

The Revelation to John

A Study Outline

By Edwin B. Stube.

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Foreword

By Rev. Edwin Stube

I began studying the Revelation to John in the early 1960s. In 1972, I began to study it in depth with the community at the Lawang Bible Training Center, in East Java, Indonesia. We proceeded verse by verse, looking up all relevant Scriptural references. In the 1980's after spending a prolonged silent retreat in meditation on the book, I taught it in a series of lectures at a Bible Camp in Lawang. Since then, I taught it several times, both in Indonesia and in the United States.

As time goes on, many parts of the Revelation which have been hard to understand become more clear because many of the events described are taking place. It is a book for today. We live in the days when all this is beginning to unfold. It may well be a life and death matter for us to understand these things as they come along.

What follows is more a progress report than a definitive statement. I have tried to stick to things of which I am reasonably certain, not attempting to explain everything. I am sure that, in the days ahead, some of these teachings will have to be revised as more of this takes place and as God gives new insights.

I have chosen to leave this material in outline form, both for the sake of brevity and for the sake of flexibility.

I hope that this outline will at provoke further study, prayer, and discussion and that it will open hearts and minds to the great and exiting things God is doing in our days.

Forward 2

By Pr. Spencer Scrutton

For the on-line version of this study, I think a little more needs to be said. There are so many opinions/theories about the book of Revelation that it requires an in depth study of its own. This is not that study. This is a brief outline for the purposes of raising interest and discussion. Some opinions are included (though I'm not sure Ed realised he had done this. These opinions are more a reflection of his personal preferences.).

A word of warning. Most people seem to accept/select the interpretation of Revelation that best suits there culture and personal theology preferences. This is of course a serious mistake, our life experience should not be the basis for chosing our theology (the tail should not wag the dog).

Numerous large tomes have been written on Revelation, it has to be said, that we are no closer to a consensus of opinion on what it all means. Even the letters to the churches are not as simple as they appear at a first read.

However this has never stopped Christians (and others) from expressing great interest in the book. I recall many enjoyable discussions at Bible school, many in church, and I am sure they will continue.

Having prepared this document for The Holy Way site, I have discovered that I do not agree with some of Ed Stubes summeries and conclusions. This is a healthy thing! Christians should never feel guilty about disagreeing with the preacher. If we disagree we need to find out why? Is there a solid scriptural reason for disagreeing, or is it just a personal preference? In regard to the book of Revelation, this is an important point. A word of advice for new Christians - if it is just a personal preference, then hold both the solid theology and the personal preference. I guarantee the personal preference will change over the years, the solid theology may not change much at all.

Table of Contents

Introduction	3
First Section: Letters to the Churches	11
Second Section: Opening Seals	27
Third Section: The Feast Trumpets	37
Fourth Section: Spiritual Warfare	49
Fifth Section: Lining up for the Last Battle	60
Sixth Section: The Wrath God	71
Seventh Section: The Fall of Babylon	77
Eighth Section: The Day of the Day	83
Epilogue	99
Appendix A: Outline of the	101
Appendix B: Relationships	103

2

Introduction

I. The Nature of the Book.

A. The Revelation to John is not:

1. A schedule of coming events. The Lord does not want us to know the schedule of events and make our own plans accordingly. He wants us to follow him step by step.
2. Answers to satisfy curiosity about the future.

B. The Revelation to John is:

1. A revelation of Jesus Christ given by his Father.
 - a. Jesus says only what his Father tells him to. The three Persons of the Trinity are perfectly of one mind; they submit fully to one another.
 - b. The love among the Three Persons becomes our basis of fellowship. This is not natural fellowship, but divine.
 - c. The Spirit brings us to Jesus; Jesus brings us to the Father and reveals the Father to us.
2. A revelation to be given to servants who will practice what is said.
 - a. God the Father ~ revealed to Jesus Christ ~ who sent his angel ~ to John ~ to be given to his servants (1:1).
 - b. A servant is humble. He does not want to do his own thing, but obeys his master. Leadership in the Church should follow Jesus' advice about being the servant of all.

- c. The teaching is for us, not to be passed off on other times and places or other groups of people. Blessed are those who follow the teaching of this book (1:3).
- 3. A guide book for Christian warfare. The warfare is carried on by an army of priests and kings. The war is fought by:
 - a. Holy living.
 - b. Worshipping in the heavenlies.
 - c. Prayer in the Spirit.
 - d. Following the Lamb wherever he goes.
 - e. Opposing the Beast and his mark.
 - f. Dying as martyrs, if necessary.

C. Structure of the Book.

1. The book consists of a series of pictures (visions) with prophetic explanations.
 - a. We can follow the order of events within any given vision, but not necessarily from one vision to another.
 - b. These visions are not visions which can be seen with the natural eyes. They are inner visions of the Spirit. The words used can only suggest, and not actually picture or describe, heavenly things. Words and pictures are necessarily related to things we have perceived with our senses and can only be shadows or metaphors of heavenly things.
2. The book is divided into sections, each of which begins in heaven before the throne of God.
 - a. John, in his vision, is lifted up to heaven to see the worship there. The results of this worship are seen on earth.
 - b. We have to learn to be amphibious. We live in the presence of God in heaven (Ephesians 2:6); we are citizens of heaven; but our work is both in the heavenly and the earthly realm.
 - c. Our work on earth will be fruitful only after we learn to sit with him in heavenly places. If we want to follow the teaching of the Book of Revelation, our primary lesson is to worship in the heavenly places.

II. Important Themes.

A. Priesthood.

We are to be a kingdom of priests. Priests rule in the kingdom of God. The kingly and priestly functions become one in Jesus Christ and in his Church.

We become priests in God's house to offer sacrifices of praise to God (I Peter 2:5).

"You are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a consecrated nation, a people set apart to sing the praises of God who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light" (1 Peter 2:19).

Priests have a two-fold function:

1. Priests come into the presence of the Lord on behalf of the people of God and of all mankind.
 - a. They devote themselves to the worship of God. Priests are primarily servants of God, only secondarily of men. Before we can bring others into his presence, we have to come into his presence ourselves. Worship on earth will not be adequate. We have to ascend to the heavenly places. Each day, before he met other people, Jesus sought his Father's presence. Once three disciples saw what

happened. Jesus was transfigured, glorified.

- b. We can approach his presence through meditation and prayer in the Spirit; but in his presence we may not have any words anymore. We will listen to him and enter into loving relationship with him. When we speak or sing, it will be with his words, not ours.
 - c. Priests intercede for the people. When Jesus prayed on the mountain, he took all of mankind into his Father's presence. So we in prayer take others with us. The Body of Christ is one. When one member suffers, all suffer; when one is blessed, all receive a blessing. When we come into God's presence, tremendous things happen – not only to us, but to the whole body of Christ. We may bask in his love and glory, or fight battles in prayer. The results of such ministry are great both in the heavenlies and on earth.
 - d. Priests offer sacrifice on behalf of people. We do not offer animal sacrifices as the Old Testament required. These have been fulfilled in Christ. We are called to offer ourselves. (Romans 12:1). This inadequate sacrifice of ourselves is joined with Christ's perfect sacrifice.
It is not enough to give tithes to the Lord. Christ did not give one-tenth of his life on the cross. Followers of Jesus dare to give themselves fully to him. Let us not distinguish between work for the Lord and ordinary work. Job, family, friends, possessions, all belong to the Lord. When we become thoroughly one with Christ who is the perfect sacrifice, then our sacrifices become acceptable through him.
2. Priests minister to the people in the Lord's Name.
 - a. They are God's spokesmen. They speak, not with their own words, but as the oracles of God. The Spirit gives the words to say. The Word of God is powerful.
 - b. God's priests manifest the Lord's power in their ministry. Jesus said, "You will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes upon you, and you will be my witnesses."
 - c. Priests reveal the Lord to mankind. People see God through us. True evangelism happens when people who have been in the presence of the Lord bring that presence into the world.

B. Heavenly worship.

The focal point of heavenly worship is the presence of God on his throne.

1. The temple or place of worship is always the heavenly temple. The only kind of worship in Revelation is heavenly worship. It is inadequate to pray only on earth. The worship often occurs on the altar of incense which stands before the throne. God rules over the whole scene by his presence, even though he himself rarely speaks.
2. The worship is liturgical in the sense of ritual and ceremonial done by groups of people in prescribed order. Everyone knows his own part. Each group sings together as a chorus. They sing new songs given by God, not made up by people.
3. We need to adjust our daily worship to the heavenly pattern. We will not enter into the heavenly worship until we have experienced worship in the Spirit. We need to learn to pray with his words, not our own.
4. There is no stress on sin. Sin cannot enter heaven; it must be dealt with first.
5. Since victory is assured, we can raise an exuberant battle shout going into battle (see Psalm 47).
6. The worship can also be silent at times, sharing the silence of eternity. It is always

full of reverence.

7. This heavenly worship has tremendous effect on earth as well as in heaven. The great purposes of God are fulfilled in response to the prayers of his people. The battles are won first in the heavenlies.

C. Overcomers.

1. Overcomers are victorious over sin and temptation, the power of Satan and the occult, the weaknesses of their churches or fellowships, and the mark of the beast. They are not affected by conditions. The conditions are affected by the overcomers.
2. An overcomer does not pull out of his church, his work, or his family situation. He overcomes in the existential situation in which he finds himself.
3. When we become victorious where we are, the Lord moves us to more difficult situations so we can overcome some more. Overcomers don't mind being martyrs.
4. In Revelation, the overcomers become witnesses. They are taken up into the presence of God. They join in the heavenly worship. They then see the results of this worship in the winning of the battles on earth.

D. The Lord's Purposes.

1. The Lord is forming us into a kingdom of priests.
 - a. We study to find our part in the heavenly worship in his presence.
 - b. He is preparing us to rule with him in his kingdom. We will rule, as Jesus does, by the principle of sacrifice and humility.
 - c. We are prepared and perfected in trials and times of trouble.
 - d. We are equipped with spiritual weapons to break down strongholds and bring the Gospel of the kingdom to all the world.
2. The Lord is engaged in the spread of his kingdom.
 - a. Every nation, tribe, and language must hear the Gospel of the kingdom and be given an opportunity to enter the kingdom.
 - b. This must be done before he comes. The time is short.
 - c. The ordinary methods churches have been trying won't get the job done. The work has to start before the throne of God in the heavenlies.
3. All God's enemies will be beaten down under his feet. This warfare occupies much of Revelation.
 - a. We become God's army, an army of priests.
 - b. We must act in God's power. The enemy is stronger than people.
 - c. Even the gifts of the Spirit will be inadequate - there must be warfare in the heavenlies. We will study the methods throughout Revelation.
4. God is perfecting his Church.
 - a. The Church is being prepared as a spotless bride without spot or wrinkle (holy), glorious.
 - b. The Church will be a company of overcomers, fighting the battle of the ages on the heavenly plane.
 - c. The Church will be united (at least spiritually, if not organizationally).
 - d. The Church will live according to the Lord's ways, not men's ways. The worship and the church order will be according to his ways.
 - e. The Church will be obedient to the Lord's voice. We cannot fulfil the Lord's purposes in our own strength. We need the mind of Christ.

First Section: Letters to the Churches

1. Introduction.

A. Destination: "From John to the seven congregations" (1:4a).

1. The number seven is not a literal number, but signifies completion and God's perfection.
2. These are letters to the entire people of God throughout the ages until Christ's coming.
3. God created his people to be perfected. These letters call the Church to go on to perfection.

B. Description of the Lord (1:4b, 5)

1. "He who is, who was, and who will be." This is the Three-Personed God who was from eternity and will be to eternity. He is YAHWEH, the One who exists. From before the world was created God had a perfect plan for us as his people.
2. "The seven spirits [or sevenfold Spirit] of God before his throne." The Spirit of God is one, but he works and manifests himself in many ways. He works in a special way in each Spirit-filled believer.
3. "Jesus, the faithful witness." Jesus always bears witness to his Father. He only speaks his Father's words and does his Father's works. This witness of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy (Revelation 19:10). This is an appropriate pattern for us as witnesses.
4. "Jesus, the first born from the dead." The foundation of our faith and the basis for victorious Christian living is Christ's resurrection.
5. "Jesus, who rules over all the kings of the earth." Our hope is that all the kingdoms of this world will become the kingdom of God and his Christ and that we will reign with him in his kingdom. The preaching of the Gospel is the proclamation of the kingdom.

C. What he has done (1:5b, 6).

1. "He loves us and has set us free from sin." This is the first meaning of the Cross for us. Born again means dead to sin and alive to righteousness in Christ Jesus.
2. "He has made us priests and kings to rule with him." The whole earth is our Promised Land. We are to rule with him; but the way of dominion is by becoming priests.

D. What he will do (1:7).

1. "He will come in the clouds, and every eye shall see Him." The news for this time in history is: "The King is coming." Shout it out!
2. His coming will not be a secret. Everyone will see him whether they want to or not.
3. He comes "as a thief" (Revelation 3:3) (that is, at an unexpected time) to those who do not know him. They will shake with fear and try to hide.
4. Those who know him will not be surprised (1 Thessalonians 5:1-11). They will look up and say, "Welcome, Lord Jesus!"

E. Our participation in his life (1:9).

1. We are united with him in his suffering. Jesus was made perfect in suffering. He said, "If your Master has to suffer and be scoffed at, how can you hope to get off easier than he?" (John 15:20). People who are going to reign with Christ have to be

- ready to die for him, or live for him (whichever is harder). Jesus gives us strength for anything we may have to face.
2. We are being prepared to rule with him in the kingdom. The kingdom (dominion of God) has to be established first in our hearts and in our churches, and then exported into all the world.
 3. We wait patiently for the day of His coming. He who stays steady to the end will be saved. Our perseverance is tested and matured. Exams are easy in kindergarten and first grade and get harder in university. We are perfected by perfectly difficult tests.

