

# The REVELATION of Jesus Christ to His Apostle John

Joe McKinney

## REVELATION An Unorthodox Interpretation

Randolph Dunn

**“The kingdom of the world has become the  
kingdom of our Lord and of his Messiah and he will  
reign for ever and ever.”**

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The content of this book is a vision that the apostle John was given from the Lord on the isle of Patmos about 2000 years ago. Through the years the book of Revelation has been the subject of innumerable debates and the source of all kinds of wild speculations. Many people are afraid to read the book. Others devour it and are devoured by curiosity. If you read 1000 commentaries on Revelation, you will read a thousand interpretations. If you are not discouraged by this, remember that the book was written not to hide truth but to reveal it and to be read, understood and obeyed by those people to whom it was written 2000 years ago. The title of the book as well as the first word in the book (Greek "*apokalupsis*") means "revelation." It is good to know that this book has a great practical use for Christians of all ages. It will be worth the effort to read and try to understand its message.

## **An Unorthodox Interpretation**

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Interpreting God's Revelation to John is limited to the knowledge and intellectual ability of the interpreter. Opinions expressed may or may not be correct including commentaries of Bible scholars. Therefore, we encourage you to thoroughly study the Holy Scripture before you accept this interpretation, or those of other commentaries, before reaching your own conclusion.

Revelation, like the epistles, is addressed to a specific audience, "the seven churches in Asia" (1:4). This was the immediate audience who was aware of their circumstances presented in the message. However, much can be gleaned by all Christians today (the distant audience) by studying the epistles and Revelation.

The first few chapters of this short lesson relate to the "immediate audience", while the later chapters relate to the "distant audiences."



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# **The REVELATION of Jesus Christ to His Apostle John**

## Table of Contents

Keys to Understand Revelation (*Pg. 3*)

Outline of Revelation (*Pg.11*)

<b>Chapters of Revelation</b>	<b>Page</b>
<b>1.</b> Jesus in the midst of the churches	14
<b>2 &amp; 3.</b> Letters to the seven churches in Asia	16
<b>4.</b> God's throne in heaven	20
<b>5.</b> The Lamb takes the scroll	22
<b>6.</b> Jesus opens the seals	24
<b>7.</b> 144,000 servants of God sealed	26
<b>8 &amp; 9.</b> The seven Trumpets Blow	28
<b>10 &amp; 11.</b> The little book and Two Witnesses	30
<b>12.</b> The dragon expelled from heaven	32
<b>13.</b> The beast comes up out of the sea	35
<b>14.</b> Four voices announce the result	37
<b>15 &amp; 16.</b> Bowls of wrath	38
<b>17.</b> Babylon and the Beast are identified	39
<b>18.</b> Babylon is fallen!	39
<b>19.</b> The wedding banquet and defeat of the enemies	41
<b>20.</b> The millennium and the judgment	43
<b>21.</b> New Jerusalem descends from heaven	48
<b>22.</b> A warning and an invitation	50
A Summary by Jim McGuiggan	52

## **REVELATION An Unorthodox Interpretation**

1. Background to Revelation	53
2. To the Christians Living in Asia Minor	64
3. Door to Heaven Opened	65
4. End of Roman Empire	67
5. Righteous Souls in Heaven Rejoice	69
6. Beyond the Immediate Audience	70

# The REVELATION of Jesus Christ to His Apostle John

By Joe McKenney

## Important Keys to Understand Revelation

**1. Understand that this vision was given, written and distributed to certain Christians residing in a certain place at a certain time in history.** Whatever interpretation we adopt ought to consider this fact: The tribulation of which the book refers was already happening (1:9), at least in part. Those churches in Asia (the original readers) would be blessed by reading this book (1:3). How could, for example, prophecies about the USSR, the catholic popes or any event in our present century, as some people speculate, help those brethren in the first century? To the contrary, this vision was for them and could be applied by them to their lives. Revelation was written to be understood by the Christians to whom it was addressed. Therefore, to understand Revelation, we need to have some understanding of the background of the times and living conditions of the Christians to whom Revelation was directed.

**2. Understand that the book of Revelation deals with prophetic events and these events would happen "soon." This is clearly affirmed several times in the book itself.** Almost 2,000 years ago (first century A.D.), it is said that these things prophesied would happen soon (1:1; 22:6). The time was already at hand when John wrote the book about 2000 years ago (1:3; 22:10). See the question of "do not seal the book" (Daniel 8:26; 12:4, 9 and Revelation 22:10). To seal the prophecy of Daniel meant that the prophesied events revealed to him were not to be made known to the people because they referred to the distant future. That "distant future" was about 400 years. Jesus himself preached at the beginning of his ministry "Repent for the kingdom of heaven is at hand" (Matthew 4:17). Soon afterward he said, "Assuredly, I say to you that there are some standing here who will not taste death till they see the kingdom of God present with power." (Mark 9:1). This illustrates what Jesus meant when he said something was "at hand."

The usefulness of Revelation for us today is not in the events revealed (those events would occur near the times in which they were written) but in the principles of encouragement and eternal victory for Christians in difficulties. These principles and words of encouragement for faithful Christians always apply to us but the prophesied events in Revelation are not to be literally applied to our day. It is understood that the events of the prophecies of Revelation have already happened.

One might consider that God's timetable is not man's timetable or that "one day with the Lord is like a thousand years for us." That is true (2 Peter 3:8), but when God specifies a time period to men in men's language, we would expect Him to use words that men would understand. This is especially true when the message is written to certain people at a certain time in history, distributed to them and they are told to observe the things written. Considering all this, if Jesus told them these things would happen soon because the time was at hand, we would consider a 2000-year delay as a failure.

**3. Understand the symbolic language.** This book is the record of a vision that the apostle John had on the island of Patmos near to the end of the first century A.D. The vision was in the form of symbols and figures. He saw dragons, beasts, Jesus with a sword coming out of his mouth and eyes of flaming fire, a third part of the sun being extinguished and life still continuing on earth. They cannot be understood literally but they do represent people, places, things, events, principles and truths. To understand figurative language, we have to interpret the meaning of the symbols. Sometimes the interpretation is given in the book itself. In these cases, it is definitive. Sometimes the symbols are similar to others found in the Bible and the meaning is easy to understand. In these cases, we can have a certain confidence in the interpretation. Sometimes we must interpret the symbols based on our understanding of the Bible message in general, the history of the time when it was written and even just plain old good sense. In these cases, each one has the right to his opinion. This does not mean that we can't understand symbolic language; only that we ought not to be so dogmatic when it is a matter of our own human reasoning.

a. Some examples of the interpretation is found in the book itself:

1. One similar to the son of man (1:13, 17-18).
2. The seven lamp stands (1:13, 20).
3. The seven stars (1:13, 20)
4. The two witnesses (11:3, 4)
5. The dragon (12:9)
6. The 144,000 (14:4)
7. The sea beast (17:8)
8. The ten horns (17:12)
9. The harlot (17:18)
10. The seven heads (17:9).

b. Some examples when the interpretation is found in other parts of the Bible

1. The seal of God (Revelation 7:1-4 and Ezekiel 9:1-9)
2. The son of man (Revelation 1:1-20 and Daniel 7:9ff; 10:5, 6; Ezekiel 1:7, 26ff; 3:2)
3. The throne in heaven (Revelation 4; Isaiah 6:1 and Zechariah 5:1-3)
4. The book of life (Exodus 32:33; Psalm 69:28; Malachi 3:16; Isaiah 22:22)
5. Measure the temple (Ezekiel 40:3; Zechariah 2:1ff)
6. Eat the book (Revelation 10:5-11 and Ezekiel 2:8-3:14)
7. Banquet of birds (Ezekiel 39:16-20)
8. Gog and Magog (Ezekiel 38; 39)
9. New heaven and new earth (Isaiah 65:17ff; 66:22ff).

**4. One key is to understand the historical context when the book was written;** that is, what was going on in the world in the days of the people to whom the book was given. In this case, the Roman Empire dominated the world. Toward the end of the first century A.D., they began a forced religion of emperor worship. Domitian, the eighth emperor, assumed the title of "Lord and God of the Universe." Whoever refused to recognize this would suffer for his refusal. Thousands of Christians had been tortured and martyred. The Empire and the church had entered into mortal conflict and the Christians, without political power, weapons or armies, influence in the government or financial resources, faced-off the "king of the world" and conquered! The price of the victory was high, but they overcame.

The Roman Empire dominated that period of history militarily, socially and culturally. It ruled from Britain to Africa to the River Euphrates. Its armies maintained their control over many nations. Military conquest and commerce defined the Empire. Luxury, alongside of poverty and slavery contributed to its moral decay. Chapter one of Romans gives a sample.

Rome also was a center of religion. Superstition (Roman gods) and ritualism left the people morally empty and so Christianity found a fertile field for evangelism. But Rome, to create a sense of unity among conquered peoples and to hold power over the ones they conquered, created an imperial religion, constructing heathen temples and making gods out of the emperors. The emperor was considered as divine. To worship the emperor represented an act of loyalty to the Empire. Augustus refused such worship in Rome, but he allowed it in the provinces. When this practice came in contact with monotheistic religions like Judaism and Christianity, persecution began.

**Caligula (37 - 41 A.D.)** tried to enforce it, putting his images in the temples around the Empire, but he died before it took root. In the last year of his reign in Rome, Nero (54 - 68 A.D.) ordered the persecution of Christians for being a threat to the Empire. After the death of Caligula, none of the emperors actively promoted this worship until the time of Domitian. However, temples were being erected for this end throughout the Empire during the first century.

**Domitian (81 - 96 A.D.)** not only led the persecution in Rome, but in all the Empire. He declared himself to be "Lord and God" before his death, demanding that his subjects adore him. Their refusal constituted irreverence and an act of treason. The test of loyalty to the Empire, as well as to the emperor, was the greeting: "Caesar is lord". They were forced to burn incense on the altar. To refuse was disloyal. Doing it was proof that a person was not a Christian. Many did it to save their lives. Soon, under Domitian, Christianity was declared an illegal religion. The Empire readied itself to enforce worship of the emperor and to punish the Christians.

It was in the Roman province of Asia Minor that emperor worship was more developed. There were groups of Roman officers called *concilia*, whose purpose was to promote the worship of the emperor. They built images of the emperors and altars for his worship. Traveling from city to city, they heard accusations against any who refused to confess, "Caesar is lord." These would be taken before the *concilia* where they could make this confession publicly. If they did not, they would be condemned as atheistic traitors of the emperor and the Empire, their properties could be confiscated and their appropriate punishment applied, including death.

Paul enunciated the principle that caused the great conflict between the church and emperor Domitian. Even before this confrontation Christians refused to worship Domitian so they were hated and persecuted (1 Corinthians 8:5-6). Lies circulated regarding Christians to defame them. Examples: "They practice incest, brothers and sisters marry," "They drink blood during their meetings," etc. Not only the Empire turned against the church, but also the ones who commercialized heathen religious objects and people of other religions opposed the true faith.

The historical context is found in secular history but also inside of the book of Revelation. To know this history is so important for a good interpretation of the vision that we need to see chapters 12, 13 and 17, before continuing.

**5. The date of the vision is important** to confirm the historical context. There is no consensus concerning the date but there are three main ideas:

**At the time of Nero (54-68 A.D.)**

Those in favor of this theory interpret 11:1-2 as meaning that the Temple of Jerusalem had not yet been destroyed at the writing (it occurred in 70 A.D.). Against this theory, there is no evidence that the persecution under Nero was more than only local. There is no evidence that the persecution was taken to the provinces. The biggest difficulty with the dating in the period of Nero is the lack of evidence that Nero worship was actively promoted. Also, the temple mentioned in 11:1, 2 may well be symbolic in a symbolic book.

**At the time of Vespasian (69-79 A.D.)**

A most natural interpretation of 17:9-11 referring to the already fallen five kings would be: Augustus, Tiberius, Caligula, Claudius and Nero. The "one is" would be Vespasian and "the other has not yet come and when he comes, he must continue a short time" would be Titus who reigned only two years. "And the beast that was, and is not, is himself also the eighth, and is of the seven, and is going to perdition," would then be Domitian.

See 17:8, 11. "The beast that you saw was, and is not, and will ascend." When Revelation was written, the beast was not. If the beast represents imperial Rome that persecuted the church (Nero and Domitian) then Revelation could not be written during their kingdom.

### **At the time of Domitian (81-96 A.D.)**

Irenaeus, pupil of Polycarp, wrote: "We will not risk ourselves by pronouncing positively the name of the Antichrist, because if it was necessary that this name be disclosed at this present time, it would have been announced by him who saw the Revelation. Because 'he' (John?) or 'that' (the Revelation?) was seen... close to the end reigned it of Domitian" (Irenaeus, Against Heresies 5:30:3). This is the main basis for thinking that Revelation was written in the reign of Domitian. Obviously, the subject is not so definitive. The historical context of the book (the conflict between the church and the Roman Empire) was prophesied in the book but the vision was received when this conflict was still a prophecy. The time of the book seen in the letters to the churches in chapters 2 and 3 reflects a persecution by the Jews in Asia instead of by the Romans.

**6. Any interpretation of Revelation depends greatly on the method used.** Through the centuries, many methods had been considered, each one based on a specific theory, resulting in many different interpretations. No other book of the New Testament has been interpreted in so many different ways. Consider five main ways Revelation has been interpreted:

a. **The Past or Preterist Method** - In the strict meaning of the term, this means that all of Revelation was fulfilled in the past, in the days of the Roman Empire. The basic premise here is that the Revelation is a picture of the conditions of the Empire in the last part of the first century.

