

The
Revelation
Of
Jesus Christ

By Cecil N. Wright

OUTLINE: The Revelation of Jesus Christ 22 Chapters

I. PROLOGUE: Christ Communicating (1: 1-8)

**II. VISION ONE: Christ in the Church;
The Living One – Place: Patmos (1:9 - 3:22)**

**III. VISION TWO: Christ in the Universe;
The Redeemer – Place: Heaven (4:1 - 16:21).**

**IV. VISION THREE: Christ in Conquest;
The Warrior – Place: Wilderness (17:1 - 21:8).**

V. EPILOGUE: Christ Challenging (22:6-21).

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OUTLINE The Revelation of Jesus Christ 22 Chapters

I. PROLOGUE: Christ Communicating (1: 1-8)

1. Forward (vs. 1-3).
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II. VISION ONE: Christ in the Church; The Living One – Place: Patmos (1:9 - 3:22)

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 - e. To Sardis (3:1-6) – a dead church, except for a faithful few.
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 - e. Fifth seal: souls of martyrs under the altar (6:9-11) – cf. 20:4-6.
 - f. Sixth seal: great earthquake (6:12-17).
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 - (2) Tribulation saints in heaven (7:9-17).
 - h. Seventh seal: preparation for seven trumpets (8:1-6).
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 - c. Third trumpet: a falling star (8:10-11).

- d. Fourth trumpet: darkening of sun, moon, and stars (8:10-11).
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 - f. Sixth trumpet (second woe): four angels at river Euphrates released, and a mighty, devastating Calvary appearing (9:13-20).
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 - (1) Little open book (10:1-11).
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- a. Seven angels with seven last plagues (another sign in heaven) – song of victors over beast – preparation of pouring out the plagues (15:1-16:1).
 - b. First plague: sores on men (16:2).
 - c. Second plague: sea turned to blood (16:3).
 - d. Third plague: rivers and fountains of water turned to blood (16:4-7).
 - e. Fourth plague: scorching heat from the sun (16:8-9).
 - f. Fifth plague: darkness (16:10-11).

- g. Sixth plague: river Euphrates dried up to allow crossing of the kings from the east, and unclean spirits going forth from the beast and false prophet to recruit them for the BATTLE OF ARMEGEDON (16:12-16).
- h. Seventh plague: great earthquake and consummation of fury upon BABYLON (16:17-21).

IV. VISION THREE: Christ in Conquest; The Warrior – Place: Wilderness (17:1 - 21:8).

1. BABYLON destroyed (17:1 - 19:10).
 - a. Babylon seen as a great harlot sitting on a scarlet beast – shown to John by one of the angels with the seven last plagues (17:1-6).
 - b. Mystery of the harlot and beast explained by the same angel (17:7- 18).
 - c. Doom of Babylon announced by another angel from heaven (18:1- 3).
 - d. Another voice from heaven heard (18:4-20).
 - (1) Issuing a call to come out of Babylon and share not in her plagues (vs.4-8).
 - (2) Describing the lament of the world over the fall of Babylon (vs.9-19)
 - (3) Calling on heaven and apostles and prophets to rejoice because of Babylon’s judgment (v.20).
 - e. Babylon’s doom symbolically portrayed by a strong angel casting as it were a millstone into the sea (18:21-28).
 - f. Exultation heard in heaven (19:1-8).
 - (1) Multitude praising God for his judgment (vs.1-4).
 - (2) A voice coming from the throne and calling praise to God from all his servants (v. 5).
 - (3) A voice, coming as it were from a great multitude, praising God and announcing the coming MARRIAGE OF THE LAMB (vs.6-8) – anticipating (21:9 - 22:5), with the events of Chapter 20 seeming to intervene.
 - g. Someone speaking to John (evidently an angel), refusing to be worshipped and instructing him to record the blessedness of those invited to the marriage feast (19:9-10).
2. Beast and false prophet overthrown (19:11-21 – in Battle of Armageddon and final fury upon Babylon (19:12-21)?

- a. Crowned, warrior appearing in heaven, followed by armies of heaven, who will smite the nations and rule with a rod of iron (19:11-16).
 - b. Beast and false prophet defeated and cast alive into lake of fire (vs.17-20).
 - c. Those that had not received the mark of the beast or worshipped his image were killed with the sword that proceeded out of the mouth of the warrior from heaven (v.21) – possibly referring to conversions to Christ on a grand scale.
3. Satan bound and eventually overthrown (20:1-10).
- a. Satan bound 1,000 years (vs. 1-3) – result of Armageddon?
 - b. Soul of the martyrs and faithful reign with Christ during the 1,000 years Satan is bound – the first resurrection (vs. 4-6).
 - c. Satan loosed a little season, and leading a universal assault against the saints and the church, but defeated and cast into the lake of fire with the beast and false prophet (vs.7-10).
4. Last enemies destroyed in connection with general resurrection and judgment before the great white throne (20:11-15).
- a. Heaven and earth fled away, and no more place found for them (v.11) – cf. 2 Peter 3:10-13.
 - b. Dead, small and great, stand before God and are judged according to their works (v.12).
 - c. Sea, death, and Hades give up the dead in them (v.13) – cf. John 5:28-29; 1 Corinthians 15:20-23
 - d. Death and Hades cast into the lake of fire, which is the second death (v.14) – cf. 1 Corinthians 15:24-26.
 - e. Any not found written in book of life cast alive into the lake of fire (v.15).
5. New heaven and new earth seen for the righteous (21:1-8) – introductory to next vision; cf. 2 Peter 3:13.
- a. No more sea (v.1) – in which many had died, and was therefore a dreaded enemy – which also separated John from his brethren.
 - b. New Jerusalem, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband (v.2) cf. 19:6-10.
 - c. Tabernacle of God with men (v.3).
 - d. No more death, crying, or pain (v.4). \

- e. The ungodly excluded – their lot being the second death, in the lake of fire (vs.5-8).

V. EPILOGUE: Christ Challenging (22:6-21).

1. Challenges of Christ (vs.6-9).

- a. To obedience – an appeal to the will (vs.6-7).

- (1) John reporting what Christ said through angel (vs.6-7).

- (2) John reporting his own reaction and angel's response (vs.8-9).

- b. To receive reward – an appeal to the intellect (vs.10-15) – John reporting what Christ said through the angel.

- c. To fellowship – an appeal to the emotions (vs.16-20).

- (1) Christ speaking in person (vs. 16-20a).

- (2) John's response (v. 20b).

2. Benediction (v.20) – language of John.

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VOCABULARY OF CHAPTER 1

1. Revelation (v.1).

The Geek word is *apokalupsis*, from *apo*, from, and *kalupto*, to cover, cover up, or hide; hence, removal of the cover from, or uncovering, and therefore the revealing or revelation of something. In this case, it is a revelation that God gave to Christ for earthly recipients (v.11).

The verb form, *apokalupto*, always translated "reveal," occurs a total of 26 times in the New Testament. The noun form,

apokalupsis, anglicized as *apocalypse*, occurs 18 times, variously translated, as "revelation" (Romans 2:5; 16:25; 1 Corinthians 14:6,26; 2 Corinthians 12:1,7; Galatians 1:12; 2:2; Ephesians 1:7; 3:3; 1 Peter 1:13; Revelation 1:1); "be revealed" (2 Thessalonians 1:7; 1 Peter 4:13); "to lighten" (Luke 2:32); "manifestation" (Romans 8:19); "coming" (1 Corinthians 1:7); and "appearing" (1 Peter 1:7).

The words *apokalupto* and *apokalupsis* are therefore common in the New Testament vocabulary, without any specialized meaning unless possibly in Revelation 1:1. But between 200 B.C. and A.D. 200 a type of literature styled apocalyptic became fairly common. It was modeled more or less after the highly figurative and symbolical writings of Ezekiel and Daniel, and elements of Isaiah, Joel, and Zechariah, and occurring mostly in times of severe trial and apprehension, to comfort and encourage with assurances that God is in control and will give ultimate victory to their/his cause.

The Book of Revelation is the only inspired apocalypse of that period. Its exact date is disputed. The majority of scholars place it some time in the latter part of the reign of the Roman emperor Domitian, or between 90 and 96 A.D., but a minority have argued for the latter part of the reign of Nero, and not later than A.D. 68. This is done principally to be able to interpret a major portion of it as a prediction of the destruction of Jerusalem and the Jewish state. But if the later date is correct, obviously such an interpretation is inadmissible.

Not only various internal considerations, but early external testimony favors the later date.

According to Eusebius (A.D. 263-339), the father of church history, the tradition handed down was that during the persecution under Domitian the apostle John was banished to the island of Patmos but permitted to return to Ephesus under the reign of his successor, Nerva. He quotes Clement of Alexandria (who died A.D. 215) as speaking of John as, "after the tyrant was dead, coming from the isle of Patmos to Ephesus." He also quotes Irenaeus (A.D. 125-202) as speaking of John, "who saw the revelation, for it is not long since it was seen, but almost in our

own generation, at the close of Domitian's reign." (Eusebius, Ecclesiastical History, Book III, Chapters 17-18, 20, 23). This testimony of early antiquity would seem to be decisive, and gainsaid not for objective but for subjective reasons.

2. Shortly (v.1).

The Greek word is tachos, which also occurs in 22:6 and is there likewise translated "shortly". Elsewhere it is translated "quickly" (Acts 12:7; 22:18) and "speedily" (Luke 18:8). Obviously the word is a relative term and subject to a great deal of latitude, depending on the perspective of the speaker or writer.

In Revelation 22:6, "shortly" seems to cover the accomplishment of all the predictions of the book up to that point, which includes more than a thousand year segment of time after Chapter 19 and carries the readers to the consummation – to the end of all things of this earth and transition into eternity.

Also, in Luke 18:7-8, the text reads: "And shall not God avenge his elect, that cry unto him day and night, and yet he is longsuffering over them (or, as the margin renders it, slow to punish on their behalf)? I say unto you, that he will avenge them speedily. Nevertheless, when the Son of man cometh, shall he find faith on the earth?" The implication is that the avenging will be when the Son of man comes, presumably at the end of time on earth. Yet the word tachos, which in Revelation 1:1 and 22:6 is translated 'shortly,' is used also in this text and translated "speedily".

Again, in 2 Peter 3:8-9, we are admonished: "But forget not this one thing, beloved, that one day with the Lord is as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day. The Lord is not slack concerning his promise as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering to youward, not wishing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance." These words were spoken in regard to the coming of "the day of the Lord", when Jesus comes and "the earth and the works that are therein shall be burned up" (verses 10-13). From the Lord's perspective, is not slack

concerning his promises to be fulfilled "shortly" (*tachos*) – even if it seems so to men.

On the other hand, however, even from human perspective, the chain of events depicted in Revelation did begin "shortly", regardless of how long the consummation may take.

NOTE: A related Greek work, *tachu*, occurs in other chapters of Revelation – 2:5 (KJV), 16; 3:11; 11:14; 22:7,12,20 –each time translated "quickly". It is also employed elsewhere – in Matthew 5:25; 28:7,8; Mark 6:8; and John 11:39, and translated the same way. In Revelation it always refers to the coming of Christ, but not always to a personal coming, though likely in Chapter 22 it does.)

3. Signified (v.1).

This suggests a communication by means of signs and symbols – that it is signified. That is predominately what the Book of Revelation is. In 12:1 and 15:1, what John saw is specifically referred to in each instance as a "sign". (The word also occurs in the plural in 13:13, but does not refer to what John saw.) In 12:1 and 13:13, the King James Version has "wonder" and "wonders". Such, however, is an inexact translation, though in many instances signs were wonders. But there are other words more properly translated "wonder".

4. Prophecy (v.3).

The word "prophecy" denotes properly a divinely inspired communication, which the Book of Revelation is. It occurs also in Chapter 22:7, 10, 18, 19. In it are matters to be "kept" or observed – which would be exhortations or commands. Because prophecy oftentimes involved predictions, it has come to be popularly used almost exclusively of such. But that is not its basic meaning in the Bible. However, the Book of Revelation is itself primarily, though not exclusively, a predictive prophecy – namely, of things which "must shortly come to pass".

5. Cometh (v.7).

The Greek word here is *erchatai*, "futuristic present indicative of *erchommai*," to come, in the sense of arriving. In this text it is described as a visible coming, and a coming with clouds. It is as though Acts 1:9-11 was in mind, promising that Christ would come again in the same manner that he went away when ascending back to heaven, and a cloud received him out of the sight of his gazing disciples – which would make it a personal and visible return, with or upon a cloud or clouds. That there will be such a return at the end of time, is indicated in 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18, where the saints are described as being "caught up in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air".

A few have applied the "coming" of Revelation 1:7 to the destruction of Jerusalem, or to the overthrow of Rome – in either case a non-personal coming. That the "coming" of Christ is sometimes referred to in an invisible sense is evident from Ephesians 1:17, where it is stated that Christ "came and preached peace to you that were far off, and peace to them that were nigh" – that is, to Gentiles and Jews – a preaching done by his disciples, but at this direction. Also, in Matthew 16:28, we have Jesus saying, "verily I say unto you, there are some of them that stand here, who shall in no wise taste of death, till they see the Son of man coming in his kingdom" – evidently referring to Pentecost after his ascension back to heaven, when he came representatively in the person of the Holy Spirit and in the events of that day. Moreover, in Revelation 2:5, 16, 25; 3:3, 10, 20 it is evident that impersonal comings are intended – some of them stated as being conditional, whereas the personal coming of Christ at the end of the world will be unconditional.

It is not unlikely that all the comings of our Lord on, in, or with clouds, are references to his coming at the end of the world. His disciples asked him when the destruction of the temple would be and "what shall be the sign of thy coming and of the end of the world (Matthew 24:1-3) – thinking that those three events would be simultaneous or nearly so. Then he desabused their minds of the thought that his coming at the end of the world would be associated with the destruction of Jerusalem (vs. 4-14), which would occur before that generation had passed away (vs. 32-34). It would be "after" the tribulation of those days that the Son of man would be seen "coming with the clouds of heaven with power and

great glory" (vs. 29-30); Mark 13:24-27; Luke 21:25-28). He specifically excepted that occasion from "all these things" which were to occur within the lifetime of that generation, when Jerusalem and the temple would be destroyed.

That seems to make all references to our Lord's coming with the clouds to be of his coming at the end of the world, unless that of Revelation 1:7 is an exception – for which there seems no compelling reason to conclude. At the end of the world, there will be the general resurrection and judgment (Revelation 20:11-15) – when surely "every eye shall see him, and they that pierced him" (1:7). It would seem most appropriate to refer to that consummation at the outset, toward which all else to be mentioned would be moving.

6. Alpha and Omega (v.8).

These are the first and last letters of the Greek alphabet, and are equivalent to our A and Z. In this text, they are used by God to describe himself as "who is and who was and who is to come, the Almighty" – similar to the description John uses of him in v.4 – to indicate the external nature of his Being.

In 22:13, Jesus likewise says of himself, "I am the Alpha and the Omega, the first and the last, the beginning and the end". And in 1:17-18, he testifies: "I am the first and the last, and the Living one; and I was dead, and behold, I am alive for evermore, and I have the keys of death and of Hades".

These references remind us of the Gospel of John, 1:1-2, in which Christ is referred to as "the Word", as follows: "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. The same was in the beginning with God". And v.14 states: "And the Word became flesh, and dwelt among us (and we beheld his glory, glory as of the only begotten from the Father)". It was "in the flesh" that he was put to death (1 Peter 2:18), but he did not remain dead.

Deity inhabits all eternity. And both the Father and Son are Deity, as is also the Holy Spirit. All three are associated in John's invocation, in 1:4-5.

7. Kingdom (vs.6,9).

In v.6, it is said that Christ "made us to be a kingdom". And in v.9, John said: "I am your brother and partaker with you in the tribulation and kingdom and patience which are in Jesus". John's concept of the kingdom was not premillennial. Instead of not to be established till the second coming of Christ, Christ had already made his saints to be a "kingdom" and John and his fellow Christians were in it. This accords with Colossians 1:13. And with the fact that both John the Baptist and Jesus, during his personal ministry, preached that the kingdom was "at hand" (Matthew 3:1; 4:17; etc.) It is ironic, therefore, to use John's language in Revelation 20:1-6 to teach to the contrary.

This kingdom is referred to variously as the kingdom of heaven, kingdom of God, kingdom of Christ, "the kingdom of Christ and God" (Eph. 5:5), and sometimes simply as "the kingdom" as in Luke 12:32.

Though all these are one and the same kingdom, there are two dominions or administrations – that of the Son, during time, and that of the Father, in eternity. The former had its formal beginning on Pentecost following the ascension of Christ. He had said, "There are some here of them that stand by, who shall in no wise taste of death, till they see the kingdom of God come with power" (Mark 9:1). After his own death and resurrection, he requested his apostles to "tarry ye in the city (of Jerusalem), until ye be clothed with power from on high" (Luke 24:49). Likewise, he promised them, "But ye shall receive power, when the Holy Spirit is come upon you" (Acts 1:8). The kingdom was to come with power, power was to come with the Holy Spirit, and the Spirit came on Pentecost, clothing them with supernatural power. So the kingdom was formally established that day, and ceased to be preached as "at hand" – and never was preached as postponed.

On Pentecost day the apostle Peter, guided by the Holy Spirit, testified: "This Jesus did God raise up, whereof we are all witnesses. Being therefore by the right hand of God exalted, and having received the promise of the Holy Spirit, he hath poured forth this, which ye see and hear. For David ascended not into the heavens: but he saith himself, The Lord <God> said unto my Lord <Jesus Christ, yet to be born>, Sit thou on my right hand, till I make thine enemies the footstool of thy feet". Then he concluded, "Let all the house of Israel know assuredly, that God hath made him both Lord and Christ, this Jesus whom ye crucified". (Acts 2:32-36).

At the right hand of God, "angels and authorities and powers (are) being made subject unto him" (1 Peter 3:22). But at his "coming", when he raises the dead, "Then cometh the end, when he shall DELIVER UP the kingdom to God, even the Father; when he shall have ABOLISHED all rule and all authority and power. For he must REIGN, till he hath put all enemies under his feet. The last enemy to be abolished is death. . . . And when all things have been subjected unto him, then shall the Son also be subjected to him that did subject all things unto him, that GOD may be ALL IN ALL" (1 Corinthians 15:23-28).

So, the administration of the kingdom was Christ's from Pentecost and will continue till he comes again at the end of the world. But in eternity the administration will be the Father's. Christ's administration is temporal, the Father's will be eternal. When it is said to disciples of Christ that "through many tribulations we must enter into the KINGDOM OF GOD" (Acts 14:22), and when it is said unto the faithful, "for thus shall be richly supplied unto you the entrance into the EXTERNAL KINGDOM of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ" (2 Peter 1:11), reference is to the eternal phase of it, after the consummation of things temporal. While Christ will be co-regent, as it were, he will be subordinate to the Father

An understanding of these facts is necessary to prevent confusion over the kingdom being spoken of as presently existing, on one hand, and as being yet future, on the other hand.

In no case do the scriptures support the concept that the establishment of Christ's kingdom was postponed till his second coming, then to last only a thousand years and end before the end of the world. Revelation 20:1-6 has nothing to do with the BEGINNING of Christ's reign, but with only a SEGMENT of its ONGOING existence.

8. In the Spirit (v.10).

This expression obviously means that John was under the influence of the Holy Spirit, and inspired by it, on the occasion of receiving the Revelation on Patmos. It is repeated in 4:2, 17:3; and 21:10, then in vision he changed locations – to heaven, to a wilderness, and to a great and high mountain, respectively – each with a distinctive series of visions.

9. The Lord's day (v.10).

Early Christians understood this as referring to the first day of the week, in honor of the Lord Jesus Christ on the day of his resurrection. (See Didache 14; Ignatius, in Magnesians 9.)

The Greek word *kuriakos*, here translated "Lord's" was in common use in the sense of "imperial" and relating to the emperor of the Roman Empire. This is significant, and sets the tone for depicting the escalating conflict between Caesar as Lord (in the pagan world) and Christ as Lord (among Christians).

10. The word of God and the testimony of Jesus (vs.2,9).

The foregoing is the reading of v.9, referring to John's having been exiled to Patmos "for the word of God and the testimony of Jesus" in the sense of being on account of his bearing witness to such prior to his exile. V.2 refers to "the word of God, and . . . the testimony of Jesus Christ" received by John on Patmos and recorded in the book he was commanded to write.

11. Tribulation (v.9).

This has reference to the increased trials and persecutions of Christians at that time, particularly in the Roman province of Asia, where emperor worship was promoted more vigorously than anywhere else in the empire. John was their "partner" (companion, KJV) in these tribulations, being exiled on Patmos.

12. Patmos (v.9).

This was a rocky, almost treeless, wind-swept, island with salt mines, in the Aegean Sea, off the coast of southwestern Asia Minor, 37 miles west-southwest of Miletus, which was 20 miles south of Ephesus as the crow flies, and used as a Roman penal colony. It is 10 miles long and six miles wide at its broadest point, with an area of about 25 square miles.

According to tradition preserved by Irenaeus, Eusebius, Jerome, and others, (see The Great Harlot (Notes on Revelation A7:1 - 19:4 and Note at the end) the apostle John was banished there toward the end of the reign of Domitian (A.D. 81-96), and released 18 months later by Domitian's successor, Nerva – making the banishment to have been about A.D.95. A cave, or grotto, near the town of Scala, is said to be pointed out to travelers as the abode of John while on the island.

Most scholars today agree that the Book of Revelation contains internal evidences supporting a date during the early 90s A.D. In fact, while previous emperors had accepted divine honors, Domitian was the first to require them – except the "mad" emperor Caligula (A.D. 37-41), who endeavored to have his statue placed in the temple at Jerusalem but died before succeeding. Even the beastly Nero (A.D. 54-68), who horribly persecuted Christians in Rome and under whom the apostle Paul was put to death, did not require divine honors but shied from them.

13. The seven churches that are in Asia (vs.4, 11).

That there were other congregations in the Roman province of Asia is almost certain. But these seven were on a somewhat circular Roman post road that would enable a messenger to deliver to each a copy of the Revelation. No doubt they also represented

about all the conditions that existed among the churches of the region. And they were so situated that any other congregations of the area would soon be able to have these copies shared with them.

Beginning with EPHESUS, the nearest to Patmos, and listing the approximate distance and direction from one place to the next, we have the following: SMYRNA, slightly west of north, 40 miles; PERGAMUM, slightly east of north, 60 miles; THYATIRA, southeast, 44 miles; SARDIS, south, 36 miles (and 58 miles east of Smyrna); PHILADELPHIA, southeast, 26 miles; and LAODICEA, southeast, 50 miles (and 100 miles east of Ephesus).

Modern names are, respectively, Selcuk, Izmar, Bergama, Akisar, Alashehir, and Eski Hissar ("old castle"). The latter lies in ruins. The names are Turkish, and the area is now a part of Turkey.

14. Angels of the seven churches (v.20).

Each of the seven congregations is represented as having an angel (2:1, 8, 12, 18; 3:1, 7, 14). "Angel" means messenger – who may be either earthly or heavenly. In this text, a human messenger seems more likely. As such, he would have been the one (or ones, collectively) most responsible for communicating the Lord's message to the church – possibly "he that readeth" (v.3).

Each letter, while addressed to the angel of a particular church, was really to the congregation itself collectively and individually, and even to all the other churches and individual members as well – the admonition in each letter being: "he that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith to the churches" (2:7, 11, 17, 29; 3:6, 13, 22). Also: "Blessed is he that readeth, and they that hear the words of the prophecy, and keep the things which are written therein" (1:3).

While not written to us directly, Revelation is nevertheless preserved and disseminated for us. And we can be abundantly "blessed" by familiarizing ourselves with its contents, imbibing its spirit, being encouraged by its assurances, and sharing it with others as opportunity is afforded.

15. The things which thou sawest, . . . which are, and . . . which shall come to pass hereafter v.19).

"The things which thou sawest" must be the vision which John had just seen (vs.10-20).

"The things which are" would seem to be primarily the conditions described in the letters to the seven churches (Chapters 2 and 3).

"The things which are to come to pass hereafter" would be those particularly disclosed in Chapters 6-22 – prefaced by Chapters 4 and 5, which show God to be in control of the future, with Christ associated with him on the throne of the universe.

(THESE VOCABULARY NOTES ARE DESIGNED TO BE OF VALUE AND USE THROUGHOUT THE STUDY OF REVELATION, JUST AS THE FIRST CHAPTER ITSELF IS.)

LETTERS TO THE SEVEN CHURCHES

Notes on Chapters 2 and 3

1. Structure of the Letters:

- a. Addressed to the "angel" of each church (2:1, 8, 12, 18; 3, 7, 14).
- b. Author's characterization of himself to each (2:1, 8, 12, 18; 3:1, 7, 14).
- c. Author's knowledge of each declared (2:2-3, 9, 13, 19; 3:1, 8, 15).
- d. Author's commendation and/or criticism of each (2:1-7, 8-11, 12-17, 18-2; 3:1-6, 7-13, 14-22). (No criticism of two and no condemnation of one)
- e. Author's promises to the faithful and/or threats against the unfaithful in each (2:5, 7, 10-11, 16-17, 22-27; 3:3-5, 9-12, 16, 19-22).

2. Historical Background Notes:

EPHESUS: Although not the titular capital of Asia (Pergamum retaining that honor), it had become its metropolis. Its chief attraction was its temple of Diana (Gr. *Artemis*), one of the seven wonders of the ancient world – a part of which, in 29 B.C., had been dedicated to the worship of the goddess *Roma* (Rome) and "the divine Julius" (d. 87 B.C.). From that time the worship of *Artemis* was closely associated with the Roman imperial cult, which was pervasive throughout the Roman province of Asia. A temple was also built to the emperor Claudius, and others were later built to Hadrian and Severus. Emperor worship at its simplest consisted of burning incense to the emperor and confessing that "Caesar is Lord".

SMYRNA: Two of its famous temples were to the Sipyrene Mother (a tutelary goddess, and local variety of Cybele) and to Zeus. But as one of the oldest allies of Rome, Smyrna had built a temple to the goddess *Roma* as early as 195 B.C. Then, in A.D. 26, when eleven cities of Asia competed for the right to build a provincial temple to Tiberias, Rome decided in favor of Smyrna in recognition of her long loyalty.

PERGAMUM: Famed as a "city of temples", it had a cluster of them to Zeus, Apollo, Athene (the patron goddess), Dionysus, Aphrodite, and Asclepius, in a beautiful and impressive grove called the *Nicephorium* – the pride of Pergamum as the temple of *Artemis* was of Ephesus. The shrine of Asclepius, the god of healing, acclaimed as *Soter* (Savior), attracted people from all over the world. But above all, Pergamum was the official center in the province of Asia for the imperial cult. In 29 B.C., it had been the first city in Asia to receive permission to build a temple dedicated to the worship of a living ruler – namely, to "the divine Augustus and the goddess *Roma*". In the course of time it added a second, to Trajan (A.D. 98-117), and finally a third, to Caracalla (AD. 211-217).

THYATIRA: Besides a wide variety of other gods and goddesses, the tutelary deity of the city was Tyrimnos, identified with the Greek sun-god, Apollo, who appeared on the city's coin grasping the hand of the Roman emperor. **SARDIS:** As in other cities of Asia, the imperial cult had been grafted into the local pagan

religion. On the coin of Sardis from the reign of Tiberius, the empress Livia (mother of Tiberius) was depicted sitting like the goddess Demeter (Mother Earth) with a sheaf of grain in her hand, as the new dispenser of prosperity.

PHILADELPHIA: Although this city had many temples and religious festivals, and the worship of Dionysus was its chief local cult, it was not without imperial cultic connections also. After Tiberius had helped rebuild it following the great earthquake of A.D. 17, it founded the cult of Germanicus, the son and heir of Tiberius. And during the reign of the Flavian emperors (Vespasian and his sons Titus and Domitian, A.D. 69-96), it printed the name of Flavia on its coins. And whatever difficulties these posed for Christians were either abetted or added to by unbelieving Jews – focused on chiefly in the Lord's letter. The Jews had been exempt from emperor worship, but not so with Christians who, since the days of Nero (d. A.D. 68) had ceased to be considered a sect of the Jews, which indeed they were not.