II. The first vision of heavenly worship.

A. A vision of the Lord.

1. "I was in the Spirit on the Lord's Day" (1:10). John entered into the presence of the Lord to receive his revelation. "The Lord's Day" may not refer to Sunday, but the day of Christ's coming. The vision which follows is not seen with the natural eyes, but an inner vision of the spirit. John "sees" the risen, glorified Lord Jesus.
2. "I heard a voice behind me, shouting like a trumpet, 'Write down all that you see in a book, and send it to the seven churches of Ephesus, Smyrna, Pergamum, Thyatira, Sardis, Philadelphia, and Laodicea'" (1:10b, 11). These letters are not just for the seven churches in Asia Minor, but for the whole Church throughout the ages. We can see ourselves as God sees us and as he wants us to be.
3. "I turned around to see who had spoken to me, and when I turned I saw seven golden lampstands, and, surrounded by them, a figure like a son of man" (1:12, 13a). The seven golden lampstands represent the seven churches. The risen Christ is seen standing in the midst of his Church.
4. "Dressed in a long robe tied at the waist with a golden girdle" (1:13b). The long robe represents Christ's priestly function. He is the great High Priest who prays continually in the Father's presence. When we, like John, enter heavenly realms in prayer, we are joining momentarily in the continuous worship and intercession of our High Priest. The golden girdle indicates readiness to enter into battle. It is of gold because he does battle with perfect kingly power.
5. "His head and his hair were white as wool or as snow" (1:14). White hair represents great age. He has been since eternity. All his plans which are to be unfolded in the Revelation to John were made before Creation. He is the Head of the Church from all eternity. When our churches experience problems and shaking, let us remember that he eternally walks among their lampstands.
6. "His eyes like a burning fire" (1:14b). He sees everything that we do or leave undone. The fire is to burn up whatever is not pleasing to him. He sees his Church and tries it with fire.
7. "His feet like burnished bronze when it has been refined in a furnace" (1:15a). Bronze in Scripture symbolizes deliverance or redemption. "Refined in a furnace" means that his redemption is based on his own suffering and trial. The redemptive work of Christ has been heated in the fire. It is applied aggressively to the churches to sanctify and perfect them.
8. "His voice like the sound of many waters" (1:15b). The Lord speaks to his people. He does not speak loudly, but his voice has great authority. We need always to be attentive to that voice.
9. "In his right hand he was holding seven stars" (1:16). The seven stars symbolize the angels of the churches (see verse 20). Children (and grown-ups, too) have guardian

angels. Cities and countries have angels. Each church also has its angel which protects it and serves as God's messenger to it. They deliver the letters to the churches of chapters 2 and 3.

10. "Out of his mouth came a sharp, double-edged sword" (1:16b). All things were spoken into being at the Creation by the Word of God. Salvation comes through the Word Incarnate. The words of God are powerful to perform miracles. The sword of the Spirit, the word of God, is our powerful offensive weapon in warfare (Ephesians 6:17).
11. "His face was like the sunshine, with all its force" (1:16c). The Israelites could not bear to look on the reflected glory of God on Moses' face when he came down from the mountain. The disciples were overwhelmed to see Jesus transfigured on the mountain. "But we all with unveiled face behold the glory of God face to face" (II Corinthians 3:18).
12. "When I saw him I fell in a dead faint at his feet" (1:17a). If we ever really see God as he is, we must be afraid. In Revelation, people often fall prostrate in the presence of the Lord.
13. "But he touched me with his right hand and said, 'Do not be afraid'" (1:17b). The right hand of God symbolizes his authority and power. When he lays his right hand on us, we are given an anointing of his power which cannot be defeated.
14. "It is I, the First and the Last; I am the Living One, I was dead and now I live for ever and ever, and I hold the keys of death and of the underworld" (1:17c, 18). He exists from eternity past to eternity future. All things are in his hands. He is alive and gives us life. We need have no fear of death or of life, of people, of governments, or of the forces of evil.

III. The Letters.

A. Introduction.

1. Each letter begins with a description of the Lord, usually comprising two or three of the details from the vision of chapter 1.
2. These descriptions of the Lord at the beginning of each letter and the promise at the end are related to that church's strengths and weaknesses.
3. The Lord then praises several features of the church's life, and criticizes other features. This approval and disapproval is followed by a brief exhortation.
4. Each letter ends with promises to those who overcome.

B. Letter to the congregation in Ephesus (people who had lost their first love) (2:1-7).

1. Description of the Lord.
 - a. He holds the seven stars (the angels of the churches).
 - b. He walks among the seven lampstands (the churches).
2. Acceptable features.
 - a. They work hard
 - b. They are patient in suffering for the Name of Christ.
 - c. They are not patient with wicked men.
 - d. They recognize and refuse to receive false prophets.
 - e. They hate the works of the Nicolaitans (those who oppress the lay people in the church, making it a dictatorship).
3. Unacceptable features.

They have left their first love.

4. Exhortation.

If they don't repent, they will lose their lampstand (cease to exist as a church).

5. Overcomers.

An overcomer is one who continues and grows in his love for the Lord.

6. Promises to overcomers.

They will eat of the fruit of the tree of life which is in the paradise of God. Adam and Eve had a choice between the tree of life and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. This was the choice between participating in God's life or trying to operate on the basis of their own knowledge.

Since it was the serpent's suggestion they followed, they actually came under his control, not their own.

Overcomers renounce the way of self-reliance and self-dependence, and receive the mind of Christ.

N.B. "Paradise of God" referred initially to the garden where Adam and Eve lived in close fellowship with God. It refers here to the Paradise to come, the New Jerusalem.

C. Letter to the congregation in Smyrna (the church under persecution) (2:8-11).

1. Description of the Lord.

a. He is the First and the Last.

b. He was dead, and lives again. He overcame ultimate the ultimate persecution.

2. Acceptable features.

a. They have held up under trials.

b. Though poor in the things of the world, they are rich in spiritual things.

c. They have borne the slanders of false "Jews" - people who pretend to be God's people, but are really working for the devil.

3. Unacceptable features.

None.

4. Exhortation.

a. Some of them will be imprisoned. Persecution is not over.

b. Church must face ordeals for "ten days." This either refers to the fact that there were ten major persecutions in the days of the Roman Empire, and /or it is a symbolic number for a limited amount of persecution in any age.

c. Don't be afraid. Persecution is the way to perfection.

d. If you are faithful to death, you get a crown of life.

5. Overcomers.

An overcomer is a person or group who bears persecution patiently and remains faithful, even in the face of death.

6. Promise to overcomers.

They won't experience the second death.

The second death is the lake of fire of Revelation 20:11-15, at which point, the devil, the beast and the false prophet are defeated and thrown into the lake of fire.

The last judgment occurs. Those whose names are not found in the book of life are thrown into the lake of fire.

A congregation that has been tested and remained faithful in persecution and suffering is a mature, overcoming people. Overcomers are tested in the great tribulation, but are exempt from the last judgment.

D. Letter to the congregation in Pergamum (the church in warfare, living in evil

surroundings with evil governments) (2:12-17).

1. Description of the Lord.
 - He has a two-edged sword. This represents discernment to separate truth and falsehood, soul and spirit, evil and righteousness, and power to take decisive action.
2. Acceptable features.
 - a. They have held firm to the Name of the Lord.
 - b. They have not denied the faith.
3. Unacceptable features.
 - a. Some of them follow the teaching of Balaam (idolatry, immorality).
 - b. Some of them follow the teaching of the Nicolaitans (worldly principles of organization and authority in the Church).

N.B. If we live in the midst of people of another religion (e.g., secular humanism or New Age), it is easy to be influenced by them.
4. Exhortation.

If they don't repent, the Lord will attack them with his sword.
5. Overcomers.
 - a. An overcomer separates himself from the teaching of Baalam (i.e., from worldly ideas and moral relativism).
 - b. An overcoming congregation maintains equality and diversity in the Body of Christ and follows the New Testament principles of Church order.
6. Promises to overcomers.
 - a. He is given the hidden manna. Manna is the Lord's provision, protection, and strength. According to John 6:32-35, manna is a type of Christ who is the Bread of Life. Manna which is placed in the Ark of the Covenant is hidden manna and is found in the presence of God alone (Hebrews 9:4).
 - b. He is given a white stone. In New Testament times, at a court trial, the verdict was indicated by a white or black stone. The white stone indicates acquittal. Overcomers are exempt from God's judgment.
 - c. A new name is written on the stone, known only to the one who receives it. Only the overcomer and the Lord recognize the victory that he has won. No doubt the other people in Pergamum think the overcomer is stupid, strange, and an easy mark. God's promises are fulfilled in secret since this congregation is apostate and controlled by powers of darkness which intend severe persecution of overcomers.

E. Letter to the congregation in Thyatira (a church which tries to do good by its own effort) (2:18-29).

1. Description of the Lord.
 - a. His eyes are a burning fire. Evidently he is not pleased with what he sees, and something and/or somebody is going to get burned.
 - b. His feet are like bronze. He wants to bring redemption, but this will come through trial by fire.
2. Acceptable features.

The Lord commends them for their love and faith, their ministry, their perseverance, and their increased works.
3. Unacceptable features.
 - a. It appears that the good works listed above are being done in their own natural effort.

- b. They have refused the Lord's power, and have therefore been prey to other spirits.
 - c. They have received Jezebel, a false prophet. Jezebel seems to be a foreshadowing of the Great Harlot in chapter 17. Babylon is an idol worshipping and political spirit.
 - d. Influenced by Jezebel, they have committed adultery (in the spiritual sense) and have eaten food offered to idols.
4. Exhortation.
- a. If they don't repent, Jezebel and her friends will be hurled into tribulation, her children killed.
 - b. Those who have so far resisted Jezebel's influence need to persevere until the Lord's coming.
5. Overcomers.
- a. An overcomer is one who walks in the Spirit in obedience to the Lord.
 - b. He is not influenced by worldly or political ways.
 - c. He avoids all involvement in the occult.
6. Promises to overcomers.
- a. They are given power over the nations. In Psalm 2, this promise is given to Jesus; but here the promise clearly extends to the overcomers as sons of God.
 - b. They will rule with a rod of iron. In Revelation 19:14, 15, we learn that the armies of the Lord come with him seated on white horses. They strike the nations with the sword that comes out of his mouth.
 - c. They will be given the morning star. In Revelation 22:16, Jesus is spoken of as the Morning Star. In II Peter 1:19, it is said that the morning star will shine in our hearts. Overcoming the Jezebel spirit opens up to this possibility.

F. Letter to the congregation in Sardis (a church which appears alive, but is actually dead) (3:1-6).

1. Description of the Lord.
- a. He holds the seven spirits of God. He has the power and authority of the Holy Spirit. He wants to give spiritual gifts to those who want to do his works.
 - b. He holds the seven stars. He has the actual authority and judgment over the churches.
2. Acceptable features.
- None.
3. Unacceptable features.
- a. They are supposed to be alive, but they are dead. It is possible to be physically alive and spiritually dead. Dead, in this case, means independent of God.
 - b. All their work is imperfect. Judgment is according to works. But the basis for judging the works is whether they are done in response to God's will or are the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.
4. Exhortation.
- a. Strengthen what little remains.
 - b. Remember the teaching you received earlier.
 - c. Repent.
 - d. If you don't watch out, the Lord will come like a thief.
5. Overcomers.
- a. Overcomers are really alive because they have a right relationship with the Lord.
 - b. They listen to his instructions and do what he says.

- c. Their works are done in the Spirit.
- 6. Promises to overcomers.
 - a. They are given white clothes. White clothes represent God's righteousness (Matthew 22:11-13; Revelation 19:8).
 - b. Their names are written in the Book of Life. (See Exodus 32:33; Revelation 13:8, 17; Revelation 20:15) . Only those whose names are written in the Book of Life can enter the New Jerusalem (Revelation 21:27).
 - c. The Lord will acknowledge their names. Only those who acknowledge the Lord will be acknowledged (Matthew 10:32).

G. Letter to the congregation in Philadelphia (faithful, but not very strong) (3:7-13).

1. Description of the Lord.
 - a. He is the righteous One.
 - b. He holds the Key of David. This is the key to the eternal kingdom promised to David.
 - c. He opens and no one can close; he closes and no one can open. Doors in scripture typically refer to opportunities for ministry. These really originate with the Lord, not in as many suppose.
2. Acceptable features.
 - a. They follow the Lord's word and don't deny his Name. They are obedient, and they accept his authority.
 - b. They persevere in waiting for the Lord's coming.
3. Unacceptable features.

They have little power.

The Lord has called them to have dominion over all things. He wants them to be full of the Holy Spirit, the greatest force in the universe. He wants the Resurrection power of Jesus to abide in them.
4. Exhortation

Hold fast to what you have.
5. Overcomers

An overcomer is one who is full of the power of God and ministers in that power.
6. Promises to overcomers.
 - a. They become pillars in the Temple of God. God manifested himself to the people of Israel in the wilderness by means of a pillar of cloud by day, and a pillar of fire by night. Peter and John are referred to as pillars in the congregation in Galatians 2:9. The Church of God is a pillar and foundation of truth (1 Timothy 3:15). The Temple referred to here is the heavenly tabernacle. The overcomers stay in the New Jerusalem in fellowship with him, while the nations come and go (Revelation 21:24-27).
 - b. The Lord writes the Name of God, the name of God's city, and the Lord's new name on them. The name, Holy to the Lord, was written on the priest's mitre (Exodus 28:36). The Lord's servants have the Lord's name on their foreheads (Revelation 22:3, 4). The name of God's city is: God is here (Ezekiel 48:35). A new name (Zion = Jerusalem) is given to the people of God at the time of his coming (Isaiah 65:15).

H. Letter to the congregation in Laodicea (the lukewarm church) (3:14-22).

1. Description of the Lord

- a. He is the faithful and true witness.
- b. He is the firstborn of God's creation.
- 2. Acceptable features.
 - None.
- 3. Unacceptable features.
 - a. They are lukewarm, blah. Anything would be better than that.
 - b. They think they are rich when they are poor, wretched, blind, and naked. The Lord's standards are different from ours.
- 4. Exhortation.
 - a. They should buy from the Lord gold tried in the fire. The gold represents divine perfection and divine attributes. For us these attributes must be tested and purified in the fire of tribulation.
 - b. They should buy from the Lord, white clothes. The white clothes represent the Lord's sanctification. It can come only from him.
 - c. They should buy from the Lord, eye salve. The eye salve represents the anointing of the Spirit. We should know people after the Spirit, and see all things from the Lord's point of view.
 - d. They should repent.
 - e. They should open the door for the Lord and let him in. How pathetic that this church that thinks it is doing great, actually has left the Lord outside altogether.
- 5. Overcomers.