Revelation must be studied and interpreted taking into account the historical circumstances of the author and those to whom it was given and taking into consideration that the intended purpose of the book was to console those readers. John wrote mainly for the encouragement and edification of the believers of those days and treated to events that related to them. So, Revelation is a book with spiritual meaning anchored to a specific historical situation. However, as it happens in most prophecy, the underlying truths are truths in present days as it was in those days. To the extent that the reader sees the teachings that encouraged Christians to remain faithful to Jesus Christ when the forces of the evil tried to overcome them, the value of this book, in any age, is understood. However, when one loses sight of the historical background and purpose of the author in that context, almost any kind of interpretation of symbols can be made. It is necessary to place Revelation in its appropriate literary and historical context in order to read it with understanding. Perhaps no other book of the New Testament is so dependent on its historical background for its interpretation.

The symbols represent people, events, truths and principles. The internal evidences of Revelation indicate that this method of interpretation is the most coherent and effective for a correct understanding of the prophecies contained in the book.

b. **The Futurist Method** - the interpretation method based on this theory sees Revelation relating to events immediately preceding and following the second coming of Christ. This idea considers the Revelation as entirely eschatological, a book of prophecies not yet fulfilled, and insists that everything be interpreted as literally as possible. It is from this idea that Dispensationalism came, being systemized and popularized by the Schofield Bible. This theory says that Jesus came the first time to establish the Kingdom, but, because of his rejection by the Jews, the church was established as a parenthesis (substitute) in history until the time when the Kingdom would be set up on Earth. This group also considers apocalyptic Israel as literal and so insists on a literal restoration of the kingdom of Israel.

The problem is that Revelation is highly symbolic throughout, and to interpret it literally is impossible. The value of the book would be mainly for the Christians who lived close to Christ's second return instead of those to whom it was addressed

c. **The Historical Method** - This method considers the Revelation as a summary of the history of the church (or the history of the humanity during the period of the church), since the time of John until the end of time. The idea is that events that from the days of John until the end of time are described in the book. Through this method people such as Napoleon, Saddam Hussein, the Pope, and Adolph Hitler and events such as WW II, the fall of the communism, the union of the European countries and the creation of "Euro," European common currency, are seen in the book.

d. **Philosophical Method** - This method of interpretation says that Revelation is a poetical book that only teaches spiritual truths but does not refer to past or future historical events. The basis for this method of interpretation is in the idea that the Revelation is a discussion concerning the underlying forces of events, but not a discussion of the actual events. In each case, the symbols are understood as referring to conflicts that could be repeated over and over. They may or not have continuity. Therefore, the main emphasis is on the presentation of the perpetual conflict between good and evil.

**7. A key to interpret the Revelation is to recognize a good outline of the vision**, especially in chapters 14-21. Being able to see a plan or an order in the development of the vision should help us perceive the connection between the historical context, the language used and the purpose of the book. In the following outline, notice especially chapters 14-21.

## **An Outline of Revelation**

### **I. Introduction (1:1-20)**

This is God's message for the church in Asia (1:1-11).

Jesus, glorious, powerful, holy and alive is in the midst of the churches. (1:12-20)

### **II. Jesus Sends Letters to The Seven Churches In Asia**

Ephesus, Smyrna, Pergamos, Thyatira (2:1-29)

Sardis, Philadelphia, Laodiceia (3:1-22)

### **III. The Throne Room in Heaven (4:1-11)**

A message of comfort for the Christians: God is in control of the situation (and not the Roman emperor).

### **IV. The Lamb Takes The Sealed Book (5:1-14)**

A message of comfort for the Christians: Jesus overcame and is worthy to open the book of future judgments against the disobedient.

### **V. Jesus Opens The Seals Of The Book (6:1-8:1)**

The 4 sore judgments of God against the rebellious, sinners and persecutors of the church are revealed and executed by Jesus.

1. The white horse and its rider (**6:1-2**) - Jesus, the Word, who conquered the devil and judges the sinner.

2. The red horse and its rider (**6:3-4**) - The sword, war, invasion

3. The black horse and its rider (**6:5-6**) - Famine

4. The pale horse and its rider(s) (**6:7-8**) - Pestilence, wild beasts and death

5. The martyrs ask for vengeance (**6:9-11**). These judgments are against the persecutors of the church but the persecution will last a little longer. God will give an opportunity for repentance.

6. Announcement of the day of wrath of God and the Lamb. (**6:12-17**) God's patience has limits. The oppressors will be destroyed.

### **VI. Interval to Explain and Comfort:**

144,000 of Israel Sealed (7:1-8) All the servants of God are preserved when God pours out His wrath on the enemy of the church.

A Great Multitude in Heaven (7:9-17) The protection of God works! Those who passed through the great tribulation are happy and secure.

## **VII. Jesus Opens the Seventh Seal: Seven Trumpets (8:1-21)**

The details of the day of God's wrath are developed in the form of seven trumpets (seven plagues)

1. First trumpet: Third of vegetation destroyed - attack food
2. Second trumpet: Third of sea creatures and ships destroyed - attack commerce
3. Third trumpet: Third of rivers and springs become bitter, - attack drinking water
4. Fourth trumpet: Third of sun, moon, and stars struck, - attack environment
5. Fifth trumpet (first woe): Locusts from the bottomless pit torment men - internal corruption
6. Sixth trumpet (second woe): an army of 200,000 attacks killing a third of mankind - external invasion

These judgments are to warn the oppressors and call them to repentance but to no avail. Now it is extermination.

## **VIII. Interval to Explain and Comfort (10:1-11:14)**

John Eats the Little Book (10:1-11)

When the seventh trumpet sounds, God's judgment against the enemy will be complete.

John Measures the Sanctuary (11:1-2)

The church will suffer in the conflict with Rome but will be preserved.

The Two Witnesses Are Killed But Are Raised (11:3-14)

God will preserve the church, faithful in evangelism, even in persecution.

## **IX. The Seventh Trumpet Sounds (11:15-19)**

Babylon (Rome) will fall but first comes a recapitulation to explain where she came from and why she will be destroyed.

The Pregnant Woman gives birth to the male child and the dragon fails in his attempt to kill him and the woman (**12:1-18**). Satan is expelled from being able to accuse God's elect and persecutes the church.

Satan Calls Up The Beast From The Sea (**13:1-18**) to use him to persecute the church. Another beast (from the earth) promotes worship of the beast from the sea. The instrument of Satan is identified with the Roman emperors helped by the perverse religion of emperor worship.

## **X. Four Voices Announce the Headlines Of The Result Of The Great Battle (14:1-13)**

### **1. The Justice of God Triumphs (14:6, 7)**

- a. The harvest (14:14-20) The hour of God's wrath against the Roman Empire arrives and the oppressors will be exterminated.
- b. Bowls of wrath announced (15:1-8) With 7 more plagues, God's wrath against Rome is consumed
- c. Bowls of wrath poured out (16:1-21)  
**First bowl:** Sores on those who worshipped the beast and

his image

**Second bowl:** Sea turns to blood, all sea creatures die

**Third bowl:** Rivers and springs turn to blood

**Fourth bowl:** Men are scorched by the sun (**16:8-9**)

**Fifth bowl:** Pain and anguish upon the beast and his kingdom

**Sixth bowl:** An army plans to attack

**Seventh bowl:** Earthquake and hailstones

## **2. Babylon Is Fallen!**

- a. Babylon identified (17:1-8) The great harlot is Rome, the commercial power of the world
- b. Babylon is fallen, is fallen! The ruin of the Roman Empire is complete and definitive.

## **3. The Worshipers of The Emperor Are Judged! (14:9-10)**

- a. Armageddon and the lord's supper (19:11-21). The enemies of the church are defeated and totally destroyed.
- b. The dragon bound (20:1-3). Satan is defeated but not destroyed. He will try again.
- c. The great white throne and the lake of fire (20:11-15). The oppressors are defeated and punished.

## **4. The Christians Who Died in The Conflict Are Blessed (14:13).**

- a. The marriage supper of the lamb (19:1-10). The victorious church is received by Christ.
- b. The resurrection of the martyrs to reign (20:4-6) The Christians are victorious even if they had died.
- c. The defeat of Gog and Magog (20:7-10) Whatever future enemy that Satan may use to attack the church will also be defeated by God.
- d. New heaven and earth (21:1-8) Rest and relaxation for the faithful
- e. The new Jerusalem (21:9-22:5) The faithful church, and thus the victorious church, is precious, safe and blessed.

## **XI. CONCLUSION AND WARNING (22:6-21)**

Quotations are from the New King James Version unless otherwise noted.

# **REVELATION 1**

## **Jesus is in The Midst of The Churches**

**Seven Churches:** The number 7 symbolizes perfection or completion, so the book was for all the church in Asia

**Seven Spirits** is the Holy Spirit of God. Isaiah 11:1-2 mentions the seven aspects of the one Spirit.

“A shoot will come up from the stump of Jesse; from his roots a Branch will bear fruit. The Spirit of the Lord will rest on him -the Spirit of wisdom and of understanding, the Spirit of counsel and of power, the Spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the Lord.”

**Alpha And Omega** are first and the last letters of the Greek alphabet and mean the beginning and the end (Revelation 22:13). The same words are applied to the Father and the Son (1:8, 17; 2:8; 22:13).

**Seven Golden Candlesticks** are the seven churches in Asia (1:20).

**Jesus In The Midst Of The Candlesticks:** He is near, and not far away (Matthew 28:20).

**A Robe Down To His Feet And A Golden Sash:** Jesus is dressed as high-priest (Exodus 28:4; 29:5).

**White Head And Hair:** White symbolizes purity and justice.

**Eyes With Flaming Fire:** His eyes see everything that happens (Hebrews.4:13; Revelation 19:12).

**Bronze Feet** symbolize the ability to destroy His enemies (Micah 4:13; 1 Chronicles 28:18).

**Voice Of Many Waters:** He speaks with authority as on Mount Sinai.

**Seven Stars** are the angels of the churches (1:20). Angel means "messenger," so they are not necessarily angels, but could be human representatives.

**Sword in The Mouth** is the Word of God, not the gospel (good news), but a word of judgment (Isaiah 11:4 and Hebrew. 4:12, 13). Think of the transfiguration on the mount.

**Shining Face:** Christ is the splendor of the glory of God (Hebrews 1:3).

**The First and Last:** He is the beginning and end of creation, revelation and hope.

**The Living One Who Was Dead:** We will walk no road He has not walked; meet any fear He has not met and fight no foe He has not defeated.

**Keys of Death And Hades:** The correct word here is Hades, not Hell. Hades is the place where the deceased go, the unseen world. It was important for the persecuted church to know who controlled death. "Who believes in me, even though he dies, will live" (John 11:25).

Chapter 1 is the introduction to the book. This book is a message from God, transmitted to the Christians in Asia close to the end of the 1st century A.D., by Jesus, His angel and His servant John. It deals with things that would soon happen. Those who reads must know that Jesus is alive, victorious, judge, priest, King of the kings of earth and Savior. Also, the reader knows that He will return. All this was very important for our brethren back then who were about to enter into the worst persecution in the history of the church. Here in the introduction, God is already giving strength, courage and comfort, showing the beauty and greatness of the Lord of the Christians, Jesus Christ. Like John, all will fall down before the feet of Jesus one day. The message is clear for those who were about to be killed because of the gospel of Christ: Jesus has the power over death. This glorious, all-powerful, pure Son of God is Jesus.

## REVELATION 2 AND 3

### Letters to The Churches

#### **TO: The church in Ephesus**

**FROM:** He who holds the seven stars in His right hand, who walks in the midst of the seven golden lamp stands

**I KNOW:** your works, your labor, your patience, and that you cannot bear those who are evil. And you have tested those who say they are apostles and are not, and have found them liars; and you have persevered and have patience, and have labored for My name's sake and have not become weary.

**I HAVE SOMETHING AGAINST YOU:** you have left your first love (without love, works have no value - 1 Corinthians 13)

**EXHORTATION:** Remember from where you have fallen; repent and do the first works

**OR ELSE:** I will come to you quickly and remove your lamp stand from its place

**IN YOUR FAVOR:** you hate the deeds of the Nicolaitans (Irenaeus said that they were perversion and decadence).

**TO THE OVERCOMER:** I will give him to eat from the tree of life in the paradise of God.

**HE WHO HAS EARS, LET HIM HEAR WHAT THE SPIRIT SAYS TO THE CHURCHES.**

#### **TO: The church in Smyrna**

**FROM:** the First and the Last, who was dead, and came to life

**I KNOW:** your works, tribulation, and poverty (but you are rich); and [I know] the blasphemy of those who say they are Jews and are not, but [are] a synagogue of Satan.

**EXHORTATION:** Do not fear any of those things which you are about to suffer. Indeed, the devil is about to throw [some] of you into prison, that you may be tested, and you will have tribulation ten days. Be faithful until death and I will give you the crown of life.

**TO THE OVERCOMER:** shall not be hurt by the second death.

**HE WHO HAS EARS, LET HIM HEAR WHAT THE SPIRIT SAYS TO THE CHURCHES.**

#### **TO: The church in Pergamos**

**FROM:** He who has the sharp two-edged sword

**I KNOW:** your works, and where you dwell, where Satan's throne [is.] And you hold fast to My name, and did not deny My faith even in the days in which Antipas [was] My faithful martyr, who was killed among you, where Satan dwells.