LAODICEA: This city, while primarily pagan and a center of the imperial cult, had also a large, wealthy, and influential Jewish population. Situated in a rich agricultural and pasturing area, it had a flourishing textile industry. And it was widely known for its medical school, established in connection with the temple of Men (ancient Carian god of healing, later identified with Asclepius), 13 miles to the northwest and for the manufacture of compound medicines – famous especially for eye salve and ointments for the ears. Sister cities, in the Lycus river valley, were Hierapolis, six miles north, across the river, noted for its springs of hot medicinal waters, and Colossae, ten miles to the east, famous for its cold, pure, refreshing waters. Its favorable location and immense wealth also attracted a considerable banking industry.

Its chief physical weakness was the lack of a convenient water supply. That is said to have left it vulnerable to enemies, especially in the dry season when the Lycus River could dry up. Yet there seems to be no record of its having been imperiled because of this. It has been remarked, however, that "such vulnerable communities must learn the arts of appeasement and conciliation", with the implication that such may partially account

for the lukewarm state of the church there – not that it overtly compromised truth – but that it provided "neither refreshment for the spiritually weary, nor healing for the spiritually sick" – hence, was "totally ineffective, and thus distasteful to its Lord".

3. Vocabulary:

a. Works of the Nicolaitans (2:6; cf. v. 14). Nicolaitans were obviously the followers of some person named Nicolaus, or a least presumed to be such. Of the early church fathers, Irenaeus believed that the Nicolaus of Acts 6:5, a proselyte from Antioch, whom the apostles in Jerusalem had appointed to assist in waiting tables, apostatized and that the Nicolaitans were his followers.

Clement of Alexandria, however, a contemporary of Irenaeus, defended Nicolaus of Antioch, saying he was misunderstood. Since then it has been disputed whether the testimony of Irenaeus was fact or inference. And the weight of recent scholarship, rightly or wrongly, supports the view that we know little about Nicolaus the proselyte, and nothing about his relationship to the Nicolaitans of our text; also that we know only the information about the Nicolaitans of Revelation from that book itself, and have no certain knowledge of any connection between them and later sects of similar name.

But there seems to be a close link in Revelation between the teaching and works of the Nicolaitans, the teaching of Balaam, and the teaching and practice of the woman Jezebel (the latter two of which see below). It would seem that all of them taught compromise with paganism and promoted licentious indulgence.

b. Paradise of God (2:7). The Greek word, *paradeisos*, borrowed from the Persians, meant a pleasure garden, grove or park – a place of beauty and delight. There was, first of all, an earthly paradise, in Eden, for man in his innocence but forfeited when he sinned – in which a river and the tree of life (Gen. 2:8-17; 3:22-24). Secondly, there is a paradise in Hades for the spirits {souls} of the righteous (Lk.23:23; cf. Acts 2:27, 31-12) – Hades being the place of departed spirits between death and the resurrection, where there seems to be a foretaste of their eternal future, whether they

be righteous or unrighteous – *tartarus* being the Greek word (translated "hell" in 2 Pet. 2:4) for the abode of wicked spirits awaiting judgment – evidently in Hades, but separated from the place of the righteous by a "great gulf" (Lk. 16:19-31). Finally, and this is what is referred to in our text, there is a "Paradise of God" for the righteous in eternity – in the heavenly city, in which there is also the river of life and tree of life (Rev. 22:1-5).

c. Overcometh (2:7, 11, 17, 26; 3:5, 12, 12. "He that overcometh" is, in the Greek text, *to nikonti*, the overcoming (one), victorious one, or conqueror. All through Revelation, and the New Testament, it is not defeat to die, but to be unfaithful to the Lord and thus be deprived of eternal life in the world to come. (See Matt. 10:28, 34-39; 16:24-27). "He that overcometh" is "he that keepeth my works unto the end" (Rev. 2:9). The command is to "hold fast that which thou hast, that no man take thy crown" (3:11) – that is, by causing you to become unfaithful to Christ.

d. Synagogue of Satan (2:9; 3:9). This term is used of a congregation in Smyrna and another in Philadelphia claiming to be "Jews", which word, derived from "Judah", means praise, and taken literally would describe them as praiseworthy – which they were not, because of their disobedience to God and opposition to Christianity. (cf. Rom. 2:29).

e. Ten Days (2:10). Likely the expression is intended to convey the idea of a comparatively short period of time rather than precisely ten days – and rather than ten years (a year for a day), as some have interpreted it. It would be short in comparison with 42 months or 1,000 years – periods later indicated in Revelation. The then present and immediately pending tribulation mentioned in the foregoing text was not itself to last for long; but the over-all message of Revelation was that persecution would continue, however intermittently, over a more extended period, and would greatly intensify before the then principal persecuting agencies of Satan would be overthrown – which they would be, however and ultimately Satan himself.

f. Faithful unto death (2:10). This does not mean simply until death, but to the point of dying for one's faith – faithful even if it

costs one's life on earth – which faithfulness will be rewarded with the crown of life eternal in the world to come.

g. Satan's throne (2:13). The city of Pergamum was said to be "Satan's throne", and "where Satan dwelleth". That would seem to indicate its being the chief center of Satanic influence in the province of Asia. (See the above Historical Background Notes for a partial description.) It was the principal center of the emperor cult in that part of the world. As Rome had become the center of Satan's activity in the West, Pergamum had become his "throne" in the East.

h. Sharp two-edged sword (2:12); sword of my mouth (2:16). Reference here, and likewise in 1:16 and 19:15, is not to a literal sword, but to the word of Christ that proceeds out of his mouth. Eph. 6:17 speaks of "the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God". And Heb.4:12 states that "the word of God is living, and active, and sharper than any two-edged sword, and piercing even to the dividing of soul and spirit . . . and quick to discern the thoughts and intents of the heart". If the pen of man is mightier than the sword, as observers of history have declared, how much more the word of God in Christ. It is generally recognized that the gospel of Christ was what actually and ultimately undermined and overthrew paganism in the Roman Empire. And it has achieved many a victory on a much smaller scale.

i. Teaching of Balaam (2:14). It was teaching like that of the ancient prophet Balaam, who advised the pagan king Balak how he could cause God to curse the Israelites, of whom Balak was afraid but whom Balaam was unable to curse for him. Reference is made to such by Moses in Num. 31:15-16, speaking of the occasion described in Chapter 25, as a result of which the Lord sent a plague that caused the death of 24 thousand persons. The Jewish historian Josephus, in his Antiquities of the Jews, Book IV, Chapter VI, Sections 6-12, elaborates upon the details as they had come down to his day, which correspond with the summary description given by Christ in his letter to Pergamum. It was a compromise with paganism in worship and morals.

j. Teaching of the Nicolaitans (2:15). Apparently this differed little in principle from the teaching of Balaam, though seemingly presented by a different heretical group. Some would connect the Nicolaitans with Balaamites because of similar etymology of the Greek name Nicolaus and the Semitic name Balaam. That seems fanciful, however, since the two seem to be differentiated in vs. 14-15.

k. Hidden manna (2:17). This is an apparent allusion to the tradition that the prophet Jeremiah, before the destruction of the temple in Jerusalem by Nebuchadnezzar, had hidden the golden pot of manna which was "laid up before the Lord" in the ark of the covenant in the Most Holy Place (Ex. 16:33-34; Heb. 9:4), and that it would not be discovered till Israel had been restored (2 Macc. 5:4-8).

l. White stone (2:17). The Greek word here translated "stone" is *psephos*, a pebble. Pebbles were used in courts of justice, black ones for condemning and white ones for acquitting. Of Paul's career as a persecutor, when Christians were put to death, he said, "I gave my vote (*psephos*) against them" (Acts 26:10). But another use of a white stone, if it had a name on it, was to admit one to banquets or other special occasions. Here it would seem to be for admission to the feast of hidden manna at which the OVERCOMER would be the guest of his Lord. Christ while on earth, had represented himself as the true bread from heaven typified by the manna given centuries earlier in the wilderness (Jno.6:48-58).

m. New Name (2:17; 3:12). In 2:17, addressed to the church in Pergamum, a new name written on a white stone was to be given to the OVERCOMER by Christ. It would be known only by the recipient and his Lord, and therefore would admit no one else to the feast of hidden manna.

In 3:12, however, addressed to the church in Thyatira, the new name is Christ's and is not secret. It would be written upon the OVERCOMER, who would be made a pillar in the temple of God. A new name symbolizes a new status. And new names were not unknown to residents of Thyatira. That city had adopted the name

Neocaesarea (New Caesar) out of gratitude to Tiberius Caesar for help in rebuilding after the great earthquake of A.D. 17 (though later, about A.D. 42-50, it fell into disuse). And more recently, during the reign of Vespasian (A.D. 169-79), it had called itself Flavia – Flavius being the family name of Vespasian, founder of the Flavian dynasty (including Titus and Domitian).

n. The woman Jezebel (2:20). Most manuscripts have "the" woman, but a few have "thy" woman. Some have supposed her to be the wife of the one addressed as the "angel" of the church, since sou (thy) is singular. But the consensus of textual scholars favors ten (the) as having been the original reading.

Here Jezebel is evidently a symbolic name for some prominent woman in the church at Thyatira, somewhat like the wicked wife of King Ahab who was guilty of "whoredom" and "witchcraft" (1 Kgs. 16:31; 2 Kgs. 9:22), promoting the worship of Baal and seeking to drive worshippers of God out of Israel. The Jezebel of Thyatira promoted both idolatrous and licentious practices among Christians.

o. Reins and hearts (2:23). "Reins" are the kidneys, anciently thought to be, along with the bowels, the seat of emotion; and the "heart" was thought to be the seat of both emotions and thought.

p. Deep things of Satan (2:24). It is possible that Jezebel advocated first-hand experience of the mystery of evil, ostensibly to identify with the common life of Thyatira and avoid persecution, insisting that the grace of God would render such conduct innocuous. (Cf. Jude 4.)

q. Authority over the nations (2:26). The OVERCOMER is promised a share in the power and rule exercised by his Lord. (See 12:5; 19:15; cf. 20:4-6; also 2 Tim. 2:11-12.)

r. The morning star (2:28). Christ himself is the morning star (22:16), prophesied of centuries earlier by Balaam – "a star out of Jacob" (Num. 24:17).

s. Be watchful (3:2-3). This warning may be an allusion to examples in the history of Sardis itself. Its name is plural in the Greek (*Sardeis*), for there were actually two towns – the original on a high, narrow ridge, and practically impregnable, and the other in the valley immediately below. The former was accessible only by a difficult defile up its south side, and had never been captured by assault. But twice it had been taken by stealth – by Cyrus in 546 B.C., and again by Antiochus the Great in 218 B.C. On both occasions the invaders had come as a thief in the night, and the defenders were caught off guard. The church in Sardis was in the same danger, and needed to take warning from the history of the city.

t. Key of David (3:7). This signifies the authority of David and his successors as king. In Isa. 22:22, when pledging to place Eliakim as steward over the royal palace (vs. 20-24), Jehovah had said: "And the key of the house of David will I lay upon his shoulder; and he shall open, and none shall shut; and he shall shut, and none shall open". Jesus was born to be king (Jno.18:37), and to occupy the throne of his father David (Lk.11:32). And he was raised from the dead and received into heaven to sit upon David's throne (Acts 2:25-36) – to reign over the people of God, for God, as David had done. As David had reigned over fleshly Israel, from earthly Jerusalem, Christ reigns over spiritual Israel (of which fleshly Israel was a type), from the heavenly Jerusalem (of which earthly Jerusalem was a type). His kingdom is not of this world (Jno. 18:36).

u. Word of my patience (3:10). This is an idiomatic expression which the NIV translates as "my command to endure patiently", which seems to be the thought intended. The Greek word here for patience is *hupomone*, meaning endurance, perseverance or steadfastness.

v. Go out thence no more (3:12). This is likely an allusion to the fact that Philadelphia was a "city full of earthquakes", with its inhabitants often fleeing for safety. It seems that in A.D. 17, when a great earthquake destroyed eleven cities, Philadelphia fared the worst. It is said that tremors continued for years, and that for a time most of its population lived outside the city in huts and feared

to go on the streets lest they be killed by falling masonry. Those terrible days were never forgotten, and the people stood in readiness to flee. Christ was promising the OVERCOMER in the church a security spiritually that physically he had not known in Philadelphia. He would be made a pillar in the temple of God in the heavenly Jerusalem, never to go out.

w. The Amen (3:14). It is possible that his alludes to the fact that Jesus had so often prefaced his remarks with "Verily, verily I say unto you". The Greek word translated "verily" is *amen*, which means "truly". Its Hebrew equivalent in the Old Testament is from a root meaning to take care, to support, to be firm, true, reliable. Jesus is all that the word represents, and everything he says can be trusted completely. This is true also of God the Father, who in Isa. 66:16 is called "the God of truth (*Amen*)".

x. The beginning of the creation of God (3:14). This means, not that Christ was the first that God created, but that he is an agent in all of God's creation. "All things were created through him, and unto him" (Col. 1:16). "And without him was not anything made that hath been made" (Jno. 1:3). That was "in the beginning", before he became flesh (Jno. 1:1-2, 14). As DEITY he always was. Only as a man did he have a beginning – when his body was formed in the womb of the virgin Mary. Yet as a MAN he was no less DEITY. Notwithstanding his incarnation, but because of it, and after he had ascended back to heaven, it was testified that "in him dwelleth all the FULNESS of the Godhead BODILY" (Col. 2:9). And, being DEITY and CREATOR, all the resources of heaven and earth are his, so that he can fulfill all promises made.

THRONE OF GOD AND CLOSED BOOK

Notes on Chapters 4 and 5

CHAPTER 4

Verse 1: Following his vision on the isle of Patmos of the risen and eternal Christ and receiving dictation for the letters to the seven churches of Asia (Chapters 1-3), John saw a door opened in heaven and a voice called him to come up to be shown "the things

that must come to pass hereafter." Heaven would now be the vantage point "in the spirit" for the series of visions continuing through chapter 16. They would have to do with the environment and fortunes of the saints, their tribulations and enemies, and the eventual success of the Lord's cause and theirs (in the Roman Empire, seemingly). After that, his vantage point would change to "a wilderness" (17:3), where certain enemies and conflicts and victory would be seen in even more impressive detail. Finally, it would change to "a mountain great and high" (21:10), from which the heavenly Jerusalem, the promised eternal abode of the saints, would be seen in awe-inspiring magnificence and glory.

Verses 2-3: "In the spirit," John saw a throne set in heaven and its occupant, referred to later as God (vs. 8,11). This was the throne of the universe, in contrast with the vastly inferior throne of Caesar in Rome, which had become and would be one of the major agencies of Satan against the saints at different intervals until overthrown.

The appearance of God on his throne was "like a jasper stone and a sardius." Jasper is sparkling white, signifying holiness, or victory, or both, as the context may warrant. And sardius is fiery red, symbolizing justice. In addition, there was "a rainbow round about the throne, like an emerald to look upon." An emerald is green, signifying mercy. These characteristics in the Sovereign of the universe would be exceedingly comforting to the saints, guaranteeing the ultimate triumph of righteousness and justice tempered with mercy.

Verse 4: "And round about the throne were four and twenty thrones; and upon the thrones ... four and twenty elders setting, arrayed in white garments; and on their heads crowns of gold." These elders figure prominently in the court of heaven (4:10; 5:5, 8-10,14; 7:11-12, 13-17; 11:16-18; 14:3).

At first thought, these may seem likely to be heavenly representative of the redeemed of humanity – the twelve apostles of Christ and the twelve patriarchs of Israel. And the reading of 5:9-10 in the King James Version makes that seem to be so, representing them as singing: "Thou wast slain, and hast redeemed

us to God by thy blood out of every kindred and tongue, and people, and nation; And hast made us unto our God kings and priest: and we shall reign of the earth."

But the American Standard Version, supported by the consensus of textual scholarship of today as correctly representing the original Greek text, reads as follows: "Thou wast slain, and didst purchase unto God with thy blood (men) of every tribe, and tongue, and people, and nation; and madest them (to be) unto our God a kingdom and priests; and they reign upon the earth" – thus distinguishing the redeemed of the earth from themselves, without anything in any subsequent texts indicating otherwise.

On the other hand, if the elders are not representative of the redeemed of earth, they must be a part of the created intelligences of heaven along with the angels and likewise the "four living creatures" of Verse 6 and various other passages, with the latter of whom they are almost always associated.

It remains to be noted that the four and twenty elders are represented as having "on their heads crowns of gold"." The word here for "crown" is not diadema (diadem), the badge of royalty, but stephanos, a chaplet, wreath, or garland – a badge of "victory in the games, of civic worth, of military valor, of nuptial joy, of festal gladness" (Thayer) – here most likely a crown of honor and dignity – a never-fading badge, made of gold, (Some of Rome's emperors wore stephanos and not the diadema, as a badge of victory in war. But there is not anything to associate the four and twenty elders with such.)

Verse 5a: "And out of the throne proceed lightnings and voices and thunders." These are ominous sights and sounds that evidently portend judgments upon enemies of God and his people, intended to encourage persecuted saints.

Verse 5b: "And there were seven lamps of fire burning before the throne, which are the seven spirits of God." Seven was a symbolical number for fulness of completeness. Hence, the Holy Spirit in his fulness is indicated. But, since the Holy Spirit is here symbolized by seven lamps, and lamps are for illumination, this

must represent the fulness of the Spirit's function in revealing the word of God – a "lamp" unto thy feet, a "light" unto our path (Psalm 119:105). The letters of Christ to the seven churches of Asia were also "what the Spirit saith to the churches" (2:7, 11, 17, 29; 3:6, 13, 22).

Verse 6: "And before the throne, (there was) as it were a sea of glass like unto crystal." Some take this deep, smooth, transparent sea to symbolize the purity and calmness of the divine rule. The huge laver in Solomon's temple, near the entrance to the Holy Place, was called a "sea" (1 Kings 7:23-26) – likely because of the quantity of water it held, namely 2,000 baths, or 11,000 American gallons. The laver was used by the priest for washing before entering the tabernacle to minister (see Exodus 30:21). The "sea of glass" is referred to again in 15:2. It is doubtful if this "sea" was in appearance a laver or contained water. It was rather a sizable area before the throne that it was so clean and crystalline as to be called a sea (cf. 21:18, 21) – "as it were a sea of glass like unto crystal." It added significantly to the awe-inspiring magnificence of the total scene, apart from any symbolical significance it may have had.

Verse 6b-8: "And round about the throne, (there were) four living creatures full of eyes before and behind. And the first creature was like a lion, and the second creature like a calf, and the third creature had a face as of a man, and the fourth creature was like a flying eagle. And the four living creatures, having each one of them six wings, are full of eyes round about and within: and they have no rest day or night, saying Holy, Holy, Holy, is the Lord God, the Almighty, who was and who is and who is to come."

These are quite similar to the four living creatures of Ezekiel 1, seen by the prophet beside the river Chebar during the Babylonian captivity and again in the court of heaven (Chapter 10, where they are called Cherubim and identified, in vs. 15 and 22, as the ones seen by the river Chebar). Isaiah also, in a vision of God upon his throne, saw similar but not identical creatures that he called Seraphim (Chapter 6). But these are created orders of heavenly beings, along with those called angels, and are not symbolic of

earthly creations, though they may be employed in service to mankind (cf. Hebrews 1:14).

Verses 9-11: "And when the living creatures shall give glory and honor and thanks to him that sitteth on the throne, to him that liveth for ever and ever, the four and twenty elders shall fall down before him that sitteth on the throne, and shall worship him that liveth for ever and ever, and shall cast their crowns before the throne saying Worthy art thou, our Lord and God, to receive glory and honor and power: for thou didst create all things, and because of thy will they were, and were created."

It is to be noted how much in unison the four and twenty elders and the four living creatures engage in worship. Also to be noted is that the elders cast their crowns before the throne as an act of worship. Their crowns are badges of honor and dignity, and by this gesture they are saying God is worthy of greater dignity and honor and glory than they – that they are only creatures, whereas he is Creator of "all things."

CHAPTER 5.

Verse 1: "And I saw in the right hand of him that sat on the throne a book written within and on the back, close sealed with seven seals." This was a manuscript written on both sides and rolled together to form a scroll. It was completely filled, with nothing more to be added. Succeeding chapters indicate it to have been the book of the future. It was sealed both to human and to angelic vision. It was so sealed that opening the first seal allowed the first chapter, so to speak, to be read, and so on through the seventh – the entirety. And the entire revelation, while featuring particularly the fortunes of the saints and the cause of their Lord Jesus Christ in relation to seemingly invincible enemies then being faced, also sweeps to the end of history and into eternity itself, with incomparable assurances for the faithful in Christ Jesus.

Verses 2-5. A strong angel called for anyone worthy to open the book and loose its seals. And when no one in heaven or on earth was able, John "wept much." Then one of the elders said to him, "Weep not; behold, the Lion that is of the tribe of Judah, Root of

David, hath overcome to open the book and the seven seals thereof." Reference is to Jesus Christ according to the flesh. He was of the tribe of Judah (Hebrews 7:14), and Judah had been described as a "lion's whelp" (Genesis 49:9-10). He was also a descendent of David (20:16) and an heir to his throne (Luke 1:31-32).

Verse 6. "And I saw in the midst of the throne and the four living creatures, and in the midst of the elders, a Lamb standing, as though it had been slain, having seven horns, and seven eyes, which are the seven Spirits of God, sent forth into all the earth."

When John looked to see the "lion of the tribe of Judah," it was now a lamb – "the Lamb of God, that taketh away the sin of the world" (John 1:29). Though having been slain, he is now "alive for evermore" (1:18) and had been given "all authority ... in earth" (Matthew 28:19). He would open the book that was sealed with seven seals.

This Lamb was unique, having "seven horns" symbolic of all authority and power, and "seven eyes" explained as being "the seven Spirits of God, sent forth into all the earth." The latter evidently represents the Holy Spirit in all its power and functions, whose services are available to "the Lamb." Being symbolically described as "seven eyes" and said to be "sent forth to all the earth," suggests that through his agency "the Lamb" sees and knows everything – that there is no creature that is not manifest in his sight: but all things are naked and laid open before the eyes of him with whom we have to do" – even "the thoughts and intents of the heart" (Hebrews 4:12-13). Compare this with Zechariah 4:10, which speaks of "the eyes of Jehovah, which run to and fro through the whole earth."

Verses 7-14. "And he came, and he taketh (the book) out of the right hand of him that sat upon the throne." And when that occurred, a crescendo of praise of him began with the four living creatures and the four and twenty elders, followed by "ten thousand times the thousand, and thousands of thousands" of angels around the throne," and then by "every created thing which is in the heaven, and on the earth, and under the earth, on the sea,

and all things that are in them." Finally, "the four living creatures said, Amen. And the elders fell down and worshipped" – again, so it seems.

When the living creatures and the elders fell down before the Lamb initially, "each had a harp, and golden bowls full of incense, which are the prayers of the saints" (v.8). In the Old Testament tabernacle and the later temple worship, prayers were offered outside by the people while the priest were burning incense on the inside (see Luke 1:8-13). By virtue of that association, incense came to symbolize prayer. In like manner, much of the tabernacle and temple singing was accompanied by instrumental music, by virtue of which and similar association instruments of music, (in this instance harps) came to symbolize song. Hence, while the living creatures and elders were not themselves symbolic of the redeemed of earth, the imagery described represents them as presenting in heaven their prayers and praise of the saint on earth – meaning that their prayers are not lost but reach the throne of God and his Lamb.

The doxologies of the four living creatures and the four and twenty elders, the angels, and all created beings of heaven and earth, are described in verses 9-10, 12 and 13, respectively. They are all directed to the Lamb, whereas the doxologies of Chapter 4 (vs. 8 and 11) were directed to God, the Father. Both are deity, and alike deserve the worship of all created intelligences. Our English work "worship" is from an old Angle-Saxon term meaning worthship. And heavenly doxologies of Chapters 4 and 5 say of both God and the Lamb, "Thou art worthy." etc.

These two chapters are introductory to the opening of the book of the future sealed with seven seals, and of what the opening of each seal would reveal of "the things which must to pass hereafter" (4:1). They imply that heaven is in control, and they feature the Creator and the Redeemer, who are immensely concerned with their creatures here below and will reward to the uttermost those who are loyal to them.

CHART OF REVELATION 6-22

Seven Seals
(6:1 - 8:6)
 1-2-3-4-5-6-7

Seven Trumpets
(8:7 - 11:18)
 1-2-3-4-5-6-7

Seven Mystic figures <u>(11:19 - 14:20)</u> Woman (11:19-12:2)	Seven Bowls <u>(15:1 - 16:21)</u> 1-2-3-4-5-6-7
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Dragon (12:3-4)	
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-----"1000 years"-----	End of History	Beyond History
Man Child (12:5-6) Michael (12;7-17)	Satan loosed a little season and then destroyed (20:7-20)	
Beast of the Sea (13;1-10; cf.11:17) Beast of the Earth (13:11-18) Lamb on Mount Zion (14:1-5) Interlude: Angelic Messages (14:6-20)	Beast and False Prophet overthrown (19:11-21) Last enemies destroyed in connection with general resurrection and final judgment (20:11-15)	New Heaven and new earth for the righteous (21:1-8) Bride of the Lamb (the Holy City) descending from heaven (21:9-22:5)

Announcement of God's judgment (14:6-7)

Announcement of Babylon's fall (14:8)	Babylon destroyed (17:1 - 18:21)
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Warning of wrath on worshippers of Beast (14:9-12)	Satan bound, saints reign with Christ (20:1-6)
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Blessedness of dead who die in the Lord (14:13)
Call for harvesting the earth (14:14-16)
Call for gathering the grapes of wrath (14:17-20)

NOTES:

1. The seven seals seem to incorporate the seven trumpets, and the seven trumpets incorporate the seven bowls, so that even ten events of the seventh seal are not complete prior to the completion of the seventh bowl.

2. The seals, trumpets, and bowls are not necessarily consecutive, but may in part be simultaneous and represent simply different aspects of the same general events. There is a significant correspondence between the description of the trumpets and the bowls. There may even be overlapping of seals with other seals, or trumpets with other trumpets, and bowls with other bowls. But apparently the events of neither the seals nor the trumpets are complete before the completion of the events of the seventh bowl.

3. The seven "mystic figures" are involved in the events of the seals, trumpets, and bowls, and therefore are not to be taken as a chronological link between the seven trumpets and the seven bowls. One of the figures, the Beast from the Earth, is also called a False Prophet in 16:13; 19:20; 20:10. His function as the latter, briefly described in 19:20 as almost identical with that of the Beast of the Earth, is more elaborately depicted in 13:11-18. These descriptions fit quite well the role of the pagan priesthood, particularly the officials of the cult of Emperor worship in the Roman Empire, and especially in the Roman province of Asia.

4. The effects of the seven bowls seem to continue through Chapters 17-20, and are not completed before 20:15. Not only do they consummate the destruction of Babylon and the overthrow of the Beast and the False Prophet – likely when "the kingdom of this world: (probably the Roman Empire) becomes "the kingdom of our Lord, and of his Christ" (11:15) – but they also include the binding and finally the destruction of Satan (the old Dragon), with an interval of more than "1,000 years" between the binding and the

destruction. Then follow the general resurrection and the final judgment (of individuals as such) – if our interpretation is correct.

5. Understanding 11:15 as per above, as the victory of Christ, not at the end of history, but over paganism in the Roman Empire, and equating the saying of the four and twenty elders in 11:18 with 20:4-6, when the martyrs (including those of the Fifth Seal, 6:9-11) and other saints are vindicated and rewarded and their enemies destroyed in connection with, and as a result of, the fall of paganism in the Empire, we have a consistent literary, chronological, and historical progression not characteristic of any other interpretation, namely pagan (a) Chapters 6-19 describing in various and sundry ways the conflict with, and victory of 11:15 over, pagan Rome (Babylon); (b) 20:1-6 depicting the binding of Satan for "1,000 years" in connection with and a result of that victory; (c) 20:7-15 having to do with subsequent events at the end of history, when Satan himself and all other enemies are ultimately destroyed; and (d) Chapters 21-22 depicting the glories and blessings of the saints beyond history, free from enemies and suffering forever – as delineated in the above chart.