An overcomer in the Laodicean church would be anyone who could bring himself to observe the above exhortations and is on fire for the Lord.
- 6. Promises to overcomers.

They will sit with Jesus on his throne as he sits with his Father. This is the promise of ruling with Christ.

I. Conclusion.

- 1. Present-day churches in many ways fit all the above descriptions.
 - a. The unacceptable features tend to be cumulative, and their force tends to increase with time.
 - b. Fads in heresies change or appear in new guises, but are for all that very similar.
- 2. The work of overcomers becomes increasingly difficult, their position harder to maintain.
- 3. The Lord operates on the remnant principle.
 - a. When the Israelite nation as a whole didn't want to fulfil its priesthood, God choose the tribe of Levi (Exodus 32:26).
 - b. God thought Gideon would do better with a small number of committed and obedient people than with a great mixed multitude.
 - c. Jesus thanked his Father for the little group of disciples at a time when people were leaving in droves (Luke 10:21, 22).
 - d. One Friday morning, the remnant was just one Person; but he immediately started rebuilding.

Second Section: Opening Seals

1. The heavenly vision

- A. The heavenly tabernacle**, of which the tabernacle of Moses was a shadow

(4:1-11)

1. The *throne of God* takes the place of the Ark of the Covenant. All heavenly worship centres round this throne. All God's work in heaven and on earth begins at his throne. God's face cannot be seen. He is described simply as looking like "a diamond and a ruby" (4:2).
2. The *rainbow* around the throne, is not a natural rainbow. It is said to be "like an emerald." It is the *kabod* (glory) of God, which came down in the tabernacle of Moses when everything had been made and consecrated according to the pattern God had given to Moses (Exodus 40). So this glory appears in heaven as the heavenly worship is carried out according to God's perfect pattern (4:3).
3. The *twenty-four elders* sitting on thrones surrounding God's throne are dressed in white robes and wear golden crowns. These elders have a priestly and kingly function. Their main purpose is to worship before the throne. Everything that happens on earth happens first in heaven. So, if we are called to be kings and priests, there are already those who fulfil this function in heaven. These twenty-four elders may be the heavenly counterpart of the twenty four orders of priests specified in I Chronicles 24 who were to minister in the earth sanctuary (4:4).
4. *The thunder and lightning* indicates the power and awesomeness of God and also describes the fearsomeness of his judgments (4:5a).
5. The *seven lamps* burning in front of the throne symbolize, as in Chapter 1, the seven-fold Spirit of God. They remind us of the seven-branched lampstand in the tabernacle (4:5b).
6. The *sea of glass* seen in the foreground of this vision corresponds to the laver in the tabernacle. It no longer contains water, since washing is not necessary in heaven. The glass reflects the purity and beauty of the saints who appear on it (4:6).
7. The *four living creatures* or *cherubim* remind us of the cherubim seen carrying the throne of God in Ezekiel 1 and 10. They remind us also of the two cherubim over the Ark of the Covenant in the tabernacle. These angels guard the throne and are the closest to God himself. They particularly reflect in their worship the majesty and holiness of God (4:6b-8).

B. The heavenly worship

1. The worship is liturgical in the sense that groups take part in turn according to a prescribed pattern. The words are given by the Holy Spirit rather than read from a book or composed by the singers. The worship is spontaneous in the sense that it continually changes according to the progressive unfolding of God's plan. It reflects the existential situation in God and on the earth.
2. The closer one gets to the throne the deeper the sense of awe and reverence, and the more continuous and single-minded the worship. The four living creatures sing continually day and night:
Holy, holy, holy
is the Lord God, the Almighty.
He was, he is, and he is to come (4:8).
3. The twenty-four elders fall prostrate, throwing down their crowns (i.e., continually bringing their authority and power in submission to the Lord's). They sing:
You are worthy of glory and honor and power, because you made the universe and it is by your will that everything was made and exists (4:11).
The worship first of all focuses on the greatness of God as Creator of all that is.
4. A scroll is seen in God's right hand with writing front and back and sealed with

- seven seals (5:1).
- a. The right hand of God symbolizes his power to act.
 - b. The writing front and back indicates that the scroll is full of divine revelation. If the scroll is opened, the things written therein will begin to happen.
 - c. The message is sealed. The opening of this revelation involves a tremendous prayer warfare. John weeps bitterly in frustration.
5. Only the Lion of Judah, the Root of David can open the seals (5:5).
- a. The "Root of David" is a messianic expression (Sirach 47:22) for the One who will fulfil God's promise to David of a descendant who will rule forever.
 - b. The Lion turns out to be a Lamb who has been slain but has been healed (5:6).
 - c. He has seven horns (symbol of perfect dominion over all things) and seven eyes (which are explained as being the seven spirits of God, the fullness of the divine anointing).
 - d. The three Persons of the Trinity are all present and participating in this action.
6. The whole host of heaven worship the Lamb (5:8).
- a. As the Lamb takes the scroll, the twenty-four elders and the four living creatures all fall prostrate.
 - b. The elders have bowls of incense made of the prayers of the saints. Prayers in the Spirit rise as a sweet smelling savour before God's throne.
 - c. The prayers play an important role in the releasing of what happens next.
7. The elders and the four living creatures sing a new song (5:9, 10).
- a. The contents of this song have profound meaning concerning future events and the power to make them happen.
 - b. The song is based on the redeeming work of Christ which makes us his possession and directs us towards his purposes.
 - c. God purposes the salvation of people of all races and tribes. The Gospel of the Kingdom must be preached to all the world to every tribe and nation.
 - d. We need to remember that this is too great a task for us to do in our own strength. Only as we join the heavenly worship will we be able to see God's work in its fullness.
8. Conclusion
- a. The Church at this time needs to enter into this heavenly worship. This is our part in getting the scroll opened.
 - b. Only the Lord can open the seals. He alone has the key to the future.
 - c. The purpose of opening the scroll is so that the things written in it can come to pass. The Word of the Lord, whether written or spoken, has power. Prophecy, if it really is from the Lord, will surely be fulfilled.
 - d. There is a great spiritual struggle involved in opening up or revealing the Word of the Lord. All Satan's armies oppose it. We need to be prepared for spiritual battle.
 - e. We need to know our place in the heavenly worship. The Bible does not give us a method for entering into heavenly worship. But if we have a desire for it, surely the Lord will bring us into that realm of worship.

II. The opening of the seals (chapter 6).

Wars, famines, persecutions, and vindication of the saints are results of the praise and worship in the above verses.

A. The four horsemen (the first four seals) (6: 1-8)

1. The four living creatures call the four horsemen.
 - a. This action originates at the throne of God.
 - b. The manifestation on earth looks as though men were doing it to each other. Men who are out of tune with the Lord's plan and ways are out of tune with creation and with each other. Wars and natural disaster result.
2. The four horsemen act as messengers to carry out God's intentions.
 - a. They are given power over one-fourth of the earth's inhabitants to kill with: sword, famine, plague, wild beasts.
 - b. These things are bad and getting worse as we approach the time of Jesus' second coming. God wants to get people's attention.
 - c. These things don't just happen. God has a clear purpose.
 - d. This is a partial judgment and is intended to be remedial.
 - e. Christians need to learn to trust the Lord. This is why the Lord has the world rigged, to get people into trouble through their disobedience to his ways and commandments.

B. The martyrs stored under the Altar (the fifth seal) (6:7-11)

1. Christians have always been persecuted and will be increasingly as we approach the end. See Daniel 7:21, 25.
 - a. In many parts of the world today, Christians are being persecuted even to the point of being killed.
 - b. The more effectively we proclaim the Gospel, the more surely we get persecuted.
 - c. Christians are perfected by perfectly hard testings.
2. The martyrs cry out to God: "How long before you take vengeance?"
 - a. The Lord will avenge the death of the faithful saints.
 - b. We don't need to be afraid of death. Overcomers love not their souls even unto death (Revelation 12:11).
 - c. We don't need to pay people back for stuff they have done to us. The Lord will avenge.
3. The martyrs are given white robes.
 - a. They are told to wait until their number is complete. Even martyrs need patience. God can't be pushed.
 - b. Evil has to get ripe before the Lord harvests it. Evil increases. Christians mature. The separation becomes more obvious as time goes on.
 - c. In tribulation, we make the ultimate choices.

C. The Day of the Lord (sixth seal) (6:12-17)

This again is the earthly result of the heavenly worship. See Isaiah 13:9, 10; 34:4; Joel 2:10, 11, 31; Matthew 24:29.

1. The Day of the Lord is characterized by massive worldwide earthquake, the sun and the stars being taken away, mountains and islands totally rearranged. The earth as we know it is being totally shaken. What will remain?
2. All the big shots and worldly people are scared silly. They seek in vain for places to hide from God's wrath.
3. Notice that this is the coming of the Lord, not a departure of the saints as some suppose. It takes place after the tribulation.

D. Silence in heaven (the seventh) (8:1)

1. The opening of the seventh seal follows the parenthesis in chapter 7. This seal returns to the heavenly worship of chapter 4.
2. The ultimate in worship and devotion is to enter the silence of God, to be still and know that he is God.
3. Silence in the presence of the Lord is not just the absence of sound, but rather a perfectly close relationship with him, which goes much deeper than words and does not require words.
4. This is complete victory and ultimate purpose of our struggle.
5. A half hour is adequate. God's silence is a quality of relationship, not a long period of time in which to get smug and settled down.

III. Salvation on the Day of the Lord

Two groups are saved on the day of the Lord.

The events of Chapter 7 occur simultaneously with those of 6:12-17. They are another way of reacting to the same events. This is a separate vision inserted between the sixth and seventh seals to show the other side of the day of the Lord.

A. The 144,000

1. The final judgment is proclaimed.
 - a. Four angels stand at the four corners of the earth with a commission to devastate the land and the sea.
 - b. These four angels are going to carry out God's judgment on the earth by releasing the "four winds."
 - c. The number four indicates the whole earth.
2. God's servants are sealed against that day of judgment (7:2, 3).
 - a. Another angel comes with the seal of God to seal God's servants (cf. Ezekiel 9:4, 14: 12-23). The seal is for protection in the time of judgment.
 - b. The Christians receive persecution in the time of tribulation, but are protected from destruction at the time of judgment.
 - c. The seal is the sign of the Cross.
3. 144,000 servants of God from "the twelve tribes of Israel" are revealed (7:4-8).
 - a. This can hardly refer to national Israel, since the twelve tribes do not exist anymore.
 - b. Israel in the New Testament generally refers to the New Israel = the Church, the true people of God, the overcomers (Romans 9:8; Gal 3:29; 4:26; Matthew 3:9).
 - c. 144,000 is a symbolic number. These are people who are faithful and obedient to God in the time of trouble. Twelve is the number of foundation for God's work. 1000 indicates a large number.

B. Countless throngs from all nations, tribes, and languages (7:9-17)

1. They stand before the throne of the Lamb. These are people who have entered deeply into the heavenly worship. They practice the presence of God.
2. They wear white robes, which is the holiness of God. The holiness is a gift from God, not the fruit of human effort.
3. They carry palm branches. This is a symbol of victory. These are overcomers.
4. They shout, "Victory to our God and to the Lamb." Overcomers know that their victory is really the Lord's victory.
5. This again occasions all the heavenly host to prostrate themselves in worship. Clearly the appearance of these people in heaven is a cause for great rejoicing.

6. An angel explains to John that these are tribulation martyrs.
 - a. This is the completion of the number of the martyrs seen in Chapter 6.
 - b. We do not need to be overly afraid to suffer or die if necessary. God's grace is given at the time it is needed (as Stephen discovered as the stones started to smash him up).
 - c. Conversely, we should not seek martyrdom for its own sake.
 - d. These martyrs have washed their robes white in the Blood of the Lamb. Martyrdom is one of the best ways to perfect sanctification.
 - e. The martyrs now stand before the throne of God and serve him day and night. This is a worthy objective and more enjoyable than many people realize.

Third Section: The Feast of Trumpets

1. The Heavenly Preparation (8:2)

A. Seven Angels with Trumpets

1. These angels are God's messengers of the fullness (seven) of judgment.
2. They are held in readiness until the necessary prayer work is done.
3. Trumpets are intended for (Numbers 10:1-10):
 - a. Calling the community together.
 - b. Breaking camp, moving on.
 - c. Preparing for war.
 - d. Celebrating the appointed feast days.
4. These trumpets are for the fulfilment of the Feast of Trumpets (Leviticus 23:23-25).
 - a. The Feast of Trumpets occurred on the first day of the seventh month. It prepared for the Feast of Atonement on the tenth day and the Feast of Tabernacles beginning on the fifteenth.
 - b. The feasts of the seventh month culminate in the Feast of Tabernacles, the feast of completion.
 - c. All the above meanings of trumpets are fulfilled.
 - d. The trumpets gather God's people. They are ready to move on to experience the Lord's warfare, and ultimately to celebrate the Feast of Tabernacles.

B. The Angel with the Censor (8:3, 4)

1. Much incense, mixed with the prayers of the saints, is burned on the golden altar of incense before the throne of God.
2. The veil is gone, eliminated after Christ died on the Cross. The altar of incense stands right in front of the throne.
3. "Prayers of the saints" means prayers of holy people. Prayer associated with the Altar of Incense is prayer in the Spirit which brings us into a supernatural mode.
4. Even prayer in the Spirit has its limits. In God's presence, there are often no words anymore. We communicate directly face to face. Then we join in with the heavenly songs of the angels.
5. Scripture encourages us to do our prayer and worship in the heavenlies, not just on earth. Love draws us up into God's presence. Faith enters in behind the veil into the Holy of Holies. From the throne, we see things from God's point of view. We receive the mind of Christ.
6. We go forth from his presence to minister by the spirit of prophecy.
7. The prayers of the saints make a pleasant odor for the Lord. They make him happy.

Prayers and worship should be designed to make God happy.

C. Fire on the Earth (8:5)

1. The angel took fire from the altar in his censer and threw the fire down on the earth. Thunder, lightning, and earthquakes resulted.
2. The same fire which makes a lovely pleasing act of worship in the heavenlies also causes dire results on the earth.
3. Our prayers, united with the heavenly worship have a profound effect upon the fulfillment of God's purposes in history. All that follows is the result of this heavenly worship.
4. The prayer releases the trumpets. The sounding of the trumpets causes powerful forces to be unleashed on earth.
5. The Lord is about to start acting directly. The events that follow are clearly supernatural events.