**I HAVE SOMETHING AGAINST YOU:** you have there those who hold the doctrine of Balaam, who taught Balak to put a stumbling block before the children of Israel, to eat things sacrificed to idols, and to commit sexual immorality. Thus you also have those who hold the doctrine of the Nicolaitans, which thing I hate. [The Nicolaitanes taught the community of wives, that adultery and fornication were things indifferent, that eating meats offered to idols was quite lawful; and mixed several pagan rites with the Christian ceremonies. (Adam Clarke's Commentary)]

**EXHORTATION:** Repent

**OR ELSE:** I will come to you quickly and will fight against them with the sword of My mouth.

**TO THE OVERCOMER:** I will give some of the hidden manna to eat. And I will give him a white stone, and on the stone a new name written which no one knows except him who receives

**HE WHO HAS EARS, LET HIM HEAR WHAT THE SPIRIT SAYS TO THE CHURCHES.**

#### **TO: The church in Thyratira**

**FROM:** the Son of God, who has eyes like a flame of fire, and His feet like fine brass

**I KNOW:** your works, love, service, faith, and your patience; and [as] for your works, the last [are] more than the first.

**I HAVE SOMETHING AGAINST YOU:** you allow that woman Jezebel, who calls herself a prophetess, to teach and seduce My servants to commit sexual immorality and eat things sacrificed to idols.

**EXHORTATION:** hold fast what you have till I come.

**OR ELSE:** I will cast her into a sickbed, and those who commit adultery with her into great tribulation, unless they repent of their deeds. I will kill her children with death, and all the churches shall know that I am He who searches the minds and hearts. And I will give to each one of you according to your works.

**TO THE OVERCOMER:** I will give power over the nations. He shall rule them with a rod of iron. They shall be dashed to pieces like the potter's vessels as I also have received from My Father and I will give him the morning star.

**HE WHO HAS EARS, LET HIM HEAR WHAT THE SPIRIT SAYS TO THE CHURCHES.**

**TO: The church in Sardis**

**FROM:** He who has the seven Spirits of God and the seven stars

**I KNOW:** your works, that you have a name that you are alive, but you are dead.

**EXHORTATION:** Be watchful, and strengthen the things which remain, that are ready to die, for I have not found your works perfect [complete] before God. Remember therefore how you have received and heard; hold fast and repent.

**OR ELSE:** I will come upon you as a thief, and you will not know what hour I will come upon you.

**TO THE OVERCOMER:** shall be clothed in white garments, and I will not blot out his name from the Book of Life; but I will confess his name before My Father and before His angels.

**HE WHO HAS EARS, LET HIM HEAR WHAT THE SPIRIT SAYS TO THE CHURCHES.**

**TO: The church in Philadelphia**

**FROM:** He who is holy, He who is true, He who has the key of David, He who opens and no one shuts, and shuts and no one opens

**I KNOW:** you have a little strength, have kept My word, and have not denied My name.

**EXHORTATION:** Because you have kept My command to persevere, I also will keep you from the hour of trial which shall come upon the whole world, to test those who dwell on the earth. Behold, I am coming quickly! Hold fast what you have, that no one may take your crown.

**TO THE OVERCOMER:** I will make him a pillar in the temple of My God, and he shall go out no more. And I will write on him the name of My God and the name of the city of My God, the New Jerusalem, which comes down out of heaven from My God and [I will write on him] My new name.

**HE WHO HAS EARS, LET HIM HEAR WHAT THE SPIRIT SAYS TO THE CHURCHES.**

**TO: The church in Laodicea**

**FROM:** the Amen, the Faithful and True Witness, the Beginning of the creation of God

**I KNOW:** your works, that you are neither cold nor hot. I could wish you were cold or hot.

**EXHORTATION:** buy from Me gold refined in the fire, that you may be rich; and white garments, that you may be clothed, [that] the shame of your nakedness may not be revealed; and anoint your eyes with eye salve, that you may see. As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten. Therefore be zealous and repent.

**TO THE OVERCOMER:** I will grant to sit with Me on My throne, as I also overcame and sat down with My Father on His throne

**HE WHO HAS EARS, LET HIM HEAR WHAT THE SPIRIT SAYS TO THE CHURCHES.**

## **REVELATION 4**

### **God's Throne in Heaven**

The God of The Christians Is in Control of The Universe  
(Not A Roman Emperor)

**An open door to heaven.** The use of the word "heaven" is much more than the place where God resides. The omnipresent can't be limited to one geographical place. He is always in every place. Heaven is more of a state of being than a place. We can think of it as the spiritual region. Ephesians 2 says that Christians are seated with Christ in the heavenly places. Philippians 3:20 says, "our citizenship is in heaven," Because of Christ, today we have the privilege of entering into the presence of God who is in heaven. An open door gives the ideas of free access to the presence of God.

**Throne** signifies dominion, power, authority, rule and reign. It is much more than just a piece of furniture. We will read about "throne" 38 times. The message is clear: God is in control of everything.

**Precious stones:** The one seated on the throne is glorious, magnificent, and brilliant. God is majestically impressive.

**Rainbow** is the symbol of a covenant of mercy. See Genesis 9 and Ezekiel 1. This vision will tell of God's terrible judgments but His people need to know of His mercy too!

**Twenty-four elders** symbolize the church. In the Old Testament sacerdotal system of the Levitical priesthood, 24 was the number of shifts among the priests. (1 Chronicles 24:1-19). Their crowns are "*stephanos*," the victor's crown, rather than a crown of royalty. Seated on thrones, they are reigning (Revelation 1:5, 6). White clothes represent purity and good works of the saints (Revelation 19:8). So, who are the purified, victorious, reigning people who are priests of God full of good works and who live in close relationship to God? They are the Christians! This is the church! They are the royal priesthood! Read 1 Peter 2:5, 9; Revelation 1:6; 5:9, 10; 20:4, 6 and 1 Chronicles 23:4. Of these, twenty-four thousand were to look after the work of the house of the LORD, six thousand were officers and judges,

**Lightning, voices and thunders** always indicate a demonstration of the wrath and power of God as well as the time for Him to speak. See Hebrews 12. God's voice means terror to the rebellious but hope to the obedient.

**Seven lamps of fire** represent the Holy Spirit of God (Revelation 1:4). It is fire because He knows all and reveals all.

**Sea of glass** is the separation between God and all inferior beings. In the temple of Solomon, (2 Chronicles 4:2-6), the sea of bronze was placed between the priest and the Holy Place where God made His appearance. God is Holy (separate).

**Four living creatures** are cherubim, the defenders of God's justice and holiness. They are God's war wagon (Ezekiel 1 and 10). They see all. They are like beasts to destroy, strength to serve, intelligence to act and swiftness to execute God's will. The message is that God is well equipped to handle any enemy.

**Casting crowns before the throne** symbolizes unending worship (submission).

Revelation teaches the victory of the church, Christians, over the Roman persecutors. The battle will be fierce and many will lose their lives. The battle scenes might frighten the reader so, before seeing such tribulation, it was needful to give God's people hope and confidence. So we see the power and dominion of

God. It does not matter what seems to be in life. Each Christian needs to know with certainty that God is in control of the universe. All things will cooperate for the good of those who love the Lord, who are called according to His purpose. The church is always before God's throne. Don't be afraid!

## **REVELATION 5**

### **The Lamb Takes The Scroll**

Jesus Was Slain but Is Alive and Worthy to Reveal The Coming Judgments.

**The sealed book** is the story of God's judgments against the enemies of the church in the fight of the church against Rome.

**Sealed with seven seals** means that its content was hidden unless someone would open the seals. The purpose of a seal was to keep it from being revealed.

**In His right hand:** Never forget that the future is in God's right (strong) hand. Governments, armies and multinational corporations may influence your life but God is the one who holds your future.

**The Lion of Judah** is Jesus (Genesis 49:9, 10), the king of the tribe of Judah.

**Root of David:** Jesus is both the descendent of David (physical lineage) and the ancestor of David (as Creator).

**A Lamb that had been slain:** Killed because he was totally obedient to the Father. Killed because he loved sinners. John 1:29 - the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world. But this sacrificed and killed lamb is on his feet. He is alive again! A lamb emphasized his meekness and submission. The meek and lowly in heart will face off the dragon and his beastly pawns in this book. See John 1:36; 1 Peter 1:19; Isaiah 53:7.

**Seven horns:** He has total power

**Seven Eyes:** 2 Chronicles 16:9 "For the eyes of the LORD run to and for throughout the whole earth, to show Himself strong on behalf of those whose heart is loyal to Him."

**New Song** The old song was of Moses (Revelation 15:3), that he sang when God freed Israel from Egyptian captivity. A new song is a new expression of God's power and goodness to save His people.

**They will reign over the earth:** But the Christians are already reigning. Revelation 20:6 says that the saints will be priests when they were already priests. This language just emphasizes that the present blessedness will continue. The relationship the Christians enjoy with Christ will never end, not even with death.

Chapter 4 shows God power and chapter 5 shows His mercy, (God Creator and God Redeemer). The All-powerful who rules the universe is someone who sacrificially loves His people. Jesus fought hand-to-hand combat with Satan and had the scars to show for it but he won! These are words of comfort for a persecuted church. "Let not your heart be troubled. Believe in God and believe in me!"

## **REVELATION 6**

### **The Lamb Opens The Seals**

Jesus Reveals God's Four Sore Judgements  
To Be Poured Out on The Church's Enemies

**Four Horses, Horsemen and Winds** are the four sore (dreadful) judgments of God. See Revelation 7:1 and Zachariah 6:1-8 to see how the four winds are God's attacks against the disobedient and that these correspond to the four different color horses. The symbol is understood in Ezekiel 14:12-23. By famine, wild beasts, sword and plague, God punishes a perverse nation. In Revelation 6 we see 4 dreadful judgments, the four horses to identify that this is the subject, but we see another horseman going out in front of the others. To keep the number four, then, two plagues are joined in the fourth horseman.

**Rider on the white horse** is Jesus, the Living Word that judges and conquers. See Revelation 19:11-16; John 12:48 and 1:1-4. His crown is an overcomer's crown. The color of his horse symbolizes purity and justice.

**Rider on the Red horse** symbolizes war. Red is the color of blood.

**Rider on the black horse** is famine. Refer to Ezekiel 4:10, 16 to see this symbol. With a scale the food is measured because it is scarce. The money specified is a day's wage so a man must work all day just to buy a little bit of the essentials in food. The nonessentials, wine and oil, aren't lacking because no one can afford to buy them. All their money will be used just for survival.

**Rider on the pale horse:** This judgment completes the figure of the four horsemen. It is God's judgment in all its forms. Pale is the color of death.

**A fourth part:** This judgment is partial and not total. There is still an opportunity to repent and flee from God's wrath.

**Fifth Seal:** After punishing the earth with these judgments, the martyrs cry out for vengeance. God's answer is "not yet ... more Christians must die!" This language makes it clear to the brethren who would be persecuted that God was in control. Everything would happen according to the divine plan. They could relax because their reward was secure.

**Earthquake, blackened sun, bloody moon and falling stars:** This is God's wrath poured out on the evildoers. Compare this to Joel 1:15; 2:1-2, 10, 11, 28-32; Zephaniah 1:14, 15 and Isaiah 13:6-11. John used the language of the Old Testament prophets to paint a picture of destruction. It is symbolic language and not literal. If just one star fell to the earth, life here would be over. But in the vision life goes on. The message is that the enemy nation must be punished and would fall. When God pours out His judgment on an enemy, nobody escapes.

Jesus begins to reveal the future with respect to the fight between God and His adversaries. We already know the final score in any such conflict. God will punish the church's enemies. He will treat them as he has always treated perverse nations. He will bring partial plagues on them to call them to repentance. If it works - then great! If they refuse, he will increase the intensity until they repent or are destroyed. Even though the martyred Christians ask for vengeance, God is in absolute control and will proceed as planned, even though more Christians will die. After all, what is so bad about being removed from this old world of woe to go and be with Jesus? For a while, the plagues will continue. The important question is asked, "Who will stand in the day of the wrath of God and the Lamb?" The answer is found in chapter 7.

## **REVELATION 7**

### **144,000 Servants of God Sealed**

Christ's Followers Are Marked for Protection  
Before The Axe Falls on Rome

**The seal on the forehead.** This symbol comes from Ezekiel 9. Before sending the punishment on a nation where both the righteous and unrighteous lived, God wanted to assure the righteous that He would make a distinction between them. The seal isn't literal but a way to say to His servants, "The Lord knows who belongs to Him." This was not a guarantee that the Christians would not suffer along with the perverse when God hit their surrounding world. It did mean that that suffering was not punishment for them. Read Ezekiel 21:3, 4 and see that the righteous, even though sealed, died the same as the perverse when Babylon destroyed Jerusalem in the year 586 B.C. The difference was that the righteous who died were victorious but the wicked who died were defeated.

**144,000 of Israel.** How many servants of God were sealed in Ezekiel 9? All of them! So, it is here. The 144,000 represent all Christians. Twelve is the number of God's people (12 tribes of Israel, twelve apostles). The 12x12 gives emphasis that this is all God's people. One thousand (1000) is the number for completeness or totality. They are of Israel because Israel is the people of God. Paul in Galatians calls the church "the Israel of God." Peter (1 Peter 2) calls the church the holy nation. 144,000 here means the universal church.

**Palm branches, dressed in white:** This is the picture of joyful festivity, the feast of booths which was the happiest of all Jewish feasts.

**Never be hunger** ... symbolizes prosperity and protection (Isaiah 25:8; 40:8-10 and Psalm 121:5, 6).

Revelation 6 ended with the question "Who will stand in the day of God's wrath?" Revelation 7 answers the question: "Those who belong to God." All God's servants are under His protection and the seal worked! The servants of God who lived through God's judgment on Rome and remained faithful to God are now with Christ in heaven rejoicing. The seal of protective ownership really worked! The 144,000 and the great multitude are the same people, faithful Christians, seen before and after the tribulation God brought on Rome. The 144,000 are sealed to pass through the tribulation and the great multitude is those who came out through the tribulation. The 144,000 receive the mark of God on the forehead and the church receives the mark of God on the forehead (Revelation 3:12). All God's servants have this mark (Revelation 22:4). The multitude follows the Lamb and the 144,000 follow him (Revelation 14:4). The church is and always will be victorious.