FIRST FOUR SEALS

Notes on Chapters 6:1-8

When each of the first four seals was opened, John heard one of the four living creatures in his turn saying "Come." (The King James Version says, "Come and see.") In each case John saw a horse and its rider -- the first horse, white; the second, red; the third, black; the fourth, pale. The horse was anciently used principally in war, and became a symbol of war. Hence, these seals represent warfare of some kind -- evidently involving the Roman Empire, of which the province of Asia was a part, where the seven churches of Revelation were located. Therefore, it was warfare that would involve the fortunes if not the participation of the saints. It is at this point that our most difficult task of interpretation begins. The four seals appear to be related and though likely following in chronological order, most probably the

second, third and fourth overlap considerably, as will be indicated in the following notes.

1. The First Seal (vs.1-2): "Behold, a white horse, and he that sat thereon had a bow; and there was given unto him a crown: and he came forth conquering, and to conquer." This symbolically represents the initial event of the future disclosed by opening the respective seals of the book sealed with seven seals. There have been two principal interpretations of it with which we shall be concerned -- one that it symbolizes spiritual warfare, and the other that it represents carnal warfare.

The former interpretation equates the foregoing scene with Chapter 19:11-16, where there is a white horse whose rider wears many crowns, is called Faithful and True, The Word of God, and King of Kings and Lord of Lords, and is followed by armies of heaven on white horses. In both instances, the horse is white, signifying victorious warfare. In the first, the rider is given a crown and comes forth conquering and to conquer. In the second, the rider is a crowned warrior who would smite the nations with a sword and rule them with a rod of iron. Hence, to one class of interpreters the first seal is: "A symbol of Christ's victorious power" (Godet). "A symbol of the conquering Gospel" (Alford). "The Rider is Christ" (Archdeacon Lee in Speaker's Commentary). "It is our Lord riding prosperously" (Dr. William Milligan of Anerdeen).

But the only similarity between the two warriors is that they ride white horses and wage successful war. The one of the first seal is known only from his description, which has been variously interpreted, as already indicated: the other from his titles, which indicate him to be divine and Christ. The first had a bow, the second a sword -- which proceeded out of his mouth, and therefore was not carnal, but was the word of God -- whereas the bow was not associated with the first rider's mouth, and so was likely carnal and symbolic of carnal war, waged by an entity that was not divine. The single crown of the first was a stephanos, a symbol of victory, whereas the second wore many crowns, which were diadems, kingly crowns -- he being "King of Kings and Lord of Lords." Of the second it was said that "in righteousness he doth

judge and make war" of the first it was not so stated. Therefore, to another school of interpreters the first seal represents: "The Roman Empire. The Persian Empire was symbolized by a ram (Dan. 8:3); the Macedonian Empire by a goat (Dan. 8:5), and here the Roman Empire by a white horse and his rider" (Elliott). "The prosperous period of the Roman Empire extending from the Emperor Nerva to the end of the Antonines (Barnes).

Nerva ruled only two years(96-98 A.D.) and was succeeded by his adopted son Trajan, who ruled 98-117 A.D., and was followed by Hadrian (117-138 A.D.) the "Antonines" were the Antonius Pius (138-161 A.D.), his adopted son Marcus Aurelius (161-180 A.D.), and the latter's son Lucius Commodus (180-192 A.D.). According to the interpretation now being considered, the first seal would cover from about the time of Nerva and Trajan and through the reigns of Antonius Pius and Marcus Aurelius, to but not including that of Lucius Commodus, who was of a decidedly different character.

Evidence for this seems so compelling that it is adopted in these notes, with all seven seals as a whole (not simply the first) considered as a significant part of secular history affecting the church. And a significant primary source is the monumental history of Edward Gibbon, *The Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*, published in six volumes 1776-1788). Albert Barnes says of him that "sceptic as he was, (he) seems to have been raised up by Divine Providence to search deeply into historical records, and to furnish an inexhaustible supply of materials in confirmation of the fulfillment of the prophecies and of the truth of revelations."

In the opening sentence of his work, Gibbon says" In the second century of the Christian era, the Empire of Rome comprehended the fairest part of the earth, and the most civilized portion of mankind ... During a happy period (A.D. 98-180), of more than fourscore years, the public administration was conducted by the virtue and abilities of Nerva, Trajan, Hadrian, and the two Antonines. It is the design of this, and the two succeeding chapters, to describe the prosperous condition of their empire; and afterwards from the death of Marcus Antonius, to deduce the most important circumstances of its decline and fall; a revolution which

will ever be remembered, and is still felt by the nations of the earth." And later, in Chapter 3: "If a man were called to fix a period in history during which the condition of the human race was most happy and prosperous, he would, without hesitation, name that which elapsed from the death of Domitian to the accession of Commodus" -- between which the five afore favorable mentioned emperors reigned.

The horsemen of the first four seals are likely representative of significant epochs rather than specific individuals. And the first seal obviously represents one of conquest and prosperity. Yet conquest was mostly under Trajan, who extended the borders of the Roman empire to its greatest extent -- "every day the astonished senate receiv(ing) the intelligence of new names and nations, that acknowledged his sway" (Gibbon) -- but domestic peace and prosperity, which characterized his reign as well as that of Nerva, continued through the reigns of Hadrain and the two Antonines. Trajan in particular was entitled to wear the victor's crown. And even the bow may have special significance. As Johnson, in his Notes points out: "Before this age the emperors were all of Roman stock, and until the death of Nero they were of the line of Julius Caesar. Nerva, the founder of a new line of Caesuras, was of Greek descent, and is said to have been of Cretan stock. The Cretans were a race of bowmen, the most famous in the ancient world. Some have seen this pointed out in the bow." The national weapons of the Romans were the javelin and the sword, not the bow, though there were bowmen in their armies who were not native Romans. Hence, the First Seal and the history of the Roman empire shortly after the giving of Revelation coincide perfectly. This seems to provide solid ground for interpreting the other seals.

2. The second Seal (6:3-4); And another horse came forth, a red horse: and to him that sat thereon it was given to take peace from the earth, and that they should slay one another: and there was given unto him a great sword." This also suggest war, but of a different kind.

Peace would now be taken from the earth -- the Roman earth or empire -- and the land drenched in blood. During the time of the

first seal, Roman generals waged triumphant war beyond distant frontiers while peace reigned within the empire. But during the time of the Second Seal there would be civil war" they would "slay one another." And a "great sword" would indicate great carnage, which indeed occurred and has been described as the most prolonged and bloody in human history.

Lucius Commodus, son and successor of the second Antonine, Marcus Aurelius, who ascended the Roman throne upon the death of his father in 180 A.D., was a dissolute and contemptible tyrant, and conditions in the empire degenerated precipitously. Many efforts were made to assassinate him, until finally, in 192 A.D., on orders of his advisors, he was given poisoned wine by a concubine and strangled by a wrestler. That ushered in a calamitous period of 92 years, lasting till 284 A.D., during which 32 emperors and 27 pretenders alternately hurled each other from the throne by incessant civil war. The successor of Commodus was murdered after only 86 days. Just two emperors (in addition to the 32) did not die violent deaths. And one of these died the same year he became emperor.

The imagery of a prophetic vision could hardly be more strikingly fulfilled than that of the Second Seal in the history of the Roman empire.

3. The Third Seal (6:5-6): "Behold, a black horse; and he that sat thereon had a balance in his hand. And I heard as it were a voice in the midst of the four living creatures saying, A measure of wheat for a shilling, and three measures of barley for a shilling; and the oil and the wine hurt thou not."

The black horse and the balance (scales) in the hand of the rider must have a still different significance in connection with war. And the time of the seal likely overlaps a part of the preceding one, but may not be confined to it.

Black is a symbol of mourning. And the balance, when used for weighing food, indicates scarcity (Leviticus 26:26; Ezekiel 4:16-17). Together they would indicate serious famine. Jeremiah 14:1-6 describes such as the result of a great drought, with verses 1 and 2

reading as follows: "The word of Jehovah that came to Jeremiah concerning the drought. Judah mourneth, and the gates thereof languish, they sit in black upon the ground; and the cry of Jerusalem is going up."

The famine of the Third Seal, however, is associated with war rather than drought, and would therefore result from excessive taxation, rapine and oppression, land lying uncultivated and so on. The prices mentioned were famine prices: "A measure of wheat (about a quart, enough for one person for a day) for a shilling (a day's wage); and three measures of barley for a shilling." There are 32 quarts in a bushel, making that amount of wheat of three bushels of barley to cost about a month's wages. (Some represent the shilling as then ordinarily purchasing 15 or 20 measures. See Halley's Bible Handbook, 24th edition, 1965. p. 712.)

Barnes mentions that one of the usual emblems of the Roman procurator or questor, of which he shows a picture, "(had) a balance as a symbol of exactness, and an ear of grain as a symbol employed with reference to procuring of exacting grain from the provinces." And this could account, at least partially, for the balance being employed symbolically in the Third Seal. In Hosea 12:7, the balance is also referred to in connection with fraudulent exaction and oppression ("balances of deceit"), which were not uncommon in the Roman empire during the period under consideration.

"And the oil and the wine hurt thou not" may represent a governmental directive not to diminish the yield of the oliveyards and vineyards in order to avoid excessive taxation or confiscation of their produce. Barnes cites the following as an example of such: "If any one shall craftily feign poverty in order to avoid a fair assessment, he shall, upon detection, suffer death, and his property be confiscated" Cod. Theod. 1,13,lib. xi, seq.).

Also, cited by Johnson in *A Vision of the Ages* from Lactantius is the following: "Swarms of extractors sent into the provinces, filled them with agitation and terror, as though a conquering enemy were leading them into captivity. The fields were separately measured, the trees and vines, the flocks and herds, were

numbered, and an examination made of the men. ... The sick and weak were borne to a place of inscription, a reckoning of the age of each was made, years were added to the young and subtracted from the old, in order to subject them to the higher taxation than the law imposed. The whole scene was filled with wailing and sadness." (Cited also in Barnes, who has it "in order to subject them to a higher taxation than the law imposed" -- in which case the "extractors" would keep, and would be allowed to keep, the difference.) NOTE: Lactantius (260-340 A.D.) was a Latin tutor, teacher of rhetoric, a celebrated author and Christian apologist, converted during persecutions of Christians, and an important source of Gibbon as well as other historians. The New Columbia Encyclopedia (1975) states that his writings are "a chief source for the history of the persecutions."

Again from Lactantius: "In the course of this history, we shall be too often summoned to explain the land tax and capitation, and the heavy contributions of corn (wheat), wine, oil, and meat, which are exacted of the provinces for the use of the court, the army, and the capital." And from Gibbon (Chapter 6, covering the years 208-235 A. D.): "The rest of his (the emperor Caracalla's) reign was spent in several provinces of the empire, particularly those of the East, and every province was by turns the scene of his rapine and cruelty ... The most wealthy families were ruined by partial fines and confiscations, and the great body of his subjects oppressed by ingenious and aggravated taxes."

So, beyond question, the conditions indicated by the Third Seal were a reality in the Roman empire during a part of the period of the Second Seal and beyond. And so would those be in the Forth Seal.

4. The Forth Seal (6:7-8): "Behold, a pale horse: and he that sat upon him, his name was death; and Hades followed with him. And there was given unto them authority over a fourth part of the earth, to kill with the sword, and with famine, and with death (margin: Or, pestilence), and by the wild beast of the earth."

"Pale" here is descriptive of the pallor of death. The rider of the pale horse was also named "Death," representing an appalling

result, directly and indirectly, of the calamitous period represented by the previous two seals. "Hades" is the place of departed spirits between death and the resurrection, and is represented as following immediately behind Death in order to swallow up the killing spirits of the dead. "Death," as also used above in the sense of killing by death, refers to death in great numbers, as by epidemic or plague. That there was such a period in the Roman Empire is graphically described in Gibbon (Chapter 10, covering years 248-268 A.D.):

"But a long and general famine was a calamity of a more serious kind. It was the inevitable consequence of rapine and oppression, which extirpated the produce of the present, and the hope of the future harvests. Famine is almost always followed by epidemical diseases, the effect of scanty and unwholesome food. Other causes must however have contributed to the furious plague, which, from the year two hundred fifty to the year two hundred and sixty five, raged without interruption in every province, every city, and almost every family, of the Roman Empire. During some time five thousand persons died daily in Rome; and many towns, that had escaped the hands of the barbarians, were entirely depopulated."

(Mention of "barbarians" gives occasion to mention that near the close of the period under consideration, with the empire weakened by civil war and its concomitants, barbarians from the north invaded, even as far as Italy, almost bringing the empire to its knees. But it was rescued by a series of valiant princes, including Diocletian, to be referred to later.)

Gibbon continues: "We have the knowledge of a very curious circumstance, of some use perhaps in the melancholy calculation of human calamities. An exact register was kept at Alexandria, of all the citizens entitled to receive the distribution of corn. It was found that the ancient number of those comprised between the ages of forty and seventy had been equal to the whole sum of the claimants, from fourteen to fourscore years of age, who remained alive after the reign of Gallienus. Applying this authentic fact to the most correct tables of mortality, it evidently proves that above half of the people of Alexandria had perished; and could we venture to extend the analogy to other provinces, we might suspect

that war, pestilence, and famine had consumed, in a few years, the moiety of the human species."

The word "moiety" means one of two equal parts, or one-half. Gibbon's analogy of Alexandria, however, may not have been applicable to all other provinces. And the language of the fourth Seal specifies only a "fourth part." Also, Gibbon does not mention another contributing factor to death in the empire as being "wild beast," listed under the Fourth Seal. But other sources do, speaking of the scourge of ravenous wild beast which multiplied owing to colossal loss of population in great provinces.

Thus ends the four seals dealing with carnal war beyond and later within the borders of the Roman empire, and the calamitous circumstances connected therewith, symbolized by the four horses and their riders. The next seal is of a different sort, pertaining to persecuted saints within the empire.

LAST THREE SEALS

Notes on Chapters 6:9 -8:6

THE FIFTH SEAL (6:9-11).

"And when he had opened the fifth seal, I saw underneath the altar the souls of them that had been slain for the word of God, and for the testimony which they held: and they cried with a great voice, saying How long, O Master, the holy and true, dost thou not judge and avenge our blood on them that dwell on the earth? And there was given to each on a white robe; and it was said unto them, that they should rest yet for a little time, until their fellow-servants also and their brethren who would yet be killed as they were, should have fulfilled their course."

John did not see bodies, but the "souls" of Christian martyrs. They were "under the altar" of the apocalyptic temple. This may have been because they had been sacrificed, as it were, in the service of God. In connection with the earthly tabernacle, there was the altar of burnt-offering, where animal sacrifices were made and the blood of the sacrificial animals was poured out at its base

(Leviticus 4:7). This may have provided the symbolism of souls under the altar.

Souls do not die when the blood of their bodies is shed and the bodies die. Neither are they ever represented as unconscious. So these represented as crying out to God, asking how long it would be before their blood would be avenged "on the earth" - not in eternity, in hell. They were given white robes, symbolizing victory and purity of righteousness, and told to wait a little longer till still others of their brethren should likewise suffer martyrdom.

The victory symbolized may very well have been not only their own personal victory over temptation to succumb to the opposition of their cause but also the assured victory of their cause itself. For it indeed prospered notwithstanding repeated persecutions, so that Tertullian (who died in 230 A.D.) had remarked that the blood of martyrs was the seed of Christians. He also wrote: "We are of yesterday. Yet we have filled your empire, your cities, your towns, your tribes, your camps, castles, palaces, assemblies and Senate." By the end of Imperial persecutions and the accession of Constantine as emperor, they are estimated by some to have been numbered one-half the population of the Roman Empire.

The question of the martyrs heard by John would have been appropriate at any time after there had been the martyrdom of Christians. But its answer makes it most likely to have been toward the end of the [period of Roman history in which there were persecutions of varying durations, intensities and scopes under the following several rulers: Domitian (81-96 A.D.); Trajan (98-117 A.D.); Hadrian (117-138 A.D.); Marcus Aurelius (138-161 A.D.); Antoninus Pius (161-180 A.D.); Septimus Severus (193-211 A.D.); Maximim (235-238 A.D.); Decius (249-251 A.D.); Valerian (253-260 A.D.); Aurelian 271-275 A.D.); and Diocletian (284-305 A.D.).

The climax, and bloodiest of all, began under Diocletian in the latter years of his reign, empire-wide, and lasted more than 10 years, till 311 A.D. - "to abolished the Christian name from the earth" - resulting in martyrdoms by thousands and estimated into millions by some - and has itself been called the "Age of Martyrs."

The "little time" the souls already under the altar would have to wait for the avenging of their blood would likely be till the persecution begun under Diocletian had ended. Or, perchance, it might be till 324 A.D., when the victory of their cause was assured by the victory of their friend Constantine over their enemy Licinius, and becoming sole ruler of the empire. Afterwards there developed an actual reversal of the positions of paganism and Christianity in the empire, with the latter declared by a later emperor (Theodosius, 378-395 A.D.) to be the state religion. Later chapters in Revelation will indeed indicate an avenging "on the earth" of the blood of the martyrs - beginning even with the next seal of this chapter.

3. THE SIXTH SEAL (6:12-17).

"And I saw when he opened the sixth seal, and there was a great earthquake; and the sun became black as sackcloth. And the whole moon became as blood; and the stars of heaven fell unto the earth, as a fig casteth her unripe figs, when she is shaken of a great wind. And the heaven was removed as a scroll when it is rolled up; and every mountain and island were moved out of its places. And the kings of the earth, and the princes and chief captains, and the rich, and the strong, and every bondman and freeman, hid themselves in the caves and in the rocks of the mountains; and they say unto the mountains and to the rocks, fall on us, hide us from the face of him that sitteth on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb: for the great day of their wrath is come; and who is able to stand?"

The great earthquake is a symbol of revolution - great agitation and upheaval. The sun, moon and stars are symbols of earthly dignitaries - great lights in the political and religious heavens. Blackness of the sun and bloody hue of the moon indicate mourning and bloodshed among rulers and princes. The falling of the stars evidently represents the downfall of those who occupied high positions in the Roman Empire. The heaven being removed as a scroll likely refers to the old religions, superstitiously supposed to be of heavenly origin. Every mountain and island removed out of their places seems to refer to earthly rulers and kingdoms. The European provinces of the empire were often referred to as "the isles of the seas." So the symbolic picture is one

of great commotion and drastic change, recognized as being the result of the wrath of Jehovah and the Lamb (Christ). And secular history records just such a revolution in the Roman Empire - a synopsis which shall now be given.

It followed chronologically the "Age of Martyrs" seemingly symbolized by the Fifth Seal. After Diocletian ascended to the imperial throne in 284 A.D., he came to feel that one emperor was not enough to defend the immense frontiers against barbarian invasions, since the empire had been seriously weakened by its long period of civil war. Accordingly, in 285 A.D., he nominated Marcus Aurelian Maximian as "Caesar," worthy of supreme command yet subordinate to himself as Augustus - thus in theory dividing the supreme rule between them, with himself over the eastern part, and Maximian over the western part, of the empire - while in reality he exercised senior status, to which Maximian graciously deferred without any signs of rivalry - which would not necessarily hold true of all successors.

So a further step was taken in 293 A.D., to fix the succession of the two Augusti, in order to prevent further revolutions and competition for imperial power. They each elected a "Caesar" who would succeed him at death if not promoted to the status of Augustus earlier. Diocletian chose Gaius Valerius Maximianinus (referred to as Galerius), and Maximian chose Gaius Flavius Valerius Constantius Chlorus (to be referred to as Constantius). The two Augusti would be "brothers" and their "Caesuras" would be their "sons," who would automatically succeed them in case of death or abdication. And each Augustus pledged to retire after 20 years in favor of his: Caesar," who would then appoint a "Caesar" to aid and succeed him in turn.

Each Augustus was also to give a daughter in marriage to his "Caesar" to add the ties of family to those of law. This, however required that each "Caesar" put away his former companion. (In the case of Constantius, he was obliged to put away Helena, mother of his son Constantine (now 21 years of age, according to some authors), and accept Maximian's stepdaughter Theodora as his wife, by whom he had three daughters and three sons. And later, when Constantine became a "Caesar" he had to repudiate

Minervina, mother of his son Crispus, and marry Fausta (sister of his father's second wife), by whom he had three sons and two daughters.)

The immense empire was now a "tetrarchy, divided among four dynasts who were to render mutual assistance to each other. Each also chose a residence for himself suitable for the territory he would govern. Caesar Constantius was given Britain, Gaul, and perhaps Spain (though some authorities say it belonged to Maximian); and he chose Trier as his residence, in what is now Germany. His Augustus (Maximian) kept for himself Raetia (south of the Danube and north of Italy), Italy itself with its islands, Africa west of Egypt and Libya (and possibly Spain); and his court was in Milan, in northern Italy. Caesar Galerius received the regions east and southeast of Raetia below the Danube, Illyria, Macedonia and Greece with Crete; and he resided in Sirmium, in Pannonia, in an area that is now part of Yugoslavia. His Augustus (Diocletian) retained Thrace (in Europe), the whole of Asia Minor with Syria and Palestine, and Egypt with Libya (in Africa); and his palace was in Nicomedia, in Bithynia, in Asia Minor, near what is now Constantinople. None made Rome his headquarters, though the Senate was there and it was officially still capital of the empire.

Although there were technically two Augusti, Diocletian was the acknowledged head of the tetrarchy and invested with the official title of Dominus. Lord, which early Roman emperors had shunned. That was reminiscent of the beastly Domitian and unwelcome to Christians, since it carried with it implications of deity which they could not acknowledge. Diocletian's reign was also otherwise more like that of an Oriental monarch. However, the empire held together without civil war as long as he retained his throne but rapidly disintegrated after his abdication.

In 305 A.D., however, both Diocletian in the East and Maximian in the West abdicated their power as emperors, and their respective "Caesars," Galerius and Constantius, became Augusti. And before his death in 313 A.D., Diocletian saw the failure of both his tetrarchy and his persecution of Christians begun during his reign, mainly at the instigation of his "Caesar" Galerius. That persecution had been so extreme that it turned the sympathies of

many pagans toward Christians and converted them to their religion. And furious rivalry and civil war also broke out among the rulers and would-be rulers of the empire.

According to the rules of the tetrarchy, when Galerius and Constantius became emperors (Augusti), the office of "Caesar" would have gone to Maxentius, son of Maximian and son-in-law of Galerius, and to Constantine, son of Constantius. But Galerius, who was impatient of becoming Augustus and Lord, and had manipulated the abdication of Diocletian and Constantius, also maneuvered to get Diocletian to name Flavius Galerius Severus and Maximian as the new Caesars. Since these were his own men, to all intents and purposes he would now be master of the empire. For the other Augustus, Constantius, was a long way off in Britain and in poor health, with no grand ambitions, and Galerius thought he could soon put another of his men in his place. But this did not work so smoothly, for neither Constantine nor Maxentius was happy with the new arrangements that excluded them so completely.

Constantine, who had been on loan as it were to assist with campaign in the East and had distinguished himself, was sent for by his father, the ailing Augustus Constantius of the West. Augustus Galerius was reluctant to let him go, and kept him almost a hostage. But he escaped. And when his father died the next year (July 25, 306), the army proclaimed Constantine his successor. Yet, according to the rules of the tetrarchy, the "Caesar" of Constantius, who was Severus, should have succeeded him, and Constantine had so apprised a council of high ranking officers. Yet on the day of his father's funeral he was so vigorously and publicly acclaimed as the new Augustus that he could say he accepted against his will and in order to avoid disturbance. Accordingly he sent to Galerius for confirmation, which was refused, and Severus appointed instead, with Constantine as his "Caesar." Galerius nearly had to do that much for Constantine in order to avoid disturbance and sedition himself.

And now that Constantine had gotten substantially what he wanted, Maxentius began to look for opportunity to do so as much for himself. Galerius unwittingly afforded such by imposing new

and severe fiscal measures to fill the empty coffers of the empire. Till then Rome had been exempt from taxation, but not now, and its citizens reacted angrily. Maxentius then presented himself as protector of the people, and the Praetorian Guard immediately proclaimed him emperor. (October 27, 306). With Roman Senate, which the tetrarchy had been by-passing, adding its confirmation - Maxentius making it known that as far as he was concerned the tetrarchy no longer existed. Also, to gain the support of the veterans of the army who held his father, Maximian (a former Augustus), in high regard, he offered him that position again (though he had not been on very good terms with him), and he readily accepted.

Galerius, the Augustus of the East and head of the tetrarchy, then dispatched Severus, whom he had appointed Augustus of the West, to dispose of Maxentius and occupy Rome. His mission was a disaster, however, for his army was made up mainly of veterans of Maximian, who deserted to the defenders of the city out of regard to the latter. Severus escaped to Ravenna, where he committed suicide in February 307. Then Galerius, furious at the turn of events, personally headed a strong expedition to punish the traitors and save the tetrarchy. But when he arrived in Italy he had to abort his mission and retreat in humiliation with greatly diminished forces, for his soldiers, too, deserted by companies and the worst he could do was to leave a scorched earth and ravaged civil population in his wake, which he did with a vengeance as he withdrew.

In the meantime, Maximian, who had never really trusted his son, Maxentius, visited Constantine and made a deal to give him (1) his daughter Fausta in marriage and (2) the title Augustus (of the West) which had been denied him by Galerius - having himself been Augustus when Galerius was only "Caesar." This, in turn, eventuated in Maximian and Maxentius publicly coming to blows, with the father tearing the imperial robe from his son. And Maxentius, managing to get away with the help of a few bribed soldiers, soon made and executed plans to avenge his insult. This time Maximian had to flee Rome. So, with him gone and Severus dead, Maxentius now declared himself Augustus - on October 27, 307 - the anniversary of his nomination as such by the praetorian guard.

This meant that hardly two years after the abdication of Diocletian from the tetrarchy, one Augustus (Severus) had been driven to suicide and there were four other Augusti - Galerius in the East and Maximian, Constantine, and Maxentius in the West - and one "Caesar" (Maximin), nephew and subordinate to Galerius - who were all more or less hostile toward one another. So Galerius, Maximian, and Constantine held a consultation meeting with retired Diocletian as to how to preserve and strengthen the tetrarchy, which Maxentius had repudiated. Diocletian advised that Licinius, an intimate friend of Galerius in the East, be made an Augustus in place of the dead Severus, and that Constantine and Maximin be given the title of "Sons of Augusti." Maximian had to give up the title of emperor (Augustus) but was designated consul for the following year as a small compensation. And Maxentius was ignored altogether. So this by no means brought peace for long.

Only months later, in 308, Maximin (the "Caesar" of Galerius), proclaimed himself Augustus in opposition to Licinius in eastern Europe, and after the death of Galerius in 310 he exercised considerable authority - dying, however in 313. Maximian also began to look for ways to restore himself to his original position of Augustus, and resorted to treachery against Constantine (who was only a "Caesar" by title but was more powerful in Europe than Augustus Licinius). Visiting Constantine as a time when the latter was having to leave for northern frontiers to stave off invasion, he attempted to bribe the soldiers who had been left as a garrison to attach themselves to him circulating rumors that Constantine was being defeated at the borders. Hearing of this, Constantine hurriedly returned with his army and Maximian had to flee for his life. After being defeated at every successive endeavor against Constantine, including in the last an attempt to murder him, he was allowed to choose the manner in which he himself would die, and he committed suicide (February 310). That left Maxentius as Constantine's only foe in the West. But before there was any settling of old scores between them, there were other crucial developments in the empire.

By March of 310, the senior Augustus, Valerius, was suffering severely from an odious venereal disease that became more and more excruciating and debilitating, and took his own life by May

15, 311. Notwithstanding he had been the moving spirit behind the most furious of all persecutions against Christians, they had been without avail except to strengthen their cause and to purge it of many of its ills; so now he began to think that, since the gods of his own empire seemingly could not help him, maybe the God of the Christians would. Reaching the point of whimpering like a child and endeavoring to propitiate Him, he promised to rebuild ruined churches and do penance for his crimes - even asking Christians to pray for him! And on April 30, 311, just days before his death, he issued an Edict of Toleration and had it published in all territories of the empire. The effect was electrifying. Not only did Christians rejoice ecstatically, but many pagans joined in the celebration and "proclaimed the God of Christians great and true" - while others, however, were seized with anger, fear and desperation.