II. The Sounding of the Trumpets

A. The first four Trumpets-partial judgment

1. Hail and fire mixed with blood destroys one-third of the earth (8:6, 7).
2. A burning mountain dropped into the sea turns the sea to blood and destroys one-third of the life in the sea (8:8, 9).
3. A huge burning star, called Wormwood, falls into rivers and springs, turning the water bitter. Many people die (8:10).
4. The sun, moon, and stars are darkened by one third. The lights which God gave to distinguish light and dark, times and seasons are growing dim to men's eyes (8:12).
5. These first four trumpets are not natural disasters. They are symbolic and supernatural.
6. They represent the beginning of God's judgments on the earth. Judgment is still partial and hopefully remedial. The Lord gives as much opportunity as possible for repentance.
7. After these first four have occurred, an eagle appears (v.13) saying, "You haven't seen anything yet. Wait till you see the remaining three."
8. These first four had natural elements to them and could almost be applied to a possible nuclear holocaust. The ones which follow are even more obviously supernatural.

B. The Three "Woes"

The last three trumpets are called "woes". They all happen according to God's plan. Even the devil is God's creation and acts according to God's purpose. The Lord's judgment is a corollary of his justice.

1. The fifth trumpet (9:1-11)
 - a. A star falls from heaven and opens the great abyss. This star is obviously a fallen angel, maybe Satan himself.
 - b. The abyss is the place the fallen angels have been stored their final judgment. When the abyss is opened, smoke pours out darkening the sky.
 - c. Locusts with power like scorpions come out of the abyss. They are given authority to torture people for five months. Men want to die but can't.
 - d. These locusts are demons that have been locked in the abyss. Their leader is the "angel of the abyss" i.e. Satan. They have been prepared by God for this present

- occasion (cf. Joel 2:2-9; Jude 6).
- e. People with the seal of God (the 144,000) are exempt from this judgment.
2. The sixth trumpet (9:13-21).
 - a. A voice from the altar of incense tells the sixth angel with a trumpet to release the four angels chained at the River Euphrates. This voice comes from the altar of incense because it is a fulfilment of the prayers of the saints in 8:3 and of the martyrs under the altar in 6:9, 10. The Lord's vindication is coming.
 - b. Four angels released from the River Euphrates will kill one-third of mankind. They bring with them two hundred million satanic troops.
 - c. God is trying to make abundantly clear the necessary result of refusal to repent.
 - d. Judgment at this point is still partial and directed toward driving people to repentance.
 - e. Most people cannot or will not see the point. The more obvious his judgments, the more rebellious and stubborn they get.
 - f. As time goes on, the division among persons becomes clearer and clearer. They are either overcomers or rebels.
 3. The seventh trumpet-the third "woe" (11:15-19)
 - a. Voices in heaven are heard shouting, "The kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of our Lord and his Christ, and he will reign for ever." This is the ultimate in bad news to all the rulers of the earth and to all people who are doing their own thing. It is, of course, good news to those who are with it and like the way God does things.
 - b. This seventh and last trumpet marks the fulfilment of all God's plans (I Corinthians 15:51). The Lord has let evil mature and ripen. The Christians also have grown to maturity.
 - c. The twenty-four elders analyse the situation in song. The Lord has begun to reign as King. The pagans are angry. The Lord is also very angry. Judgment and vindication are handed out as appropriate.
 - d. The day of the Lord makes a final and painfully clear separation. All who are not for him are assumed to be against him. God's wrath meets the anger of his opponents, and he comes out on top.
 - e. The heavenly sanctuary is opened and the Ark is seen accompanied by thunder, lightning, earthquake, and hail. The heavenly places and their worship, so beautiful to those who love the Lord, are a terror to a world awaiting God's judgment and wrath.

III. Preparation for the Feast of Tabernacles-saints in tribulation

The events of 10:1-11:13 cover the same time as those of 9:13-21. The time of tribulation is here looked at from the point of view of the saints of God. The seven trumpets represent God's judgments on those who are living outside of God's plan. Chapters 10 and 11 describe God's dealings with the elect.

A. Announcement of the Day of the Lord (10:1, 2)

1. A powerful angel, wrapped in a cloud, a rainbow over his head, his face like the sun, and his legs pillars of fire, with a scroll in his hand, comes down from heaven.
 - a. This appears to be the Lord Himself. Scripture often refers to him as "the angel of the LORD." He is much bigger than life size.
 - b. The cloud symbolizes God the Father. He often appears as a cloud (as to Moses and Jesus) because people cannot see him clearly face to face. He is too vast,

- too glorious, and too inscrutable to be known fully by our finite minds.
- c. The rainbow is apparently the *kabod* or glory of God, as in the vision of God's throne in Chapter 4.
 - d. "His face like the sun," shows the awesomeness and brilliance of the glory of God.
 - e. The legs looking "like pillars of fire" refers to the fire of judgment.
 - f. The little scroll is the Word of God comprising his decisions about the rest of his plan which is about to unfold. It is little because little remains to be done.
2. The seven thunders were heard, but John was not allowed to repeat what they said (10:3, 4).
 - a. God's voice often sounds like thunder (cf Psalm 29).
 - b. The number seven indicates the completeness of this revelation.
 - c. The content of the revelation could not be revealed at that time. God's plan is revealed little by little as we get ready to receive it.
 3. The angel seen in verse 1 speaks, proclaiming, "The time of waiting is over" (10:6, 7).
 - a. The fifth, sixth, and seventh trumpets are referred to as woes. They represent the working out of God's judgments.
 - b. When the seventh angel sounds his trumpet, God's secret intentions will be fulfilled, his judgments complete. Everything the Lord has spoken must come to pass.
 - c. The angel is standing on the sea and land, and his head is reaching up to the clouds. This means that he has authority and judgment over all things.
 - d. The Lord gives plenty of warning before his final judgment comes. People are given as much chance as possible to repent.
 4. John is told to take the scroll from the hand of the angel who was standing on the sea and land. It is sweet in the mouth, but bitter in the stomach. He is told to prophesy more (10:8-11).
 - a. New Testament prophecy is greater than Old Testament. The old prophecies were sure, but we have something more sure if we have seen the Lord in his glory (II Peter 1:19).
 - b. The news that he is to receive and to disseminate is sweet because it speaks of the vindication of the elect, but it is bitter in its outworking because the elect have to go through a lot of persecution.
 - c. This is bad news for those who don't know the Lord, but good news for the elect. By this point, people have received God's seal or the mark of the beast. Judgment will be on the basis of which they have received.
 - d. The news proclaimed is that of the imminent fulfilment of God's judgments. This news must be proclaimed.

B. Measuring of the Temple (Zechariah 2:1ff, Ezekiel 40:3 ff; see also Ezekiel 47).

1. John is told to measure the sanctuary, the altar, and the people worshipping there (11:1).
 - a. Measuring signifies: knowing and understanding; defining, determining the limits or boundaries; truing up something to agree with the standard or blueprint.
 - b. The sanctuary here, as in every other instance in Revelation, refers to the heavenly place of worship (cf. chapter 4) gathered around the throne of God in the heavenlies. Hebrews 10 tells us that the earthly temple has been done away

- and replaced by a heavenly temple of which the earthly one was just a shadow.
- c. The altar in front of the throne is the place where the prayers of the saints join with the incense rising as a sweet-smelling savor to God.
 - d. Our worship needs to be measured by spiritual discernment and brought into agreement with the specifications of heavenly worship.
 - e. Christians need to go on to perfection in their worship. Those who do not tend to go back into natural forms of worship.
2. Pagans are let into the courtyard at this period and take control of it. The courtyard is the place of natural worship (11:2).
 - a. Pagans can and do participate in natural worship, but they cannot enter the sanctuary or presence of God.
 - b. At the moment of the entrance of the overcomers into the holy of holies (heavenly sanctuary), the courtyard is given over to the pagans.
 - c. Throughout the ages a few individual contemplatives have entered the presence of God, but now God wants to bring us into corporate worship in this realm.
 - d. Division occurs between those who remain in the natural realm and those who enter the heavenly.
 3. The pagans will trample on the Holy City for forty-two months (11:2c).
 - a. The Holy City (the New Jerusalem) is the church (Galatians 4:22-31; Hebrews 12:22-28). We are children of the heavenly Jerusalem. Our citizenship is in heaven (Ephesians 2:6; Philippians 3:20).
 - b. Pagans, both inside and outside the church, will persecute the true church of God (those who live in God's presence) (Daniel 7:24, 25; 8:9-25; 9:27). Persecution is directed specifically at Christians.
 - c. God allows persecution to perfect the Christians (Daniel 12:10). Christians are prepared for ruling by being persecuted, even by being defeated (as Jesus won by being humiliated and killed). We need to be defeated, because we are still too proud. We have to learn perfect obedience and dependence on him.
 - d. We don't need to be afraid of persecution. God's grace will be given at the time it's needed. We can trust the Lord.

C. Two Witnesses: Church's Ministry of Priest, and King (11:3-14).

1. Two witnesses represent the ministry of the church in the period of tribulation. They are commissioned to prophesy for 1,260 days (i.e., 42 weeks or 3 and a half years) (11:3b).
 - a. They are probably not two persons, but a people. Two is the number of witnesses. Jesus sent disciples out two-by-two for ministry.
 - b. Their ministry issues from the heavenly worship and results in the endurance of verses 1-3a above.
 - c. Jesus is prophet, priest, king. The Church is called, as his body, to manifest those same ministries.
2. They have prophetic call.
 - a. The word of God in people's mouth (i.e. prophecy) is the sword of the Spirit, the most powerful weapon in spiritual warfare and the only offensive weapon (Ephesians 6:17). The witness of Jesus is the "spirit prophecy" (Revelation 19:10).
 - b. They witness, not only by word of prophesy, but by miracle and manifestation of supernatural power (11:5, 6). They are given power like Moses and Elijah. They bring plagues like Moses, ascend like Elijah (11:11, 12).

- c. When the temple was being rebuilt after the Babylonian captivity, the work stalled, and the people became discouraged. The prophetic ministries of Haggai and Zechariah encouraged them and got them going again.
- 3 The two witnesses are described as olive trees and lampstands, providing spiritual power for rebuilding the temple and the city. They represent the priestly and kingly functions of Jesus and his church.
 - a. In Zechariah, chapters 3 and 4, Joshua, the high priest (the spiritual authority) and Zerubbabel, the governor (the civil authority) are presented as the two lampstands.
 - b. The olive trees give out oil (a symbol of the Holy Spirit) which flows into the lampstands causing them to be a light in the darkness of the world. They show the light of Christ in the power of the Holy Spirit.
 - c. In Zechariah 6:12, 13, the spiritual and civil authorities are presented as one royal priesthood.
 - d. The church conducts warfare by being built up into the glorious church God intends and by learning the stunt of ruling by submission (like Christ).
 4. The beast comes out of the abyss, attacks, defeats, and kills them. Their corpses lie in the street for three and a half days. The heathen rejoice. But then the witnesses arise and ascend to heaven. Everybody is scared. A terrible earthquake knocks down one tenth of the city, kills a lot of people and scares some into believing.
 - a. If Christians truly speak the word of God and demonstrate its power, they will be persecuted severely.
 - b. Christians win by losing, just as Christ won by being crucified. Martyrdom is the ultimate witness.
 - c. In chapter 11, we see the part of the Christians in the retribution and vindication described by the seven trumpets. They stand as priests in the presence of God, and they take the part the Lord gives them in the warfare on earth.
 - d. When they ascend, terrible things happen on the earth. Whenever saints of God come into his presence, terrible things happen to those who are still in the earthly realm.
 5. The two witnesses represent the life and ministry of the overcomers during the time of tribulation.
 - a. This is final exam. They are perfected by their suffering and martyrdom.
 - b. Satan is manifested fully in all his in glory.
 - c. He does to the two witnesses as he did to their Founder, and with similar results.

Fouth Section: Spiritual Warfare

Revelation 12 is the teaching of the whole book. In it is described the whole of the end-time cosmic warfare taking place. The warfare takes place on all levels at once; and all the different levels are interrelated and interact.

1. The Vision of the Woman in the Heavens (12:1)

A. The woman represents the church. She is the woman of Genesis 2, Ephesians 5:22ff, Revelation 19:6-9, and Revelation 21:1, 2 9-14).

1. She is born of Christ, just as Eve was taken out of Adam. Only that which originates in God is appropriate to the life of the church. The natural ways of man are not appropriate.
2. Christ loves the church, and gives himself for her. She is being perfected "by the

- washing of water by the word." She is his intended bride.
3. She will be to bride, a glorious church, without spot or wrinkle.

B. The celestial lights, the sun, moon, and stars which surround her, represent divine illumination (12:1).

1. In Genesis 1:14, it is explained that these are to distinguished light and darkness, and times and seasons. The spiritual meaning of this is that we are to distinguish right and wrong and discern the signs of the times by divine revelation resulting from contemplation and fellowship with him, and not on the basis of the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil (natural human knowing, inspired by Satan).
2. Adam and Eve walked and talked with God in the garden and did what he said. The true church of Jesus walks by the light of God. The natural (fallen) man "does what is right in his own eyes."

C. The church is in travail to give birth to the "male child" (12:2).

1. Every new thing in God's plan is brought to birth through travail.
 - a. Jesus, through his travail (passion, suffering, and death) produced seed (sons of God after his likeness) (Isaiah 53:11). Christ becomes the first of many brothers. These are children of the New Jerusalem, which is the bride of Christ and the mother of us all (Isaiah 54:1, following Paul's interpretation in Galatians 4:24-33).
 - b. In Isaiah 66:7, 8, a woman (i.e., Sion) gives birth to a nation composed of sons of God. This speaks of the same event as our passage in Revelation 12 (the birth of the male child).
 - c. All creation experiences travail waiting for the revelation of the "sons of God." All creation suffers futility and decay, but hopes to experience the freedom of the sons of God. We also experience travail as we await the fulfillment of our hope of the resurrection of the body (Romans 8:21-25).
 - d. The whole church today is experiencing this travail. Out of this travail will come forth a body of mature sons of God. The male child (like the woman) is a group of people, not an individual. Notice that the plural pronoun is used in verse 11.
2. The woman is amphibious. She is both in the heavenlies and on earth. In verse 1, she is seen in the heavenlies, but she gives birth to her son on earth.
3. The male child is to be identified with the company of overcomers (Compare verse 5: "Who was to rule all nations with an iron scepter" with Revelation 2:27 and Revelation 12:11).
 - a. God's deepest purpose in creation was that people would become his mature adopted sons (Ephesians 1:4, 5) conformed to the image of the pattern Son Jesus Christ.
 - b. The revealing of the mature sons of God (Romans 8:19) refers to the same event as the birth of the male child (Revelation 12). This birth must issue from the travail of the church.