## **REVELATION 8 and 9** **The Seven Trumpets Blow**

God Orders Attacks on The World of The Persecutors of The Church

**Silence in heaven** calls attention to the seriousness of what is to befall. It is the drum roll before the scary part. There is a pause to show that God's judgments delay to allow time for sinners to repent (2 Peter 3:9); the delay before the jury announces the verdict.

**Trumpets** call the people to assembly and also issue warnings (Numbers 10:1-5). These trumpets will announce God's judgment on the persecutors of the church.

**Incense** reminds us of the fifth seal where the martyrs asked for vengeance against their murderers. Now, these judgments are in answer to their prayers.

**Fire from the altar** God responds to the prayers of the righteous (James 5:15-18).

**First Trumpet.** God attacks the food (vegetation). Remember the plague of Exodus 9:24.

**Second Trumpet.** God attacks the commerce. The sea symbolizes the nations (Isaiah 57:20; 17:12ff and Revelation 17:1, 2, 15). The mountain is the punished nation (Jeremiah 51:25; Amos 4:1 and Isaiah 2:2). Remember the first plague of Egypt.

**Third Trumpet.** God attacks drinking water. Remember the first plague in Egypt.

**Fourth Trumpet.** God attacks the environment. Remember the 9th plague against Egypt. It could be a locust plague (Joel 2:10) or figurative language of judgment in general. (Isaiah 13:10, 11; 34:4-5)

**Those who dwell on the earth** are the ungodly in comparison with those who dwell in heaven (13:6) See 3:10; 6:10; 8:13; 11:10; 12:12; 13:8, 12, 14; 14:6; 17:8. The saints, even though they live here on earth, are seen as people who reside in heaven (12:12; 13:6).

**Fifth Trumpet** is internal corruption.

**The fallen star** is Satan, the god of this world, who blinds the people's understanding (2 Corinthians 4:4).

**Smoke from the bottomless pit.** Satan causes people to walk in darkness. See Proverbs 14:34. Rome fell in part due to internal moral decay. Romans 1:24-28 shows the type of society that results from refusal to repent. Read Ephesians 2:2.

**Grasshoppers.** The decadence and darkness bring uncertainty, fear, discomfort, superstition and inner turmoil, all things that torment people. Their appearance as a woman's beauty hides their destructive power. Breastplates of iron show how hard it is to destroy them.

**The Seal of God** shows that here is a tribulation referred to in chapter 7 and the Christians are protected.

**Sixth Trumpet** is external invasion.

**The River Euphrates** is where all the enemy armies come from (Isaiah 9:7, 8; 11:15; 7:20).

**200,000,000** is a number so large that it terrorizes the enemy and causes the saints to rejoice.

Jesus reveals the end of the story of God's judgments against the great persecutor of the church - the Roman Empire. But the end does not come immediately. God in His mercy tries once more to persuade the evil ones to repent before they are exterminated. But it is of no avail. In the face of God's punishment, they still refuse to repent of their evil deeds. This adversary has a hardened heart, fanatic, given to sin. It is hopeless. All that is left to God is to destroy them. The seventh trumpet will blow.

## **REVELATION 10**

### **The Little Book and Two Witnesses**

He Accepts the Commission and Continues to Prophesy  
A Faithful Church Preaches the Gospel Under Persecution

**The little book** is the mission given to John to keep on preaching.

**Sweet in the mouth.** Like Ezekiel 2:8; 3:3, it is sweet, being God's word (Psalm 10) but bitter because the subject of the preaching is judgment. It is bad news. To eat the book means that John accepted the job of announcing this bad news.

The time has arrived for God to avenge the blood of the martyred saints. There will be no more delay. The curtain will now fall.

## **REVELATION 11**

**The measuring rod** is the same as Ezekiel 40:3, 4; 42:20. It means a separation between holy and unholy things. The thing being measured is separated from the other things in order to be protected.

**The temple of God and His altar.** When Revelation was given, there was only one sanctuary of God - the church. (1 Corinthians 3:16; Ephesians 2:10-22).

**42 months** is the symbol of the period of persecution but protected by God. 42 months = 1260 days = 3 1/2 years = a time and times and half a time. It is the period of authority of the beast (13:5), the persecution of the holy city (11:2), when the witnesses testified (11:3) and when the woman was protected in the wilderness (12:6, 14). The symbol originates from the life of Elijah who was persecuted by Jezebel for 3 1/2 years while hiding in the wilderness and being protected by God.

**Two Witnesses** symbolize the church. Zachariah 4:1-4 uses the same figure. The two olive trees are two lamp stands who are the two anointed ones (king and priest). See Revelation 1:12, 13, 20.

**Sodom, Egypt and Jerusalem.** These are symbolic names for one certain city. Sodom is the seat of immorality. Egypt is the heart of bondage. Jerusalem is the seat of corrupt religion. What city in John's day was all this? Rome!

**Put on their feet.** The church seemed down and out to the eyes of the world but God gave her the victory.

**The 7<sup>th</sup> Trumpet Sounds.** The church here was about to enter a great tribulation of persecution but had the assurance of being protected by God. She was stomped but protected. She was represented by two witnesses who preached the gospel during persecution and even lost their lives but God still gave them the victory.

## **REVELATION 12**

### **The Dragon Expulsed from Heaven**

Satan, Frustrated and Defeated, Attacks the Church

**A woman** in the Bible often symbolizes a nation (Isaiah 50:1; 54:1ff; Micah 4:9ff and Ezekiel 16)

**This woman** represents God's chosen people. Earlier, God's chosen people was the nation of Israel. Since the cross she is the church.

**Twelve stars** identify her as God's people (12 tribes of Israel and 12 apostles). See Joseph's dream in Genesis 37:9-11.

**This crown** (*stephanos*) means victorious. Another word for crown (*diademata*) represents kingly power.

**God's chosen people** before Calvary was the physical nation of Israel. The Israel of God since Calvary is the church. See 1 Peter 2:9. A good meaning might be "the Israel of God" (Galatians 6:16) which was the Jewish nation before the cross and the church after the cross.

**Labor pains** represent the suffering Israel faced as they awaited the long process that would eventually bring the Messiah into the world (Micah 4:9, 10; Jeremiah 4:31; 13:21).

**The dragon is Satan.** He is cruel and fierce (red). Seven heads and ten horns will associate him with the beast from the sea, which would be his instrument of persecution in this context. He has crowns (diadems - crowns of royalty) representing civil power but not "*stephanos*" because he is not victorious. His power is seen in his tail. In his rebellion against God (before the foundation of the world) he swept away with him a third of God's angels (represented by stars). He wanted to kill Jesus when he was born and tried to (the massacre of the babies in Bethlehem) but failed. He tried when the Jews tried to kill Jesus in Nazareth (Luke 4) and when they tried to stone him (John 8) but also failed. He also tried in the desert (Matthew 4) with temptations but failed.

**The male child** is Jesus who escaped all of Satan's plans to destroy him and who, even though killed on the cross, rose again the third day. He ascended and sat on God's right hand to begin his reign. He now reigns with a rod of iron (Psalm 2:6-9) and justice (Psalm 45:6). See 1 Kings 2:12; 1 Chronicles 29:23; Psalm 2:7ff; Acts 2:29-36 and Revelation 3:7, 21.

**The war in heaven and Satan expelled.** The key here is to see when this war happened and by what right Satan was in heaven until Jesus ascended to heaven. Verse 10 shows that Satan was expelled when salvation arrived; that is, when Jesus died, arose and ascended to begin his role of interceding for his people. But why was Satan in heaven? What was he doing? He was accusing God's elect people day and night (and rightly so). That's what he was doing in the book of Job, but he could find nothing with which to accuse Job. Ever since the victorious Jesus ascended to heaven, Satan can no longer accuse God's redeemed people.

Romans 8:33-4 states in plain language what is said here in figurative language. "Who will bring any charge against those whom God has chosen? It is God who justifies. Who is he that condemns? Christ Jesus, who died - more than that, who was raised to life - is at the right hand of God and is also interceding for us."

Satan, the accuser, can no longer accuse God's chosen people of sin because Christ died to pay for our sins, was raised from the dead and ascended back into heaven to make intercession for us.

**The kingdom came** when Jesus received the kingdom (power, authority and dominion). See Matthew 28:18 and Acts 2:36.

**The persecuted woman** (The Israel of God) was the object of the dragon's wrath, once Jesus escaped him. Notice that verses 13-16 are a development in more detail of what was said in summary in verse 6. Satan, frustrated in his plan to destroy Jesus, humiliated in his expulsion from heaven, is going after the church. Just as Israel fled to the desert to escape the dragon Pharaoh (Psalm 74:13; Isaiah 51:9 and Ezekiel 29:3) and was carried on the wings of an eagle to safety (Exodus 19:4), so the church was persecuted but protected by God.

**The flood of water** was Satan's first attempt against the church (the Jewish persecution). See Isaiah 8:5-8. What ended the Jewish persecution? The Romans did when they destroyed Jerusalem in the year 70 A.D. (See Psalm 144:7).

This chapter explains the historical context of the prophetic vision. Israel suffered much in her history but was able to bring the Messiah into the world. Satan wanted to destroy Jesus but failed. Jesus, after his resurrection, ascended back into heaven to reign and also, through his blood, to intercede for his people. Satan no longer had the right to accuse God's chosen people of sin. Satan, frustrated, humiliated and defeated, was irate. But all he could do was hurt the church here on earth. He instigated a persecution by the Jews but God protected the church and the nations of the earth stopped that persecution when the Romans destroyed Jerusalem. Satan did not give up when the Jews failed to exterminate the church. The next chapter shows going to the sea of nations, looking for another instrument to use against the next generation(s) of the church. It was the Roman Empire. Chapter 13 will show the dragon invoking Rome from among the nations to do his evil work.

## **REVELATION 13**

### **The Beast Comes Up Out of The Sea**

The Roman Empire Is Chosen to Be Satan's Pawn to Persecute the Church

**Sea Beast** is the civil power of Rome (the emperors) who persecuted the church. Chapter 17 will say the beast "is" when a particular emperor persecutes the church and "is not" when a particular emperor does not.

**Seven heads** are the seven mountains upon which Rome was built and also seven kings (emperors). See Revelation 17. This beast was similar to three beasts, a leopard, a bear and a lion. This reminds us of Daniel 7 where those beasts represented the three world kingdoms that preceded the Roman Empire - Babylon, Media-Persia and Greece. The fourth beast of Daniel 7 does not appear here in Revelation because the fourth beast was the Roman Empire. As in Daniel, the beast that represents Rome has all the characteristics of the others but is worse (crueler).

**The wounded head** was the death of Nero, the fifth emperor. He was the beast when he persecuted the church (he killed the apostle Paul). When he died the persecution stopped (the beast was not) but there appeared a legend in Rome that he would come back to life. When Domician assumed the throne, many said that it was Nero revived. In the sequence of this vision, the beast revived because he persecuted the church.

**Those who dwell on the earth** are the unbelievers since the followers of Jesus dwell in heaven (v6). We understand that the church is God's tabernacle, that is, God dwells in the midst of His people. See Ephesians 2:6; Colossians 3:1ff and Philippians 3:20. Remember that in this book those who live in heaven are the faithful and those who live on earth are the unbelievers.

**The beast of the earth** is from the earth instead of heaven. Its origin is human and unbelieving. His appearance is like a lamb (imitating Jesus) identifying him as a religion. His voice like a dragon instead of a lamb proves him to be a false religion (emperor worship). It spread through the Empire and when Christians refused to bow down to the emperor, they were punished.

**The mark on the head.** The 144,000 servants of God were marked on their foreheads in chapter 7 for protection from God's wrath and the beasts' worshippers were also marked to be protected from the beast's persecution. He persecuted the unmarked ones. In history, Rome established guilds (like labor unions) to control the life of the people and those who refused to worship the emperor lost their civil rights and commercial rights.

**The number 666** identifies the beast. Many have tried numerical schemes of attributing values to each letter of the alphabet (like in Roman numerals) and adding all the values of a particular name to come up with 666. Results have identified Nero, the Catholic pope, Napoleon, Ronald Reagan, etc. Read carefully: The text says that 666 is the number of men, the number that represents man. Just as seven represents perfection (divinity), six is less than perfect (human). Three sixes emphasize he is just a man. The message is: The beast that will terrify the church is not to be feared. He is just a man.

Chapter 12 ends with Satan irate and frustrated because he failed to destroy Jesus. Now he wants to destroy the church and to do this he needed an instrument of persecution. He chose Rome - cruel, arrogant and evil. Satan gave authority to Rome to dominate the nations and make the dwellers on earth to worship Rome. Thus began the great persecution of the church by the Roman Emperor Domitian. He would be totally defeated, thank God.

## REVELATION 14 & 15

### Four Voices Announce the Outcome of The Conflict

**New Song** - means a new expression of God's goodness (Isaiah 42:9ff). Only the saved in Jesus can sing this song. Only they receive all the goodness of God.

**Four Voices** - are four headlines that announce the outcome of the conflict between Rome and the church. They are 1) God's justice triumphs! 2) Babylon falls! 3) The worshippers of the emperor are judged! 4) The Christians who die in the conflict are blessed!