Also, after the death of Galerius, and Maximin was now his lawful successor as emperor, there was almost civil war between the two Augusti, Licinius and Maximin, over territorial claims. According to the rules of the tetrarchy, all the lands Galerius had governed belonged to Maximin as his former "Caesar." But he grudgingly yielded those in Europe (principally Thrace) to Licinius, while getting to retain Asia Minor, Syria (including Palestine), and Egypt and Lybia in Africa.

At the same time, Maxentius and Constantine were strengthening their respective lands in the West. Britain, Gaul, Spain, and a small part of Africa, Italy, and the land beyond the Alps to Raetia looked to Maxentius - with eastern Europe except Thrace (including all the Balkan and Grecian peninsula) belonging to Licinius. Maxentius, however, was officially a rebel and usurper in the tetrarchy, and neither Constantine nor Licinius (who were still friends) liked him, though he and Constantine were now brother-in-laws. Likewise, Maximin and Licinius were not on good terms, since the latter had attempted to annex Asia Minor to his territories after the death of Galerius. So Maximin in the East and Maxentius in the West entered secretly into a pact against Licinius and Constantine, making it known by erecting monuments in Rome of Maxentius and Maximin together.

Maximin was also re-lighting the fires of persecution in his territories, which would give Constantine an opportunity to become the champion of Christians. His father, Constantius, had been tolerant of them and his mother, Helena, with whom he still had close ties, was sympathetic toward them and either had become or else later became one of them.

Maxentius was also preparing to avenge his fathers, Maximian, against Constantine, who had in effect put him to death though he was a suicide. So he strengthened his military bases in northern Italy in anticipation of war against Constantine and Licinius. Aware of this, Constantine decided not to wait for the attack of Maxentius, but to strike first by surprise and when Maximin would be unable to give speedy assistance. Everywhere in northern Italy, however, the cities were favorable to Constantine and Maxentius lost every attempted battle. So the war would be decided in Rome.

Constantine is said to have felt the need of divine aid, and decided to put his trust in the God of Christians. He reported seeing in the sky "a trophy in the shape of a dazzling sword in front of the sun and with it a motto saying 'with this sign conquer.'" Which all of his army likewise saw and was seized with wonder; also that while he slept that night "there appeared to him Christ of God with the sign he had seen in the sky, who told him to make standards of that shape to serve as protection of his conflicts with the enemy" - which he did. And when he marched on Rome, Maxentius, who fought under the pagan banner of the "Unconquered Sun" and had every natural advantage, was filled with terror and every move he made seemed to play into the hands of Constantine.

Losing the battle of Milvian Bridge just north of the city and seeking to flee across the Tiber River, he was dragged down by his heavy armor and died in the mud of the opposite bank. The following day October 28, 312, Constantine made a triumphal entry into Rome, where he was welcomed by most of the populace and acclaimed by the Senate as "First of the Augusti," giving him precedence over Licinius and Maximin. The statues of Maxentius and Maximin were duly destroyed and the famous "Arch of Constantine" was later erected. The latter was dedicated in 315, with the following inscription: "Constantine, the Great, general,

Caesar and priest pious and Happy Augustus, because of the guidance of divinity and the loftiness of his own mind he freed with his army the Republic from the tyrant and all his machinations at one blow by just force, the senate and Roman people dedicates this worthy arch of triumph."

After only two months in Rome, Constantine went early in 313 to Milan to celebrate the marriage of his sister, Constantia, to his friend, and now fellow Augustus, namely Licinius. While there they made plans for the empire and among other things, issued the famous Edict of Milan, making Christianity a legal religion throughout the empire, confirming the edict of Galerius in 309, which Maximin in the East had not honored.

But while Licinius was in Milan, Maximin took advantage of his absence and invaded his territory with intention of wresting it from him. Moreover, he made it a religious war, with word circulated that he had made a vow to Jupiter to destroy Christianity once and for all if granted victory. While Licinius had no real sympathy for Christianity, as would later be demonstrated, for the time being it was to his advantage to champion it, which he did - and won - Maximin fleeing and Licinius pursuing until finally he poisoned himself and died - his territory now belonging to Licinius.

This left Licinius and Constantine the unchallenged rulers of the empire. And a war-weary people rejoiced at the prospect of peace. But neither Augustus had abandoned hope of an undivided supremacy. In 314 their mounting rivalry had reached the point of war. Due to an act of Licinius that looked like intrigue and treason, Constantine invaded his territory, defeated him, and exacted the surrender of his European territory except Thrace. Licinius then revenged himself upon Constantine's Christian supporters by renewing persecution in Asia and Egypt. "He excluded Christians from his palace in Nicomedia, required every soldier to adore the pagan gods, forbade the simultaneous attendance of both sexes at Christian worship, and at last prohibited all Christian services within city walls. Disobedient Christians lost their positions, their citizenship, their property, their liberty, or their lives." (Will Durant, *Caesar and Christ*, 1944, p.665.) So Constantine now

watched for opportunity both to give relief to the Christians of the East and to add the East to his own realm.

For the greater part of another decade there was tension between the two Augusti, with occasional skirmishes and then shaky truces, with the wife of Licinius, who was Constantine's half-sister Constantia, serving as intermediary and peacemaker as long as she could. Finally, when Barbarians invaded Thrace, adjoining Constantine's territory, and Licinius failed to move against them, Constantine did. But, after he had driven them back, Licinius protested Constantine's entry into Thrace and war between them was renewed. The defender of Christianity, with 130,000 men, met the defender of paganism with 160,000 men. After Constantine was victor in two major battles, Licinius surrendered of condition of pardon, arranged for by his wife, but the next year (324) he was executed of the charge of resuming his intrigues.

Constantine, the ruler in the west since 313, was now emperor of the East as well - of the entire empire. Not baptized till the last year of his life (337), that all his sins might then be removed, he nevertheless had identified himself with Christianity since October 27, 312. In the Edict of Milan in 313, he granted "to Christians and to all others full liberty of following that religion which each may choose." But he favored Christians in every way - filling chief offices with them, exempting their ministers from taxes and military service, encouraging and helping in the building of church houses, making Christianity the religion of his court, making Sunday (their) day of regular general assembly) a day of rest for the cities (permitting Christian soldiers and slaves to attend church services), and so on; and in 325 he issued a general exhortation to all his subjects to embrace Christianity. Furthermore, because the Roman aristocracy persisted in adhering to their pagan religions, he moved his capital to Byzantium, which was neither East nor West but both, which he embellished and officially designated as New Rome - but which was also called Constantinople, after him. It was the capital of his new Christian Empire.

As for history, the emperor Julian (361-363), an apostate, sought to restore paganism. His successor, Jovian (363-364), restored Christianity to its favored status. And Theodosius (378-395) went

so far as to make it the state religion. After Theodopsius, however, the empire was permanently divided into Eastern and Western parts, each with its own emperor, with the Western emperor theoretically holding office at the pleasure of the Eastern emperor. But Rome fell to the barbarians from the north in 476, ending the empire of the West, and Constantinople in 1453 fell to the Ottoman Turks, ending the empire of the East, which also had been known as the Byzantine Empire from the time of Constantine. But most of the barbarian invaders became converts to Christianity, at least theoretically, and helped spread it in areas to the north from which they had come. And long before that, Christianity had at least theoretically replaced paganism as the dominant religion of the Roman Empire. At the end of the 3rd century paganism was still in the ascendant, seeking to "abolish the Christian name" but by the end of the fourth century the civilized world was professedly Christian.

So, the symbolism of the Sixth Seal in the Book of Revelation is most aptly descriptive of the history of the empire as given above. And Gibbon states that a pagan writer described the matter from his point of view "as a dreadful and amazing prodigy, which covered the earth with darkness, and restored the ancient dominion of chaos and night."

4. THE SEVENTH SEAL (8:1-6).

The opening of the Seventh Seal follows an interlude occupying the entire 7th Chapter. It consists of two parts, verses 1-8 and 9-17. The first indicates that the earth (likely the Roman world) was not to be devastated (as later to be described) before the full number of the servants of God in it had been sealed (likely the empire Christianized). The second is a consolatory vision, showing an innumerable multitude of the redeemed from every nation and tribe and tongue standing before the throne and before the Lamb, arrayed in white robes (of righteousness) and with palms (of victory) in their hands - having come successfully through great tribulation, with their robes made white in the blood of the Lamb, and are blessed for evermore in the heavenly temple.

"And when he opened the seventh seal, there followed a silence in heaven about the space of half an hour. And I saw the seven angels that stand before God; and there were given unto them seven trumpets. And another angel came and stood before the altar, having a golden sensor; and there was given unto him incense, that he should add it unto the prayers of the saints upon the golden altar which was before the throne. And the smoke of the incense, with the prayers of the saints, went up before God out of the angel's hand. And the angel taketh the censor; filled it with the fire of the altar, and cast it upon the earth: and there followed thunders, and voices, and lightnings, and an earthquake. And the seven angels that had the seven trumpets prepared themselves to sound.

All of this was preparatory to the sounding of the seven trumpets, heralding great devastating fury upon the Roman Empire, which seems to be incorporated in the Seventh Seal. The effects of the seven trumpets seems likewise not to be finished until the emptying of the seven bowls upon the same areas described in connection with the trumpets. If this perspective is correct, the seventh seal actually takes us to the end of history. But its accomplishments are described in various aspects that take us through Chapter 19, with a long extension of effects described through Chapter 20:6, or till almost the end of history. (See Throne and Closed Book (Notes on Chapters 4 and 5)).

As for the half hour of silence mentioned in the foregoing text, it may have been for dramatic effect to quicken wonder and focus attention on what was to follow. Or, it may have been symbolized a brief interval before the sounding of the seven trumpets. The burning of incense in heaven in connection with prayers of the saints on earth suggest recognition and approval in heaven of the latter. And the ominous occurrences that follow seem to be portents of the heavy judgments upon the Roman Empire that were next to begin.

SEVEN TRUMPETS

Notes on Chapters 8:6 - 11:19

I. FIRST FOUR TRUMPETS (8:7-12).

The sounding of the Seven Trumpets results from the opening of the last of the Seven Seals, and is an integral part of them. As stated in Thrones and Closed Book (Notes on Chapters 4 & 5) the Seven Seals seem to be incorporate in the Seven Trumpets, and in the Seven Trumpets incorporate the Seven Bowls, so that the events of the Seventh Seal are not complete prior to the completion of even those of the Seventh Bowl much later in the text; also that the Seals, Trumpets, and Bowls are not necessarily consecutive, but may in part be simultaneous and overlapping and represent simply different aspects of the same general events.

As with the Seven Seals, the Seven Trumpets are divided into two distinct groups of four and three, respectively; and there is an interlude, or parenthetic episode, between the sixth and seventh numbers of each series. The first four Trumpets introduce judgments upon the Roman Empire symbolized by disorders affecting nature in four of its realms: the earth, the sea, the rivers, and the heavenly bodies. The symbolism of the remaining Trumpets is that of demonic disasters upon the inhabitants of the earth. Descriptions of the judgments correspond in large measure to the plagues of Egypt, but with modifications. The first four are not as severe and widespread as the last three – each affecting only a "third part" of the category. All are designed as warnings to repent, but the first four are not as punitive as the last three, which are designated as "woe Trumpets. Some have thought the first four symbolize the overthrow of the western part of the Roman Empire; the next two, the overthrow of the eastern part; and the last, the complete and final destruction of all the enemies of Christianity at the end of history. The interpretation adopted in these notes, however, is that the latter has reference to the overthrow of paganism in the Roman Empire and its becoming nominally Christian, with a complete reversal of the status of paganism and Christianity in the empire – with rationale for said interpretation given later.

1. First Trumpet (v.7): "and the first sounded, and there followed hail and fire, mingled with blood, and they were cast upon the earth" and the third part of the earth was burnt up, and the third part of the trees was burnt up, and all green grass was burnt up."

This is reminiscent of the plague of hail and fire upon Egypt (Exodus 9:22-26), but "blood" is added, which seems to symbolize war. In that case, the scorched and blasted land may indicate the devastation of destroying armies. It could be symbolic of Gothic invasion from the north in A.D. 409 and the sacking of Rome the next year under Alaric. Johnson points out some of the expressions of Gibbon concerning it as follow: "the tremendous sound of the Gothic Trumpet"; "At the first sound of the trumpet the Goths left their farms" (for the invasion); "the Goths conflagration"; "Blood and conflagration and the burning of trees and herbage marked their path." Italy had been invaded temporarily more than a century earlier, but not nearly as extensively and for a period of 619 years Rome itself had never been violated by the presence of a foreign enemy. So, when Rome was sacked and conquered it was a staggering blow, spreading consternation and gloom. But after six days the Gothic army evacuated the city, and not long afterward Alaric died, with his brother-in-law and successor concluding a treaty of peace two years later (412).

2. Second Trumpet (vs.8-9): "And the second angel sounded and as it were a great mountain burning with fire was cast into the sea: and the third part of the sea became blood; and there died the third part of the creatures which were in the sea, even they that had life; and the third part of the ships was destroyed."

In symbolism a mountain usually represents a king or kingdom (cf. 17:9-10), and here it is a "mountain burning with fire" – a volcanic mountain erupting and being cast into the sea, giving it the appearance of blood – which is reminiscent of the waters of the Nile in Egypt being turned to blood. Bodies of water or seas often represent a multitude of people (cf.17:18), but sometimes the literal and figurative are blended, as may be the case here, since warfare in which ships are destroyed is indicated. In the event, the attack on Rome would come from the sea instead of land as under Alaric. And in harmony with this line of interpretation, the symbolism of the Second Trumpet corresponds remarkably with the invasion of the Vandals under Genseric.

Gibbon says of Genseric that in "the destruction of the Roman Empire" his name "has deserved an equal rank with the names of

Alaric and Attila." He began his conquest in Africa, taking Carthage and the whole of its province from Rome in 439. He then "cast his eyes toward the sea" and created a "naval power." With fleets that issued from the ports of Carthage (and) claimed the empire of the Mediterranean" – of which Rome had held undisputed mastery for six hundred years. In the course of time he cast anchor at the mouth of the Tiber and advanced from port of Ostia to the gates of the city of Rome. Gibbon states that "Rome and its inhabitants were delivered to the licentiousness of the Vandals and Moors, ... The pillage lasted fourteen days and nights; and all that remained of public or private wealth, or sacred or profane treasure, was diligently transported to the vessels of Genseric." This occurred in 455. Three years later when the Roman emperor had prepared a navy of "three hundred large galleys, with an adequate proportion of transports and smaller vessels," the Romans were defeated by a surprise attack of the Vandals, when "many of their ships were sunk, or taken, or burnt: and the preparations of three years were destroyed in a single day" – in 458.

3. Third Trumpet (vs.10-11): "And the third angel sounded, and there fell from heaven a great star, burning as a torch, and it fell upon a third part of the rivers, and upon the fountains of the waters; and the name of the star is called wormwood: and a third part of the waters became wormwood; and many men died of the waters, because they were made bitter."

A star usually symbolizes a ruler or person of rank. In this case, a great burning star or meteor flashed across the sky, as it were, and fell upon a third part of the rivers, rendering them bitter, and many men died as a result. Meteors appear and disappear suddenly, which would indicate a suddenness with which the work of some significant personage would begin and/or end against Rome. In this case, the symbolism is in striking harmony with the career about Attila as a leader of the Huns, which embraced from 433 to 453, making him contemporary with Genseric part of the time, but beginning his career about five years later. As a military leader he was a star of the first magnitude, calming divinely given dominion or the earth. And "in the reign of Attila, the Huns again became the terror of the world," as they had been in earlier times and other parts under previous leaders. Gibbon says he "alternately insulted

and invaded the East and the West, and urged the rapid downfall of the Roman Empire."

It is said that before the year 400 the Romans knew nothing about the Hungarian nation (not to be confused with the present -day Hungarians, who had come into central Europe from the depths of central Asia, but that about the time of Attila appeared upon the banks of the Danube, the river boundary of the Roman Empire, with eight hundred thousand fighting men. Overcoming opposition to the passage of the Danube, he rushed westward, crossed the Rhine river and on the Marne engaged in a tremendous battle with the armies of Rome, where the blood of the slaughtered is said to have made the river run with blood, and that from one hundred fifty thousand to three hundred thousand were slain. Then his army desolated the Rhine river to its mouth and turning southward, it met again the host of Rome on the banks of the Rhone river in furious combat. Finally, arriving on the banks of the Po river Attila contended for the mastery of Italy itself. Victorious, he marched further southward to take Rome. Unable to contend longer, however, the emperor and the senate sent a commission to meet him and obtain a treaty of peace. Upon receiving an immense ransom, he departed, re-crossed the Danube, and soon died (453) – at Bud, on the north side of the Danube, which he had made the capital of the Huns.

4. Fourth Trumpet (v.12): "And the fourth angel sounded, and the third part of the sun was smitten, and a third part of the moon, and the third part of the stars; that the third part of them should be darkened, and the day should not shine for the third part of it, and the night in like manner."

Johnson comments as follows: "We have found the Goths struck their blow (by land) about 409; the Vandals from the sea about A.D. 422; and Attila upon the rivers about A.D. 440. What follows? We are to seek the fulfillment in the next and final invasion of Rome. It occurred A.D. 476. Odoacer, king of the Heruli, a Northern race, encouraged by the apparent weakness of the failing empire, besieged and took the almost helpless city. Augustulus, the feeble emperor, was hurled down, the Roman Senate that had met for twelve hundred and twenty-eight years,

was driven from the Senate chambers, the mighty fabric of the empire fell to the dust, and the great men humbled never to rise again. Sun, moon, and stars, emperor, princes, and great men, were smitten, lose their power, and cease to give light. There now began the period called by all historians the 'Dark Age.'" (Incidentally, one of the plagues of Egypt was a preternatural darkness for three days.)

Further by Johnson: "The third part is named in each of these four judgments. The first fall on the third part of the earth, the second on a third part of the sea, the third on a third part of the rivers, and the fourth on a third part of the sun, moon, and stars. If they were to fall upon a third part of the great Roman world, (1) upon its land provinces, (2) upon its seas,(3) upon its river systems, and (4) upon emperors and rulers (sun, moon, and stars), the whole would thus be fulfilled. This is just what took place. During a great part of the period when the events were taking place which are covered by the seven trumpets, the great Roman world was divided into three parts. Gibbon, Chap. LIII., says: 'From the age of Charlemagne to that of the Crusades, the world (for I overlook the remote monarchy of China) was occupied and disputed by the three great empires, or nations of the Greeks, the Saracens, and the Franks.' 'Three classes of men during that interval are conspicuous, the Saracens or Arabians, the Latins or Franks, inhabitants of the Western Europe, and the Byzantine Greeks.' – Phil. Inquiries , Part III. These quotations, which might be multiplied, show that during the long period of a thousand years, a period embraced in the vision of John, the civilized world was divided into three distinct parts, a third part, the Western third part called the Latin or Frank part, that all the calamities of the four invasions of Goths, Vandals, Huns and Heruli fell. It was the Western third part, the Old Roman Empire, which fell forever under the blows."

The striking correspondence between symbolism and Roman history, including sequence, is the most remarkable if not more than mere coincidence – if not divine prophecy and fulfillment.

II. FIRST TWO "WOE" TRUMPETS (8:13 - 9:21).

John next said: "And I saw , and I heard an eagle, flying in mid heaven, saying with a loud voice, Woe, woe, woe, for them that dwell on the earth, by reason of the other voices of the trumpet of the three angels, who are yet to sound" (8:1-13).

This sets the last three trumpets off in a separate class from the four preceding and indicates increased misery for the inhabitants of the earth – likely the Roman portion of the earth particularly. And between the sixth and the seventh trumpets is an episode or interlude of significance for appreciation of the last trumpet. Hence, now we notice only the fifth and sixth trumpets.

1. Fifth Trumpet (9:1-12): "And the fifth angel sounded, and I saw a star from heaven fall unto the earth: and there was given to him the key to the pit of the abyss" (v.1). John did not see a star fall from heaven, as the King James Version reads, but a star from heaven "having fallen unto earth," as the Greek literally reads. A star is a symbol of a leader. And in this case he may be "the angel of the abyss." *Abaddon* in Hebrew and *Apollyon* in Greek, which means "Destroyer" (v.11) – either Satan or one of his angels – possibly the latter symbolizing some outstanding false teacher and military leader. The "abyss" is likely Tartarus (cf. 2 Peter 2:4) of the Hadean world, the abode of the wicked until resurrection and judgment, and not Gehenna, the lake of fire and brimstone, but whose occupants represent hellish influences. Having the "key" to the abyss evidently represents power to turn loose a multitude of evil workers.

"And he opened the pit of the abyss; and there went up a smoke out of the pit, as the smoke of a great furnace; and the sun and the air were darkened by reason of the smoke of the pit" (v.2). Smoke would darken the sun wherever is spread, and may represent false teaching that, by shutting out the light of truth, would darken the minds of men (cf. 2 Corinthians 4:3-4).

"And out of the smoke came forth locusts upon the earth; and power was given them, as the scorpions of the earth have power" (v.3). This is reminiscent of the plague of locusts upon Egypt, yet is different. Those destroyed vegetation, but these were not allowed to do so, but to hurt man – "only such men as have not the

seal of God on their foreheads"—not kill them, however, but torment them five months so grievously that they would prefer death (vs. 4-6).

The description of the locusts is interesting and quite unnatural. They were shaped like "horses prepared for war," which indicates that they symbolized warfare. They wore, not crowns of gold, but "as it were crowns like unto gold," evidently a significant factor of identification along with others. Their faces were as "men's" hence must have been bearded; their hair was as that of "women," hence likely long; their teeth were as those of "lions," likely indicating of fierceness. The sound of their wings was as that "of chariots, of many horses rushing to war" – suggestive of great numbers as well as their military mission. And they had tails like scorpions, that is, with stings in them – to torment, but not to kill. (vs. 7-10.)

The combined factors of identification have led historicist interpreters to believe that the rise and spread of Mohammedanism (or Islam) is what is symbolized. For one thing, it issued forth from Arabia, which was preeminently the land of the locusts in the Middle East and apparently the source of the locusts plague upon Egypt – being borne in on an east wind. Mohammed proclaimed himself a prophet, set out at the head of an army to propagate his religion by the sword, and conquered Arabia before his death in 632. Under successive leaders Mohammedan armies swept on from there, with one conquest after another in the Eastern world and in parts of the West. Syria fell in 634 (and Damascus established as the capital of their budding empire), Jerusalem in 637, Egypt in 638, Persia in 640, North Africa in 689, and Spain in 711. Not until 732 in a decisive battle at Tours, France, was the tide of conquest stayed. Twice after that, in 675 and 716, they besieged Constantinople but were repulsed each time. In 762 they moved their capital to Bagdad on the Tigris river and called it "the city of Peace." And Gibbons says, "War was no longer the passion of the Saracens" – a term by which the Arabs were popularly known in the Middle Ages. And by the year 782 they engaged in friendly correspondence with Christian rulers of Europe. But indicative of their scourge, possibly at its worst, from 634 to 644, it reported that they had reduced 36,000 cities to obedience, destroyed 4,000 church buildings, and built 1,400 mosques. And

Gibbons says: "At the end of the first century of the Hegira [the flight of Mohammed from Mecca in 622] the caliphs [successors of Mohammed] were the most potent and absolute monarchs on the globe. Under the last of the Ommiades [a dynasty of caliphs in the East from 661 to 750] the Arabian empire extended two hundred days' journey from east to west, from the confines of Tartary and India to the shores of the Atlantic Ocean."

Furthermore, the Arabian armies were fierce and composed of horsemen, famous for their beards, wore their hair long, with yellow turbans on their heads, and are said to have worn iron coats of armor. And when they invaded Syria in 632, Abubeker, the successor of Mohammed, commanded: "Destroy no palm trees, nor burn any fields of corn. Cut down no fruit trees." This corresponds with "it is said unto them that they should not hurt the grass of the earth, neither any green thing, neither any tree, but only such men as have not the seal of God on their forehead."

The question arises as to who commanded to hurt "only such men as have not the seal of God on their foreheads," whether God or the leader of the armies. If the latter, he would mean those who did not accept Mohammed as a prophet of God. If the former, reference would be to the true people of God. Either interpretation is linguistically possible.

While it is true that the Arabian armies were primarily interested in making converts to Mohammedanism, and were dead set against paganism, they often exercised a great deal of leniency toward professed Christians if they recognized the political supremacy of Islam in the regions. "Ironically, considering the Arabs' reputation in the West for proselytizing by the sword, their advance through Syria and Egypt was often welcomed by the Monophysite populations, who found the Islamic conquerors more tolerant than their own Orthodox brothers in Constantinople" (*Religion at the Crossroads*", 1980, p.40). Of conditions under later Islamic leaders (Turkish sultans) it is said: "After he routed a Byzantine army in 1301, Osman was joined by still more fighting Turks, and even Greek defectors. He also welcomed Christians who recognized his authority – and thus the supremacy of Islam.—and let them worship as they pleased" (*Ibid.* p.90). Also:

"the Greek-Orthodox Bulgarians, who had been persecuted by the Catholic Hungarians, welcomed the religious tolerance under Ottoman rule" (Ibid. p.94).

Although Islamic Arabs did not completely subdue the Eastern (or Byzantine) part of the Roman Empire, they greatly shrank its borders and considerably weakened its political fabric. And what they failed to do, the Ottoman Turks, who were likewise Islamic, accomplished. And, if the symbolism of the fifth trumpet (the first "Woe") referred to the former, that of the Sixth Trumpet (the second "Woe") must refer to the latter.

2. Sixth Trumpet (9:13-21): When the sixth angel sounded, John "heard a voice from the horns of the golden altar before God, one saying to the sixth angel that had the trumpet, Loose the four angels that are bound at the great river Euphrates. And the fourth angels were loosed, that had been prepared for the hour and day and month and year, that they should kill a the third part of men. And the number of the armies of the horsemen was twice ten thousand times the thousand: and I heard the number of them," said John (vs. 13-16).

Angels are messengers or agents through which events are accomplished. In this case, the four angels are agents of wrath that had been confined beyond the Euphrates, the eastern boundary of the Roman Empire. While four may be indicative of strength, it could have reference to the four principalities under the four grandsons of the leader who established the Turkish empire in western Asia. Coming originally out of central Asia, and having converted to Mohammedanism in the 9th and 10th centuries, by the second half of the tenth century A.D. they extended themselves as far west as the Euphrates river, the eastern boundary of the Roman Empire, but, somehow, were "bound" there for sixty years. In 1057, however they crossed the Euphrates with a tremendous cavalry and marched upon the eastern part of the Roman Empire. By the beginning of the next century they were in control of most of it. By late in the 13th century, the Turkish empire had reorganized itself into the Ottoman Turks in power. Then they crossed into Europe. The eastern part of the Roman Empire was soon shorn of all its territories and reduced to the city of

Constantinople. And in addition to clashing and fighting back and forth with nearly every country that had been a part of the western Roman Empire, and wearying them to a standstill, in 1453 the Turks successfully assaulted Constantinople with 200,000 soldiers, and with battering rams and cannons – the first ever used in a siege – and with a mighty slaughter took, on May 29, the last vestige of the once mighty Roman Empire. And when more than a century later it reached its peak, the Ottoman empire extended from Persia throughout Asia Minor (or Anatolia, as it was called), into parts of Arabia, into most of southeastern Europe, throughout Syria and Palestine, and to Egypt and most of northern Africa, and penetrated deeply into parts of other areas where it molested but never gained and/or maintained control. Eventually it disintegrated and weakened to the point of being the "sick man of Europe." But on its way to ascendancy it achieved the disintegration and overthrow of the last vestiges of the Roman Empire – the Byzantine portion – the Byzantine "third" of the civilized world – which seemingly was its main providential mission. The Saracens had achieved a part of that mission, and the Turks completed it and came to dominate for a long period of time the territory the Saracens had taken as well as that which they themselves additionally conquered.

Out of the mouths of the preternatural horses seen in John's symbolical vision "proceedeth fire and brimstone. By these three plagues was the third of men killed, ... For the power of the horses is in their mouths, and in their tails: for their tails are like unto serpents, and have heads; and with them they do hurt." (vs.17-19).