II. The Red Dragon (the Devil) (12:3)

A. This is the serpent of Genesis 3 grown up.

1. He is beginning to reveal himself as he is. He has been operating in secret as the "mystery of lawlessness", but before Christ's parousia (appearing, revealing) the

- devil has his parousia (2 Thessalonians 2:3-8).
2. At present, he still has access to the presence of God in the heavenlies (Job 1). He serves as the accuser of the people of God, and general trouble-maker.
 3. He is wearing seven heads, seven crowns, and ten horns (12:3).
 - a. The heads appear to be world empires. The crowns indicate the authority given to them. Since seven is the number of completion, these must include all the great empires in history.
 - b. The ten horns apparently represent ten governments or rulers of nations, who are joined together in a final satanic world empire. This is the perfection of evil.

B. The dragon is ready for war.

1. The dragon's tail can pull down one-third of the stars (12:4).
 - a. Stars, in Revelation, generally refer to angels. The number *one-third* refers to something which is partial. The meaning of this vision is that a part of the angels are in the control of the devil. These are all the satanic or demonic hosts.
 - b. They still have access to the heavenly realm just as the devil himself does. They are principalities and powers of evil in high places (Ephesians 3:10; 6:12).
 - c. Our warfare is with this spiritual army of evil in the heavens. We can overcome them only if we sit with Christ in the heavenlies (Ephesians 2:6).
2. He stands in front of the woman as the male child is born ready to gobble him up (12:4b).
 - a. The devil fears the maturity of the church more than anything. He knows that overcomers can overcome him. He wants to prevent their development and destroy them or lead them astray any way he can.
 - b. He makes war on the saints (Daniel 7:21), and harasses them (Daniel 7:25). He will deceive, if possible, the elect (Mark 13:20-22) with lying signs and wonders (2 Thessalonians 2:9, 10).

III. The Male Child (12:5)

A. He is given dominion over the nations. He will rule with an iron scepter.

1. This is said of Jesus Christ in Psalm 2:9 (see also Psalm 110:2).
2. But in Psalm 47:3, we read that he brings the peoples under *our* dominion and puts all nations under *our* feet.
3. Daniel 7:27 explains that, after the coming of the Lord and the destruction of Satan's kingdom, sovereignty, and kingship, and the splendors of all the kingdoms under heaven will be given to the people of the saints of the Most High.
4. This is explicitly said of the overcomers in Revelation 2:26-28: "I will give them authority over the pagans ... to rule them with an iron scepter and shatter them like earthen ware."
5. The male child is to rule with Christ in his kingdom. This male child is a kingdom of priests.

B. The male child ascends to God's throne (12:5).

1. "Taken up to heaven" may mean to depart from this earthly life altogether as in the case of Enoch or Elijah.
2. It may also mean to experience the presence of God and enter into the heavenly worship
 - a. Paul was taken up into "the third heaven" (2 Corinthians 12:2), but subsequently

- continued to minister on earth.
- b. In Ephesians 2:6, "we have been raised with Christ and sit with him in heavenly places," means that we share in all the benefits of Christ's Ascension.
 - c. Our true citizenship is with him in heaven, but we are still very much involved in the warfare on earth. John was taken up to heaven to see the visions recorded in Revelation, but still was able to write down the vision for us to read; and later in his old age, showed up on horse-back rushing around Asia Minor on the Lord's business.
3. The male child company does battle in the heavenlies.
 - a. They worship in the heavenlies. Their prayers are mixed with the incense on the altar of incense before the throne of God. Their intercessions become one with the continual intercessions of our Lord.
 - b. The warfare has to come to victory first in the heavenlies, and then on earth. The victory depends upon the overcomers entering into the heavenly worship.
 - c. This is a group eminently suited to warfare in the heavenlies. It may not be important to determine whether they are still on earth or not.

C. The basis for victory is the finished work of Calvary and the overcomers' commitment to the Lord (12:11).

1. The blood of the Lamb is the objective foundation for overcoming Satan because the blood of Christ cleanses us from all sin, gives us a conscience free from blame, and gives us boldness to come into the Lord's presence. It destroys all of satan's right to accuse us.
2. They overcome by the word of their testimony. It matters deeply what we affirm with our mouths.
 - a. Jesus resisted all the devil's temptations by speaking the word of God, ("It is written ...")
 - b. We too will be victorious by speaking the word of God. The witness of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy.
 - c. We don't have to listen to satan's lies and accusations. We can affirm God's word and promises.
3. They overcome because they "love not their lives even in the face of death." The way of victory is the way of obedience unto death, the way of sacrifice, the way of the cross, being willing to die for the Lord, or, if necessary, living for him, enduring to the end. For such an overcomer, it does not greatly matter whether he lives for Christ or dies as a martyr.

IV. War in Heaven

A. The victorious ascent of the male child sets off a warfare in heaven (12:7).

1. This warfare is actually fought on all levels; but Revelation always shows us heavenly things first and then their earthly counterpart, because the earthly is the result or outworking of the heavenly.
2. Michael and his angels fight against the devil and his angels.
 - a. Michael, the archangel, is the commander-in-chief of the heavenly hosts who confronts satan (Daniel 10:13, 21; Jude 9). He is the protector of God's people (Daniel 12:1).
 - b. Michael and his army oppose all the principalities of all the nations of the earth. These principalities must be defeated before the nations can become the

- kingdom of God and his Christ.
3. The devil and all his angels get kicked out of heaven (12:9).
 - a. This means that they cannot accuse people in the presence of God anymore. They have no more access to the heavenly realm.
 - b. The devil is really going to kick up a storm on earth, because he knows his time is short. This will produce a time of unparalleled trouble for "three and a half years."

V. The Ultimate Persecution of the Church

A. The devil turns his fury on the woman (the church) (12:13).

1. It is the true believers, those who stay faithful to the Lord, who will know the full wrath of satan in the time of tribulation (Daniel 7:21, 25; 8:24, 25; Mark 13:19, 20; Revelation 13:16-18).
2. This is a time of terrible persecution, deception, false prophets, false teachers, false miracles.
3. All people are required by law to worship the devil.

B. The woman is taken to the desert for the duration of the tribulation (12:14).

1. The woman is weak and cannot even run away under her own strength. She is not a part of the fighting.
2. This desert is symbolic rather than literal. The spiritual meaning of desert is:
 - a. A dry place, characterized by: little spiritual support, a famine of the word of God, a worldly ethos in which Christianity is illegal and evil seemingly triumphant.
 - b. A place of God's protection and help where clothes don't wear out, food is supplied, and God protects and hides the woman from her enemies.
 - c. Simple living, living in tents, no modern conveniences, sand to eat.
 - d. Great difficulty, correction, discipline, testing of faith, forced dependence on God.
3. The woman is passive. God himself defends her. The dragon tries to wipe her out with a torrent of water. God passes a miracle: The earth swallows the water.
 - a. The devil may be tempting her by providing water in the desert, offering respite from the dryness.
 - b. God has ordained the dryness for her. She has to learn to trust in him who is the "water of life" (the water out of a rock).
 - c. A desert would soak up water in a hurry, leaving hardly a trace.
4. This desert is the church's preparation for entrance into the kingdom.
 - a. The Israelites were prepared in the desert for entrance into the Promised Land.
 - b. They had to get all the rebellion worked out of them.
 - c. Jesus was perfected through what he suffered.
 - d. We also have to be perfected through suffering.

VI. The Battle on the Earth (12:15-17)

A. The dragon is frustrated because he can't defeat the woman (the church), so he turns to "the rest of her offspring."

1. This is a group of people prepared by God for the carrying on of spiritual warfare in the earthly realm.

2. The vital purposes of God are often carried on by a "remnant", a small group of faithful, obedient warriors who are willing to follow their Command-in-Chief into battle.
3. These are the woman's children in the sense that we are all children of the New Jerusalem (Galatians 4).

B. This group consists of those who follow God's commandments and have the "witness of Jesus."

1. "Follow God's commandments" does not refer to the Old Testament Law. It must refer to the New Testament commandment of love and the law of the Spirit.
 - a. They have been set free from the Old Testament "law of sin and death."
 - b. They are full of the love of Christ.
 - c. They have learned to walk in the Spirit. They are led and empowered by the Spirit.
2. They have the witness of Jesus.
 - a. "The witness of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy" (Revelation 19:10). Everything that Jesus said was given to him by his Father. It was all, by nature, prophecy.
 - b. The spirit of prophecy is deeper than a gift of the Spirit. The spirit of prophecy is a way of life and not just an occasional revelation.
 - c. This remnant group has to have a deep relationship with the Lord, a deep understanding of the things of the Spirit, and a thorough obedience to the leading of the Spirit.

VII. Conclusions

The exact relationship among the woman, the male child, and the "rest of her offspring" is difficult to define. These may be different aspects of the life of the whole church in the tribulation period. Or they may be separate groups with different ministries or functions in the church.

Clearly the warfare has to be carried on at several different levels. But these different levels of warfare are all interrelated and interdependent.

We need to maintain the unity of the church as the body of Christ, but at the same time not all members have the same function. As we are obedient to the Spirit, he will lead each of us into his or her specific ministry.

The warfare is going to get rougher; but we know we are on the winning side.

Fifth Section:

Lining up for the Last Battle

1. The Satanic Trinity

A. The dragon-the devil or Satan

1. The devil is a creature of God
 - a. He was evil from the beginning. He is called "the primeval serpent" (Revelation 12:9), "a sinner from the beginning" (1 John 3:8), "a murderer from the beginning" (John 8:44).
 - b. God created both good and evil (Isaiah 45:7, Amos 3:6).
 - c. Satan is the prince of this world (Matthew 4:9, John 12:31, 14:30, 16:11, Ephesians 2:2, Revelation 2:13).
 - d. He has access to the presence of God (Job 1:6, 2:1, Revelation 12).
2. God created Satan to fulfil his purposes.

- a. Satan "tempts" or tests people (Matthew 4:3; 1 Thessalonians 3:5).
- b. He deceives (Genesis 3:13; John 8:44).
- c. He accuses us before the throne of God (Revelation 12:10).
- d. He forces Christians to depend more on God (1 Corinthians 10:13).
- e. He causes maturity in God's faithful (James 1:24, 12; 2 Thessalonians 1:4, 5; consider Job) and builds spiritual strength (Luke 10:19).

B. The Beast coming out of the Sea (13:1-10)

1. The beast is the manifestation of the antichrist
 - a. He is probably a man or group of men (1 John 2:18, 19). The sea symbolizes humanity. There have been many minor antichrists; but this is the ultimate.
 - b. The beast has seven heads, ten horns, and a crown on each horn. The heads represent all the kingdoms or empires of world history. The horns represent people who have (or who have had) authority in these empires. The crowns represent rulership.
 - c. The beast looks like a leopard with feet like a bear and a mouth like a lion. These, are, in reverse order, characterizations of the first three beasts in the vision of Daniel 3, which also represented world empires.
 - d. The heads have blasphemous names on them. These nations are not afraid to defy God.
 - e. One of the heads has a wound that has healed. This is a parody of Christ.
 - f. This description is obviously of a spiritual vision. It cannot be depicted as it stands. The details must be understood as symbols.
2. The dragon (Satan) gives all his power, throne, and authority to the beast (antichrist).
 - a. This is a parody of the real Trinity, in which the Father gives his authority to the Son.
 - b. The beast fully manifests Satan's power for the duration of the tribulation (3 1/2 years) (study also 2 Thessalonians 2:3-12 and 1 John 4:1-6)
3. For 42 months, the beast shows off a lot to impress people with his authority and power (13:4, 5).
 - a. He dares to mouth off at God, blaspheming God's name, his tabernacle, and all those therein (13:6).
 - b. He makes war on the saints, conquering them (13:7a).
 - c. He is given authority over every race, people, language, and nation (13:7b).
4. He has great influence, both in the world and in the church.
 - a. All worldly people, including pagans of other religions and within the church, are deeply impressed, follow him, bow down and worship him.
 - b. Many, including many Christians, are deceived and led astray.
5. Overcomers resist enormous pressures.
 - a. There is safety in a profound and secure knowledge of the truth, who is Jesus (1 John 4:1-5; 2 Thessalonians 2:10-12).
 - b. The antichrist will not look like a fierce wild beast. He will look deceptively good.
 - c. We will need spiritual discernment. For this, we must be walking in the Spirit.
 - d. We need a strong foundation in Bible, theology, church history, and the purposes of God (2 Thessalonians 2:15).
6. There is ample opportunity these days to practice recognizing false messiahs, false teachers, and false prophets.

- a. People who show off and try to impress others with their spiritual prowess are immediately suspect. A true servant of God decreases, lets himself be hidden, that Jesus may be seen.
 - b. More and more we hear blasphemies and scorning of God. Sometimes these are obvious and easy to recognize. Sometimes they are concealed under nice sounding words - "rights," "security," "sensitivity," and the like (Romans 16:17-19).
7. We need actively to resist the antichrist.
- a. We are involved in spiritual warfare (Ephesians 6:12).
 - b. If we resist the enemy, he will flee (James 4:7).
 - c. We need to walk in the Spirit, manifesting the gifts of the Spirit (1 Corinthians 12:31).
 - d. We can put on the whole armour of God (Ephesians 6:10 ff).
 - e. We can trust God's power in us. We don't need to ask to be strengthened. Human strength won't work. Better we should be dead; let Christ be our life and our strength (Galatians 2:20).
 - f. Worship in the heavenlies gets us above all principalities and powers of the antichrist (Ephesians 1:19-23; 2:6).