**The wheat harvest** - is the salvation of the faithful (See Matthew 3:12, 20 and Amos 9:9, 10).

**Harvest of Grapes** is the judgment of the ungodly in this conflict.

The cast of characters has been identified in this conflict. On one side is the lamb (gentle and mild) and with him 144,000 virgin men singing praises with harps. On the other side is the dragon (cruel, strong and fierce) and with him the beast from the sea, the false prophet (beast from the earth), and ten kings with their armies and a great multitude, all marked with the mark of the beast. The hour has come for battle. But who will win? The result was never in doubt! The outcome is already announced, even before the battle (in this vision) begins. The enemy of the church will pay dearly for his crimes but even the Christians who die in the battle are blessed!

**Bowls of Wrath** - the Hour Has Come To Finish God's Judgments On Rome

**The sea of glass** before the throne as in Revelation 4:6 indicates the holiness (separation) of God. In the Old Testament, the priests had to pass by the sea of bronze before entering the sanctuary. The sea mixed with fire shows the conquerors near the throne being purified through suffering. See Philippians 3:10 ff.

**The sanctuary filled with smoke.** See Exodus 40:34ff; 1 Kings 8:10, 11 and 2 Chronicles 5:13, 14. The smoke indicates that God is present in the role of Judge and everyone ought to stop everything, be quiet and just watch.

The time has come to pour out God's wrath on these ungodly ones.

## REVELATION 16

**Seven Bowls** are parallel to the seven trumpets except now the judgment is total and not partial. The purpose now is not to call to repentance but to destroy totally.

### THE BOWLS

1. Foul and loathsome sores Torment evil men.
2. The sea becomes blood, killing all sea life.
3. Fresh water turns to blood.
4. The sun scorches men with fire.
5. Men are tormented by utter darkness.
6. Kings from the east invade from across the great river Euphrates.
7. Noises and thunderings and lightnings, the great earthquake, and great hailstones falling from heaven.

### THE TRUMPETS

1. Hail and fire, mingled with blood, burn the vegetation.
1. A great burning mountain turns the sea to blood, destroying fish and ships.
3. A great burning star ruins drinking water.
4. The sun, moon, and stars are blacked out.
5. Smoke and locusts from the bottomless pit torment men.
6. A giant army invades from

Similar figurative language of God's judgments is found in Zephaniah 1:2-4; Jeremiah 5:23ff and Isaiah 13:10-13, 17-22.

- **The kings of the east** are the redeemed.
- **Three unclean spirits** deceive the nations so they will go to a hopeless war (1 Kings 22:19-23).

God buries Rome and its vassals. You would think that with no water in the oceans, no water in the rivers or fountains, no mountains or islands, bodies covered with boils, skin aflame from the sun, earthquakes and 100 pound hailstones falling on them they would “cry uncle”, give up. But they just blaspheme God! There is no hope for them. Some of the elements of the bowls are developed later. The details of the fall of the city will be in chapters 17 and 18. The battle of Armageddon is in chapter 19. The defeat of the dragon is in chapter 20.

## **REVELATION 17 & 18**

### **Babylon And the Beast Are Identified**

The Enemy In This Conflict Is Rome - The Persecutor Of Christians

**The great harlot** is Rome seen as a commercial power. Notice her marks of identification:

1. She sits on seven mountains 17:9.
2. She rules the world in John's day 17:18.
3. She persecutes the Christians horribly. 17:6 and 18:20, 24.
4. She is the greatest commercial power on earth during John's day. 18:3ff, 11ff, 15-19.
5. She is sustained and supported by the military power (emperors) of Rome. 17:3, 7.
6. She is destroyed by her own military power. 17:16, 17.

**The beast** is the Roman emperors who persecuted the church:

1. Augustus (27 BC-37AD)
2. Tiberius
3. Caligula
4. Claudius
5. Nero (64-68 who persecuted the church)
6. Vespasian (69-79 - the emperor when John received the vision).
7. Titus (79-81 - who only remained, ruled, for two years)
8. Domitian (81-96 - who started the terrible persecution and was the last of the Caesars).

**The beast "was"** with Nero and **"is not"** with Vespasian in the sense that the beast "was" when Rome persecuted the church and "is not" when Rome did not persecute the church. With Domitian the beast reappeared from the abyss to begin the persecution again.

**When John wrote, five emperors had died** (Augustus to Nero), one was (Vespasian), one would come (Titus) and stay for a little while (two years). The beast (persecutor) was Domitian, the eighth emperor who was of the Caesar family but was destined to defeat.

**Ten horns** may be the kings of vassal nations that allied with Rome. But one interesting historical fact is that after Domitian there were exactly ten emperors who also persecuted the church. All these were destined to defeat.

These ten emperors after Domitian also persecuted the church:

- 1) Trajan (98-117)
- 2) Hadrain (117-138)
- 3) Antoninus (138-161)
- 4) Marcus Aurelius (161-180)
- 5) Septum Sever (193-211)
- 6) Maximinus (235-238)
- 7) Deices (249-251)

- 8) Valerian (253-260)
- 9) Diocletian (284-305)
- 10) Galleries (305-311)

The Harlot is identified as Rome, the commercial power. She was brutal and her fall was due to the Roman military power. The great enemy of the Christians in Revelation was Rome, the civil and commercial power. The message was that Rome would fall.

### **Babylon Is Fallen - Rome Is Defeated**

- **Merchants of the earth** - The aspect of the Roman Empire in view here is the commercial power. We have seen the Roman Empire in three aspects: Civil and military power (the beast from the sea), false religion of emperor worship (false prophet or land beast) and commercial power (Babylon the drunken harlot). The woman lived in luxury (v7) and made the businessmen rich (v3). The merchants of the earth (emperor worshippers) lamented when she fell because they lost their trading partner (v11-14, 19).
- **Prostitution** - When someone sells themselves, morally, physically or ethically just for material gain or material security, it is called prostitution.

The most powerful and desired city is condemned by God for her crimes against the church. She remains as a warning to all who think themselves self-sufficient. Do not mistreat God's children!

God condemned the most envied and powerful city because of the crimes she committed against the Christians. She remains as a warning for all who think themselves self-sufficient. You cannot mistreat the children of God.

## **REVELATION 19**

### **The Wedding Banquet of The Lamb and The Defeat of The Enemies**

The Church Will Be Blessed and The Persecutors Will Be Destroyed

**Smoke rising forever and ever** - the same language is used for Edom (Isaiah 34:10) and Sodom (Jude 7). It means total defeat at the hands of God.

**Kingdom of the Lord our God** - God has always reigned over the universe. Never has there been an instant when He was not in absolute control of a situation. To say that God now reigns means that He acted to manifest His dominion. Sometimes, God lets His enemies act. When however; He rises up to put an end to their actions, we say that He reigned or dominated.

**Wedding feast of the Lamb** - Jesus is the lamb and the church is His bride or wife (Ephesians 5:22-33). The meaning here is pure joy, honor and happiness for the church.

**Dressed as a bride** - She dressed herself in her righteous deeds.

**White horse** - in this vision, only Jesus rides a white horse.

**His name** - means his character, His virtues and His identity. Only He has a name that no one knows because no one else is equal to Him. His name is Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Eternal Father, Prince of Peace, True, Word, King of kings and Lord of lords (Isaiah 9:6).

**Blood on His robe** -- Is it His blood? The martyrs' blood? Or the enemies' blood?

**Sharp sword** - See v21. It was with this sword that the enemies were killed. His followers did not fight with their own weapons. The sword of Jesus overcomes all enemies (Hebrews 4:12 and Ephesians 6:17).

**God's Supper** - is just for the buzzards! The menu is the flesh of dead enemies! The invitation was given even before the battle began because the result was never in question.

**Lake of fire** - When someone enters the lake of fire (the beast, false prophet, the dragon and sinners) it is the end of his or her action. They are out of the game! The dragon was not yet thrown into the lake of fire because he will act again in this vision. The dead (both those who died in Christ and those who died in service of the beast) will all be raised but the Roman Empire will never raise its ugly head again!

The fall of Rome was a joyful event for all who suffered under her mighty and cruel hand. The rejoicing was like the marriage feast where the bride is received by her beloved. On the other hand, those who persecuted the church were only met by horrible defeat and absolute humiliation. Instead of being invited to the wedding feast as the saints were, the defeated enemies of the church would be devoured by the birds that were invited to their feast of dead meat. Rome (that is, the Roman Empire who persecuted Christ and the church) is defeated to never rise again. The wrath of God is fulfilled against her.

## REVELATION 20

### The Millennium and Great White Throne Judgment

Satan Is Totally Defeated in His Using Rome Against The Church

**An angel from heaven** - John is on earth in this part of the vision

**Having the key to the abyss** - Satan, referred to as a star fallen from heaven, in chapter 9 had this key, but now an angel from heaven has it indicating Satan has been defeated."

**The dragon bound for 1000 years** - The devil is totally and perfectly [completely] defeated and bound with reference to his working through Rome against the church, (witness the chain, the pit and the sealing closed). This was the end of the history of the Roman Empire but not for Satan. He would be released to try again using other nations.

**For 1000 years** - 1000 years does not speak of a time period but a state of affairs. Applied to Satan it is total defeat. Applied to the saints it is total victory. The number 1000 means totality. Psalm 50:10 says God owns the cattle on a thousand hills. Deuteronomy 7:9 says God keeps His promises for a thousand generations. Psalm 105:8 and 1 Chronicles 16:15 says God commanded His word for a thousand generations. The idea is totality and not a limited time period. Notice some other ideas regarding the 1000 years:

1. 1000 years is the whole Christian dispensation (from then until the end of time). The problem with this idea is that it requires a little time period of earth history after the end of time.
2. 1000 years is all of time until just before the second coming of Christ. The problem with this idea is that it would limit the reigning priesthood period of the Christians to less than the whole Christian era.
3. 1000 years following the destruction of Rome when Christianity flourished. The problem with this idea is that it would require the dead martyrs to be raised about a thousand years ago.

**Satan in the sealed abyss** - Satan is not limited in action, he is stopped!

**Satan loosed for a little time to deceive the nations** - This is not a time period but a message where God says to the Christians: "I protected you in the past and will do it in the future, anywhere, anytime, against any foe. This is God's guarantee for the future, just like in Ezekiel 38 and 39.

**Those sitting on thrones.** Those who sit on thrones are reigning. They are those to whom was given the authority to judge. Who are they? They are victorious, faithful saints, living or dead. Jesus had promised that the overcomers would share with Him in ruling over the nations (Revelation 2:26f; 3:21; 11:15-18; 18:20). This is the same as Daniel 7: 21, 22.

**Souls of them beheaded for Jesus' sake** - These are the martyrs in the persecution. They are resurrected (they live) and reign with Christ. Picture the battleground after the battle of Revelation 19 with the ground littered with the bodies of the slain. Those slain that are Christian martyrs are resurrected and join the living saints on thrones to rule with God. Those who were killed did not lose out because immediately they were raised to die no more. This is the "first resurrection." Notice that these are only the martyrs in the conflict of Revelation and not those Christians who had died all throughout history. This is not a literal resurrection that will happen when Jesus returns. Here is only a symbolic way of saying the faithful saints are victorious and secure.

**The rest of the dead** - are those who died in the vision in service of the beast and they remain dead for 1000 years (symbolically) only to be raised up and destroyed again. They were living losers. They are dead losers and they will live again only to be losers. Verse 5 is parenthetical. To get the sense read v4 then v5b: ("The Christian martyrs lived and reigned with Christ for a thousand years. This is the first resurrection.") That the foes of Jesus remain dead for a thousand years simply means that they were totally defeated in their war against Christ and the church. It is not referring to a literal time period.

**The first resurrection** - this is the resurrection of martyrs for Jesus. It is called "first" because John will see a second resurrection. Both God's servants and the beast's servants died in the first death but only the good guys are in the first resurrection. The first resurrection is to life and reigning but the second resurrection is to the second death. The message is that the dead in Christ share in the victory just as surely as do the living servants of God.

**Priests of God** ...reign 1000 years - this doesn't talk about how long Jesus reigns but how long the saints would reign. The point here is not time but total victory and blessedness. What they had before they died (kingdom of priests), continued after they died. In life and in death the servants of God are victorious.

**Satan loosed and deceives the nations (again)** - Satan will continue to operate in the world to destroy the faith of God's servants.

**Gog and Magog** – They are anybody yet nobody in particular just as they were used in Ezekiel 38, 39. The message is this in both places: God says to His people: "I have already defended you and made you victorious in this present crisis and I will do it again whenever you need it." The emphasis is on the size of this new future enemy (whatever) and the ease with which God will defeat them also. Christians, don't worry about God's desire and ability to protect you against any and all enemies, now or in the future! A note about pre-millennial theories: All attempts to create a huge army of God-haters in a world where Satan does not act and only God's servants live is doomed to failure (especially if you believe in the impossibility of apostasy).