Historicist interpreters have seen in this a reference to the use of gun powder and firearms, employed for the first time in the campaigns of the Ottoman Turks – since at a distance it might look as if the smoke of guns fired by the riders was coming from the horses' mouths, and that this was the source of their power. The other source was their tails. Johnson remarks: "this is a singular statement. No less singular is the fact that among the Turks the horses tail is a emblem of power. The number of horses tails determined rank. A Pacha of three tails is a great officer. The emblem of rule of the Pacha, the most wasteful, oppressive, unjust rule the world has ever seen, is likely the horse's tail." If that seems farfetched, "Perhaps the serpent like tails only signify the

biting torture that would be felt by those who would have to suffer from the new kind of warfare indicated" (John T Hinds. Commentary on the Book of Revelation, Gospel Advocate Company, 1937.)

"And the rest of mankind, who were not killed with these plagues, repented not of the works of the hands, that they should not worship demons, and the idols of gold, and of silver, and of brass, and of stone, and of wood; which can neither see, nor hear, nor walk" and repented not of their murders, nor of their sorceries, nor of their fornication, nor of their thefts" (vs.20-21).

This has a special reference to those who were guilty of idolatry and commonly associated sins. Although both the Saracens and the Turks were Mohammedans and were a scourge especially against such, they never succeeded either in converting or killing all who practiced it. Christians were as much opposed to idolatry as the Moslems (another name for Mohammedans) were, but did not use the sword (or guns) against it.

III. Interlude (10:1 - 11:4).

1. The Little Open Book (10:1-11). This is the first part of an interlude before sounding the Seventh Trumpet. John sees another strong angel, not one of the seven with trumpets, having in his hand a little open book, who set his right foot upon the sea and his left foot upon the earth (land), and cried with a loud voice, responded to by the "voices" of the seven thunders – evidently ominous utterings, which John was forbidden to record. Then the strong angel swore by the Creator that there would be "delay no longer," but in the days of the voice of the seventh angel, when he is about to sound, the "mystery of God," according to what he had declared to his servants the prophets, would be "finished." (vs.1-7.) That is, a significant consummation that had been foretold would be accomplished. Then John was directed to take the little open book from the strong angel standing upon the sea and upon the land, and to "eat it up," which in his mouth would be "sweet as honey" but in his stomach would be "bitter." And he was told that he must "prophesy" (make known God's message) again in regard to (*epi*, as in John 12:16, where it is translated "of") "many peoples

and nations and tongues and kings." It would be a message of mercy upon some, which would be sweet, and of judgment upon others, which would be bitter to contemplate. This may possibly have reference principally to the remainder of "The Revelation" itself, concerned with the consummation, which is bitter-sweet indeed.

2. The Two Witnesses (11:1-14): "And there was given unto me a reed like unto a rod: And one said, Rise, and measure the temple of God, and the altar, and them that worship therein. And the court which is without the temple leave without and measure it not; for it hath been given unto the nations: and the holy city shall they tread under foot for forty and two months. And I will give unto my two witnesses, and they shall prophesy a thousand and two hundred and threescore days, clothed in sackcloth" (vs.1-3).

The measuring john was to do so reminiscent of that described in Ezekiel, Chapters 40-43 – to obtain dimensions of the pattern for the people to conform to if ashamed of their iniquities and interested in obedience to God (43:6-12) and acceptable by him (v.27). John was to measure the temple (the church), the altar (the worship), and the worshippers themselves. The outer court was not to be included in the measuring, being the court of the nations (Gentiles), who would tread under foot (persecute) the holy city (another term for the church) for 42 months (3 ½ years). During that time (expression also as 1260 days) God's "two witnesses" would prophesy in "sackcloth" – a symbol of sorrow and mourning – obviously due to persecution. (A similar period of time was forecast, in Daniel 12:5-28, "a time, times, and a half." When there would be a "breaking in pieces the power of the holy people." See also 7:25 and the context, vs. 15-28.)

The instrument for the above measuring was "given" to John. Not something he made; and , in harmony with the chapters referred to above from Ezekiel, it must have been the word of God – in this case, the teaching of the New Testament, already given to the apostles, who had been guided into all truth (John 16:13). Obviously, that would also be the message of God's "two witnesses" who would prophesy in sackcloth for 3 ½ years.

These two witnesses are described as "the two olive trees and the two candlesticks (Gr. *lampstands*), standing before the Lord of the earth" (v.4). this imagery seems to be suggested by Zechariah 4. The "olive trees" would supply the oil necessary of the lamps to give light. And, since the word of God is a "lamp" and a "light" (Psalm 119:105), the "oil" would likely be the Holy spirit by which the word is received by prophets and communicated. When Zechariah asked what the two olive trees in his vision represented, he was told, "This is the word of Jehovah unto Zerubbabel, saying, Not by might, not by power, but by my Spirit, saith Jehovah of host" (4:6); Also, "These are the two anointed ones, that stand by the Lord of the whole earth" (v.14) – referring to Zerubbabel, governor of Judah, the high priest (3:1,8-9; cf. See Haggai 2:1-5) – so endowed (anointed) by the Spirit of God as to do the work assigned to them by the Lord.

But the two witnesses of our text in Revelation are not so specifically designated, though they are called "prophets" – persons who by the Spirit of God receive and communicate to others the word of God. They are described, however, in terms reminiscent of Moses (Exodus 1:14-21 through Chapter 11) and Elijah (1 Kings 17:1-5 and James 5:17-18; 2 Kings 1:10-14) – yet they are not these. In all probability, reference is symbolically made to all Christian martyrs (witnesses) during the period under consideration – for they are killed – by the "beast that comes up out of the abyss and makes war with them (v.7) -- to be described later and referred to again and again. (Some have thought them to represent the Old and New Testaments, and surely they would speak forth the truths of such – "the word of God, and the testimony of Jesus" (1:2.9; 6:9; 20:4).)

They are killed in the great city where our Lord was crucified (v.8) – likely not referring to his literal crucifixion, but to his being "crucified afresh" by enemies of his cause (see Hebrews 6:4 for such a figurative use of the word). And, if the crucifixion referred to is not literal, neither would the city likely be the one where he was literally crucified. "Spiritually" (that is figuratively) it is Jerusalem (because of its rejection of Christ and the persecution of his people); Sodom (because of its moral degradation); and Egypt (because of its cruelty and oppression). It is the antithesis of the holy city (New Jerusalem, yet to be depicted), and is preeminently

the sin city (later referred to again and again as Babylon and described as a great harlot sitting upon "many waters", symbolizing "peoples, and multitudes, and nations, and tongues", (17:1-15), and likewise described as sitting upon a "scarlet colored beast" (17:3), answering to one referred to above in 11:7).

Contempt for the witnesses put to death is shown by refusal to allow them to be buried (which was not true in literal Jerusalem in regard to Christ when he was crucified), as well as by the merry-making of "the peoples and tribes and tongues and nations" beholding their dead bodies in the city of their martyrdom – answering not to any one city alone, but to the Roman Empire as a whole. Their rejoicing is short-lived, however, for after 3 ½ days the martyred ones are described as being restored to life, and then called into heaven. This evidently means that when the cause of the two witnesses was thought to be so vanquished as never to revive, it not only recovered but was even exalted (and therefore successful) beyond what it had ever been before. That was greatly frightening to the enemies of Christianity, and "in that hour" there was a "great earthquake" causing a part of the city of sin to fall, with many killed, and the rest giving "glory to God of heaven" – reminiscent of what has already been depicted under different symbolism, and will be repeated in various other ways as well. This has brought us through 11:13.

"The second Woe is past: behold the Third Woe cometh quickly" (v.14).

IV. THIRD "WOE" TRUMPET (11:15-19).

1. Seventh Trumpet (11:15-18): "And the seventh angel sounded; and there followed great voices in heaven, and they said, "The kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of our Lord, and of his Christ: and he shall reign for ever and ever."

This represents a promised consummation. The strong angel that had said, "there shall be delay no longer" continued by saying, "but in the days of the voice of the seventh angel, when he is about to sound, then is finished the mystery of God according to the good tidings which he declared to his servants the prophets" (10:6-

7). But it is doubtful if this refers to the victory of Christ at the end of history, unless in prospect and by way of prelude and assurance. It is more likely to be primarily his victory over paganism, to be symbolized yet in various ways in addition to what has already been done, including the symbolism of Chapter 19, after which there is still an interval represented as more than one thousand years before the end of history, as described in 20:1-10. See Chart of Revelation 6-22.

The 24 Elders responded to the above quoted declaration by worshipping God saying, "We give thee thanks, O Lord God, the Almighty, who art and who wast; because thou hast taken thy great power, and didst reign. And the nations were wroth, and thy wrath came, and the time of the dead to be judged, and the time to give reward to thy servants the prophets, and to the saints, and to them that fear thy name, the small and the great; and to destroy the earth." (vs.16-18.)

While this could be said at the end of history, it is likewise applicable after the overthrow of paganism and enthronement, as it were, of Christianity in the Roman Empire. Remember the symbolism of the two witnesses who were killed and were then restored to life and even called up into heaven (vs.3-13)? Also the promise to the souls under the altar (6:9-11)? Note likewise the "first resurrection" and the enthronement of a thousand years of the souls of those who "had been beheaded for the testimony of Jesus, and for the word of God," etc., to be described in 20:4-6. The latter appears to be the result of the sequel to, the overthrow of paganism, apparently symbolized for the last time in chapter 19.

2. Verse 19: "And there was opened the temple of God in heaven; and there was seen in his temple the ark of his covenant; and there followed lightnings, and voices, and thunders, and an earthquake, and great hail."

The first part of this verse is designed to give assurance to the beleaguered saints that God's covenant with them (all he has promised them) is ever held in remembrance, that they should not despair; and the second part describes omens of judgments upon

theirs and God's enemies, to be further described in succeeding chapters.

If the interpretation adopted in these notes is correct, what has gone before general emphasis upon secular history of the Roman Empire from the giving of Revelation till the dissolution of the empire, which had and would have a bearing upon Christians and Christianity; whereas what is to follow will emphasize more particularly and depict in greater detail the spiritual conflict between Christianity and its various enemies in the Roman Empire during the same period, plus the final and over-all outcome at the end of history.

Tough there is marked contrast between the first eleven and the second eleven chapters of Revelation, John's vantage point beginning with Chapter 4 does not change till chapter 17 – being heaven itself – "in the Spirit," that is. Moreover, if the seven Seals incorporate the Seven Trumpets, and the Seven Trumpets incorporate the Seven Bowls, then the effects of these carry through to Chapter 20:6 – till nearly the end of history, depicted in 20:7-15, and a glimpse beyond history (21:1 - 22:5).

SEVEN MYSTIC FIGURES

Notes on Revelation 11:9 - 14:5

Introduction:

Chapter 11:19 was included in the Notes on "The First Four Trumpets" because it was the last verse in that chapter. But it belongs with and is introductory to what begins with Chapter 12 and, in a sense, marks a new beginning. Whereas before, John had seen a door opened in heaven and was called to come up there to be shown things which would come to pass thereafter (4:1), now the temple of God in heaven was itself opened and John saw the ark of God's covenant (containing his promises to his people) opened (revealing facts pertaining to the temple of God, symbolizing the church). And, whereas the preceding chapters have appeared to present predominantly certain aspects of secular history of the Roman Empire affecting the church and Christianity, even to the dissolution of the empire itself, the remaining chapters

seem to cover much the same ground, and even beyond, but to deal primarily with aspects of religious history pertinent to the purpose of the Book of Revelation. They seem to begin even with the birth of Christ himself, and emphasize the spiritual struggles and ultimate triumph of his church and saints over the enemies they faced when The Revelation was given.

Chapters 12:1 through 14:5 present seven mystic figures involved in the conflict and struggle just mentioned - a Radiant Woman, her Man Child, Michael, and the Lamb, on one side, and the great Red Dragon, a Beast from the Sea, and a Beast from the Earth, on the other side. In figurative and symbolic language, a given entity may at one time be represented as one thing and at a later time as something else. For example, John was told that a Lion of the tribe of Judah had prevailed to open the seals of the book sealed with seven seals, but when he looked it was a Lamb that he saw receiving the book to open its seals (5:4-7). Likewise, the Beast of Earth in 13:11-18 will be found to become the False Prophet of 16:13; 19:20; 20:10. It will be well to keep this in mind in connection with the Radiant Woman presently to be considered - also in connection later with the Man Child and the Lamb.

The seven "mystic" figures are involved in the events of the seven seals and the seven trumpets already presented and in the seven bowls yet to be depicted. They are therefore not to be taken as a chronological link between the seven trumpets and the seven bowls. (See Chart of Revelation 6-22 and its explanatory notes for the perspective set forth in these outlines.)

The woman and the Dragon are seen as "signs" or "symbols in heaven", and both heaven and earth are involved in the conflict for which the Dragon is responsible. What the woman symbolizes is of heavenly origin and association. And what the Dragon symbolizes was likely once an occupant of heaven but became a rebel and the leader of a rebellion in heaven, before being cast out along with those he led. (Cf. Matthew 25:41; 2 Peter 2:4; Jude 6.)

1. A Radiant Woman (12:1-2). "And a great sign in heaven: a woman arrayed with the sun, and the moon under her feet, and

upon her head a crown of twelve stars; and she was with child; and she crieth out, travailing in birth, and in pain to be delivered."

The Woman can hardly be a "sign" or symbol of Mary, the physical mother of Jesus. She is more likely to represent the Messianic community, the ideal of spiritual Israel, that gave us Christ, of which the New Testament church is a continuum. Of that community it is prophetically stated centuries before-hand: "For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given; and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. Of the increase of his government and of peace there shall be no end, upon the throne of David, and upon his kingdom, to establish it, and to uphold it with righteousness from henceforth even forever. The zeal of Jehovah of host will perform this" (Isaiah 9:6-7). That the New Testament church is in a very real sense a continuum of that community is seen, among other things, in the fact that all who are Christ's are also Abraham's seed, and call "the Israel of God" (Galatians 6:16; cf. 3:13-14,29) - Israel being descended from Abraham.

The woman continued after being delivered of the Man Child, though persecuted, and had other "seed" besides him - "who keep the commandments of God, and hold the testimony of Jesus" (12:17) - which identifies her with the Jerusalem that is above ..., which is our mother" (Galatians 4:26) - and the "heavenly Jerusalem" is identified with the "church of the firstborn who are enrolled in heaven" (Hebrews 12:22-23) - "that are written in the Lamb's book of life" (Revelation 21:27) - the "Lamb," of course, being Christ (Revelation 5"6-10; cf. John 1:29,35).

And, because the Messianic community in its continuation as the New Testament church was involved in the great conflict depicted in Revelation, the Woman is described in terms that would identify her as such - as being "arrayed with the sun, and the moon under her feet, and upon her head a crown of twelve stars." Sun, moon and stars are heavenly sources of light - in this case, spiritual light - the word of God (Psalm 119:105). Christ is prophetically spoken of as "the sun of righteousness" (Malachi 4:2) - the greatest light of all - and spoke of himself as "the light of

the world" (John 8:12; cf. 1:4-9). The Woman was "arrayed with the sun" and therefore radiates the light of Christ in the New Covenant, of whose light it was but a reflection, but upon which the New Testament church nevertheless stands. And the twelve stars, while possibly alluding to the twelve tribes of Israel as some have thought, more likely represents the twelve apostles who, next to Christ, occupy the highest position with reference to the church, its leaders and teachers of his word. They constitute a stephanos, crown, not of royalty, but of victory - likely symbolizing victory at last for the church and "the testimony of Jesus".

The Woman, at the threshold of the new dispensation, was described as being with child and in pain to be delivered, which may represent, as has been suggested, "the true Israel in her pre-messianic agony of expectation." But in particular it provides symbolism for showing the incipency of the conflict in which John and his readers were involved and which is the major burden of the Book of Revelation.

2. A Great Red Dragon (12:3-4). "And there was seen another sign in heaven: and behold, a great red dragon, having seven heads and ten horns, and upon his head seven diadems. And his tail draweth a third part of the stars of heaven, and did cast them to the earth: and the dragon standeth before the woman that is about to be delivered, that when she is delivered he may devour her child."

In v.9, we are told that the dragon was "the old serpent, he that is called the Devil and Satan, the deceiver of the whole world." But his having seven heads and ten horns, and wearing seven diadems (crowns of royalty), seem to point particularly to his connection with and embodiment in the empire of pagan Rome (cf. 13:1-10; 16:3-18). Red, the color of blood, likely symbolizes his murderous nature. His greatness and fury are likewise symbolized and dramatized by his drawing and casting to earth a third of the stars of heaven with his tail, which may be an allusion to his leading an apostasy and rebellion among the angels of God, as shall be noted later. A third part signifies a considerable number, not a larger part.

In his enmity against God, he is also represented as having been poised to devour the Man Child of the radiant Woman when she delivered - to do whatever he thought he would have to do to destroy him, which included what he attempted to do through Rome's puppet king Herod to get rid of him as an infant (Matthew 2:13-18) and later through the Jewish leaders and Roman soldiers that crucified Christ (Matthew 27:27-31; cf. Acts 2:23). But God thwarted him, as will soon be seen.

3. A Man Child (12:5-6). "And she was delivered of a son. A man child, who is to rule all nations with a rod of iron: and her child was caught up unto God, and unto his throne. And the woman fled into the wilderness, where she hath a place prepared of God, that there they may nourish her a thousand two hundred and threescore days."

Here we see Satan thwarted, first in that the Man Child, whom we take to be Christ, was caught up to heaven. That was the climax of his failure with reference to his person. It began with God sending the babe to Egypt before Herod could strike, and culminated in raising him from the dead after his crucifixion, receiving him into heaven at his right hand, and making him Lord and Christ, to reign till all enemies had been made the "footstool of thy feet" (Acts 2:24-36). This corresponds to his being the Woman's son, "a man child, who is to rule all the nations with a rod of iron; and her child was caught up unto God, and unto his throne." (cf. 19:15.)

Second, the Devil is likewise described as thwarted when at some subsequent time he sorely persecuted the Woman herself (the community of the saints), and she "fled into the wilderness, where she hath a place prepared of God, that there they may nourish her a thousand two hundred and threescore days." This symbolism seems to allude to Israel's escape from the Egyptian Pharaoh and his armies by fleeing into the wilderness on the other side of the Red Sea. When they reached Mount Sinai, God said to them through Moses: "Ye have seen what I did unto the Egyptians, and how I bare you on eagles' wings, and brought you unto myself" (Exodus 19:4). And, of course, they were nourished by bread from heaven during the sojourn in the wilderness. A further allusion to the same occasion is found in v.14 of Revelation 12: "And there

were given the woman the two wings of a great eagle, that she might fly unto the wilderness unto her place, where she is nourished for a time, and times, and half time."

The "thousand two hundred and threescore days" of v.6 and the "time, and times, and half a time" of v.14 equal the same and are equivalent to the "forty and two months" of 11:2 and likewise of 13:5. These, in turn, have their prototype in Daniel 7:25 and 12:7. In each instance, it represents a period of persecution for the people of God - at the same time indicative of a limitation of it (described in terms meaning 3 1/2 years) - and contrast greatly with the thousand years yet to be presented in 20:1-6, indicative of a vastly longer period. Likely both are symbolical, not literal. The 3 1/2 years appear in each instance to occur within the history of the Roman Empire, and the 1,000 years appears to follow it (as will be noted again in connection with chapter 20).

Especially to be remembered is the Woman (symbolical of the church, or people of God in the aggregate) was "nourished" rather than destroyed during and by the above mentioned period or persecution - as was learned also from the section of Revelation previous to the one beginning with our present chapter.

4. Michael (12:7-17). "And there was war in heaven: Michael and his angels going forth to war with the dragon; and the dragon warred and his angels; and they prevailed not. Neither was their place found any more in heaven. And the great dragon was cast down, the old serpent, he that is called the Devil and Satan, the deceiver of the whole world; he was cast down to the earth, and his angels were cast down with him." These are verses 7-9.

In Jude 9, Michael is called "the archangel" - that is, highest angel, or chief angel. There are indications of rank among the heavenly creation. It is likely that Satan was once an angel of high rank, with angels under him, as we read of "the devil and his angels" (Matthew 25:41) as well as of "Michael and his angels". It would seem, therefore, that Satan was leader of the rebellion of angels who sinned and were cast down to hell (Gr. *Tartaros*) to await judgment (2 Peter 2:4). Jude speaks of them as follows: "And angles that kept not their principality, but left their proper

habitation, he (God) hath kept in everlasting bonds under darkness unto the judgment of the great day" (v.6) - that is, the day of final judgment. And Paul states a "novice" (a new convert) is not to be made a bishop in the church, "least being puffed up he fall into the condemnation of (that is, the condemnation passed on or received by) the devil" (1 Timothy 3"6). The implication, then, is that the rebellion of the devil and his angels resulted from pride, which led to dissatisfaction with the rank and position assigned to them and an effort to acquire one they did desire - which may have been the highest. It is likely, therefore, that their rebellion resulted in actual war in heaven with Michael and his angels, and is used as a prototype for the symbolism in John's vision.

Michael is again referred to by name in Daniel 10:13, 21; 12:1. In 10:13, 21, he is described by a personage in a vision of Daniel as aiding said personage in his divine mission against evil princes in Persia and Greece. And in 12:1, he is said to be "the great prince who standeth for the children of thy people" - that is, for the people of God, "found written in the book" - and would be involved in their deliverance at a time of great trouble then future - seemingly the time of the end, and in connection with the resurrection (cf. 11:40; 12:1-4). In Matthew 13:36-43, 49-50, Christ stated that he would employ angels in separating the righteous from the wicked at the end of the world. And in 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18, it is stated that when Christ comes to raise the righteous dead and receive them and the righteous living unto himself, he will "descend from heaven, with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God" (v.16).

In the symbolism of Revelation 12, the casting down of Satan and his angels may have represented the defeat of paganism as embodied in the Roman Empire, for associated with it is the victory of the saints, who had overcome him "because of the blood of the Lamb, and because of the word of their testimony: and they loved not their life even unto death" (vs.10-12). That being the case, not the literal heaven, but the political and religious heaven, may have been the arena. If so, then Michael and his angels may symbolize Constantine and his armies, and the Dragon and his angels may symbolize Maxentius in the west and Licinius in the East, and their armies; the Dragon cast out and down may

symbolize the defeat and humiliation of paganism as embodied in the Roman Empire.

An alternate interpretation is that Satan, infuriated at his failure to destroy Christ by crucifying him, followed him in his ascension and made bold to storm the bulwarks of heaven, where he met a crushing defeat at the hands of Michael and his angels, and lost forever any further power to harm Christ or the souls of the redeemed. (Halley's Bible Handbook, which also states, "the outcome may depend, far more than we realize, on the armies of the invisible world.") And this seems more compatible with vs.13-17, in which Satan in his "great wrath" is described as setting out to make the most of the limited time ("short time," v.12) he knew he had - evidently the 3 1/2 years of v.14 - by intense persecution of the Woman and "the rest of her seed, that keep the commandments of God, and hold the testimony of Jesus". But still they experience the victory described in the foregoing paragraph, accomplished on their part "because of the blood of the Lamb, and because of their testimony; and (because) they loved not their life even unto death" (v.11).

The American Standard Version makes the sentence begun in 12:17 to continue through a part of 13:1, as follows "And the dragon waxed wroth with the woman, and went away to make war with the rest of her seed, that keep the commandments of God, and hold the testimony of Jesus: and he stood upon the sand of the sea". John then saw two confederates of the Dragon appear, one a beast coming up out of the sea, the other a beast coming up out of the earth. These will play an important role in the Dragon's conflict with the Woman and "the rest of her seed," as depicted in succeeding chapters.

5. Beast from the Sea (13:1-10). From what is stated in this text and subsequent ones (Chapter 17 particularly), it becomes pretty evident that this Beast represents Imperial Rome in its capacity as persecutor of Christians, and has been proleptically mentioned in 11:7 as coming up out of the abyss, making war with God's two witnesses, overcoming and killing them (though they remained dead only 3 1/2 days and were received up into heaven). He seems to answer the fourth beast (Roman Empire), of Daniel 7:1-8, and is

described as a composite of three predecessors depicted by Daniel in reverse and chronological order as a leopard (Babylonian empire), a bear (Medo-Persian empire), and a lion (Grecian empire). The Dragon "gave him his power, and his thrones, and great authority" (v.2). And he is represented as "having horns and seven heads, and on his horns ten diadems (crowns of royalty), and upon his heads names of blasphemy" (v.1). "He opened his mouth for blasphemies against God, to blaspheme his name, and his tabernacle, even them that dwell in the heaven. And it was given to make war with the saints, and to overcome them: and there was given him authority over every tribe and people and tongue and nation. And all that dwell on the earth shall worship him, every one whose name hath not been written from the foundation of the world in the book of life of the Lamb that hath been slain" (vs.6-8) - the Greek text being more accurately represented in the margin of the ASV and in the text of the KJV, as follows: "... not written in the book of life of the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world" - that is, not names "written from the foundation of the world," but "Lamb slain from the foundation of the world" - in the purpose and plan of God.

John saw one of the "seven heads" of the Beast "as though it had been smitten unto death; and his death-stroke was healed" (v.3). This is elaborated upon in Chapter 17. Suffice it to say that if "heads" represent emperors, as they seem to do, likely the one receiving the "death-stroke" was Nero, a monster and the first to persecute Christians, who likewise a suicide (A.D. 68). Though given a state funeral, many refused to believe he was dead and a legend grew up that he had gone among the Parthians and would soon return with a Parthian army to destroy Rome. As time went on, the belief that he was still alive faded and was replaced with the expectation that he would rise from the dead and return to seize power. And when Domitian, who was emperor A.D. 81-96, became a persecutor toward the end of his reign, the only predecessor with whom he could be compared in this respect was Nero. It was as if Nero had risen from the dead and was back in Rome as a persecutor - which was pagan and in essence, devil worship (see vs.3-4). That John's symbolism is an allusion to Nero-redivivus myth, which he would not believe but would suggest to them Domitian, the current emperor, as the particular

Roman emperor under consideration, seems a reasonable and probable hypothesis.

Vs.9-10 are of special importance for Christians. Their part of the warfare between them and their enemies was to be spiritual, and only that. They were not to attempt to promote or defend their cause by carnal means - not by the sword and not by taking captives. Captivity only produces captivity for him who takes others captive, and he who is taken the sword shall die by the sword. The victory of Christians was assured notwithstanding the use of captivity and the sword against them, but would not be accomplished by the employment of such means on their part.

6. Beast from the Earth" (13:11-18) If the Beast from the sea was Imperial Rome, represented at that time by Domination, the Beast from the Earth must have been the Emperor Cult of the pagan priesthood of the Roman Empire, for they worked hand in hand, each supporting the other - the second Beast promoting worship of the first Beast - hence, emperor worship (in the case, that of Domitian in particular). At that time, the greatest concentration of Christians seems to have been in Asia Minor, where also the Emperor Cult was most ancient and active. Its promotion of emperor worship is described as including the making of monuments to and images of the emperors worshipped, and doing "great signs" to deceive the populace - namely, "making fire to come down out of heaven upon the earth in the sight of men" and "giving breath ... to the image of the beast, that the image of the beast should even speak." (The word we translated "even" is *kai*, and is translated either "even", "both" and "also", depending on context. We have here, along with the RSV and NASB, adopted "even" rather than "both" as best suiting the context. Some other translations have achieved the same result by means of paraphrase. Moffatt: "so that the statue of the Beast should actually speak."

The Journal of Biblical Literature of December 1984, pages 599-610, carries an article by Steven J. Scherrer entitled, "Signs and Wonders of the Imperial Cult: A New Look at a Roman Religious Institution in Light of Rev13:13-15." Well researched and documented from ancient sources, he demonstrates that contrived religious wonders were not unusual in the ancient world and

concludes: "In light of all this it seems quite plausible that technology and simulation of nature might have been employed in the imperial cult. We suggest that Rev13:13-15 be accepted as describing a part of the actual practice in the cult of the princes in the East."

It was also given unto the second Beast to "cause that as many as should not worship the image of the (first) beast should be killed." " And he causeth all, the small and the great, and the rich and the poor, and the free and the bond, that there be given them a mark on their right hand, or upon their forehead; even the name of the beast or the number of his name." (vs.15-17.) A mark on the right hand is thought by some to represent one's practice, while a mark on the forehead indicates what one professes. The power of the second Beast to enforce worship of the first Beast ranges from economic sanctions to putting one to death, to be exercised, at least principally, at his discretion.