C. The Beast out the Earth: the False Prophet of the Beast (13:11-18).

1. He comes out of the earth (13:11).
 - a. Paul uses the word "earthly" in 1 and 2 Corinthians to contrast that which is natural or worldly with the spiritual or heavenly. It indicates the fallen nature of the earth realm.
 - b. Revelation consistently uses the word "earth" with a similar meaning.
 - c. The false prophet comes from the fallen nature and worldly structures.
2. He has two horns "like a lamb" (13:11).
 - a. He wants to appear harmless.
 - b. Two is the number of witness. He wants to be associated in people's minds with the Lamb of God.
 - c. Note that it is only the horns that are like a lamb.
3. He sounds like a dragon. He is really speaking for Satan. He is Satan's powerful witness.
 - a. This is obviously Satan's counterpart to the Holy Spirit. He bears witness to and manifests the power of the first beast.
 - b. He receives his authority and power from the first beast. He is a servant of the first beast (13:12)
 - c. He extends his influence by force, not by invitation as the Holy Spirit does.
4. His work is to enforce worship of the first beast.
 - a. He works great miracles on behalf of the first beast. (13:13)
 - b. He persuades the people of the earth to erect a statue of the first beast. He makes this statue speak. Anyone who will not worship the statue is killed (13:14, 15).
 - c. He requires everyone to receive the mark of the beast on the right hand or the forehead. Without the mark no one is allowed to buy or sell.
5. As the satanic trinity becomes more manifest, people will have to decide between him and God.
 - a. Most people receive the mark of the beast and go along with his program.
 - b. The only alternative is to receive the seal of God. In the last days everyone will have one or the other.

6. Overcomers will need spiritual discernment to resist the beast and his schemes.
 - a. All the innovations will be brought in gradually, one by one, and disguised as being for the good of humanity. The mark will be sold on the basis that, "This is just the way we do business nowadays. It's really more convenient and efficient."
 - b. The temptation to worship the beast will be subtle. It might, for example, be disguised as respect for the government.
 - c. We will have to learn to trust the Lord fully for all daily needs - food, shelter, protection. If we don't want to worship the beast (Satan worship), we have to have daily miracles from God or die.
 - d. We need to be alert to clues about the significance of the number 666.

D. Conclusions

1. Our future is a time of deception - the culmination of all evil. The first beast is the culmination of all false messiahs. The second beast is the culmination of all false prophets. There will be false miracles, false teachers, false apostles, and false doctrines. We have to be able to distinguish the true and the false.
2. We have to know the real thing in order to be able to identify the false. If we really know the real Messiah, we will not easily be fooled. We need a close relationship with him.
3. Only those who are truly standing on the foundation of the Word of God, who truly walk in the Spirit of God, and are totally familiar with true works of the Spirit will be able to see these deceptions for what they are.
4. Being baptized in the Spirit is not just sticking a toe into the water of life. It is total immersion, total submission to control by the Spirit of God.
5. If we know the gifts of the Holy Spirit and the ministry gifts of the Spirit, we will not easily be influenced by false miracles, false prophets, or false teachers.

II. The 144,000 on Mount Zion (14:1-4)

A. The significance of Zion

1. In Jerusalem are two mountain peaks: Moriah and Zion.
2. Moriah was the place of the temple, the center of worship. It was known as "God's Holy Mountain" to which the tribes went up three times a year for the feast days.
3. Zion was the place of David's citadel and the place of the palace of the king. Zion symbolizes kingly authority. In prophecy regarding the last days, it is known as "the mountain of the LORD." Descendants of David will rule forever from (spiritual) Mount Zion.
4. Zion is the proper place for Christians. We need to receive God's rule in our hearts so that we can be prepared to rule the world with him.

B. The Seal or the Mark

1. At this point, everyone has either the seal of God or the mark of the beast.
2. The 144,000 have the Name of the Lamb and the Name of God written on their foreheads. The Name of Jesus conveys his authority.
3. In chapter 7, 144,000 out of Israel received the seal of God to enable them to stand during the coming tribulation.
4. Here, the 144,000 are being prepared to enter into the final warfare and to be secured against the wrath of God which is about to be manifested.

C. God's Army

1. The 144,000 are God's answer to the army of the satanic trinity described in chapter 13. The battle lines are being drawn up for the final conflict.
2. God's army must stand on Mount Zion, the place of God's authority.
3. The 144,000 sing a new song (14:2), apparently a battle song. They enter the battle with a cry of victory.
 - a. Much spiritual warfare is done by prayer and song in the Spirit. Our own words are inadequate. We can do battle in the language of the Spirit.
 - b. We should not try to take on burdens in the Spirit. We must let the Spirit give the burdens. Then we pray or sing until it is finished and the burden lifts.
4. A substantial part of the warfare is simply to resist the mark of the beast.
5. The Lord's army is of a very different kind from other armies.

D. The Character of the 144,000 (14:4)

1. They are "virgins." The spiritual meaning of a virgin is one who has no idols. He puts nothing before the Lord.
2. The 144,000 follow the Lamb wherever he goes. In warfare soldiers have to obey their commander and be totally committed to him. There is no place for individualism.
3. There is no lie in their mouths. They are totally honest and trustworthy. They are in touch with reality. This is in opposition to Satan and his friends who specialize in deception.

III. Announcement of Judgment and the Wrath of God (14:6-12)

A. Angelic proclamations of impending judgment

1. Before God's judgments and the day of retribution there will be ample warning.
 - a. The Lord always tells what he is going to do, then he does it, then he explains it again. He does not act without warning.
 - b. Giving the warning is a responsibility of the church, but angels also take part in it.
 - c. We need to pray for the fulfilment of this task, that the Gospel will get to everyone in the world.
2. An angel is seen flying in the air with the eternal Gospel (14:6).
 - a. The message of this eternal Gospel is the nearness of the coming judgment and the need to obey and respond to God.
 - b. This is good news to those who obey, but bad news to those who reject the Lord.
 - c. This Gospel separates those who accept and those who don't.
 - d. At the time of Jesus' coming, it will be too late.
3. Another angel pronounces judgment on Babylon (14:8).
 - a. Babylon represents all worldliness, worldly wealth, and particularly worldly religion.
 - b. All this will be destroyed at Jesus' coming.
4. Another angel pronounces God's judgment on all who worship the beast and his image or receive his mark (14:9).
 - a. This is a promise of unmixed judgment from the Lord.
 - b. Those who don't receive the mark of the beast experience difficulty, but how desperate is the fate of those who receive the mark.

- c. All have to weigh the risks and choose.
 - d. Christians need to persevere with patient endurance. This is not just trying to hold out. What is demanded is obedience to the Lord, following him into battle (14:12).
 - e. Being a Christian is not just looking religious, or attending church. The Lord demands our obedience. We need to do what He tells us - prophesy, heal the sick, be where he wants us to be, and do what he wants us to do.
5. Happy are they who die in the Lord (or live for him) (14:13). In the period before the Lord's coming there are two possibilities for Christians: continuing to act in obedience to the Lord, or dying as a martyr.
- a. Christians boldly approach the hardships of our time regardless of the consequences.
 - b. We don't seek martyrdom, but are willing to receive it if necessary. We are dead to self and Christ is our life. We only die once. If we are dead, we can't really be killed.

B. Announcement of the Harvest (14:14-20)

1. When the bride of Christ has matured, and evil has reached its ultimate perfection, the harvest will come. Remember Jesus' explanation of the parable about the wheat and the tares (Matthew 13:36-43). The angels are the reapers.
2. An angel appears on a cloud with a sickle (14:14).
 - a. The Lord has given ample warning.
 - b. God the Father himself determines the time of harvest.
- c. Angels are messengers, sent to carry out God's judgments and to put in the sickle.
3. Another angel comes out of the altar of the temple in heaven also with a sickle (14:15-20).
 - a. This is the result of the prayers of the saints under the altar. It is the moment for which they were longing.
 - b. The judgment is violent. Clusters of grapes are cut and put into the winepress of God's wrath. Vast quantities of blood come out. The wrath of God is a corollary of his justice.

Sixth Section: The Wrath of God

I. The Heavenly Situation

A. The Seven Angels and the Overcomers

1. Seven angels are seen in heaven with the seven last plagues (15:1).
 - a. Seven is the number of completion. These plagues represent the fullness of God's judgment.
 - b. They are the last because, with them, the wrath of God is fully manifested.
2. The overcomers stand beside the sea of glass (15:2).
 - a. This is the sea before the throne of God, seen first in 4:6.
 - b. It is made of glass to reflect the image of God in those who stand or walk on it.
 - c. The fire indicates the final purification of the overcomers as they cross it.
3. The overcomers stand on the edge of the sea.
 - a. They have just crossed over it in safety. This is analogous to the children of Israel when they had passed through the Red Sea.
 - b. They have been delivered from the beast, his image, and the number of his name. Their victory is complete.

4. They sing the song of Moses and the Lamb (15:3, 4).
 - a. Their song is compared to the song Moses sang when he and his people came out on the other side of the Red Sea.
 - b. It is the song of the Lamb, because, just as Moses led the people through the Red Sea, so the Lamb has led his people through the tribulation.
 - c. As the Israelites rejoiced in their victory and the Egyptians' destruction, so these overcomers rejoice in their victory and the coming destruction of the beast and his friends.
 - d. They see this as the ultimate manifestation of God's glory, the triumph of his justice, and the means by which the nations will be brought into submission to God.
 - e. The Lord is not only full of love and grace, but also full of righteousness and justice. The justice ultimately manifests itself in judgment on the ungodly.

B. The Opening of the Heavenly Temple (the "tabernacle of Testimony") (15:5)

1. In the tabernacle of Moses, the tabernacle proper was the tent in which were the Holy Place and the Most Holy Place.
 - a. In the Holy Place were the table with the bread of the Presence, the seven-branched candlestick, and the golden altar of incense.
 - b. In the Most Holy Place, was the ark of the Testimony containing the tablets of the law.
 - c. The Most Holy Place was separated from the Holy Place by the curtain (veil). At Christ's crucifixion, the curtain was torn and the separation removed.

Since we have confidence to enter the Most Holy Place by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way opened for us through the curtain, that is, his body, and since we have a great priest over the house of God, let us draw near to God with a sincere heart in full assurance of faith. Hebrews 10:19, 20.
2. In the ultimate temple, here spoken of, the presence of God and the Lamb are the tabernacle.
 - a. The throne is always accessible. Since the heavenly tabernacle is the Father and Jesus, entering the tabernacle is coming into the presence of God.
 - b. The Testimony is no longer the laws carved on tablets of stone, but the law of the Spirit written on human hearts.
 - c. The wrath of God is delivered on the basis of lack of adherence to this law of the Spirit, and lack of regard for the presence of God.
3. The seven angels come out of the heavenly temple (15:6).
 - a. They are dressed in clean, shining linen, appropriate to priestly ministry in the temple. Judgment is a priestly function.
 - b. They wear golden girdles around their chests, symbolic of their participation in the kingly state, and their readiness for action.
4. One of the four living creatures (cherubim) gives the seven angels the bowls of wrath to be poured on the earth (15:7).
 - a. These bowls of wrath come from the throne of God.
 - b. The outpouring of God's wrath is consequent to the appearance of the overcomers on the edge of the sea of glass.
5. The temple is filled with smoke (15:8).
 - a. This outpouring of God's wrath is a manifestation of his glory and power.
 - b. The smoke indicates that God's glory is like a consuming fire. Nothing can stand against him.

- c. No one can come near while God's wrath is in operation.
- d. The manifestation of God's glory and power begins in the sanctuary and fills heaven and earth.
- e. The manifestation of his glory increases as the day of retribution approaches and culminates in the splendour of His Coming.

II. The Seven Bowls of God's Wrath (chapter 16)

A. Seven Plagues

1. These plagues are reminiscent of the plagues in Egypt - water turning to blood, hail, boils, darkness.
 - a. But they are much more universal, severe, and conclusive.
 - b. John may have seen weapons of destruction which did not then exist and had to be described in terms of what he knew.
 - c. The wrath of God which is poured out in these bowls is the same cup which Jesus agreed to take in the garden. That cup is, therefore, a cup of blessing to the believer, but a cup of wrath to the unbeliever.
2. God has given as much opportunity as possible for repentance.
 - a. There have been many minor disciplinary or remedial judgments. Many people have ignored these and refused to repent.
 - b. There have been repeated warnings (of which the Revelation to John is an example).
 - c. Those who have worshipped the beast and received his mark refuse to repent. They prefer to blaspheme God (16:9).
3. The sides have been drawn up.
 - a. It has become increasingly clear that we are looking at warfare between the Lord's army and the devil's army (16:14).
 - b. People have, by this point, made their choice.
4. The angels proclaim the Lord as just and righteous. His judgments, though violent, are praiseworthy (16:5-7).

B. The Battle of Armageddon

1. The sixth plague brings preparation for battle (16:12-14).
 - a. The Euphrates River dries up preparing a way for the kings from the east to come to battle (16:12).
 - b. Three frogs (representing demons) from the mouths of the satanic trinity (16:13, 14) perform miraculous signs to attract all the kings of the earth to gather.
 - c. The Lord will come as a thief (16:15). The time of his coming is known only to those close to him (1 Thessalonians 5:1-5).
2. This is total and final spiritual warfare. All God's forces and all of Satan's are drawn up.
 - a. All nations are organized by the devil to attack God's people.
 - b. They gather at the hill of Megiddo (16:16). There may be a literal battle in this geographical place, or this may be a spiritual battle in a place symbolic of the gathering of the gathering of satan's forces.
3. At the pouring of the seventh bowl (16:17), a voice from the throne announces that judgment is complete.
 - a. This is God's proclamation of total victory.
 - b. There is lightning and thunder signifying the power of God (cf. 4:5).

- c. A severe earthquake seriously rearranges all geography (16:18).
- d. The great city (i.e., the city of man) is split asunder. nations collapse, Babylon receives the cup of God's wrath. Islands and mountains are removed (16:19, 20).

Seventh Section: The Fall of Babylon

I. The Nature of Babylon (chapter 17)

A. The Origins of Babylon

1. Nimrod raised himself up before the LORD (Genesis 10:8-10)
 - a. He founded Babylon.
 - b. He became the pioneer of heathen religion.
 - c. He became the pioneer of heathen government.
2. The people decided to build the tower (Genesis 11:1-9).
 - a. The tower was created with "the heavens on the top." It was probably a minaret with the signs of the Zodiac on top.
 - b. Stars were intended as God's signs. Astrology uses them in accordance with the tree of knowledge, and does, actually, get its unwisdom from Satan.
 - c. The basis of much heathen religion involves worship of sun, moon, and stars.
 - d. The tower was an effort to unite on the world on the basis of heathen religion.
3. Babylon became a great empire.
 - a. It was the mother of heathen religion.
 - b. It became a great commercial political empire.
 - c. Babylon has become the symbol of all heathen religious systems and empires.