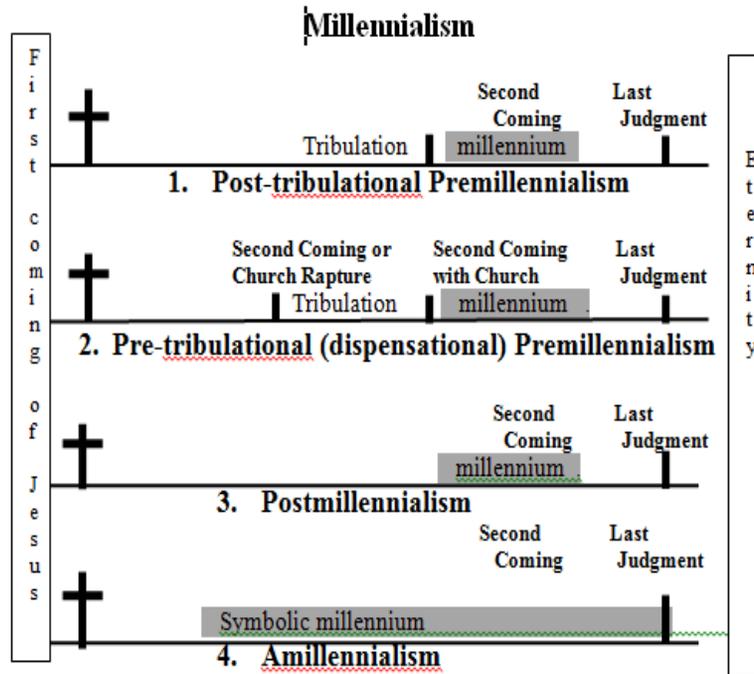
**The devil cast into the lake of fire** - Fire symbolizes total defeat. Nobody returns after being thrown into the lake of fire. This is not eternal punishment but victory of God's people and defeat of God's enemies.

**Great white throne** - is not the literal judgment day before which all men must appear one day. This is just like Daniel 7:9-12 where Rome (the fourth kingdom) is judged.

**Second resurrection** - the beast's worshippers are raised. The servants of God are not because they were raised 1000 years earlier (in the vision).

In this vision the devil is bound 1000 years to show how he was totally defeated in his war against the church using Rome. He is loosed a little while because after Rome there would be other attempts and they would meet the same fate. Victory is presented by the vision of saints (living ones and raised ones) reigning and judging in perfect [complete] victory. This chapter says complete victory of the church and complete defeat for Satan and the church persecuting Roman Empire.

<p>In the persecution by Rome some Christians die. They sit on thrones and judge for 1000 years</p> <p>The martyrs are raised to reign with Christ for 1000 years</p>	<p>Satan is defeated in his attempt to destroy the church using the Roman Empire</p> <p>Rome goes under and disappears</p> <p>Future attempts by Satan using other nations will also fail</p> <p>Satan is destroyed</p>	<p>In the vision's battle between good and evil all who serve the beast are killed</p> <p>These remain dead for 1000 years</p> <p>After 1000 years the dead servants of the beast are raised, only to be judged and destroyed in the lake of fire.</p>
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[en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Postmillennialism](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Postmillennialism)

The term "millennium" does not occur in English translation. It is from a Latin word meaning a thousand years. The various interpretations are:

**Premillennialists** take it that Christ's kingdom has not yet been established and that his second literal and bodily coming to earth will precede its establishment, after which he will reign for a thousand years before the end of history.

**Dispensationalists** believe that Israel is distinct from the Church, and that God will establish a millennial kingdom in Israel where Christ, upon His return, will rule the world from Jerusalem for a thousand years

**Postmillennialists** believe Christ's kingdom was established as a sequel to his first coming, that the millennium will be a golden age of the kingdom lasting till near the end of history and after which Christ will come a second time at the end of history.

**Amillennialists** do not accept any of these theories, but for various reasons. Some of them believe that no time element at all is symbolized by the thousand years, but simply the completeness of the victory of Christ and his saints over Satan and all his agents.

Various other social and political movements, both religious and secular, have also been linked to millennialist metaphors

The first clear opponent of premillennialism associated with Christianity was Marcion (85-160 AD). Marcion opposed the use of the Old Testament and most books of the New Testament that were not written by the apostle Paul. He was the first great heretic who broke drastically with the faith of the early church

in abandoning the doctrine of the imminent, personal return of Christ. Marcion did not believe in a real incarnation, and consequently there was no logical place in his system for a real Second Coming. He expected the majority of mankind to be lost denying the validity of the Old Testament and its Law. Other pre-Nicean premillennialists were Irenaeus, Justin, Theophilus, Tertullian, and Hippolytus of Rome.

[en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Premillennialism](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Premillennialism)

## **REVELATION 21**

### **New Jerusalem Descends from Heaven**

#### The Faithful Church Is Triumphant

**New heaven and new earth** - The situation of the Christians is now "new." In 20:11 we saw the heaven and earth fleeing away from the presence of God. This is the apocalyptic description of God's attack on the world of the unrighteous. See Isaiah 13:6-22; 2 Peter 2:5; 3:6; Isaiah 34:1-17; Nahum 1:1-5 and Zephaniah 1:2f. The language of God's judgment on a nation is to dismantle that nation's world. The language of blessing on a nation then is the opposite. He makes all things new. He gives them a new heaven and a new earth for his people to live in. A new heaven and a new earth is a new situation, environment or state of affairs. Read Isaiah 65:1ff and see that a new heaven and new earth for Jerusalem was rejoicing and joy.

**The sea is no more** - the whole Roman world (from which the beast arose) is gone.

**The holy city, New Jerusalem** - The church, the Lamb's bride.

**Coming down out of heaven** - The church's origin is heavenly and divine. Beasts who came up out of the earth stressed that they were of human origin. (See Revelation 13 and Daniel 7)

**The bride adorned** - She is not dirty, bloodstained and beaten but rather pure, innocent and joyful.

**Wipe away every tear** - The past (and immediate) troubles of the church have passed away. Compare to Isaiah. 14:3; 30:19; 35:9 and 25:8.

**Death will be no more** - Rome will make no more martyrs.

**Bride of Christ** - This is a figurative description of the church, present, faithful and victorious. This is not heaven but the church that has come down from heaven (divine origin). She glows with a heavenly glory.

**Wall** - She's protected, safe and secure.

**Twelve foundations** - The church built on the foundation of the twelve apostles. Ephesians 2:20 (the church is built on what they taught).

**Measure the city** - to stress her holiness and glory (see Ezekiel 42:20). This is a cube (foursquare) like the Jewish temple was a cube. This is the city where God dwells, not Babylon where sin dwells. Ezekiel was told to measure the temple (43:10-12) "that the house of Israel may be ashamed of their iniquities make known the form of the house ... so they may keep the form of it and all the ordinances." The measurement speaks about holiness. Its size says "glory and security" also, 1500 miles high, wide and broad.

**Wall of jasper...** - the church is precious

**No temple** - the church is the temple of God.

**No need of the sun** - spiritually illuminated.

**The nations walk in her light** - If this is eternity, then where do the nations come from? All the unsaved in this vision went to the lake of fire. The church is the light-bearer, in her lies the hope of the nations, the church that was despised and beaten down now sits on a hill.

**Gates never shut** - This is security, no night where the gates had to be closed to keep out the raiders.

**Nothing unclean** - The only people allowed to enter the church are holy ones (purified by the blood of Jesus).

This is a picture of the triumphant church in history, not eternity (although the truths here will continue into eternity, only more vivid). It is not the church in heaven. It still shines among the nations and brings light to those who walk in darkness. The faithful church is victorious, glorious, secure, joyful, pure and evangelistic. This describes the faithful church in any age.

## **REVELATION 22**

### **A Warning and An Invitation**

**River of water of life** - In John 4, Jesus used this figure for all the blessings, which flow to God's children. In John 7:37-39, Jesus uses the figure to refer to the Holy Spirit. It is clear in scripture that Christians partake of the water of life already. We don't have to wait until eternity to drink it. See in Ezekiel 47:1-12 that this is a picture of blessedness that God provided for the righteous, that flow from God through the righteous to the barren and dead places of the world.

**The throne of God and the Lamb** - This is where the mercy and authority of God are combined. If it were eternity, it would be after the Lamb had delivered the throne back up to God (1 Corinthians 15:24 ff).

**Leaves of the tree** – The church's offering to the nations that brings spiritual healing is called evangelism. The faithful, victorious, glorious, blessed church evangelizes. May we be that church today! **See His face** - closeness of communion between God and His church

**Reign forever** - Revelation 5:10 states this kingdom of priests reign on the earth. Live or die, the saints reign.

**Seal not the words of this prophecy** - Daniel was told to seal his vision because the time of fulfillment was distant (about 400 years - Daniel 8:26). This vision was not to be sealed because the time of fulfillment was near.

**Let the unrighteous do unrighteousness** - This is not encouraging men to do wrong but stating that people act according to character.

**Right to the tree of life** - The tree of life is in the city and only the faithful live there. The right is a privilege granted to those who belong to Jesus but that right can be taken from the saint. This is not talking about eternity and "once saved always saved" is not biblical. Revelation 2:10 promises the crown of life to those who are faithful unto death. To the overcomer Jesus promised, "I will not blot out his name from the Book of Life" (Revelation 3:5). It is implied that those who fall away will have their name blotted out of the Book of Life.

**Plagues added** - How could those who have tampered with this book from the day it was written be subjected to the plagues written in this book? There are only three possibilities:

- 1) All the dead tamperers will be resurrected so they can live through the tribulation period when the Plagues are fulfilled.
- 2) All the dead tamperers will suffer these same plagues when they are in eternity (this requires nuclear war on earth, resurrection of a Red Chinese army, mutant locusts, oceans and rivers turned to blood, resurrection of Gog and Magog, etc.
- 3) The tamperers will not be plagued with the plagues written in this book. (This requires that the plagues be a figurative presentation of God's judgments on the wicked or else His threat was an idle one).

## A SUMMARY OF THE BOOK

"The central thrust of the book is comfort and assurance of ultimate triumph. In its unique way, the book told of a coming and terrible storm. We saw that the heart of the universe is a heavenly throne! God and the Lamb rule - not Italy. We saw the seals reveal, the trumpets warn and the bowls punish in a full and complete way. We saw the saints sealed against the coming fury upon the ungodly; saw the world, piece by piece, attacked; her seas were bloodied as were her water supplies; her commerce was ruined and her armies defeated while their property was invaded; her gods were punished while her society ran riot in decadence. We saw the Church under the heel of the oppressor and the Witnesses preach in sackcloth, with death awaiting them. But we saw the **inner sanctuary** hold and the Witnesses loyally preach and, after death, be vindicated in resurrection. We saw the people of God in a wilderness, but saw them nourished while the Devil is impotent on earth and in heaven. We saw Rome go under in blood and fire and smoke. Rome is seen in all her apocalyptic manifestations from the civil persecution sea beast to the religious pervert, the earth beast. And the God of all power broils the sea beast; and the seductive power of a commercially successful Rome (Harlot) is set on fire by no man's hand and burns like Nero's fire never did - eternally and thoroughly. We saw the end of Rome pictured in the battle of Armageddon and heard the Serpent thresh as he was bound and salted away for a thousand years, while the saints, living and dead, sat enthroned with their Lord! We saw the full story told of those who died in the service of the beast. They were raised to no thrones but to die one more time, finally, in a lake of fire. We hear from God, through the "little time" of loosing the Devil, that all attempts by the Devil are doomed to failure, anytime and anywhere. And then we saw the picture of the Church of God. Consecrated in her service; glorious and honored in her reputation and appearance; unbeatable in her strength; intimate in her communion; a blessing to the world and beloved of her Lord. HER FUTURE SECURE AND HER TRIUMPHS ETERNAL!"

(Copied from REVELATION by Jim McGuigan, Looking into the Bible Series, International Bible Resources, Lubbock, Texas, 1976.)

## An Unorthodox Interpretation of Revelation

By Randolph Dunn

### Chapter 1 Background

#### John the Apostle

Domitian was a believer in prophetic omens and insisted on calling himself a god. In about 86 AD a temple to Domitian was built in Ephesus. John's opposition to emperor worship, in addition to his continued preaching of the Gospel of Christ, ultimately reached the ear of Domitian and prompted him to take action. In 94 AD the elderly John the Apostle was exiled to the island of Patmos. ([drivethruhistoryadventures.com/john-exiled-to-patmos](http://drivethruhistoryadventures.com/john-exiled-to-patmos))

The apostle John was later freed, possibly due to old age, and he returned to what is now Turkey. He died as an old man sometime after AD 98. ([gotquestions.org/apostle-John-die.html](http://gotquestions.org/apostle-John-die.html))

With Eusebius and others, we are obliged to place the Apostle's banishment to Patmos in the reign of the Emperor Domitian (81-96). After Domitian's death the Apostle returned to Ephesus during the reign of Trajan, and at Ephesus he died about AD 100 at a great age. (Church History III.13.1)

[\(puritanboard.com/threads/apostle-john-polycarp-and-patmos.79254/\)](http://puritanboard.com/threads/apostle-john-polycarp-and-patmos.79254/)

### **Jesus of Nazareth**

Jesus, as described in the New Testament, was most likely crucified on Friday April 3, 33 AD. The latest investigation, reported in the journal “International Geology Review,” focused on earthquake activity at the Dead Sea, located 13 miles from Jerusalem. Matthew 27, mentions that an earthquake coincided with the crucifixion: “And when Jesus had cried out again in a loud voice, he gave up his spirit. At that moment the curtain of the temple was torn in two from top to bottom. The earth shook, the rocks split and the tombs broke open.”

[\(livescience.com/20605-jesus-crucifixion.html\)](http://livescience.com/20605-jesus-crucifixion.html)

### **Saul of Tarsus – Paul**

“While they were stoning him, Stephen prayed, ‘Lord Jesus, receive my spirit.’ Then he fell on his knees and cried out, ‘Lord, do not hold this sin against them.’ When he had said this, he fell asleep, (died). And Saul was there, giving approval to his death.

“On that day a great persecution broke out against the church at Jerusalem, and all except the apostles were scattered throughout Judea and Samaria. Godly men buried Stephen and mourned deeply for him. But Saul began to destroy the church. Going from house to house, he dragged off men and women and put them in prison.” (Acts 7:59-8:3)

The exact details of St. Paul's death are unknown, but tradition holds that he was beheaded in Rome and thus died as a martyr for his faith. His death was perhaps part of the executions of Christians ordered by the Roman emperor Nero following the great fire in the city in 64 CE (Christian Era same as 64 AD).