How identify the first Beast? "Here is wisdom. He that hath understanding, let him count the number of the beast; for it is the number of a man: and his number is Six hundred and sixty and six." V.18). This indicates that only the wisest might understand the significance of the clue. And we are without information as to their interpretation. So it is part of wisdom for us to be cautious and undogmatic. For one thing, while the preponderance of manuscripts have the number 666, a few have 616. And for another, in the Greek language, in which our New Testament scriptures were written, there is no indefinite article corresponding to our "a", but only the definite article to our "the". When a noun is left *inarthrous* (without an article), the context has to determine whether in English a definite or indefinite article is to be understood. Or none at all. "A man" would refer to an individual, whereas "man" might be a class noun referring to mankind.

What is clear, is that reference is made to a cryptogram (writing with a hidden meaning) consisting of a gematria (a numerical equivalent of the letters of a word or name) - possibly in either Hebrew or Greek in this case, since both used the letters of their alphabets as numbers. If our interpretation up to this point is correct, the most attractive of the many solutions that had been put

forward is that the name is the Greek form Nero Caesar, which while transliterated in Hebrew characters adds to 666. If the Latin spelling is used, the sum in Hebrew translations is 616, which might account for the variant in some Greek manuscripts. "The recent discovery of an Aramaic illustration of Nero Caesar spelled so far to equal 666 at Qumran gives credence to this as a solution. Given Jewish background for many Christians and Greek Godfathers, it is not surprising that John should have adopted this riddle." (J. W. Roberts, *The Revelation of John* [Austin, Texas: The Sweet Publishing Company, 1974], p.116.) In such event, the cryptogram would be an allusion to the Nero-redivivus myth, with application to the revivification of Nero in the person of the emperor Domitian. Incidentally, the abbreviation in Greek of the full title of the emperor Domitian himself also total 666. (see Donald Guthrie. *New Testament Introduction* [1970], p.960, n.1.)

7. Lamb on Mount Zion (14:1-5). "And I saw, and behold, a Lamb standing on the Mount Zion, and with him a hundred and forty and four thousand, having his name, and the name of his Father, written on their foreheads. And I heard a voice from heaven, as the voice of many waters, and as the voice of a great thunder: and the voice which I heard was as the voice of many harpers harping with their harps: and they sing as it were a new song before the throne, and before the four living creatures and the elders: and no man could learn the song save the hundred and forty and four thousand, even they that had been purchased of the earth. These are they that follow the Lamb whithersoever he goeth. These were purchased from among men, to be the first-fruits unto God and unto his Lamb. And in their mouth was found no lie: they are without blemish."

This is a consolatory vision, in which Christ is symbolized as a Lamb having one hundred and forty and four thousand with him who have been purchased out of the earth with his blood (see 5:9). They are standing on Mount Zion, associated with deliverance (Joel 2:32 - not earthly Zion, however, but the heavenly (cf. Hebrews 11:22-24). They have the name of the Lamb, and the name of his Father, written on their foreheads (cf. 7:3-4) - in contrast with those who worshipped the Beast and had his mark on their right hand or upon their forehead. The latter are doomed to be tormented with fire and brimstone forever and ever (14:9-11),

while the former are rewarded with association with the Lamb wherever he goes - for all time to come seeming to be implied. They were free from idolatry (often symbolized by adultery or fornication) - not meaning only men will be saved. They were also purchased from among men to be the "firstfruits unto God and the Lamb" - first fruit always being dedicated unto God under the old Covenant -- and Christians (not just the earliest Christians, who were Jews) have been brought forth "by the word of truth, that we should be a kind if firstfruit of his creatures" (James 1:18). The Lamb in this vision is the same as the Man Child of 12:5, who was to "rule all nations with a rod of iron: and ... was caught up unto God, and unto his throne."

This vision, featuring the seventh Mystic figure (the Lamb on Mount Zion), is designed to emphasize the glory that will reward those who align themselves with the Woman, the Man Child, Michael, and the Lamb (who is also the Man Child) against the Dragon and his confederates, the Beast from the Sea and the Beast from the Earth, depicted in the Revelation. And immediately following it is an Interlude of six Angelic messages before there is a description of "the wrath of God" upon his enemies and those of his people, beginning with Chapter 15. They combine with the foregoing in order to provide more background and vocabulary for understanding and appreciating all that yet follows.

SIX ANGELIC MESSAGES

Notes on Revelation 14:6 - 15:1

Introduction:

In Chapters 6:1 - 8:6, we have had the opening of the Seven Seals; in Chapters 8:7 - 11:18, the sounding of the Seven Trumpets; in Chapters 11:19 - 14:5, the introduction to the Seven Mystic Figures, followed by an Interlude of Six Angelic Messages in 14:6-20; and in Chapters 15:1 - 16:21, we have the pouring out of Seven Bowls of plagues – "which are the last, for in them is finished the wrath of God" (15:1) -- associated with the sounding of the Seventh Trumpet (10:5-7) and "the kingdom of the world" (seemingly the Roman Empire) becoming "the kingdom of our Lord, and of his Christ" (11:15) – that is, the triumph of Christianity over paganism in the Roman Empire.

It bears repeating that Chapter 11:19 seems to have marked a new beginning – that up to that point the secular history of the Roman Empire as it affected the church seems mostly to have symbolized, and that from that point onward much the same ground is covered again but with significant aspects of religious history receiving the emphasis. Also, that the seven Seals seem to incorporate the Seven Trumpets, and the Seven Trumpets to incorporate the Seven Bowls, so that the events of the Seven Seals are not complete prior to the completion of those of the Seventh Bowl. Likewise, that the Seals, Trumpets and Bowls are not necessarily consecutive, but may in part be simultaneous and represent simply differently aspects of the same general events, and that there may even be an overlapping of the Seals with other Seals, of Trumpets with other Trumpets, and Bowls with other Bowls. A remarkable similarity will be found between the descriptions of the Seven Bowls (Chapter 16, "Seven Bowls of Wrath" Notes to Revelation (15:1 - 16:21) and the Seven Trumpets (Chapter 8 and 9, "The Last Four Trumpets" Notes to Revelation 8:6 - 11:19), yet with a difference. But before that, we have an Interlude of Six Angelic Messages that serve as a significant prelude to the pouring out of the Seven Bowls and "finishing the wrath of God" upon the Roman Empire.

I. SIX ANGELIC MESSAGES (14:6-20).

1. First Message (vs.6-7). "and I saw another angel flying in mid-heaven, having eternal good tidings to proclaim unto them that dwell on the earth, and unto every nation and tribe and tongue and people; and he saith with a great voice, Fear God, and give him glory; for the hour of his judgment is come: and worship him that made the heaven and the earth and sea and fountains of waters."

This message is by "another angel" than the one of Chapter 10:1. It is a warning of judgment about to fall upon the Roman Empire, but the eternal good tidings is being proclaimed empire-wide with the implication of salvation for all who will heed it and worship the God of heaven (instead of the emperor or any other god), It is possible that it corresponds with prophecy of the Two Witnesses of 11:3. It is reiterated in 18:4 in connection with announcement of the fall of Babylon. saying, "come forth, my people, out of her,

that ye have no fellowship with her sins, and that ye receive not of her plagues" – this being addressed to potential converts to Christ.

2. Second Message (v.8). "and another, a second angel, followed, saying Fallen fallen is Babylon the great, that hath made all nations to drink of the wine of the wrath of her fornication."

That fall is so certain that it is spoken of as already accomplished, but is not described in detail till chapters 17 and 18 as a city and a great harlot, where it is pretty evident that it is pagan Rome. "The wine of the wrath of her fornication" may be do called because (a) of her wrath manifested in the persecution of those who refused to engage in her fornication (namely, idolatry and, here, emperor worship particularly), or because (b) the wine of God's wrath is to be poured out upon her on account of her fornication.

3. Third Message (vs.9-12). " And another angel, a third, followed them, saying with a great voice, If any man worshippeth the beast and his image, and receiveth a mark on his forehead, or upon his hand, he also shall drink of the wine of the wrath of God, which is prepared unmixed in the cup of his anger; and he shall be tormented with fire and brimstone in the presence of the holy angels, and in the presence of the Lamb: and the smoke of their torment goeth up for ever and ever; and they have no rest day or night, they that worship the beast and his image, and who so receiveth the mark of his name. Here is the patience of the saints, they that keep the commandments of God, and the faith of Jesus."

The "beast" here mentioned is the Beast from the Sea of 13:1-10, namely, Imperial Rome, particularly in the person of Domitian, or Nero-revivified, and supported by the Beast from the Earth of 13:11-18, namely Emperor cult of the pagan priesthood, whose chief function was to promote emperor worship. The angelic message spells out the doom of anyone who yields to such promotion, and is designed to promote patience or faithful endurance of the saints in their loyalty to God and Jesus under persecution for not worshipping the emperor.

4. Fourth Message (v.13). "And I heard a voice from heaven saying Write, Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord from

henceforth: yea, saith the Spirit, that they may rest from their labors; for their works follow with them."

The voice is not identified except as being from heaven, but was one of authority and may have been that of an angel. The "blessedness" it describes is the opposite of the doom announced for those who worship the beast. To "die in the Lord" is to die in the fellowship with him, which can be only if we are faithful to him when we die, even if we have to die because of our faith. The Lord had enjoined and promised, Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give the crown of life" (2:10). He had also warned, "And be not afraid of them that kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul: but rather fear him who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell" (Matthew 10:28). "For whosoever would save his life (by disloyalty to the Lord in this world) shall lose it (in the world to come): and whosoever shall loose his life for my sake (in this world) shall find it (in the world to come)" (Matthew 16:25). Those who die in the Lord or for the Lord, as many would be doing from the time John was told to write the above assurance, would not be deprived of any blessedness by death. Rather, they would enjoy rest from their labors and their works on earth would not be forgotten, but would go with them as it were and be rewarded in the world to come. The word here for "labor" (*kopos*) means labor to the point of weariness, and sometimes to the point of trouble and pain.

The next two messages are associated with activity. The descriptions are in language that could be eschatological (pertaining to last things). But more likely intended to represent judgments on Babylon, whose fall has already been announced but not yet described. For, after these messages, the pouring out of the seven plagues that result in Babylon's fall is depicted in chapters 15 and 16 and described still further in chapters 17-19.

5. Fifth Message (vs.14-16). "And I saw, and behold, a white cloud: and on the cloud I saw one sitting like unto a son of man, having on his head a golden crown, and in his hand a sharp sickle. And another angel came out from the temple, crying with a great voice to him that sat upon the cloud, Send forth thy sickle, and reap: for the hour to reap has come; for the harvest of the earth is

ripe. And he that sat on the cloud cast his sickle upon the earth; and the earth was reaped."

In 1:13, "one like the unto a son of man" represented the risen and eternal Christ. And so it may here. If so, God is represented as telling him through an angel that the time is come to reap the harvest of the earth. Though this may be eschatological. As in the Parable of the Tares (Matthew 13:24-30,36-43), it is more likely intended to apply to the end or near the end of the Roman Empire and the destruction of "Babylon." In the Parable, the wicked are separated from the righteous by the reapers at harvest, and burned. In this instance, however, nothing is said of the disposition of that which is harvested.

But harvest and reaping may be understood in still another sense. When Jesus had discoursed with the woman of Samaria at Jacob's well near Sychar, she went back to the city and told the inhabitants, "Come, see a man, who told me all things that I ever did: can this be the Christ?" When they left the town and were coming to him, Jesus addressed his disciples, saying: "Say not ye, There are yet four months, and then cometh the harvest? Behold, I say unto you, Lift up your eyes, and look on the fields, that they are white already unto harvest. He that reapeth receiveth wages, and gathereth fruit unto life eternal." (John 4:27-38.) In this case, He was speaking of evangelism and conversions of people unto himself and unto eternal life. And the fields being white unto harvest refers to great numbers being ready for conversion. So it might likewise be in the text above, in which it is said: "Send forth thy sickle, and reap: for the hour to reap is come; for the harvest of the earth is ripe." For there came a time in the Roman Empire, notwithstanding the most intense and widespread and prolonged persecution thus far, that conversions likewise increased and the fortunes of Christians and pagans became reversed in the empire, with the heavy judgments coming to fall upon the latter, which could well be the subject of the next angelic message.

6. Sixth Message (vs.17-29). "And another angel came out of the temple which is in heaven, he also having a sharp sickle. And another angel came out from the altar, he that hath power over fire; and he called with a great voice to him that had the sharp

sickle, saying, Send forth thy sharp sickle, and gather clusters of the vine of the earth; for her grapes are fully ripe. And the angel cast his sickle unto the earth, and gathered the vintage of the earth, and cast it into the winepress, the great winepress, of the wrath of God. and the winepress was trodden without the city, and there came out blood from the winepress, even unto the bridles of the horses, as far as a thousand and six hundred furlongs."

This is definitely symbolic of terrible judgments upon the grapes of God's wrath – his enemies and the enemies of his people. It is similar to what will be said with reference to Christ in the last great and decisive battle against the Beast and his supporters in 19:15, where it is stated that "he treadeth the winepresses of the fierceness of the wrath of God, the Almighty." And it is most probable that these are two descriptions of the same event – the latter being the more elaborately descriptive of finality in regard to the Roman Empire, but is not eschatological – there being more than a thousand years afterward prior to the time of the end, according to Chapter 20.

The winepress imagery may be taken from Joel 3:13: "Put ye in the sickle; for the harvest is ripe: come, tread ye; for the winepress is full, the vats overflow; for their wickedness is great." Ripeness for the harvest both here and in Revelation refers to having become deserving of the vengeance because of persistent and exceeding iniquity. And the terribleness of the vengeance in Revelation is symbolically described as blood coming out of the winepress "unto the bridles of the horses, as far as a thousand and six hundred furlongs" – or 200 miles, counting eight furlongs to the mile. However, in the Greek it is 1600 stadion, or more nearly 184 miles. That, however, is immaterial – the purpose being to impress enormity.

SEVEN BOWLS OF WRATH

Notes on Revelation 15:1 - 16:21

Introduction:

In Chapters 6:1 - 8:6, we have had the opening of the seven seals; in Chapters 8:7 - 11:18, the sounding of the Seven Trumpets; in Chapters 11:19 - 14:5, the introduction to the seven Mystic

Figures, followed by an Interlude of six Angelic Messages in 14:6-20; and in Chapters 15:1 - 16:21, we have the pouring out of seven Bowls of plagues - "which are the last, for in them is finished the wrath of God" (15:1) -- associated with the XXX sounding of the Seventh Trumpet (10:5-7) and "the kingdom of the world" (seemingly the Roman Empire) becoming "the kingdom of our Lord, and of his Christ" (11:15) - that is, the triumph of Christianity over paganism in the Roman Empire.

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Chapter 14 has given a swift summary of events to the end of either of the Roman Empire or the end of the world, but more likely the former (for reasons already indicated), announcing the fall of the great harlot city Babylon, almost certain to be pagan Rome. The 15th through the 19th chapters present the same events in significant detail. Chapter 15 is introductory to the pouring out of the Bowls of God's wrath, and Chapter 16 is descriptive of their being poured out, with Chapter 17 through 19 elaborating the results in greater detail. Our attention now, however, will be directed to chapters 15 and 16.

In 15:1, John states: "And I saw another sign in heaven, great and marvelous, seven angels having seven plagues, which are the last, for in them is finished the wrath of God" - that is, against the Beast of Chapter 13 and involving the fall of Babylon, associated with and supported by the Beast. As for being "another sign in heaven," it seems to be in addition to the "great sign ... in heaven" of 12:1 and the other "sign in heaven" of 12:3. Those pertained to the radiant woman and the great red Dragon. The woman not only gave birth to the Man Child (the Christ), but had other "seed, that keep the commandments of God, and hold to the testimony of Jesus." The Dragon was Satan, particularly as embodied in the Roman Empire. He not only sought to devour the Man Child, (the Christ), but persecuted the woman and "made war with the rest of her seed," as the remainder of chapter 12 states. His chief agents in the Roman Empire were two beast - the Beast of the Sea (persecuting emperors, represented by Domitian at the time of the Revelation) and the Beast from the Earth (the Emperor Cult of the pagan priesthood, which promoted emperor worship) of Chapter 13.

In 15:2-4, John says: "And I saw as it were a sea of glass mingled with fire, and them that come off victorious from the beast, and from his image, and from the number of his name (referred to in Chapter 13), standing by the sea of glass, having harps of God. And they sing the song of Moses the servant of God, and the song of the Lamb, saying Great and marvelous are thy works, O Lord God, the Almighty; righteous and true are your ways, thou King of the ages. Who shall not fear, O Lord, and glorify thy name? For thou only art holy; for all nations shall come and worship before thee; for thy righteous acts have been made manifest." This reminiscent of the announcement in 11:15 at the sounding of the trumpet of the Seventh Angel, that "The kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of our Lord, and of his Christ: and he shall reign for ever and ever" - in connection with the overthrow of pagan Rome and the ascendancy of Christianity in the Roman Empire, if our interpretation has been correct.

The foregoing is a consolatory vision, giving a preview as it were of the victory that will be achieved by and for the saints of God. It contrasts with the wrath of God against their enemies and his, to be finished with the seven plagues to be poured from the seven

bowls of wrath. The "song of Moses" refers to the song of deliverance from Pharaoh and his armies that Moses led Israel in singing after that deliverance had been accomplished (Exodus 15:1-18). The "song of the Lamb," by the same token, would be one of celebration of having "come off victorious from the beast" under the leadership of the Lamb and through their loyalty to him and God. The song of Moses was first sung beside the Red Sea when Israel had crossed it and was safe from her enemies. Now it and the song of the Lamb are being sung beside the symbolic sea of glass mingled with fire through which seemingly the followers of the Lamb have come, having come off, as already stated, "victorious from the beast." These comport with the 144,000 of the consolatory vision of 14:1-5.

In 15:5-8, we have a resumption of what was begun in v.1. A striking description is given of the seven angels (arrayed in priestly attire) that had the seven plagues, and how they were given by one of the four living creatures in the seven bowls full of the wrath of God. These seven angels had come out of the heavenly temple, and it became "filled with the smoke of the glory of God, and from his power," so that "none was able to enter into the temple, till the seven plagues of the seven angels should be finished." This is reminiscent of what occurred at the dedication of the Tabernacle at Sinai (Exodus 40:34-35) and of Solomon's temple that replaced it for centuries later (1 Kings 8:10-11), and no doubt symbolizes the transcendent importance of the mission of the angels in connection with the Beast and the fall of Babylon.

In 16:1, John says: " And I heard a great voice out of the temple, saying to the seven angels, pour out the seven bowls of the wrath of God into the earth" - the Roman earth particularly, it would seem - and the pattern of execution will be seen to be similar to that of the events in connection with the sounding of the seven trumpets of 8:6 - 11:18, including the fact that some of the plagues are somewhat reminiscent of those in Egypt before the Israelites experienced their great deliverance. But the Trumpets featured political and secular history effecting the church, whereas the Bowl have to do with religious aspects and consequences predominately.

1. The First Bowl (16:2). "And the first went, and poured out his bowl into the earth; and it became a noisome and grievous sore upon the men that had the mark of the beast, and that worshipped his image" - reminiscent of boils on the Egyptians (Exodus 9:9-11).

2. The Second Bowl (16:3). "And the second poured out his bowl into the sea; and it became blood as of a dead man; and every living soul died, even the things that were in the sea" - reminiscent of water turned to blood in Egypt (Exodus 7:17-25).

3. The Third Bowl (16:4-7). "And the third poured out his bowl upon the rivers and the fountains of the waters" - still reminiscent of water turned to blood in Egypt.

"And I heard," says John, "the angel of the waters saying, righteous art thou, who art and wast, thou holy one, because thou didst thus judge: for they poured out the blood of saints and prophets, and blood hast thou given them to drink: they are worthy. And I heard the altar saying, Yea, O Lord God, the Almighty, true and righteous are thy judgments."

4. The Fourth Bowl (16:8-9). "And the fourth poured out his bowl upon the sun; and it was given unto it to scorch men with fire. And men were scorched with great heat and they blasphemed the name of God who hath given the power over the plagues; and they repented not to give him glory" - in this instance, no darkness it correspond with that of the Fourth Trumpet or the darkness in Egypt (Exodus 10:21-23), but rather the opposite - scorching heat,

5. The Fifth Bowl (16:10-11). "And the fifth poured out his bowl upon the throne of the beast; and his kingdom was darkened; and they gnawed their tongues in pain, and they blasphemed the God of heaven because of their pains and their sores; and they repented not of their works" - darkness in the kingdom of the Beast being somewhat reminiscent of the darkness in Pharaoh's kingdom of Egypt (Exodus 10:21-23), and corresponding somewhat to the darkening of the sun and the air in connection with the sounding of the Fifth Trumpet.

6. The Sixth Bowl (16:12-16). "And the sixth poured out his bowl upon the great river, the river Euphrates; and the water thereof was dried up, that the way might be made ready for the kings that come from the sun rising. And I saw coming out of the mouth of the dragon, and out of the mouth of the beast, three unclean spirits, as it were frogs: for they are spirits of demons, working signs; which go forth unto the kings of the whole world, to gather them together unto the war of the great day of God, the Almighty. (Behold, I come as a thief. Blessed is he that watcheth, and keepeth his garments, least he walk naked, and they see his shame.) And they gathered themselves together into one place which is called in Hebrew *Har-Magedon*."

Here the great river Euphrates is dried up so as to be crossed, as the Red Sea was dried up for the crossing of the Israelites as they escaped from Egypt (Exodus 14:15-22) and as the river Jordan was likewise dried up for their crossing it into Canaan (Joshua 3:14-17). Also, in connection with the sounding of the Sixth Trumpet the river Euphrates was involved - armies from the east no longer restrained from crossing it westward into the Roman Empire. In the present case, it is dried up to permit kings and their armies from the east to gather for participation in a mighty and decisive battle - symbolically described as being at Har-Magedon or Ar-Magedon - that is Mount of Megiddo. The low hills around the town of Megiddo, in Palestine, with their outlook over the plain of Esdraelon, are said to have witnessed perhaps a greater number of bloody encounters than have ever stained a like area of the world surface. And in the history of Israel Megiddo had been the scene of never-to-be-forgotten and decisive battles. In the case, the Dragon, Beast, and False Prophet are seeking to mobilize the kings (and their armies) of the whole world for a mighty battle and decisive struggle against God Almighty. It appears to be the battle described in Chapter 19 (see v.19), though its location is not there named (which is figurative and symbolic rather than geographic, being an ideological war primarily regardless of whatever carnal warfare may also be involved - a False Prophet) and therefore false teaching) being engaged on one side (16:13) and the Word of God on the other (19:13-16). And the False Prophet is seen in his description in 19:20 to be the same as the second Beast (the Emperor Cult of the pagan priesthood in the Roman Empire) of 13:11-18. Moreover, the first Beast (Imperial Rome, and

particularly its persecuting emperors) and the second Beast are themselves agents of Satan in his embodiment in the pagan empire of Rome, as indicated in Chapter 13.

7. The Seventh Bowl (16:17-21). "And the seventh poured out his bowl upon the air; and there came forth a great voice out of the temple, from the throne, saying, It is done: and there were lightnings, and voices, and thunders; and there was a great earthquake, such as was not since there were men upon the earth, so great an earthquake and so mighty. And the great city was divided into three parts, and the cities of the nations fell: and Babylon the great was remembered in the sight of God, to give unto her the cup of the wine of the fierceness of his wrath. And every island is fled away, and the mountains were found not. And great hail, every stone about the weight of a talent, cometh down out of heaven upon men: and men blasphemed God because of the plague of the hail; for the plague thereof was exceedingly great."

In connection with the Seventh Seal (8:1-5), the Seventh Trumpet (11:15-19), and now the Seventh Bowl (16:17-21), we have a great storm, (as a result of the plague upon the air or atmosphere) and a great earthquake (symbolic of revolution - social, religious, political, or all). But such is not surprising, since the Seals incorporate the Trumpets, and the Trumpets incorporate the Bowls, so that the Seals are not completed without the Trumpets and the Trumpets are not completed without the Bowls, as had been repeatedly suggested. All three instances seem to symbolize the same consummation in one aspect or another - that is, a decisive overthrow of the enemies of the saints and their God and his Christ in the great conflict already being experienced by the earliest readers of the Book of Revelation. It is not a consummation of the earth's history, however for that consummation seems to be represented as being more than a thousand years later (Chapter 20). But it is obviously an overthrow of Rome and its empire in all aspects crucial to the conflict between Caesar as lord and Christ as Lord.

But we are not through with all aspects of the consummation as represented by the seven Bowls of Wrath. More are yet to be given in Chapters 17 through 19. And then the results will be described

as lasting through another 1,000 years, evidently symbolic of a long duration before the time of the end of history (20:1-6). For respective from the viewpoint of the interpretation set forth in these Notes, please see the Chart of Revelation 6-22.

THE BEAST

Notes on Revelation 17

1. Identification of the Beast: The Beast of Chapter 17 is the same as the first Beast of Chapter 13, symbolizing the Roman Empire: (a) both having seven heads and ten horns, and names of blasphemy (13:1; 17:3); (b) one having a head smitten unto death but whose death stroke was healed (13:3), and the other, described in terms of one of its heads, "was, and is not, and shall come" (17:8,11); (c) one coming up out of the sea and given authority to continue "forty and two months" (13:1,5), and the other, described again in terms of one of the heads, was to "come up out of the abyss, and to go into perdition" (17:8) – neither continuing indefinitely.

Each appears to be an allusion to the Nero-redivivus myth, which would be known by John and his readers though not believed by them – except figuratively, or symbolically. Nero was the first Roman emperor to persecute Christians as such, and Domitian, soon to become emperor, would be the second – Nero incarnate as it were, or Nero personified. (And, by way of extension, the application would likely include all succeeding persecuting emperors – but who would not continue indefinitely.)

2. The seven heads of the beast (17:9-11). "The seven heads" = "seven mountains, on which the woman sitteth" = "seven kings" – "the five are fallen, the one is, and the other is not yet come; and when he cometh, he must continue a little while." The Beast, as represented by one of its heads, "was. And is not [at the time John wrote], is himself also an eighth, and is of the seven; and he goeth unto perdition." ("Goeth unto perdition" = goeth into destruction = meaning he [and likely his kind] would not continue indefinitely.)

With the seven heads understood as seven successive emperors of the Roman Empire, beginning with Augustus, we have the following:

1. Augustus (31 B.C. - A.D. 14).
2. Tiberius (A.D. 14-37).
3. Caligula (A.D. 37-41).
4. Claudius (A.D. 41-54).
5. Nero (A.D. 54-68). – "THE FIVE ARE FALLEN."

Galba [June 68 to January 69 A.D., just over six months], Otho [January to April 69A.D., 95 days of just over three months], and Vitellius [April to December 69 A.D. or approximately eight months] – rivals and contenders for the throne and reigning a total of only eighteen months during a period of chaos and civil war following the suicide of Nero – hence, likely not counted.)

6. Vespasian (A.D. 69-79). – "THE ONE IS" when John writes.
7. Titus (A.D. 79-81). – "NOT YET COME," to continue briefly.
8. DOMITIAN (A.D. 81-96) – "AN EIGHTH, AND OF THE SEVEN" – a reincarnation, as it were, of Nero.

Juvenal, a Roman satirical poet (A.D. 60-140, writing mostly about A.D. 100-128), spoke of Rome under Domitian as "enslaved to the bald-headed Nero" (Domitian is said to have been Bald). Tertullian (A.D. 160-230) called Domitian "a man of Nero's type of cruelty," and a "sub-Nero," a verdict which Eusebius (A.D. 269-339), the "father" of church history, repeated. (See William Barclay, *The Revelation of John*, Volume, Revised Edition, p. 141.)

3. Further Observations. If the foregoing interpretation is correct, it makes Chapter 17 to have been written during the reign of Vespasian, out of sequence with and several years earlier than the rest of the text if the Revelation was seen "in the reign of Domitian" per the tradition recorded by Irenaeus (A.D. 125-202). And that is precisely what some believe to have been the case. In fact, Barclay goes so far as to say "we know in fact John wrote under Domitian" (Ibid.) – though he does not say how we know.