B. Religious Babylon

1. Babylon is seen as a great prostitute (17:1).
 - a. "Woman" in the bad sense in Scripture represents worshipers of idols and followers of heathen gods.
 - b. She blasphemes God.
 - c. She persecutes worshipers of the true God (17:6).
 - d. She sits in the desert (17:3); but sits on many waters (17:1). The desert is a dry place, indicating her spiritual dryness. The many waters represent the whole of humanity (17:15). Babylon influences and controls the whole earth.
2. Babylon is primarily a satanic religious system.
 - a. People worship the creature rather than the Creator.
 - b. Ultimately, it is Satan that wants to be worshiped. He disguises this by fixing peoples' attention on themselves and their natural desires.
 - c. He gets people to worship idols - humanity, human ability, material things.
 - d. He leads people into pantheism, the occult, and eventually, satanism.

C. Economic Babylon

1. She appears with great worldly riches.
 - a. She wears purple clothing, adorned with gold and jewels (17:4).
 - b. She imitates the real riches of God.
2. In this world money is king.
 - a. We can satisfy our natural desires with money.
 - b. Money gives us power over other people.
 - c. Babylon becomes a whole system of finance and commerce which attempts to control the world with its wealth and organization.

D. Political Babylon

1. The prostitute Babylon is seen riding on a beast (17:3).
 - a. The beast is the second person of the satanic trinity, the ruler of the end-time world empire.
 - b. He has seven heads representing empires. His is the eighth. He has combined and replaced all previous world empires (17:9-11).
 - c. The prostitute rides on the beast. She is the real ruler of the beast's kingdom.
 - d. She is the "great city" (17:15), that is, the city of man, the humanly devised political system. She rules the kings of the earth. This means that the rulers of the nations are controlled by this Babylonian system (not the other way around).
 - e. The devil's way of controlling the world is by emphasizing worldly materialistic goals. Pantheism and earth-goddess doctrines help his cause.
2. The kings of the earth share his power for a time.
 - a. They may not directly or consciously worship Satan, but they use his power to seek their materialistic goals.
 - b. They join him in fighting against the Lamb and his people. They temporarily defeat the latter (Daniel 7:25); but the overcomers are ultimately vindicated and will rule with Christ (17:14; Daniel 7:26, 27).
 - c. Eventually, the kings will rebel against the prostitute (17:16). Does this mean that the political aspect will overcome the religious aspect of Babylon?
3. Every time but the last, God has frustrated Babylon-type kingdoms before they reached maximum development.
 - a. All world empires fall apart.
 - b. Only the world empire of the beast will be truly world-wide. When it gets perfected, God will clobber it.
 - c. Even churches which try to become large kingdoms, tend to disintegrate.
4. The spirit of Babylon is at work in the world.
 - a. Nations are trying to unite by worldly means.
 - b. We can expect this to succeed, at least for the duration of the tribulation.
 - c. Nations and their leaders look to witchcraft and dark powers to gain their objectives. They will follow the antichrist when he is manifested.

II. The Destruction of Babylon (chapter 18)

A. God's Action

1. The Lord lets this empire achieve its highest possible development. Then he steps in and destroys it. The day of retribution has come.
 - a. Babylon becomes a haunt of every evil spirit (18:2). The very evil spirits she had sought to use have now overrun her.
 - b. An angel comes down from heaven (18:1).
 - c. The destruction is fast and complete (18:8, 10).
2. Political Babylon is destroyed.
 - a. All nations and their governments have committed adultery with her (18:3).
 - b. The governments look in horror and weep over her destruction and theirs (18:9, 10).
3. Economic Babylon will be wiped out.
 - a. The merchants of the earth have been getting rich from her (18:3b, 15, 22).
 - b. All commerce will cease (18:11).

- c. All merchants will look in horror and weep (18:11-15).
- d. Sailors and ship owners will lament their loss of cargo (18:17 ff).
- 4. God's people will be vindicated.
 - a. Babylon will be judged for her mistreatment of saints, apostles, and prophets (18:20, 6).
 - b. Babylon will be paid back double for what she has done (18:6).

B. Babylon and the People of God

1. God's people have adopted the Babylonian ways.
 - a. Churches are organized and operated according to the political and economic principles of Babylon.
 - b. The Babylonian spirit pervades much of what is done in churches, as Martin Luther noticed long ago.
 - c. The Babylonian syndrome affects all churches alike.
2. God's people need to re-examine their church activities and weed out the Babylonian patterns. These will not work anymore. God's people must "Come out of Babylon" (18:4).
 - a. Everyone who participates in the Babylonian way will be frustrated.
 - b. Every church built on Babylonian principles will fail.
 - c. Every person who has Babylonian attitudes will be judged.
3. We do not come out of Babylon by disassociating ourselves from a particular church or denomination, because:
 - a. Babylon is an attitude or way of thinking.
 - b. Sometimes people come out of Babylon without getting the Babylon out of their hearts.
 - c. Overcomers are not people who run away.
4. If overcomers enter the heavenly realm, Babylon will be defeated.
 - a. Spiritual people will be persecuted by the Babylonian system in churches (18:24, John 16:33).
 - b. But let us not be persecuted because we have a superior critical spirit; this too is Babylon.
 - c. The antidote for Babylon is the witness of Jesus, the spirit of prophecy, whereby we say only what he gives us to say and do what he tells us.

C. Rejoicing over the Fall of Babylon (19:1-4)

1. A great multitude in heaven praises God for Babylon's demise.
 - a. True and just are his judgments.
 - b. He has condemned the great prostitute who corrupted the earth by her adulteries.
 - c. He has avenged on her the blood of his servants.
2. It is all right for us to gloat over the fate of Babylon. We should praise the Lord for it.

Eighth Section: The Day of the Lord

I. The Proclamation of the Kingdom and the Bride (chapter 19)

A. Heavenly Worship

1. A great multitude of the heavenly host proclaims the total defeat of the kingdoms of this world and Babylon, the famous prostitute (19:1-3).
 - a. The twenty-four elders and the four living creatures take their part (19:4, 5).

- b. This victory shout prepares for the proclamation which is to follow.
 - c. They applaud the completion of God's judgments.
 - d. They ask all God's servants to join in the song (19:5).
2. The great multitude of God's servants proclaims the establishment of God's reign and the wedding feast (19:6, 7).
 - a. They sound like many waters (a great crowd of people) and like thunder (God's might) (19:6).
 - b. They proclaim God's reign.
 - c. The establishment of the kingdom involves the destruction of all enemies, and the final preparation of the Bride.

B. Preparations for the Wedding

1. The bride has made herself ready through repentance and faith and acceptance of God's gift of righteousness (19:7).
 - a. She wears fine linen, which is a gift from God and represents the righteous acts of the saints (19:8).
 - b. At this point, she is prepared as a bride but is not yet married. In Ephesians 5:26, 27, she is seen as already made pure, but Christ continues to wash her by the word so that he can present her to himself in splendour.
 - c. Salvation is on the basis of works (Matthew 16:27; John 5:29). Acceptable works are those that are received from God. Righteous acts are a garment, given by God, to be put on (19:9, Ephesians 4:23; cf Hebrews 9:14).
2. An angel proclaims, "Blessed are those invited to the wedding supper of the Lamb" (19:9).
 - a. By local custom, the bride does not attend the wedding feast.
 - b. There are various groups involved in the wedding: the Groom, the bride, the invited guests, attending servants, friends of the Groom. (cf. Matthew 22:1-14). All of these, except the bride, attend the feast.
 - c. These may be different divisions of the people of God, or they may be different metaphors for all the people of God, or different aspects of their life.

C. The Testimony of Jesus.

1. The angel who had shown John the vision of the fall of Babylon (17:1-19:9) underscores the importance of the vision by saying, "These are truly words of God."
2. John, impressed with the enormity of the proclamation wants to worship the angel.
 - a. This gives the angel occasion to adjust John's priorities (19:10).
 - b. Only God should be worshiped.
 - c. Angels are ministering spirits (Hebrews 1:13, 14). Their primary desire is to bear witness to Jesus.
 - d. The angel identified John as a servant of God like himself who holds the testimony of Jesus.
3. Worship in the heavenly realm enables the operation of the spirit of prophecy (19:10b).
 - a. The angel explains that the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy.
 - b. Jesus was testifying to this when he admitted that he only said what the Father told him to say (John 12:48-50, 14:10).
 - c. A gift of prophecy is an occasional revelation. The spirit of prophecy is a permanent way of life (recommended) (1 Corinthians 13:8, 9).

- d. The gift of prophecy is related to worship of God. Revelation comes in the presence of God to those who stand before his throne (Jeremiah 23:18, 22).

II. The Parousia (Appearing) of Christ (19:11-20:3)

A. The Rider on the White Horse

1. Heaven is standing open (19:11). Early in the book, John saw a *door* open (4:1). This is the time for the full revelation of the heavenly realm.
2. The overwhelming center of attention is the Lord riding on a white horse.
3. He is spoken of as "faithful and true" (19:11b). He is coming to judge and to make war (19:15).
 - a. The emphasis is on God's justice and righteousness, and their corollary, his judgments (cf., Joel 2:1, 2; 3:14-16).
 - b. His faithfulness is also seen in the fulfilment of all his promises (Matthew 5:18).
4. His eyes are like blazing fire (19:12; see also 1:14) to burn up his enemies.
5. Satan had seven horns; Jesus has many horns.
6. He has a name which only he knows.
 - a. In these verses, he is given several names - Faithful, True, Word of God, King of kings and Lord of lords.
 - b. All these names define aspects of his nature and the purpose of his coming.
 - c. None of them, however, define him fully, nor can he be fully defined.
7. His robe is dipped in blood.
 - a. This appears not to be his enemies blood, since the war has not started yet. It is more likely that the stains are his own blood, the blood of his sacrifice.
 - b. The blood indicates the seal of his covenant with his people. Without shedding of blood, there is no forgiveness (Hebrews 9:22).

B. The Confrontation

1. The armies of heaven, also mounted on white horses, accompany the Lord (19:14).
 - a. These doubtless include a host of angels (cf., 12:7).
 - b. They also include great numbers of the overcomers seen in 14:1-5 standing on Mount Zion and those mentioned in 17:14, and the great multitude singing in heaven in 19:6-8.
 - c. They seem not to take active part in the warfare.
 - d. He apparently defeats the enemies himself, using the sharp sword that comes out of his mouth. The sword is identified with the word of God which he speaks (Ephesians 6:17, 18; Hebrews 4:12).
2. The beast (antichrist) gathers the kings of the earth together to make war against the Lord and his army (19:19).
 - a. This is a last-ditch on the part of the beast and his friends to gang up on followers of the Lamb.
 - b. Defeat is total
 - c. The beast and his prophet get captured and thrown alive of fire (19:20). This is God's final judgment on them.
 - d. The "rest of them" (i.e., the kings of the earth and their armies are killed by the sword (word) coming out of his mouth.)
3. The slain are eaten by birds of prey (19:17, 18).
 - a. This is referred to as "great supper of God." It is the counterpart of the marriage supper.

- b Before the battle begins, an angel calls the birds together to be ready for this supper.
- c. They eat kings, and mighty men. They also eat the flesh of "all people". This must refer to all the beast's folks (i.e., those who have received his mark). This event is also described in Ezekiel 39:17-20).

C. The Thousand-Year Reign (20:1-6)

1. Theories about the significance of these verses abound.
 - a. There is room for question about the sequence of events. The chapter begins, "And I saw an angel. . ." This means that this not necessarily follow 19 chronologically.
 - b. Some think the thousand years began with the death and resurrection of Christ. Some think it happens as it appears in the text: immediately after the beast and his friends hit the fire.
 - c. This is the only mention of the thousand year period in the Bible. It may be that most of the Old Testament kingdom prophecies can be applied to this period, since most of them envisage a rule of God on the earth. The Old Testament envisaged a permanent reign of Christ on earth. This refers to a limited period of time.
2. An angel seizes and binds the dragon (Satan) and throws him into the abyss (20:1-3).
 - a. After the beast and false prophet have been taken care of, the real instigator of all the trouble is dealt with.
 - b. It only takes one ordinary angel to handle this.
 - c. Satan is put out of commission for the thousand years. He can no longer accuse, harass, or lead astray. He cannot deceive or incite the nations (20:3).
 - d. The abyss is deeper than the lake of fire into which the beast and false prophet were put.
 - e. He is bound, locked, and sealed. The angel is not taking any chances of his getting loose (20:3).
3. The Lord rules on earth for a definite, though long period of time.
 - a. Thrones are set up for those who have authority to judge (20:4). This clearly includes the original Apostles (Matthew 19:28) and the saints (Daniel 7:9-10). This indicates a state of society in which Christian opinions dominate and positions of authority are given to believers.
 - b. Souls of overcomers rise up to rule with Christ. Overcomers are martyrs (our friends from Chapter 6:9 ff) and those who endure to the end. They must have been victorious over the beast, his statue, and have refused the mark of the beast (20:4).
 - c. They rule with a "rod of iron" (psalm 2:9, Daniel 7:27, Revelation 2:26, 27). Obviously, the nations still exist. They obey God under duress, but with no interference or influence from Satan.
 - d. This is the counterpart of the tribulation which is a brief period of the rule of the anti-christ.
4. Profound changes will occur, not only in people and their relation to God, but also in nature.
 - a. Man's place of rulership or control in the world was lost at the Fall. All nature was affected, being submitted to corruption (Romans 8:20).
 - b. Men fight, can't get along, misunderstand each other; all want to be #1.

- c. All this will be reversed when God is reigning, because men will be in obedience again.
 - d. The Lord's order will be re-established.
 - e. There will be provision in abundance because men will be ruling the natural forces God's way.
5. The raising of the martyrs and overcomers is referred to as "the first resurrection" (20:5). They become "priests of God and of Christ and will reign with him for a thousand years" (20:5c).