[\(britannica.com/biography/Saint-Paul-the-Apostle\)](http://britannica.com/biography/Saint-Paul-the-Apostle)

### **Nero (54–68)**

With the murder of the emperor Gaius, in 41 AD Claudius became emperor (41-54). Since the Jews were continually making disturbances at the instigations of Chrestus, he [Claudius] expelled them from Rome. So writes the Roman historian Suetonius about events in Rome around 52 AD. “Chrestus” may have been a thorn in the side of Roman politicians anxious to be rid of him and his cohorts. Or “Chrestus” may be the way uninformed bureaucrats pronounced the name Christus about which Jews argued. Such arguments between Jews and Christians were not unknown; e.g., in Ephesus. (Acts 19)

Claudius likely and inadvertently was the first emperor to persecute Christians (who were perceived as a Jewish sect) —for, it seems, disturbing the peace. The plotting Agrippina, managed to convince her husband, Claudius, to adopt her son Nero and put him, ahead of Claudius’ own son, first in line for the throne. Maternal concern not satisfied, she then murdered Claudius, and Nero ruled the world at age 17, ruling from 54 AD to 68 AD when the Senate sentenced him to death for treason.

Nero, a man with light blue eyes, thick neck, protruding stomach, and spindly legs, was a crazed and cruel emperor, a pleasure-driven man who ruled the world by whim and fear. He eventually had his mother stabbed to death for treason and his wife Octavia beheaded for adultery. He then had Octavia’s head displayed for his mistress, Poppaea, whom years later he kicked to death when she was pregnant.

During the night of July 18, 64 AD, fire broke out in the merchant area of the city of Rome. Fanned by summer winds, the flames quickly spread through the dry, wooden structures of the Imperial City. Soon the fire took on a life of its own consuming all in its path for six days and seven nights. When the conflagration finally ran its course, it left seventy percent of the city in smoldering ruins.

Rumors soon arose accusing the Emperor Nero of ordering the torching of the city and standing on the summit of the Palatine playing his lyre as flames devoured the world around him.

These rumors have never been confirmed. In fact, Nero rushed to Rome from his palace in Antium (Anzio) and ran about the city all that first night without his guards directing efforts to quell the blaze. But the rumors persisted and the Emperor looked for a scapegoat. He found it in the Christians, at that time a rather obscure religious sect with a small following in the city. To appease the masses, Nero literally had his victims fed to the lions during giant spectacles held in the city's remaining amphitheater.

From the ashes of the fire rose a more spectacular Rome. A city made of marble and stone with wide streets, pedestrian arcades and ample supplies of water to quell any future blaze. The debris from the fire was used to fill the malaria-ridden marshes that had plagued the city for generations.

The historian Tacitus wrote:

“Now started the most terrible and destructive fire which Rome had ever experienced. It began in the Circus, where it adjoins the Palatine and Caelian hills. Breaking out in shops selling inflammable goods, and fanned by the wind, the conflagration instantly grew and swept the whole length of the Circus. There were no walled mansions or temples, or any other obstructions, which could arrest it. First, the fire swept violently over the level spaces. Then it climbed the hills - but returned to ravage the lower ground again. It outstripped every counter-measure. The ancient city's narrow winding streets and irregular blocks encouraged its progress.

“Terrified, shrieking women, helpless old and young, people intent on their own safety, people unselfishly supporting invalids or waiting for them, fugitives and lingerers alike - all heightened the confusion. When people looked back, menacing flames sprang up before them or outflanked them. When they escaped to a neighboring quarter, the fire followed - even districts believed remote proved to be involved.

“Finally, with no idea where or what to flee, they crowded on to the country roads, or lay in the fields. Some who had lost everything - even their food for the day - could have escaped, but preferred to die. So did others, who had failed to rescue their loved ones. Nobody dared fight the flames. Attempts to do so were prevented by menacing gangs. Torches, too, were openly thrown in, by men crying that they acted under orders. Perhaps they had received orders. Or they may just have wanted to plunder unhampered.

“Nero was at Antium. He returned to the city only when the fire was approaching the mansion, he had built to link the Gardens of Maecenas to the Palatine.

“By the sixth day enormous demolitions had confronted the raging flames with bare ground and open sky, and the fire was finally stamped out at the foot of the Esquiline Hill. But before panic had subsided, or hope revived, flames broke out again in the more open regions of the city. Here there were fewer casualties; but the destruction of temples and pleasure arcades was even worse. This new conflagration caused additional ill-feeling for people believed that Nero was ambitious to found a new city to be called after himself.”

("The Burning of Rome, 64 AD," EyeWitness to History, - eyewitnesstohistory.com (1999). References: Duruy, Victor, History of Rome vol. V (1883); Grant, Michael (translator), Tacitus, The Annals of Imperial Rome, (1989)

Nero tried to pin the blame for that fire on the city's small Christian community (regarded as a distinct, dissident group of Jews), and so, appropriately, he burned many of them alive. Peter and Paul were said to have been martyred as a result. But the rumors persisted that Nero had sung his own poem "The Sack of Troy" (he did not "fiddle") while enjoying the bright spectacle he had ignited. That business about singing was not unreasonable, for Nero had for years made a fool of himself by publicly playing the lyre and singing before, literally, command performances.  
(christianhistoryinstitute.org/magazine/article/persecution-in-early-church-gallery)

Christians were first, and horribly, targeted for persecution as a group by the emperor Nero in 64 AD. A colossal fire broke out at Rome, and destroyed much of the city. Rumours abounded that Nero himself was responsible. He certainly took advantage of the resulting devastation of the city, building a lavish private palace on part of the site of the fire. Perhaps to divert attention from the rumours, Nero ordered that Christians should be rounded up and killed. Some were torn apart by dogs, others burnt alive as human torches.  
(bbc.co.uk/history/ancient/romans/christianityromanempire\_article\_01.shtml#one)

In the fall of AD 66 the Jews combined in revolt, expelled the Romans from Jerusalem, and overwhelmed in the pass of Beth-Horon a Roman punitive force under Gallus, the imperial legate in Syria. A revolutionary government was then set up and extended its influence throughout the whole country. In response, the Emperor Nero dispatched an army under the generalship of Vespasian to restore order. He was joined by Titus, and together the Roman armies entered Galilee. In 9 June 68, Emperor Nero reportedly committed suicide and plunged Rome into a year of civil war.

### **Vespasian (69–79)**

By the year 68, resistance in the northern part of the province (area of Galilee) had been eradicated and the Romans turned their full attention to the subjugation of Jerusalem. That same year, the Emperor Nero died by his own hand, creating a power vacuum in Rome. In the resultant chaos, Vespasian was declared Emperor and returned to the Imperial City. It fell to his son, Titus, to lead the remaining army in the assault on Jerusalem.

### **Titus (79–81)**

Titus with the Roman legions surrounded Jerusalem and began to slowly squeeze the life out of the Jewish stronghold. By the year 70 AD, the attackers had breached Jerusalem's outer walls and began a systematic ransacking of the city. The assault culminated in the burning and destruction of the Temple that served as the center of Judaism.

In victory, the Romans slaughtered thousands. Of those spared from death: thousands were enslaved and sent to toil in the mines of Egypt, others were dispersed to arenas throughout the Empire to be butchered for the amusement of the public. The Temple's sacred relics were taken to Rome where they were displayed in celebration of the victory.

The rebellion sputtered on for another three years and was finally extinguished in 73 AD with the fall of the various pockets of resistance including the stronghold at Masada.

### **Domitian (81–96)**

The bulk of traditional sources date the book (Revelation) to the reign of the Roman emperor Domitian (AD 81–96), which evidence tends to confirm.  
Stuckenbruck 2003, pp. 1535–1536  
(en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Book\_of\_Revelation)

The historian Pliny called Domitian the beast from hell who sat in its den, licking blood. In the Book of Revelation, John of the Apocalypse may have referred to Domitian when he described a beast from the abyss who blasphemes heaven and drinks the blood of the saints.

Suetonius, who hated Domitian, had to admit that “he took such care to exercise restraint over the city officials and provincial governors that at no time were these more honest or just.”

But there was something wrong with Domitian. He enjoyed catching flies and stabbing them with a pen. He liked to watch gladiatorial fights between women and dwarfs. And during his reign he was so suspicious of plots against his life, the number of imperial spies and informers proliferated, as did the number of casualties among suspect Roman officials.

Domitian was the first emperor to have himself officially titled in Rome as “God the Lord.” He insisted that other people hail his greatness with acclamations like “Lord of the earth,” “Invincible,” “Glory,” “Holy,” and “Thou Alone.”

When he ordered people to give him divine honors, Jews, and no doubt Christians, balked. The resulting persecution of Jews is well-documented; that of Christians is not. However, the beast that the author of Revelation describes, as well as the events in the book, are perhaps best interpreted as hidden allusions to the rule of Domitian. In addition, Flavius Clemens, consul in 95, and his wife, Flavia Domitilla, were executed and exiled, respectively, by Domitian’s orders; many historians suspect this was because they were Christians.

### **Trajan (98–117)**

According to Pliny the Second, who saw thousands of Christians being put to death daily, moved with pity wrote Trajan, certifying that these people did nothing against the Roman law worthy of death. Nothing was done in their defense.

**Comment:** If John was released from Patmos during Trajan’s reign, then the events “must soon take place” in Revelation would begin sometime after Domitian’s death.

Ignatius of Antioch (c. 35-110) during the rule of Domitian, Ignatius as bishop ruled over the church in Antioch, wrote and taught contrary to the teachings of the New Testament; e.g.,

- a.) In Like Manner let all reverence the deacons as an appointment of Jesus Christ, and the bishop as Jesus Christ, who is the Son of the Father, and the presbyters as the Sanhedrin of God, and assembly of the apostles. Apart from these, there is no Church" (*Ignatius to the Thrallians* III).
- b.) Christians are not to do anything without “the Bishop’s” approval. (*Ignatius to the Thrallians* II).

Polycarp (c. 69-ca155)

Within this same period of time Polycarp attempted to convince the Bishop of Rome, Anicetus, to celebrate Easter.

### **Marcus Aurelius Antoninus (138– 180)**

Although he had noble principles, Marcus Aurelius persecuted the Christians for fear they would destroy the state. It was during this time period that Polycarp of Smyrna was martyred.

**Severus (193 – 211)**

Severus, having recovered from a severe fit of sickness thru a Christian, favored Christians in general: But because of the prejudice and fury of the multitude against them and their alarming growth it caused the pagans to panic. The persecutions started. Tertullian, who lived during this time period, informs us that if the Christians had collectively withdrawn themselves from the Roman territories, the empire would have greatly depopulated.

**Maximus (235–238)**

In some provinces everything was done to exterminate all Christians. Numberless Christians were slain without trial and buried indiscriminately in heaps sometimes fifty or sixty being cast into a pit together, without the least decency.

**Decius (249–251)**

This persecution was brought on because of Decius's hatred for his predecessor Phillip, a Christian and partly by his jealousy concerning the amazing increase of Christianity. Heathen temples began to be forsaken, and the Christian churches grew.

**Valerian (253–260)**

The martyrs that fell during this time period were innumerable and their tortures were various and painful. Neither rank, gender, nor age were regarded.

**Aurelian (274–287)**

Aurelian strengthened the position of the Sun god Sol Invictus as the main divinity of the Roman pantheon. His intention was to give to all the peoples of the Empire, civilian or soldiers, easterners or westerners, a single god they could believe in without betraying their own gods. ... During his short rule, Aurelian seemed to follow the principle of "one faith, one empire", which would not be made official until the Edict of Thessalonica. He appears with the title *deus et dominus natus* ("God and born ruler"). ... He was recorded by Christian historians as having organized persecutions.  
en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Aurelian

**Diocletian (292– 304)**

The Diocletianic persecution was the last and most severe persecution of Christians in the Roman Empire. In 303, the Emperors Diocletian, Maximian, Galerius, and Constantius issued a series of edicts rescinding Christians' legal rights and demanding that they comply with traditional religious practices. Later edicts targeted the clergy and demanded universal sacrifice, ordering all inhabitants to sacrifice to the gods.

en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Diocletianic\_Persecution

**Maximian 286 to 305.**

He shared the latter title with his co-emperor and superior, Diocletian, whose political brain complemented Maximian's military brawn.

**Constantius I (305 to 306)**

A Roman emperor who ruled as *Caesar* and as *Augustus* and was the junior colleague of the *Augustus* Maximian under the Tetrarchy.

(en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List\_of\_Roman\_emperors#The\_Dominate)

**Galerius (305 to 311)**

He campaigned across the Danube against the Carpi, defeating them in 297 and 300. Although he was a staunch opponent of Christianity, he issued an Edict of Toleration in 311.

**Comment:** Diocletian and these three emperors were related by blood or marriage.

**Land of the Goths Invaded by the Huns**

The Huns were a group of Eurasian nomads, appearing from east of the Volga, (river in Russia). The **Huns** attacked the **Visigoths** (the western tribe of **Goths**) around 376 AD.

In the aftermath of this event, several groups of Goths came under Hunnic domination, while others migrated further west or sought refuge inside the Roman Empire. (en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Goths)

An unmanageable numbers of Goths and other non-Roman people, fleeing from the Huns, entered the Empire by crossing the Danube. At the Battle of Adrianople in 378 they inflicted a devastating defeat upon the Romans.

#### **Attila the Hun (406–453)**

Attila was the ruler of the Huns from 434 AD until his death in March 453 AD. He was also the leader of a tribal empire in Central and Eastern Europe consisting of Huns, Ostrogoths, Alans and Bulgars, among others,.