Admitting that the foregoing interpretation, with which he agrees, makes it look as if John wrote in the reign of Vespasian, he offers two possibilities to explain otherwise. "John may have written this particular vision years before in the time of Vespasian, lived to see it come terribly true and incorporated it in his final draft of the Revelation. Or he may have written it all in the reign of Domitian, and, projected himself back into the time of Vespasian to trace in retrospect the terrible lines that history had taken." (Ibid.) It is the later that he considers the "likeliest explanation" (Ibid.), p.146).

But, if John should have been banished earlier than during the reign of Domitian and as far back as the latter part of the reign of Vespasian, he could have received and written all of the Revelation then and not have written Chapter 17 either out of sequence and prior to the rest or in retrospect by a numbers of years, regardless of when he was able to get it published. And Barclay himself provides testimony elsewhere to such an earlier banishment as a matter of fact.

He quotes Jerome approvingly, who wrote probably in the late 300s, or two centuries later as follows: "In the fourteenth year after the persecution of Nero, John was banished to the island of Patmos, and there wrote the Revelation ... Upon the death of Domitian, and upon the repeal of his acts by the senate, because of their excessive cruelty, he returned to Ephesus, when Nerva was emperor." (William Barclay, Introduction, "The Revelation of John, Volume I, Revised Edition, 1976, p.14.) Nero's persecution of Christians was in A.D. 64, and the fourteenth year afterward would not have been later than A.D. 78, next to the last year of Vespasian's reign. That would have John's exile to have been over a period of 18 years – A.D. 78-96 –from the latter part of Vespasian's reign, through the brief reign of Titus, and throughout the reign of Domitian.

G. B. Caird, *The Revelation of St. John the Divine*, 1966, pp.21-22, cites evidence of two types of banishment: (a) *deportatio in insulum*, a penalty which involved confiscation of property and loss of civil rights; and (b) *relegatio in insulum*, which involves loss of neither property or rights. Only an emperor could pronounce the sentence of *deportatio*, but a provincial governor

could sentence a man to *relegatio*, provided he had a suitable island within his jurisdiction (Digest, xlvi. 22. 6-7). And Caird states "Tertullian [A.D. 160-230]. Who was a lawyer and can be trusted to use legal terms accurately, tell us this was the sentence John had incurred: '*Ioannes ... in insulum relegatur*' (De Praescript. Haer.36)."

So, though Vespeian himself "attempted nothing to our prejudice," according to the Christian historian Eusebius (Ecclesiastical History, Book III, Chapter XVII), John could nevertheless have been banished by local authorities during his reign. And Tertullian says in effect that he was banished by such – by the provincial governor – though in all probability it was at the instigation of the emperor cult of the pagan priesthood. Emperor worship was already being promoted in the province of Asia, and Christians were likewise being persecuted there (as attested by the Book of Revelation itself). John was given the Revelation to let them know that things would get worse still, and for quite some time, but that their cause would eventually triumph – in the Roman Empire (this much through Chapter 19). And, of course, the Revelation was intended to provide strong motivation for perseverance in loyalty to Christ at the risk of even physical life itself, with assurance of superabundant reward in the life to come (cf. 2:7,10-11, 17; 3:5,12; etc.,etc.). And that the Revelation was received near the end of Vespasian's reign seems a strong possibility.

NOTE: This is a supplement to, not a substitute for, Notes on Revelation 17:1 - 19:21, designed to deal more coherently and systematically with the identity of the Beast of Chapter 17 and its seven heads, and with when Revelation is most likely to have been written. Its content is not set forth as the last word on the subject, but as the latest considerations of the author of these notes—for whatever they may be worth.

THE GREAT HARLOT

Notes on Revelation 17:1 - 19:4

Introduction:

If our interpretation has been correct, the pouring out of the Seventh Bowl of God's wrath (Chapter 16:17-21) has brought us the third time to an aspect of the consummation of his wrath upon the Roman Empire and corporate elements within it opposed to Christians and Christianity, in each instance symbolized by a great earthquake. The other times were in connection with the opening of the Seventh Seal (8:1-5) and in connection with the sounding of the Seventh Trumpet (11:15-19).

Chapters 17 through 19 symbolize various aspects and processes of that consummation introduced in the last paragraph of the preceding chapter. And they close (19:19-21) with a defeat of two of Satan's confederates that restricts his universal persecution powers for a period described symbolically as 1,000 years (20:1-6), or until near the consummation of history itself (20:7-15). These Notes cover only through Chapter 19, relating directly or indirectly to the judgment of the Great Harlot and the Battle of Armagedon.

I. JUDGMENT OF THE GREAT HARLOT (17:11-18).

1. Judgment Announced and the Harlot Identified (17:1-6): "And there came one of the seven angels that had the seven bowls, and spake with me, saying, Come hither, I will show the judgment of the great harlot that sitteth upon many waters; with whom the kings of the earth committed fornication, and they that dwell on the earth were made drunken with the wine of her fornication. And he carried me away in the Spirit into a wilderness: and I saw a woman sitting upon a scarlet-covered beast, full of names of blasphemy, having seven heads and ten horns. And the woman was arrayed in purple and scarlet, and decked with gold and precious stone and pearls, having in her hand a golden cup full of abominations, even the unclean things of her fornication, and upon her forehead an name written, MYSTERY, BABYLON THE GREAT, THE MOTHER OF THE HARLOTS AND OF THE ABOMINATIONS OF THE EARTH. And I saw the woman drunken with the blood of the saints, and with the blood of the martyrs of Jesus. And when I saw her I wondered with great wonder."

NOTE: that John's vantage point "in the Spirit" has been changed from heaven (4:1) to the wilderness (17:2), which would be upon the earth, This does not mean that the harlot was in the wilderness, for "she sitteth upon many waters" (v.1), and which symbolizes "peoples, and multitudes, and nations, and tongues" (v.15), and a "wilderness" (*eremos*) is an uninhabited region. But it would afford him a place of seclusion from which to observe her without distraction in her true character and appalling seductiveness, yet safe from her blandishments.

It is to be noted also that she "sits" upon a scarlet-colored beast (v.3), to be identified with Imperial Rome as will be indicated later, as well as upon many waters (v.1), and that in her heart she says, "I sit a queen" (18:7). And in 17:18 it is said that she "is the great city, which reigneth over the kings of the earth." That would be pagan Rome symbolically referred to as Babylon. And upon her forehead she had a name written, "BABLYON THE GREAT" (17"5). Rome was also worshipped as the goddess of Roma, and in the first three of the seven cities of Asia to which John wrote letters it is known that they there were temples to her. And where she is worshipped, there was usually emperor worship also. Moreover, she is a great harlot (a great idolatress and promoter of idolatry) - "THE MOTHER OF THE HARLOTS AND THE ABOMINATIONS OF THE EARTH" (v.5 again) - and had been described by John, when first mentioned by him, as having "made all nations to drink of the wrath of her fornication" (14:8). She contrast with the radiant Woman of 12:1 and with the wife or bride of the Lamb (1:7-8; 21:2,9-10) - displaying and arraying herself expensively and luxuriously, gaudily, voluptuously and shamelessly - and "drunken with the blood of the saints, and with the blood of martyrs of Jesus" (17:6) - the later being true from the days of the emperor Nero.

Upon beholding her, John "wondered with great wonder" (v.6). Or, it could be rendered that he was amazed with great amazement, or astounded with great astonishment, or by paraphrase, that he was shocked at what he saw. Yet evidently he did "wonder" at the significance of what he saw, for an explanation of the "mystery" was then given him.

2. Explanation of the Mystery (17:7-18): "and the angel said unto me, wherefore didst thou wonder? I will tell thee the mystery of the woman, and of the beast that carrieth her, which hath seven heads and ten horns." v.7.)

The remainder of the chapter is taken up with an explanation of the Beast and his relationship with the Woman, with only the last verse identifying her, as already has been quoted: "And the woman whom thou sawest is the great city, which reigneth over the kings of the earth" (v.18). So we shall deal primarily with the "Mystery of the Beast" and the "Horns of the Beast."

a. Mystery of the Beast (vs.8-11). "The beast which thou sawest was, and is not, and is about to come up out of the abyss, and go unto perdition. And they that dwell upon the earth shall wonder, they whose name hath not been written in the book of life from the foundation of the world, when they behold the beast, how that he was, and is not, and shall come . Here is the mind that hath wisdom. The seven heads are seven mountains, on which the woman sitteth: and they are the seven kings; the five are fallen, the one is, the other is not yet come, and when he cometh, he must continue a little while. And the beast that was, and is not, is himself also an eighth, and is of the seven; and he goeth into perdition."

The explanation of this part of the "mystery" is itself enigmatic and would require "wisdom" to understand parts of it. It appears, however, to make use of the Nero-redivivus myth, and that the Beast is to be identified with the Beast of the Sea of 13:1-10, and therefore with Imperial Rome. As represented by its emperor, no doubt, it was "full of names of blasphemy" - most likely their claims to be deity, employed in such titles as *theios* (Divine), *soter* (Savior), and *kurios* (Lord). It had seven heads, which represented seven kings of importance in the riddle. She was a great city, which reigneth over the kings of the earth." That city at that time was Rome, built upon seven hills - the Palatine, Capitoline, Quirinal. Aventine, Esquiline, Viminal and Caelian. It was the capital of the Roman Empire, consisting of many nations or provinces ruled by "kings" (symbolically represented as ten horns, though mathematically there were many more) subordinate to the

emperors, who were also kings (but kings of kings), Symbolized as seven heads of the Beast and likewise symbolized by the "seven mountains on which the woman sitteth," as mentioned above. These are represented as reigning consecutively, and each in his turn was the embodiment of the Beast, or empire. And, if our interpretation thus far is correct, the seven would have to include both Nero, and Domitian. But who are the others? Which was the Beast that "was, and is not, and shall come"? Who were that were "fallen," the one that "is," and the other "not yet come" and when he comes will continue "a little while"? And what is meant by "the beast was, and is not, is himself also of the eighth, and is to be a useful clue, but does not resolve all difficulties.

It does not tell us the identity of all the seven emperors symbolized. Maybe that number, too, is merely symbolical and not mathematical. From Augustus (31B.C. - A.D. 14), generally considered the first emperor, through Domitian (A.D. 81-96), we have the following others in order: Tiberius (A.D. 14-37), Caligula (A.D. 37-41), Claudius (A.D. 41-54), Nero (A.D. 54-68), Galba, Otho, Vitellius (A.D. 68-69), Vespasian (A.D. 69-69), and Titus (A.D. 79-81) - making eleven in all. We can eliminate Galba, Otho, and Vitellius, however, as they may be pretenders and rivals, appointed by their armies but not ratified by the Senate, and the three combined reigned only eighteen months. That leaves eight, with the eighth strangely spoken of as being one of the seven. But, if Domitian is thought of as Nero reincarnate, that makes him one of the seven while being an eighth, and thus fitting the description precisely. (And, by way of explanation, the application might include all persecuting emperors yet to come.)

There is yet another problem, however. Five of the eight are fallen, which would be Augustus, Tiberius, Caligula, Claudius, and Nero. The "one" who "is" would seem to be Vespasian (A.D. 69-79). The other "not yet come" and would "continue a little while," would therefore be Titus (A.D. 79-81), who ruled one full year and parts of two others. And that would leave Domitian, as Nero reincarnated, to be "the beast that was, and is not, is himself also an eighth, and is of the seven" (A.D. 81-96), as mentioned above. While this poses no problem of interpretation, and seemingly must stand, it seems to make the Revelation (or at least part if it) to have been received during the reign of Vespasian, instead of the reign

of Domitian as per earliest tradition (Vocabulary of Chapter 1), and John to have been exiled at least by the late 70s instead of the mid 90s A.D. And Jerome also, writing probably in the late 300s, without stating his source or sources, is quoted as saying: "In the fourteenth year after the persecution of Nero, John was banished to the island of Patmos, and there wrote the Revelation ... Upon the death of Domitian, and upon the repeal of his acts by the senate, because of their excessive cruelty, he returned to Ephesus, when Nerva was emperor." Nero's persecution of Christians was A.D. 64, and the fourteenth year afterward would not have been later than A.D. 78, while Vespasian was still emperor. If, however, Jerome was correct, and the above interpretation of John's language is likewise valid, it changes nothing substantially except the beginning of John's exile, which could have been instigated by local representatives of the Emperor Cult in an escalation of emperor worship in the reign of Vespasian though he himself did not require it, as Domitian would soon do. [See note at the end of this chapter.] Incidentally, however, it does add confirmation for a late-in-the-century date of Revelation rather than a earlier one, in the reign of Nero (A.D. 54-68), argued for by some.

As for Domitian, after he became emperor, and through whose reign John remained in exile, it is said that when he arrived in a theater with his empress, the crowd was urged to rise and shout, "All hail to our Lord and his Lady"; that he informed all provincial governors that all government announcements and proclamations must begin, "Our Lord and God Domitian commands ..." (also that everyone who addressed him in speech or in writing must commence, "Lord and God," (William Barclay, *The Revelation of John*, Vol.1, Revised Edition (1976), p.19.)

Yet Caesar worship, while being the one religion that pretty much covered the whole Roman Empire by the time of Revelation, had not from the beginning been imposed on the people from above but had arisen from among themselves, partially as a spontaneous act of gratitude to Rome for her benefits, which were many, and partially to ingratiate themselves with her. It had begun by deifying Rome as a goddess (Roma), with Asia itself doing the pioneering, and later proceeding to add emperor worship, first of deceased emperors, and then by the middle of the first century A.D. asking and receiving permission to build statues and temples

to living emperors also as gods. A priesthood developed and came to be organized into presbyteries for the promotion and oversight of cultic worship, intended to consist everyone in the empire (except Jews) appearing once a year before the magistrates to burn a pinch of incense (or it could be salt) to the godhead of Caesar saying, "Caesar is Lord." This was not intended to prevent the practice of other religions. But to refuse that recognition of Caesar was considered an act of political disloyalty. And that within itself set Christians, who could acknowledge only Christ as Lord, on a collision course with the Emperor Cult of the pagan priesthood and later in varying degrees with Imperial Rome itself, beginning with the latter in the person of Domitian, seemingly represented above as Nero reincarnate. And Revelation was given in view of what must soon come to pass including the rise of the Beast (13:1-10) and his "perdition" (see 19:19-21). (See Note at the end of this chapter).

b. Horns of the Beast (vs.12-18). "And the ten horns that thou sawest are the kings, who have received no kingdom yet; but they receive authority as kings, with the beast, for one hour. These have one mind, and they give their power and authority to the beast. These shall make war against the Lamb, and the Lamb shall overcome them, for he Lord of Lords, and king of kings; and they also shall overcome that are with him, called and chosen and faithful.

And he saith unto me , The waters which thou sawest, where the harlot sitteth, are peoples, and multitudes, and nations, and tongues. And the ten horns which thou sawest, and the beast, these shall hate the harlot, and shall make her desolate and naked, and shall eat her flesh, and shall burn her utterly with fire. For God did put in their hearts to do his mind, and to give their kingdom unto the beast, until the words of God should be accomplished. And the woman whom thou sawest is the great city, which reigneth over the kings of nations.

The number ten is symbolic, not mathematical, and represents subordinate rulers who with one mind would give their support to Imperial Rome in making war against the Lamb and his faithful ones. But they shall themselves be overcome instead of victorious,

for they shall be fighting against the one who truly is King of Kings and Lord of Lords. When Christianity becomes dominate in the empire, both emperors and provinces will turn against corporate paganism and thus against Rome as the harlot city - whose utter downfall as such is foretold in gruesome symbolism in v.16 and more elaborately and dramatically described in Chapters 18 and 19. Tertullian (A.D. 160-230), a Christian theologian and apologist, explained why Rome was described as Babylon, saying: "Babylon also in our John is a figure of the city of Rome, as being like her great and proud in royal power, and warring down the saints of God" (Against Marcion 3, 13).

II FALL OF THE HARLOT CITH ANNOUNCED, LAMENTED AND CELEBRATED (18:1-19:4).

Judgment of the "great harlot" was assured to John by an angel from heaven in 17:1, and later in the chapter she was identified symbolically so that there could no reasonable escape from the conclusion that she was the pagan city of Rome. And now her judgment is described for the last time and with greater detail than ever before. But judgment upon Rome seems definitely to have been included previously in the following climatic connections: Opening of the Sixth Seal (6:12-17).

This section consist of five subsections, as follows:

1. 18:1-3: Announcement by another angel of great authority (that is, other than the one of 17:1 that the city has fallen, and why.
2. 18:4-10: Call by another voice from heaven to the potential people of God in Babylon to come out of her, to escape her plagues and retribution.
3. 18:11-20: Lament of kings and merchants of the earth over the loss of trade with the city - plus the jubilant admonition from another but unidentified source, "Rejoice over her, thou heaven, and ye apostles, and ye prophets: for God hath judged your judgment upon her" - which may mean that he has judged her as she judged you, in keeping with v.6.
4. 18:21-24: A strong angel (evidently still another) performing an action parable symbolizing the finality of the city's fall, and stating why.

5. 19:1-4: A great multitude in heaven praising God for his judgments upon the "great harlot," with the four and twenty elders and the four living creatures joining in worship to him "that sitteth on the throne."

NOTE: This is to call special attention to the next to the last sentence of page 3 and the last sentence of the second paragraph of page 4, and suggest that all previous references to Domitian in keeping with earliest tradition, with something like the following vaguely in mind as a solution of the difficulty posed with reference to chapter 17:9-11: "... if Rev[elation] comes from the reign of Domitian, the only conclusion that the interpreter can draw is that John has worked material from the reign of Vespasian into his vision without making it entirely consistent" (Interpreter's Dictionary of the bible, 1971). But, upon more exacting scrutiny in preparation for this Handout, he cannot be comfortable with such as a solution.

The following from J. W. Roberts, *The Revelation of John* (1974), seems much more appropriate:

"The main difficulty with this interpretation is that it places the vision in the reign of Vespasian, whereas the earlier tradition of the church (Irenaeus) said that 'the vision was seen no long time since in the reign of Domitian.' There are no patent solutions to this difficulty, only some possibilities. If John had been banished to Patmos (as he seems to be saying) during Vespasian's reign, his banishment could have extended through the short reign of Titus and into the reign of Domitian, thus giving rise to the later tradition that the vision was seen in Domitian's time. Under such conditions the book would not have been published until John's return to the mainland, anyway. The fact that there was a king not yet come who was to remain only a little while (Titus) makes it possible to postulate the time of the vision near the end of Vespasian's time and thus on the threshold of the reign of Domitian. Although there is no record of persecution under Vespasian which would account for John's being banished 'on account of the word of God and the testimony of Jesus' (1:9), little is actually known of the history of these years. John does not say he was banished by the emperor himself; it could have been by the

actions of a local official. There was no uniform Roman policy concerning such matters, and local affairs were under local jurisdiction. This also accords with numerous indications given in the book that the trial of persecution which John expected (cf. 3:10) had not yet begun. John's main point is that the line of Roman emperors has only a little time remaining until a reincarnation of Nero was to emerge, one who (as Nero) would best be described in terms of the ancient Rahab, the dragon of the Old Testament prophecy." NOTE: See Isaiah 51:9 for "Rahab" here mentioned as an alternate term for "dragon" in the King James Version and "monster" in the American Standard Version.)

Incidentally, however, it may be too much to say, as above, that "the book would not have been published until John's return to the mainland, anyway." It may not have been impossible to have some communication with the mainland even though in exile, and to have had copies of the Revelation made and distributed while he was still on Patmos, in the reign of either Vespasian, Titus, or Domitian (especially in the early part of the latter, when he was not yet a persecutor). This is not to say that John did so, but that he might have, for all that we actually know. Furthermore, it would have had to be received before it could have been written, and the initial copy made before it could be gotten to the mainland and published. So, regardless of when it was published, it could have been received under Vespasian, which seems to be the implication of the text itself and likely to be more reliable than human speculation of tradition otherwise. But, if published later especially if during the reign of Domitian, it would have been easy for the tradition to develop that it was "seen" during the reign of the latter.

MARRIAGE SUPPER OF THE LAMB ANNOUNCED

Notes on Revelation 19:5-10.

"And a voice came forth from the throne, saying, Give praise to our God, all ye his servants, ye that fear him, the small and the great. And I heard as it were the voice of a great multitude, and as the voice of many waters, and as the voice of mighty thunders, saying, Hallelujah: for the Lord our God, the Almighty, reigneth. Let us rejoice and be exceeding glad, and let us give glory unto

him: for the marriage of the Lamb is come, and his wife hath made herself ready. And it was given unto her that she should array herself in fine linen, bright and pure: for the fine linen is the righteous acts of the saints. And he saith unto me, Write, Blessed are they that are bidden to the marriage supper of the Lamb. And he saith unto me, These are true words of God. And I fell at his feet to worship him. And he saith unto me, See thou do it not: I am a fellow-servant with thee and with thy brethren that hold the testimony of Jesus: worship God for the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy."

The harlot city is fallen, the supremacy of God is demonstrated in its overthrow, and the marriage of the Lamb to the city of the redeemed is therefore a certainty. (Note the Hallelujah in v.6 as well as in v.1,2,4.) This is only an announcement, however, and a reassuring interlude. Nothing more is said about it till 21:1-2, where John says: "And I saw a new heaven and a new earth: for the first heaven and the first earth are passed away; and the sea is no more, And I saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, made ready as a bride adorned for her husband." And then vs.9-10: "And there came one of the seven angels who had the seven bowls, who were laden with the seven last plagues; and he spake unto me, saying, Come hither, I will show thee the bride, the wife of the Lamb. And he showed me the holy city Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God."

The marriage itself is nowhere portrayed. But it must represent the perfection of the union with Christ – the final and complete blessedness of the church in the world to come, after all enemies have been destroyed, as depicted in 20:11-15. In this life, however, Christians are described as being only "espoused" to Christ (2 Corinthians 11"2). But on the basis of that analogy, those who will constitute the new and heavenly Jerusalem will have experienced their marriage to the Lamb. Those who individually are "bidden to the marriage supper," as mentioned above, will also collectively constitute the "bride" in eternity.

John was so overwhelmed by the foregoing revelation from the messenger of God – likely the angel by whom the Revelation was signified unto John (1:1) – that he fell down to worship him. But

the angel reminded him that he was not himself divine, but only a fellow-servant of Jesus and his brethren who hold (or have and communicate) the testimony of Jesus – "for the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy." Testimony of Jesus could be either by Jesus or about Jesus. But here it is more likely to mean testimony about him. Such is the sum and substance of prophecy as a whole, directly or indirectly, whether of the Old Testament or of the New. John and his brethren as well as the angel had a privilege and responsibility of communicating that, and so it was inappropriate that John worship the angel. He was no more the source of that message than John and his brethren were.

BATTLE OF ARMAGEDDON

Notes on Revelation 19:11-21

In this passage the battle is not so called, but vs. 19-21 make it evident that it is the battle for which preparation was being made by the Dragon, the Beast, and the False Prophet, who gathered their armies together "into the place which is called in Hebrew Har-Magedon" (16:12-16). In this battle they are decisively defeated, however, and the Dragon's confederates, the Beast and False Prophet, are captured and cast alive into the lake of fire, their final and ultimate doom. (This is the "perdition" of the Beast as foretold in 17:11.) As a sequel, the Dragon was chained and incarcerated and his power drastically limited for "a thousand years" before the time of the end of history (see Chapter 20). For that reason, in these Notes this battle is associated with the overthrow of Rome in significant aspects rather than with the end of time a popularly interpreted.

This battle itself is not depicted, but the opposing armies are described and the results are told. The text is divided into three paragraphs, as follows:

1. The Armies of Heaven and Their Captain (vs. 11-16). "And I saw the heaven opened; and behold, a white horse, and he that sat thereon called Faithful and True; and in righteousness doth he judge and make war. And his eyes are a flame of fire, and upon his head are many diadems; and he hath a name written which no one knoweth but he himself. And he is arrayed in a garment sprinkled

with blood; and his name is called The Word of God. And the armies which are in heaven followed him upon white horses, clothe with fine linen, white and pure. And out of his mouth proceedeth a sharp sword, that with it he should smite the nations; and he shall rule them with a rod of iron: and he treadeth the winepress of the fierceness of God, the Almighty. And he hath on his garment and on his thigh a name written, KING OF KINGS, AND LORD OF LORDS."

The Captain of the armies of heaven can be none other than the Jesus Christ.

And his armies must be his saints, for they are "clothed with fine linen, white and pure," which, in v.8, is said to be "the righteous acts of the saints." Moreover, the war he wages is not carnal, but ideological or spiritual, the sword he uses proceeding "out of his mouth"; and one of his names is "The Word of God," which links him with "The Word" of John 1:1-18, who is "the only begotten Son, who is in the bosom of the Father."

2. Invitation to the Victory Celebration (vs. 17-18): "and I saw an angel standing in the sun; and he cried with a loud voice, saying to all the birds that fly in mid heaven, Come and be gathered together unto the great supper of God; that ye may eat flesh of kings, and flesh of captains, and flesh of the mighty men, and flesh of the horses and of them that sat thereon, and the flesh of all men, both free and bond, and small and great.

This invitation to all the vultures to feast upon all flesh of those making up the armies and supporters of the Dragon and the Beast and the False Prophet, means they have been or else will be slain in the battle. If this is an invitation before the fact, it is taunting perdition of victory. If, on the other hand, it is an invitation after the fact, the blood sprinkled on Christ's garment, mentioned above in v. 13, may be that of defeated enemies (cf. Isaiah 63:3).

3. The Beast and False Prophet vanquished (vs.19-21): "And I saw the beast and the kings of the earth, and their armies, gathered together to make war against him that sat up the horse, and against his army. And the beast was taken, and with him the false prophet

that wrought the signs in his sight, wherewith he deceived them that had received the mark of the beast and them that worshipped his image: they two were cast alive into the lake of fire that burneth with brimstone: and the rest were killed with the sword of him that sat upon the horse, even the sword that came forth out of his mouth: and all the birds were filled with their flesh."

Now John sees the opposing armies drawn up in battle array, the victory of the armies of heaven, and the birds gorged with flesh of the slain in battle. But the battle, so far as the saints were concerned, was spiritual, and the consumption of flesh by the birds was figurative. It was decisive, also, bringing an end to the persecution of Christians by Imperial Rome and the priesthood of the Emperor Cult, symbolized as the Beast and the False Prophet being cast into the lake of fire. (The False Prophet is the same as the Second Beast in 13:11-18, hence the priesthood of the Emperor Cult.)

The following paragraph seems appropriate at this point: "John's understanding of the messianic war is now plain. John viewed the battle as the struggle between the early church and the Roman Empire, in which Rome (as the embodiment of the ancient beast) attacked the Lamb by attacking his followers. The battle was not fought with carnal weapons on an earthly battlefield. It was fought with the gospel of Jesus Christ, as that gospel was proclaimed, lived, and witnessed in death by the followers of Jesus Christ." (J. W. Roberts, The Revelation of John, 1974, p. 169.)

Or, as stated in chapter 12:11, "and they overcame ... because of the blood of the Lamb, and because of the word of their testimony; and they loved not their life even unto death."

The effects of that victory are described as lasting for a long period of time described as 1,000 years, as will be seen in Chapter 20.

AFTER HISTORY AND ETERNITY

Notes on Revelation 20 - 22

Introduction:

Going back to Chapter 12, we have a great red Dragon (the Devil and Satan as embodied in the Roman Empire) who attempted to destroy the Christ and, upon being completely thwarted, waxed wroth against the Woman that gave birth (the community of the saints, which became the church) and went about to "make war against the rest of her seed, that keep the commandments of God, and the testimony of Jesus." In Chapter 13, we have a first Beast and a second Beast who are confederates, and likewise were agents of the Dragon in making war against the saints. The first seems to have been Imperial Rome, and the second to have been the pagan priesthood promoting emperor worship. In Chapter 16:12-16, we have the same trio again, except that the second Beast, the priesthood of the imperial cult, has become the False Prophet - making preparation for the Battle of Armageddon. And in Chapter 19:19-21, we have the Beast and the False Prophet utterly defeated - "cast alive into the lake of fire that burneth with brimstone." This represents decisive and permanent victory for the cause of Christ over Imperial Rome and the cult of emperor worship in the empire. While it does not represent a victory of equal proportions over Satan - not yet - it does so greatly restrict his influence that he cannot deceive and manipulate the nations into universal persecution of the saints again - not for "a thousand years," near the end of history - when his final effort is aborted and he too, is "cast into the lake of fire and brimstone, where are also the beast and the false prophet; and they shall be tormented day and night for ever and ever" (20:1-10). Then follows the end of history, with its general resurrection and universal judgment (20:11-15) and a glimpse of the eternal blessedness of the righteous (Chapters 21-22). It is with the events of these chapters (20-22) that these Notes will now be concerned, treating them under two major heads as (1) Earthly Sequel to Armageddon (20:1-15) and (2) Eternal Future for the Saints (21:1 - 22:5), exclusively of the (3) Epilogue (22:6-21).