D. The Battle with Gog of Magog (19:7-10)

1. After the thousand years, Satan is released from the abyss and starts trouble again (20:7, 8). He leads a final rebellion of the nations. Apparently among the nations, some still have seeds of revolt in their hearts, even after a thousand years of Christ's reign.
2. Satan and his followers encamp against "Jerusalem, the city God loves" (20:9). This means they are attacking God's center of government on the earth and his people who have been ruling with him for the thousand years.
3. These enemies are being used by God to complete the preparation of God's people for final kingdom living in the new earth.
4. Fire comes down from heaven and devours the enemies (20:9b). The Lord himself does the fighting, not the saints. This fire may be caused by nuclear weapons or more sophistic weapons now being created, or it may be strictly a manifestation of God's miraculous power.
5. The devil is thrown into the lake of fire, where he joins his buddies, the beast and the false prophet (20:10). This is a permanent judgment.

E. The Final Judgment (20:11-15)

1. The white throne or judgment seat of God appears.
 - a. The earth is shaken until it becomes a shambles (20:11).
 - b. The dead, great and small, appear before the throne. The books are opened. Everything everyone has done is known and recorded in heaven (20:12). There are no secrets.
 - c. The judgment is on the basis of works (John 5:28, 29). Dead works are contrasted with the works of faith. The one is done on the basis of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, the other on the basis of faith in Christ and guidance of the Spirit (Hebrews 9:14).
2. The lake of fire is the second death (20:14).
 - a. Death and Hades are thrown into the lake of fire. "The last enemy to be destroyed is death" (1 Corinthians 15:26).
 - b. Overcomers are exempt from the second death (2:11, 20:6). They have already been raised and are reigning with Christ.
 - c. We don't yet know what will be written in the book about us. Names can get erased; but so can the misdeeds of those who repent. Let us not be on vacation from the Lord the day he comes. He who endures to the end shall be saved.

III. The New Heaven and Earth

A. Does this mean that the present earth and heavens will literally be eliminated and replaced with new (21:1, 5)?

1. The Revelation to John consistently uses the word *earth* to describe the condition of the world since the Fall. The collapse of the Babylonian system is the end of this world order. All the social/political structures, economic structures, and world religions have been destroyed. Nothing of this fallen world order remains.
2. In 2 Peter 3, this event is described as a tremendously destructive fire in which "the heavens will disappear with a roar, the elements will be destroyed by fire, and the earth and everything in it will be laid bare" (2 Peter 3:10). The purpose of this is described as a "day of judgment and destruction of ungodly men" (2 Peter 3:7).
3. Peter compared the day of the Lord with the time of the flood in Noah's day as did Jesus himself (Matt 24:36-41). The world of that day was destroyed by water and a new one emerged. Similarly, "the present heavens and earth are reserved for fire, being kept for the day of *judgment and destruction of ungodly men.*" It is the ungodly that are to be destroyed. The promise is of a new heaven and a new earth, *the home of righteousness.*
4. Application of this analogy leads to these conclusions:
 - a. The new heaven and earth are really the old one renewed. The old order is destroyed; a new beginning is made.
 - b. A righteous remnant is saved, through the flood and through the fire, to participate in the new order.
 - c. This remnant is supernaturally protected during the period of the destruction.
 - d. A radically new start is made.

B. The Fulfilment of God's Purposes

1. The main purpose of Christ's redemption is the restoration of the fallen world. Romans 8:20, 21 states that, as a result of sin, God let everything get messed up; but his purpose is to restore it. The work of the Spirit is a foretaste of this restoration (Ephesians 1:14).
2. God's purpose throughout history has been the establishment of his kingdom on earth. Concerning this Day of the Lord, Daniel was given the following teaching: *Then the sovereignty, power and greatness of the kingdoms under the whole heaven will be handed over to the saints, the people of the Most High. His kingdom will be an everlasting kingdom, and all rulers will worship and obey him. Daniel 7:27*
Surely God is not going to give up on this project just when he has finally won the last battle. The world order, as we know it, will be destroyed, but God's Kingdom will be established for ever.
3. Undoubtedly, the earth will be radically changed after the fire. But then, Noah probably didn't see anything he recognized after the flood, either.
4. The new earth will be suited to the use of redeemed spiritual people living in God's presence and in obedience to him. We cannot accurately imagine what the new earth will be like, since we have only experienced the world in its fallen state.
5. The new earth is the fulfilment of the petition in the Lord's Prayer, "Your kingdom come on earth as in heaven." The Lord does not junk his whole project and start over; but rather, he brings it to a glorious fulfilment.

IV. The New Jerusalem

A. The New Jerusalem is defined as the bride of Christ coming down from God (21:2, 9, 10).

1. The bride has now been perfected, following the process described in Ephesians 5:26, 27. She has been lifted into the heavenly realm, decked out with all the beauty and graces of the Lord and is ready for him to present her to himself.
2. She descends to the earth that has just been worked over and refurbished with fire.
3. The dwelling or fellowship of God is with his people (21:3).
 - a. This closeness of fellowship was God's purpose from the beginning. Jesus is Immanuel, God with us. The fulfilment of this happens in the New Jerusalem.
 - b. This promise is for the overcomers (21:7), those who are fully submitted to him and have become his sons in the fullest sense of the word.
 - c. The cowardly, unbelieving, and other sinners are excluded. Their place is in the second death which is the lake of fire (21:8). Fearfulness or lack of faith is a serious sin to God. He couples it with murder, adultery and the like.

B. There is a very clear and dramatic contrast between the description of the city of Babylon in Revelation 17 and the New Jerusalem in Revelation 21.

The Great City (17:3-18)	The Holy City (21:2-4, 9 ft)
Babylon, the city of mankind	Jerusalem, the city of God
The prostitute	The Bride
Seen in the wilderness	Seen from a high mountain
Rides on the beast, controls him	Submits to the Lamb, obeys him
Leads the world astray until destroyed	Makes God present, establishes his Kingdom for ever
Kingdom of this world	Kingdom of God
Earth destroyed	Earth renewed

C. The Bible begins and ends in Paradise. The Lord is the Alpha and the Omega. Chapters 21 and 22 of Revelation describe the ending for which Genesis 1-3 describe the beginning. God's purpose is shown in Creation; his purpose is fulfilled in the new heaven and earth. The first Adam and his wife Eve live in a beautiful garden over which he is given he is instructed to take authority under God's direction and in perfect fellowship with God. Jesus, the second Adam, dwells in the midst of the New Jerusalem which is his Bride.

Genesis 1-3	Revelation 21, 22
In the beginning God created	He is the Alpha and the Omega
Mankind was intended to govern in submission to God.	The Lamb has established his Kingdom in submission to the Father.
The woman is taken out of the man. She has her origin in him.	The Bride (Church) is "taken out" of Christ. She has her origin in him.
Adam and Eve lived in a beautiful garden provided for them by God.	The new heaven and earth are the new Paradise (garden) of God.
The man and the woman live by the grace of God and by his Spirit.	God is dwelling among men. The Bride has been perfected "without spot or wrinkle."
Paradise was lost through sin.	Paradise has been regained through redemption.

D. Description of the New Jerusalem (21:9-22:6)

1. The city shines with the glory of God (21:11); it is like a precious jewel, clear as crystal. It is a city of gold and its streets are of pure gold with the purity and transparency of glass (21:18, 21). These images indicate great value, great virtue, and great purity. Nothing impure can enter the city, only those whose names are written in the Lamb's book of life (21:27).
2. Almost all the measurements are twelves or multiples thereof. Twelve is the number of foundations. It also represents new beginnings in union with God.
3. The dimensions of the city are 12,000 x 12,000 x 12,000 stadia (21:16), where 12 is the number of strong foundation and 1000 indicates a very large number.
 - a. The area of the city (if these dimensions were interpreted as literal measurements) would be roughly half the area of continental United States. The height would extend beyond the stratosphere.
 - b. Since these dimensions describe a cube it is reminiscent of the holy of holies in the tabernacle. It is the Holy City.
4. The foundations of the city are twelve in number, each of a different precious stone. The names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb are written on the foundations. The Church is built on the foundation of apostles and prophets. The wall of the city is 144 (12 x 12) cubits. It is not specified whether this is height or thickness.
5. There are also twelve gates of the city, three on each side. Each of the gates is a pearl. The names of the twelve tribes of Israel are written on the gates. This must mean the true Israel, the new Israel, i.e., believers in Jesus Christ.
 - a. Christians are gates that open to let people into the kingdom. Twelve is the number of beginnings or foundations. Gates are pearls (21:19, 20). The Lord gave all he had to purchase each pearl (Matthew 13:46).
 - b. The walls are of jasper (21:18, 21), symbolizing the beauty, majesty, and perfection of God. The streets are of gold indicating that its people will walk purely in God's ways.
6. There is no temple in the city because "the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are the temple (21:22).
 - a. The whole city becomes God's dwelling place.
 - b. The glory of God is the light of the city (21:23). Just before the Lord's coming, everything had become dark. Then the glorious radiance of the Lord burst forth. There is no longer day and night.
 - c. The nations walk by the light of it (21:24).
7. The kings of the earth bring their splendour to the city (21:24). The glory and honor of the nations shall be brought to it (21:26). This is an indication that there still are nations and peoples who are outside of the Holy City but are tributary to it.

E. The River of Life and the Tree of Life.

1. A river of life, clear as crystal, flows out from the throne of God and the Lamb down the main street of the city (22:1, 2). This is very similar to the vision recorded in Ezekiel 47. The river of life represents the Holy Spirit. The letter kills, but the Spirit gives life. Animals and people can live on the banks of it.
2. The tree of life grows on either side of the river.
 - a. In the Garden of Eden, there were two trees of note: the tree of life and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. Adam and Eve made a bad choice which cut them off from the river of life. In the New Jerusalem, the fruit of the tree of knowledge has been destroyed and abolished. The tree of life is available again.

- b. The tree provides twelve crops of fruit, one for each month.
- c. The leaves will be for the healing of the nations. The curse (result of the Fall) is eliminated (22:3). In this way the nations share in the blessing.
- d. Overcomers, having returned completely to God and become one with Christ, are prepared to eat of this tree.

F. Overcomers inherit the new heaven and earth with all its blessings.

1. God dwells with mankind. They are his people (21:3), who live continually in his presence.
2. He wipes away all tears (21:4). There is no more death, mourning, crying, or pain (21:4).
3. The thirsty can drink of the water of life (21:6). This is a promise of the restoration of the grace of God and the Spirit of God. This is the fullness of redemption, the reversal of the dire results of the Fall.
4. Rulership is centered in the city. The Lord's servants rule with him (22:9).
5. Our worship now is our practice for participation in the worship of the New Jerusalem. This is the proper goal of our lives.

Epilogue

These things we have been studying are our future. They ought not to be used as material for debate. As we approach the time of his coming, we need his teachings applied to our lives (22:6).

We look forward to his coming to rule, not to our flying away to play harps in heaven. This is the time to obey and keep the words of the prophecy (22:7).

We need to know the timing. 2 Thessalonians 2 warns that many will try to unsettle and alarm us with unbiblical teachings about the time of the Lord's coming. Before he comes *the rebellion* will occur and the man of lawlessness (antichrist) will be revealed. Many Christians will fall away and go astray. The antichrist will come out from the ranks of the Christians, deliberately turning from the faith (1 John 2:18-20). The antichrist will raise himself above all things, attempting to stand in the place of God and to be worshiped. He will try to place himself in the temple of God (i.e., in the hearts of God's people) (22:4).

It will be a time of great deception. We need to be able to distinguish the false and the true. The gift of discerning spirits is given to us by the Holy Spirit. Real apostles, prophets, and teachers in our churches can protect us against deception by false ones. Only if we know the real thing, will we be able to recognize the false. We must know and love the Truth.

The Lord determines the time. The anti-christ cannot do his thing until God permits it. The Lord's words restrains him until the time. People cannot blow up the world with nuclear bombs until the Lord permits it.

Antichrist has been working secretly and subtly all along, but at the last moment of history, at the time when God allows, he will stand revealed. All the world will recognize him as the prince of this world. His kingdom will be established on the earth. The devil can only do what the Lord allows and for the period God determines. Everything he does actually fulfils God's purpose. The devil means it for bad; the Lord means it for good (22:6).

Shortly after the revealing of the antichrist, Jesus will appear and destroy him. (22:8). Since the time is short, the words of the prophecy must not be kept secret. The world

needs to be warned to prepare for his coming (22:10).

The Lord is coming soon to people, whether their works are according to the tree of knowledge or to the guidance of the Holy Spirit. Those who have followed the Lamb, and are walking according to the Spirit will their names written in the Book of Life. Those who have followed their own ideas of right and wrong will end up in the lake of fire (22:12).

Those who have their robes washed (those who live in the Lord's holiness) will partake of the fruit of the tree of life (12:14).

The Spirit longs for the day of the Lord's coming. He puts a desire in our hearts for the fulfilment of God's purposes. The bride of Christ longs for his coming (22:17).

We are prepared by receiving the water of life (the flow of the river of the Holy Spirit) that comes out from under the throne of God. When we get out so deep into that river that we can't up any more, we begin to tlow with the river and become a part of that life giving stream (Ezekiel 47).

The words of this prophecy may not be added to or subtracted from. We need to be careful how we deal with prophecy. If we don't proclaim these truths, we are also in danger (22:18-19).

Amen. Come, Lord Jesus.

Appendix A

Outline of the Book

Revelation of Jesus Christ

Who he is; how he operates

A revelation of the purposes of God

Our present and our future

The heavenly worship

God revealed in his glory and Jesus at his right hand

The center of our life and ministry

The source of God's action in the world

Letters to churches

God's view of the church throughout its history

The good and the bad

The overcomers

The seals

The beginning of sorrows

Remedial judgment

The trumpets

Fulfilment of the feast of trumpets

Tribulation

More severe remedial judgment

God's people called for battle

Lining up for the last battle

The woman and the man child
 The satanic trinity

The bowls of wrath
 God's ultimate judgments
 The final battle

The fall of Babylon

The "Day" of the Lord
 His coming
 Confrontation
 The "great supper of God"
 The thousand-year reign
 Armageddon
 Final judgment

**Appendix B
 Time Relationships**

	Beginning of Sorrows					Tribulation							Day of the Lord		
	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	1	2	
Seals															
Trumpets															
Bowls of Wrath/Judgment															
The Fall of Babylon															
The Day of the Lord															