Italy had suffered from a terrible famine in 451 AD and her crops were faring little better in 452 AD. Attila's devastating invasion of the plains of northern Italy this year did not improve the harvest. To advance on Rome would have required supplies which were not available in Italy, and taking the city would not have improved Attila's supply situation. Therefore, it was more profitable for Attila to conclude peace and retreat to his homeland. (en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Attila)

The Western Roman Empire officially ended 4 September 476 CE, when Emperor Romulus Augustulus was deposed by the Germanic King Odoacer. (google.com/search?client=firefox-b-1-d&q=end+of+the+roman+empire)

#### **Summary of Background for Revelation**

The Apostle John was around 26 years old, probably 6 years younger than Peter, when the Apostles on Pentecost Day began teaching the Gospel of Christ. Not long afterwards Stephen was stoned to death with Saul of Tarsus consenting. As a result, many Christian left Jerusalem and Judea.

Christ called Paul to be His apostle to the Gentiles. He suffered greatly at the hands of the Jews and Pagan Gentiles. He wrote several letters to encourage faithfulness. Many believe Nero had Paul executed following the burning of Rome which occurred in 64 AD, the same year the Jerusalem Jews began their rebellion against Rome. The Jews apparently holding power in Jerusalem from AD 66 till April AD 70 when a few days before Passover, [Titus](#) began his siege that continued for five months. It ended when the Romans burned the temple with all the genealogical records. No longer could the Jews identify who could be their legitimate High Priest. (google.com/search?client=firefox-b-1-d&q=destruction+of+Jerusalem)

About 30 years after the destruction of Jerusalem and Paul's last letter to the churches in Asia Minor John wrote Revelation to the Churches in Asia.

#### **Recap:**

- a. Paganism with its Imperial cult was the religion of the empire
- b. Diocletian consider himself a god as did others following him.
- c. Christians recognized the emperor as the supreme ruler of the empire, but not God
- d. Pagan priest and Roman officials considered Christians to be rebellious subject to be punished. Therefore, Diocletian banished John to Patmos.
- e. Christians in the seven churches of Asia were probably mostly former pagans who had not completely rejected and discarded all their pagan practices.
- f. There were chief shepherds (bishops) in the churches who dominated their teachings and practices.
- g. Persecution continued to increase with each new emperor until Diocletian – considered the worst.
- h. God is patient waiting for the conversion of more pagans and the repentance of wayward Christians.
- i. John delivers God's message of things that "must soon take place" or "shortly come to pass" - sometime after 100 AD.

## Chapter 2

### To the Christians Living in Asia Minor

#### The Immediate Audience

These Christians knew what was occurring in their area and that God must also be aware of their plight and suffering. John wrote to the churches in:

1. **Ephesus** – You removed yourself from Christ who died for your forgiveness – abandon and fallen from His love and mercy.
2. **Smyrna** – Be strong the Devil is bringing more persecution
3. **Pergamum** – You have not denied Me; but you accept teachings that cause your brethren to stumble.
4. **Thyatira** – You accept the pagan practice of fornication and honor their gods by worshiping them when you participate in the eating of their sacrifices.
5. **Sardis** – You are dead since you have ceased doing God's will. Pagans accept you as their brethren.
6. **Philadelphia** – You have kept and do My will. Therefore, there are many who will listen to My message. So, take advantage of the door I have opened for you.
7. **Laodicea** – You are apathetic, have no feelings for Me – you just don't care anymore about your salvation.  
(Revelation 2 & 3)

## Chapter 3

### Heaven's Door Opened

While in the spirit John is invited to enter into God's presence through Heaven's open door. Here John sees things that would soon take place. God the supreme ruler of the universe is on His throne with a scroll of His decrees in His hand which He gave to Christ, the ruler of the Kingdom of God on earth.

John witnesses as the Root of David, the Son of God, opens the seven sealed scrolls and observes what will occur when the trumpets sound and Christ executes God's decrees on those who wage war against His Church.

1<sup>st</sup> seal – A foreign enemy is ready to attack, war is coming

2<sup>nd</sup> seal – Peace is removed - internal strife begins

3<sup>rd</sup> seal – War and strife bring famine

4<sup>th</sup> seal – War, strife and famine result in death.

5<sup>th</sup> seal – Righteous souls in Heaven plead for justice

6<sup>th</sup> seal – Time is ready for the wrath of the Lamb - upheaval of Paganism and its Emperor worship - the rich and powerful, rulers of kingdoms of earth, will try to hid from God.

A great multitude of righteous souls, from the beginning of time, who have been cleansed by Christ atoning sacrifice, shout with loud voices SALVATION belongs to God and the Lamb - these souls are in Heaven not in Hades.

John had witnessed what was going to occur in a short time, God is giving time to change. Now, John will observe Christ executing God's judgment against paganism who used earthly rulers in their attempt to destroy God's Kingdom on earth.

God through John uses many symbols to refer to His righteous judgment in chapters 8 through 18. Many Bible scholars, teachers and serious students have offered different understandings and interpretations without any solid evidence, with few agreeing. Each generation appears to offer different interpretations of these symbolism with some referring to world leaders of their generation; e.g., Pope of Rome, Hitler, Saddam Hussain, Stalin

7<sup>th</sup> seal – Silence occurs for a short time, the “calm before a storm.” Time has come for Christ to execute God's judgment to those who have waged war against his kingdom on earth.

The trumpet sound is the call to action - battle

- a. **First trumpet** – commerce by highways disrupted -causing fear and lack of food
- b. **Second trumpet** – commerce by sea disrupted
- c. **Third trumpet** – commerce by rivers disrupted
- d. **Fourth trumpet** – God's universal power displayed as major changes are about to occur
  - 1) Governments and their leaders will be unable to retain their great power over nations and people.
  - 2) Armies would wage war killing multitudes. Those left still refuses to cease their pagan practices of idol and demon worship.
- e. **Fifth trumpet** – a spirit being removed from heaven and given key to harm non-Christian people

- f. **Sixth trumpet** – an invasion from the east bound by Euphrates, a river which extends from northern Turkey to Persian Gulf.
- g. **Seventh trumpet** – the end of Rome and Paganism.

## Chapter 4

# The End of the Roman Empire

In AD 325, Constantine called together the Council of Nicaea, in an attempt to unify the empire by a state religion. Constantine envisioned Christianity as a state religion that could unite the Roman Empire, which at that time was beginning to fragment and divide. Constantine refused to fully embrace the Christian faith and continued many of his pagan beliefs and practices, so the church that Constantine promoted was a mixture of Christianity and Roman paganism. “He (Constantine) kept his position as chief priest of the pagan state religion.” (Eternal Kingdom, F.W. Mattox, p. 127)

By blurring the differences and erasing the distinctions.

The following are four such instances.

- 1) Renaming their multiple gods, henotheism, to patron saints of cities to protect them.
- 2). An Egyptian mother-goddess religion, the Cult of Isis, was absorbed into Christianity by replacing Isis with Mary. Many of the titles that were used for Isis, such as “Queen of Heaven,” “Mother of God,” and “*theotokos*” (God-bearer) were attached to Mary. Mary was given an exalted role in the Christian faith, far beyond what the Bible ascribes to her, in order to attract Isis worshippers.
- 3) Mithraism was the de-facto official religion until Constantine and succeeding Roman emperors. One of the key features of Mithraism was a sacrificial meal, which involved eating the flesh and drinking the blood of a sacrificed bull. Constantine and his successors substituted this for the Lord’s Supper / Christian Communion.
- 4) Constantine, and his successors, gave their support to the bishop of Rome as the supreme ruler of his state church believing it is best for the unity of the Roman Empire that the government and state religion be centered in the same location. When the Roman Empire collapsed, the Roman Bishop took on the title that had previously belonged to the Roman emperor Constantine – Pontificus Maximus, (meaning high priest –but originally was the highest office in the polytheistic ancient Roman religion).

(From [ccl.org/s/schaff/history/3\\_ch01.htm](http://ccl.org/s/schaff/history/3_ch01.htm))

The Roman state church established by Constantine morphed into the Roman Catholic Church, a tragic compromise of Christianity with the pagan religions that surrounded it. Instead of proclaiming the Gospel and converting the pagans, the state Church just “Christianized” the pagan religions, and “paganized” Christianity. (GotQuestions.org)

In 476 C.E. Romulus, the last of the Roman emperors in the west, was overthrown by the Germanic leader Odoacer, who became the first Barbarian to rule in Rome thus ending the Roman Empire.

(From [ushistory.org/civ/6f.asp](http://ushistory.org/civ/6f.asp))

## **Chapter 5**

### **Righteous Souls in Heaven Rejoice**

Revelation 19 begins with great rejoicing of multitudes of forgiven righteous souls from Adam to the time of God's victory over paganism. Satan had used his earthly power over people and their desire for praise of men and earthly possessions.

Once again Heaven was opened. Christ clothed in a robe dripping with blood as King of Kings and Lord of Lords comes forth.

Satan's power is bound for a while. He will be allowed to try again, before the end of time, to destroy God's people before he is eternally bound. At which time God will execute his judgment against all who have refused to accept Christ as God. They will then be sentenced to everlasting punishment and sent to be with their father the Devil. However, the righteous will live with God forever and ever, eternal life, constantly worshipping God - offering Him their love, praise and honor.

You may also be interested in "The Revelation of Jesus Christ to His Servant John" by Joe McKinney which is available on [thebiblewayonline.com](http://thebiblewayonline.com) website.

## Chapter 6

### Beyond the Immediate Audience

The message of the Book of Revelation is “God is in control of all His creation.” It is not how or when one of His decrees were implemented. This unorthodox interpretation focuses on God’s “message” presented therein rather than a) events in their lives b) some Bible scholar’s interpretation c) or when the events of a symbolic language were or will be carried out.

With greater persecutions that were “soon to take place,” remaining faithful would be more difficult. So, God thought John encouraged the Christians in Asia Minor, the seven churches, to remain faithful and how to live pleasing to God. But, the message of Revelation goes beyond the time of the Roman Empire, the immediate audience.

Following the fall of the Roman Empire, the Catholic Church becoming more powerful, persecution would become severe again. By the 11th century, in the zeal of the Catholic Church to establish their altered version of Christ's kingdom, the Roman popes began utilizing a new tool -- the Crusades. At first, the Crusades had as their object the conquering of Jerusalem and the "Holy Land". Along the crusaders' paths, thousands of innocent civilians (especially Jews) were raped, robbed, and slaughtered.

Around 1200 AD Bible believing Christians began to challenge the Catholic Church’s official Bible interpretations, teachings and practices. They separated themselves from the Church of Rome, which they saw as apostate. Consequently, they were seen as a formidable potential threat. To eliminate this perceived threat the crusade concept was altered to crush spiritual opposition within Europe itself. In other words, armies were raised with the intent of massacring whole communities of Bible believing Christians.

Waldensians (around 1179)

The earliest Waldensians believed in **austerity, public preaching and the personal study of the scriptures**. The sect originated in the late 12th century as the *Poor Men of Lyons*, [France] a band organized by Peter Waldo, a wealthy merchant of Lyon, who gave away his property around 1177 and went about preaching apostolic poverty as the way to perfection. In 1179, they went to Rome, where Pope Alexander III blessed their life but forbade preaching without authorization from the local clergy. They disobeyed and began to preach according to their own understanding of scripture. Seen by the Roman Catholic Church as unorthodox, they were formally declared heretics beginning several centuries of persecution that nearly destroyed the sect.  
[en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Waldensian](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Waldensian)

Albigenses or Cathars (around 1200)

[Pope] Innocent III believed that Bible believing dissidents were worse than infidels (Saracens, Moslems, and Turks), for they threatened the unity of ... Europe. So Innocent III sponsored "crusades" to exterminate them. Pope Innocent (what a name!) called upon Louis VII to do his killing for him, and he also enjoined Raymond VI to assist him.

The Albigenses or Cathars in southern France were generally considered to be more highly educated and wealthier than others in France. They were labeled as heretics by the pope since they did not follow his edicts. They **owned and read their Bibles** which only priests were authorized to do. In the year 1209, the Catholic Church began its crusade against fellow Europeans Christian. They were referred to in Pope Innocent's Sunday morning messages as "servants of the old serpent". Innocent promised the killers a heavenly kingdom if they took up their swords against the unarmed populaces. The destruction of Catharism, which tended to run in families, was so complete that the Crusade is now considered by historians to be Europe’s first genocide.

In July of 1209 AD an army of orthodox Catholics, probably part of the Cathars crusade attacked the city of Beziers, France and murdered 60,000 unarmed civilians, killing men, women, and children. The whole city was sacked, and when someone complained that Catholics were being killed as well as "heretics", the papal legates told them to go on killing and not to worry about it for "the Lord knows His own."

Persecution did not cease after the crusades ended. For in the 1500-1600's people were put to death for translating the Bible into the language of the masses, for owning or even reading the Bible. In the distant audience of today there is persecution all around the world, such as in China and the countries of the middle east.

Insisting on either a personal or trusted teacher's interpretation as absolute truth that must be obeyed to be in fellowship with God and man is very dangerous. In fact, one's opinion will probably change as they continue to acquire additional knowledge.

Each Christian, even when their brethren do not, needs to study God's word, live accordingly by practicing His instructions. If they do not, then soon their entire congregation will follow the types of congregations represented by seven churches of Asia.

1. One religious belief is as good as another.
2. Faithful to the end.
3. Little concern about the truth.
4. Willing to accept as truth whatever is taught having little or no desire to seek for the truth.
5. A do-nothing church.
6. Looking for opportunity to serve God
7. A social church.