I EARTHLY SEQUEL TO ARMAGEDDON (20:1-15).

1. The Millennium (vs.1-6): The term "millennium" does not occur in English translation, but is from a Latin word meaning a thousand years. And various theories have been formulated regarding it, and have been categorized as (a) Premillennial, (b) Postmillennial or (c) Amillennial. 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. 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 either 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. It will be obvious from what will soon be said in these Notes, and from various things already said that none of these viewpoints is being espoused in them.

a. Satan bound (vs.1-3): "And I saw an angel coming down out of heaven, having the key of the abyss and a great chain in his hand. And he laid hold on the dragon, the old serpent, which is the Devil and Satan, and bound him for a thousand years, and cast him into the abyss, and shut it, and sealed it over him, that he should not deceive the nations no more, until the thousand years should be finished: After this he must be loosed for a little time."

Satan is here represented as bound and incarcerated for a period symbolized as a thousand years, which may simply represent a very long time period in comparison with all lesser periods elsewhere symbolized rather than a mathematically precise one thousand years. And it is not at all stated that he would be completely inoperative or ineffectual during the time indicated. The limits described are that "he should deceive the nations no more, until the thousand years should be finished." And we find later (vs.7-10) that when he is loosed out of his prison he shall "come forth to deceive the nations ... to gather them to make war" against "the camp of the saints" - which is what he and the Beast and the false Prophet were doing in preparation for the battle of Armageddon (16:12-16). That effort was a failure, and he lost the Beast and the False Prophet as a result (19:19-21). His next effort to marshal the nations of the world in a universal war of extermination against the saints will not only fail as did the other, but he himself will also be completely and forever vanquished and doomed as the Beast and the False Prophet had been.

Excursus: Aside from the above symbolism, we call attention to the fact that again the Dragon is described as "the old serpent, which is the Devil and Satan," as previously in 12:9. Satan is no doubt referred to as a serpent because he made use of a serpent in the Garden of Eden to seduce Eve. The Hebrew word translated "serpent" in the Genesis record (Chapter 3), and found 31 times in the Old Testament, is *nachash*, the general word for serpent, corresponding to *ophis* in Greek, found 14 times in the New Testament.

In the King James Version of the Old Testament, the Hebrew word *tannim* is translated "dragon" in the following passages: Job 30:29; Psalm 44:19; Isaiah 13:22; 34:13; 35:7; 43:20; Jeremiah 9:11; 10:22; 14:6; 19:33; 51:37; Ezekiel 29:3; Micah 1:8; and, *tannothe*, feminine plural, in Malachi 1:3. But Young's Analytical concordance defines it as "howlers, jackals." And the American Standard Version translates it "jackals" with only one exception, in Ezekiel 29:3, where it is translated "monster".

The other Hebrew word translated "dragon" is *tannin*, of which the King James Version translators may have considered *tannim* to be a variant. It occurs in Deuteronomy 32:33; Psalm 74:13; 91:13 148:7; Isaiah 27:1; 51:9; Jeremiah 51:34, and is used of any large reptile, but in the KJV is always translated "dragon", yet never in the ASV, where it is rendered "serpent" in Deuteronomy 32:33 and Psalm 71:13 and 148:7.

Tannin is also translated "whale" in the KJV in Genesis 1:21 and Job 7:12 and so is *tannim* in Ezekiel 32:2; but the ASV uses "sea-monster" in each.

In Isaiah 27:1, *leviathan* (a great water animal (see Psalm 74:14; 104:26), and in Job 41 seemingly a crocodile) is also called a "serpent" (*nachash*) - a "swift serpent" and a "crooked (or, winding) serpent" (ASV). And in Amos 9:3 God is represented as saying of the wicked attempting to escape his vengeance, that "though they be hid from my sight in the bottom of the sea thence will I command the serpent (*nachash*), and it shall bite them."

In Exodus 4:3 and 7:15, we read of Moses' rod becoming a "serpent" (*nachash*). And in Exodus 7:9,10,12, Aaron's and the magician's rods became "serpents" (*tinnin*).

To summarize, we can see that in the Bible a "dragon" is a reptile, may be considerable size, may be of either water or land, or it may be amphibious. In apocalyptic literature, it may be and often is a grotesque creature with nothing in nature quite corresponding to it.

As for the English word itself, Webster says it derives originally from the Greek *drakon*, akin to *drakos*, and is so called from its terrible eyes. Out of 14 different definitions, the following are significant for our purpose: 1. A huge serpent. Now Rare. 2. A fabulous animal, generally represented as a monstrous winged and scaly serpent or saurian [lizard], with a crested head and enormous claws. 10. Used in the Authorized Version of the Old Testament to translate several Hebrew forms, some of which are translated jackal or serpent in the Revised Version, or by sea monster in the American Revised Version. See Job 30:39; Psa.71:13; 90:13; Jer.49:33; Rev.20:2. 14. a. Any of numerous small, harmless, brilliantly colored lizards constituting the genus *Draco*, of the East Indies and southern Asia ... b. any of certain other lizards of the related genera (*Amphibatus*, *Physignathus*, etc.).

End of Excursus.

b. Martyred Saints Reign (vs.2-6): "And I saw thrones, and they sat upon them, and judgment was given unto them: And I saw the souls of them that had been beheaded for the testimony of Jesus, and for the word of God, and such as worshipped not the beast, neither his image, and received not the mark upon their forehead and upon their hand; and they lived, and reigned with Christ a thousand years. The rest of the dead lived not again until the thousand years should be finished. This is the first resurrection: Blessed and holy is he that hath part in the first resurrection: over these the second death hath no power; but they shall be priests of God and Christ, and shall reign with him a thousand years."

In this vision, John sees, not the bodies, but the souls of Christian martyrs, and of those who had not yielded to emperor worship

even if they had not been pit to death as a result, enthroned as it were, and reigning with Christ a thousand years, till death has been destroyed (see Acts 2:22-36; 1 Corinthians 15:20-28), whereas the thousand years begins after the Beast and False Prophet had been cast into the lake of fire, well into the Christian era, but ends before death has been destroyed (Revelation 20:1-15). It does, however, represent a long period of time when the spirit of those described as enthroned live and reign on enough people of that period that Satan cannot deceive and manipulate the nations into universal persecution of the church and of Christians, as he will almost succeed in doing later (vs.7-10).

This is called a "resurrection," not because their bodies have been raised, for seemingly they have not, but because they live again in others, as Pope Adrian spoke of Jerome and Huss, saying: "The heretics Huss and Jerome are now alive again in the person of Martin Luther." It represents the triumph of their cause over those who would exterminate it if they could.

(For a biblical example of the foregoing principle, consider that the return of Elijah the prophet was foretold [Malachi 4:5], and that because John the Baptist performed "in the spirit and power of Elijah" [Luke 1:17] Jesus said of him, "And if ye are willing to receive it, that is to come" [Matthew 11:14; see also 17:9-13].)

Moreover, the above is called the "first resurrection." This is in contrast either with (1) the general resurrection as the end of history (John 5:28-29; 6:39,40,44,54; 1Corinthians 15:20-28; Revelation 20:12-13), or else with (2) an implied figurative living again of the non-Christian and anti-Christian element of mankind (a) with whom emperor worshippers and other persecutors of Christians had been identified and (d) who again will attempt universal was against the "camp of the saints" after the "thousand years" is finished.

It is declared that, "Blessed and holy is he that hath part in the first resurrection: over these the second death hath no power; but they shall be priest of God and of Christ, and shall reign with him a thousand years." Those whose souls were seen of John under the altar upon opening of the Fifth Seal (Revelation 6:9-11) and all

others of the past who had been martyred for Christ, or who had been loyal to him though escaping martyrdom, prior to the "thousand years," are particularly the ones under consideration. However, there is also an important sense in which those in whom they live again have a part in their resurrection - and surely, therefore, in their blessedness.

2. Satan's Final Doom (vs.7-10): "And when the thousand years are finished, Satan shall be loosed out of his prison, and shall come forth to deceive the nations which are in the four corners of the earth, Gog and Magog, to gather them together to the war: the number of whom is as the sand of the sea. And they went up over the breadth of the earth, and compassed the camp of the saints about, and the beloved city: and fire came down out of heaven and devoured them. And the devil that deceived them was cast into the lake of fire and brimstone, where are also the beast and the false prophet; and they shall be tormented day night for ever and ever."

"The war" here is Satan's final effort - after the "thousand years" in which he had been unable to deceive the nations into an international and universal war of extermination against the camp of the saints, and the beloved city" - the latter contrast with the harlot city that had fallen prior to the "thousand years". This war is intended to succeed at what the Battle of Armageddon more than a "thousand years" earlier had attempted to do but failed, but results in the same doom for Satan that the former had resulted in for his earlier confederates, the Beast and the False Prophet.

In preparation for this war, Satan goes forth to enlist even the remotest nations of the earth - "Gog and Magog" - Gog and the land of Gog. The backdrop for this symbolism is Ezekiel 38 and 39, where Gog is said to be the "prince of Rosh, Meshech, and Jubal" (38:1,2; 39:1) - or, since rosh means head or chief, "the chief prince of Meshech and Jubal." " The Hebrew word *rosh* (head), which is used in the adjectival sense of meaning 'chief' (Ezek.39:1), has no relationship to Russia nor does Meshech refer to Moscow, as has been alleged" (Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible [1962], Vol.2, p.437.) However, Josephus states that "Magog [see Genesis 10:2-4] founded those that from him were named Magogites, but who are by the Greeks called Scythians"

(Antiquities of the Jews, Chapter VI), and these did in ancient times inhabit what now is southern Russia. "Scythians were a race of savages, inhabiting a region of rather indefinite boundaries, north of the Black and Caspian Seas and the Caucasus Mountains ... War was their chief business, and they were a terrible scourge to the nations of Western Asia ... They broke through the barrier of the Caucasus in 632BC and swept down like a swarm of locusts upon Media and Assyria, turning the fruitful fields into desert; pushing across Mesopotamia, they ravaged Syria [of which Palestine was a part] and were about to invade Egypt when Psammitichus, who was besieging Ashdod [in Palestine], bought them off with rich gifts, but they remained in Western Asia for 28 years, according to Herodotus." (International Standard Bible Encyclopedia [1939], Vol. IV, p.2706.)

In apocalyptic language, the Book of Ezekiel, dating from the 6th century B.C., represents God as saying of Gog: "And thou shalt come from thy place out of the uttermost parts of the north, thou, and many peoples with thee, all of them riding upon horses, a great company and a mighty army; and thou shalt come against my people Israel, as a cloud to cover the land; it shall come to pass in the later days, that I will bring thee against my land, that the nations may know me, when I shall be sanctified in thee, O Gog, before their eyes ... And it shall come to pass in that day, when Gog shall come up against the land of Israel, saith the Lord Jehovah, that my wrath shall come up into my nostrils ... And I will magnify myself, and sanctify myself, and I will make myself known in the eyes of many nations; and they shall know that I am Jehovah ... I will give thee unto revenous birds of every sort, and to the beast of the field to be devoured. Thou shalt fall upon open field; for I have spoken it, saith the Lord Jehovah. And I will send a fire on Magog, and on them that dwell securely in the isles [margin: or, coastline]; and they shall know that I am Jehovah ... And they that dwell in the cities of Israel shall go forth, and shall make fires of the weapons and burn them, ... and they shall make fires of them for seven years; so they shall take no wood out of the field neither cut down any out of the forest; for they shall make fires of the weapons; ... And it shall come to pass in that day, that I will give unto Gog a place for burial in Israel, the valley of them that pass through on the east of the sea; and it shall stop them that pass through: and there shall they bury Gog and all his multitude;

and they shall call the valley Hamon-gog. And seven months shall the house of Israel be in burying them, that they may cleanse the land. Yea, all the people of the land shall bury them; and it shall be to them renoun in the day that I shall be glorified" (38:15 - 39:13).

It is to be further noted that Gog's army in Ezekiel would come not only from his home north of the Black and Caspian Seas and the Caucasus Mountains, and from the "Meshech, and Jubal," which were in Asia Minor, just south of the Black Sea (yet to the north of Israel, of which he was the "chief prince," but also from "Persia [Iran, to the east from Israel]. Cush [to the south, in Africa]. And Put [Libya, in Africa] ..., Gomer [in Asia Minor]. And all his hordes; the house of Togarmah in the uttermost parts of the north [likewise in Asia minor], and all his hordes; even many peoples with thee" (38:1-6) - and possibly "Sheba [in southern Arabia]. Dedan [in northwestern Arabia], and ... Tarshish [Spain, in the westernmost part of Europe] (v.13). These would be forces from long distances in every direction from Israel - an international army of overwhelming proportions - converging upon her and surrounding her holy city - a most impressive prototype of the armies of Satan "FROM OVER THE BREADTH OF THE EARTH, COMPASSING THR CAMP OF THE SAINTS ABOUT AND THE BELOVED CITY" for the CLIMATIC BATTLE OF HUMAN HISTORY. The main difference is that in Ezekiel the forces of Gog and Magog were to be gathered by God for their destruction, whereas in Revelation they were gathered by Satan for the destruction of the people of God - a figurative "gathering," however, for the saints are not themselves literally gathered in a single locality.

And the outcome of the latter gathering was not the destruction of the saints, but Satan's own defeat and everlasting doom instead. For "fire came down out of heaven, and devoured them [that is, the armies of the nations in the four corners of the earth, gathered to war against the saints]." "And the devil that deceived them was cast into the lake of fire and brimstone, where are also the beast and the false prophet; and they shall be tormented day and night for ever and ever." That takes care of Satan and a; his corporate agencies used by him against God and his people on earth, for all eternity to come. Individuals as such allowing themselves to be

used by Satan will likewise be dealt with according to their works, as next is to be seen.

3. End of History: General Resurrection and Final Judgment (vs.11-15): "And I saw a great white throne, and him that sat upon it, from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away; and there was found no place for them. And I saw the dead, the great and the small, standing before the throne; and the books were opened; and another book was opened, which is the book of life: and the dead were judged out of the things which were written in the books, according to their works. And the sea gave up the dead that were in it, and death and Hades gave up the dead that were in them: and they were judged every man according to their works. And death and Hades were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death, even the lake of fire. And if any was not found written in the book of life, he was cast into the lake of fire."

The "heaven" that fled away" was not the abode of God, but evidently the atmospheric heaven surrounding our earth, with possibly the more distant sidereal heaven. No doubt this is what 2 Peter 3:10-13 describes, as follows: "But the day of the Lord will come as a thief; in the which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall be dissolved, with fervent heat, and the earth and the works that are therein shall be burned up. Seeing that these things are thus to be dissolved, what manner of person ought ye to be in all holy living and godliness, looking for and earnestly desiring the coming of the day of God, by reason of which the heavens being on fire shall be dissolved, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat? But, according to his promise, we look for new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness." And this very thing is the next topic of Revelation, beginning with 21:1.

The universality of the resurrection is emphasized by the sea giving up the dead in it, and death and Hades being emptied of the dead in them. The grave or its equivalent gives up the bodies of the dead, and Hades gives up their spirits to animate their resurrection bodies - so that soul and body go together into whatever destiny awaits (cf. Matthew 10:28; 1 Corinthians 15:50-57).

"The book of Life," referred to in both the Old and New Testaments (in Exodus, 32:32 the first time), is mentioned again and again in Revelation (3:4; 13:8; 20:12; 20:12,15; 21:27; 22:19). Names may not only be written in the book, but also blotted out. "And if any was not found written in the book [at the time of judgment], he is cast into the lake of fire."

To be "cast into the lake of fire" is the ultimate doom, and never ends. It is significant that "death and Hades were cast into the lake of fire." That means the end of them. "Death" is used here either of the state of death itself or else of the grave or its equivalent for the bodies of the dead. And "Hades" refers to the place of departed spirits between death and the resurrection. It had been said of Christ that he should reign till all enemies had been put under his feet, and that "the last enemy that shall be abolished is death" (1 Corinthians 15:25-26). "The second death, even the lake of fire" (Revelation 20:14), is symbolically represented as the death of death itself. So we shall be reading in the next chapter, "and death shall be no more" (21:4) - for those inhabiting the new earth.

II. AFTER HISTORY (21:1 - 22:5).

1. New Heaven and New Earth (21:1-8): "And I saw a new heaven and a new earth: for the first heaven and the first earth are passed away; and the sea is no more. And I saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, made ready as a bride adorned for her husband. And I heard a great voice out of the throne saying, Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men. And he shall dwell with them, and they shall be his peoples, and God himself shall be with them, and be their God: and he shall wipe away every tear from their eyes; and death shall be no more; neither shall there be mourning, nor crying, nor pain, any more: the first things are passed away. And he that sitteth on the throne said, Behold, I make all things new. And he saith, Write: for these words are faithful and true. And he said unto me, They are come to pass. I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end. I will give him that is athirst of the fountain of the water of life freely. He that overcometh shall inherit these things; and I will be his God, and he shall be my son. But for the fearful, and the unbelieving, and abominable, and murderers, and fornicators, and

sorcerers, and idolaters, and all liars, their part shall be in the lake that burneth with fire and brimstone; which is the second death."

This is a generalized description of the blessedness of the people of God after the end of history. Heaven, the abode of God, and the new earth are one, as it were. And only the righteous will be present. Those who are otherwise shall be in the lake of fire. It is noteworthy that "the sea is no more," for it held terror for the ancients because for them and their small and frail craft it was often so very dangerous and deadly. In the new order there will be no terrors, but blessedness only - which probably can be appreciated adequately only because of experiences in the first order of things.

2. New Jerusalem (21:9 - 22:5): Now begins a specialized description.

a. John invited to view the city (21:9-10) It was the holy city Jerusalem, the bride, the wife of the Lamb, coming down out of heaven from God. His host is one of the seven angels that had the seven bowls laden with the seven last plagues, as had been the case when he was shown the judgment of Babylon the Great, the harlot city drunken with the blood of the saints and martyrs of Jesus (Chapter 17). At that time John was taken "in the spirit" to a wilderness as the most appropriate vantage point. At this time, he is taken "in the spirit" to still another vantage place more suitable for the breath-taking view that was to be his - namely, "to a mountain great and high."

b. The City's outward appearance (21:11-21a): Glowing with the glory of God, it was of immense proportions, lying foursquare, with walls as high as its other dimensions - namely, 12,000 furlongs, or approximately 1,500 miles - and 144 cubit, or approximately 216 feet, thick There were twelve gates - three on either side - each one a single pearl, with an angel stationed by it - and the names of the twelve tribes of Israel were written of them. The walls had twelve foundations, adorned with twelve manners of precious stones, and on them the names of the apostles of the Lamb written.

c. The interior of the City (21:21b-27): The street of the city was pure gold, like transparent glass. There was no temple in it, for God and the Lamb are its temple. Likewise, it had no need of the sun or moon, for the glory of God and of the Lamb are its light, and the nations (redeemed from all nations) walk by it (it being only for the redeemed, small and great, of whatever nationality) - nothing ever entering that is unclean, abominable, or false, "but only they that are written in the Lamb's book of life." Also, the gates are never shut by day (there being no danger of invasion by enemies) -- and "there is no night there."

d. Provisions of the city (22:1-5): "And he showed me a river of water of life, bright as crystal, proceeding out of the throne of God and of the Lamb, in the midst of the street thereof. And on this side of the river and on that was the tree of life, bearing twelve manner of fruits yielding its fruit every month: and the leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations. And there shall be no curse any more: and the throne of God and of the Lamb shall be therein: and his servants shall serve him; and they shall see his face; and his name shall be on their foreheads. And there shall be night no more; and they need no light of lamp, neither light of sun; for the Lord God shall give them light: and they shall reign for ever and ever."

This is the "Paradise of God" referred to and promised to overcomers in 2:7. And it is described in terms of what was in Eden and lost there through sin, except that now it seems even more magnificent and is in no danger of being lost by those who have known both good and evil and have opted, through much tribulation, for the good, and have "overcome" (see 2:7,11,17,26; 3:5,12,21; cf. Acts 14:22; 2 Timothy 3:12) - in many instances at the cost of life itself upon the earth (Revelation 6:9; cf. 7:13-17; also Romans 8:36-37).

III EPILPOGUE (22:6-21):

In many respects this resembles the opening section of the book. It is a sort of appendix after the visions have ended. Besides being an apocalypse, it is also written in the form of an epistle. It contains statements from Christ, from the angel employed in

communicating the Revelation to John, and from John himself, At times it is difficult to know when transition is made from one to the other, though the messages themselves are clear. Emphasis is placed upon the fact that what has been shown must "shortly come to pass" - meaning that it was written primarily in view of what that generation and those immediately succeeding it would be experiencing - though finally sweeping through more than a "thousand years" to closing scenes of earthly history and to ultimate rewards in eternity. It contains a final warning against worship of any being less than God. Heavy stress is placed upon the fact that this book is prophecy - that its contents neither to be added to nor taken from. It pronounces blessedness upon those who "wash their robes [the privilege of all sinners, if they will (see 1 Corinthians 6:9-11)], that they may have right to come to the tree of life, and may enter in by the gates into the city." A part of all blessedness consist in freedom from vile, repulsive, and contaminating social environment: "Without are dogs [a term used figuratively of unclean and despicable persons, and in Deuteronomy 23:18 of male equivalent of a harlot], and the sorcerers, and the fornicators, and the murderers, and the idolaters, and every one that loveth and maketh a lie." A great invitation is also issued : "and the spirit and the bride say, come. And he that is athirst, let him come: he that will, let him take the water of life freely." And it closes with a benediction: "The grace of the Lord Jesus be with the Saints. Amen."

ABYSS AND 1,000 YEARS

Notes Relating to Chapter 20

1. Abyss (vs.1,3):

The Greek word is *abussos*, from a, an intensive prefix, and *bussos*, a depth; hence, a very deep place. It occurs not only in Revelation (9:11;11:7; 17:8 20:1,3) but also in Luke 8:31 and Romans 10:7, in all of which is translated "abyss" by the American Standard Version. In the King James Version, however, it is rendered "deep" in Luke and Romans (not meaning the sea, as in 2 Corinthians 11:25, where the Greek word is *buthos*), and "bottomless pit " in the aforementioned passages in Revelation. By the ancients it was conceived as a vast subterranean cavern,

sometimes thought of as where all dead went (as in Romans 10:7), but especially where sinful spirits were generally kept while awaiting future punishment. In the former sense, it was equivalent to *hades* (see Acts 2:27,31); in the later sense, it was equivalent to *tartaros* (see 2 Peter 2:4). It was not equivalent to *geenna* (Anglicised as Gehenna), the lake of fire and brimstone, which is the place of eternal punishment.

In addition to the above, the King James Version has the expression "bottomless pit" in Revelation 9:1,2, where the American Standard Version has "pit of the Abyss." In these passages the KJV translates *abussos* as it were the adjective modifying *phrear*, a pit, whereas the ASV translates as it literally is, a noun. The word was used of a well or cistern, purposely dug; also of a shaft or pit thought of as leading to the depths of the underworld. Thayer's Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament says the expression, "pit of the abyss," was employed because the nether world was thought of as increasing in size the further it extends from the surface of the earth and so to resemble a cistern, the orifice of which is narrow. In Chapter 9:1, the "key" is represented as the "key of the pit" or orifice of the abyss, whereas in 20:1 it is simply called the "key of the abyss."

NOTE: The Revised Standard Version renders *phrear* as "shaft"; and in Revelation it renders *abussos* uniformly as "bottomless pit," but in Luke 8:31 and Romans 10:7 as "abyss." The New American Standard Bible has the expression "bottomless pit" in Revelation 9:1,2, but explains in the margin that literally it is "shaft of the abyss." And in all other passages (in Luke Romans, and Revelation) it renders *abussos* as "abyss."

2. Chain (v.1): Since Satan is a wicked spirit and not a corporeal being, in chains with which he is described as being bound can hardly be literal. The Beast and the False Prophet had been defeated by him whose name was The Word of God, and who smote the nations with the sharp sword proceeding from the mouth, symbolical of the word of God (see Chapter 19:11-21; cf. Ephesians 6:17). And by the same token it must have been by means of the word of God, or the gospel, that Satan was chained. The "angel" coming down from heaven with a great chain in his

hand may symbolize the evangels (or evangelist) on earth with a heavenly message. The binding and incarceration of Satan by means of the gospel did not render him powerless, but so diminished his influence as to be unable for a "thousand years" to deceive the nations into a universal war of extermination against Christians such as he had attempted prior to the "thousand years" and would attempt again when they were "finished" (20:7-20).

3. Millennium (vs. 1-6): The view taken in these notes is that the "thousand years" of Revelation 20 began with the overthrow of the principal corporate agencies (as described in Chapter 18 and 19) by which Satan was persecuting the Christians of the Roman province of Asia late in the first century A.D., and would do so more and more empire-wide for some time to come - said agencies being symbolized as the Beast from the sea (13:1-10); a second Beast from the earth, or land (13:11-18), also called the False Prophet (16:13-14); and Babylon, the harlot city and capital of the Roman Empire (14:8; 16:19; 17:1-18). (While Rome still stands as a city, it is not the imperial, persecuting, pagan city of John's day. The Rome that was did indeed fall!).

The view is likewise taken in these notes that, while the "thousand years" symbolizes a long indefinite period of time rather than describing a mathematically precise one thousand years, it does come to a close prior to the end of the world. And it will end when forces hostile to Christianity gain sufficient world wide control to marshal the nations again into universal persecution of Christians in an effort to destroy Christianity from the earth. There are now, and have been throughout Christian history, nations hostile to Christianity. But not since the overthrow described above has there been a concerted and coordinated world-wide effort for its extermination. Yet, according to Revelation 20:7-10, that time will come. And there are factors and forces already operating in that direction. But how soon or how remote that time itself may be, it is vain to speculate.

A Change of View.

This represents a change in views over the years on the part of the author of these notes. He once held to the continuous-historical interpretation of Revelation, and to the postmillennial

interpretation of Chapter 20, though with a degree of tentativeness. In 1949, he wrote in the "Forward" of The Book of Revelation in Outline and Chart as follows: "The interpretation suggested is that which seems most likely to the author of this outline booklet, but is certainly not set forth as infallible, and in some instances is not quite satisfactory even to the author himself." "Neither the Preterist, the Futurist, nor the Spiritualist interpretation seems as probable [to him] as the "Historical." "And, though he is definitely convinced that a historical preview is given in Revelation, he recognizes freely the difficulty, and in many instances the impossibility, of knowing what precise events, trends, or movements may be indicated by certain symbols and scenes. Historical interpreters are not themselves by any means agreed on all the details." (And he could have added that neither are those of the other schools of interpretations.)

In 1967, when an "Additional Forward" was appended to a new printing of the Outline and Chart, he stated: "Although more than fifteen years have passed since the above was written, and the author has since acquired and read more than a score of other works of varying importance and significance on the subject, he has not felt compelled to alter basically his views. The chief difference is that though he still inclines to the historical interpretation, he does so with an even greater degree of tentativeness. He feels that the 'Caution' sounded above cannot be too much emphasized. His observation has been that the most confident interpreters lean heavily at times on inferences they cannot prove, and that some of them can be definitely disproved. The main message for us in the Book of Revelation, he feels, is the fact of final triumph of Christ and his saints, and the need of our continuing faithful amidst all trials - this regardless of any specific historical applications that may be made, however valid they might conceivably be. He would urge against trying to impose on others any specific interpretation - his own or anyone else's. But with that caution observed, he believes that the study of the Book of Revelation can be most profitable.

Now, in 1986, after about twenty-one more years, and much wider reading still about the book, with yet further intensive and comprehensive study of the text of Revelation itself, the author continues to be convinced that it was primarily a symbolic preview

of significant historical events that would affect and be experienced by the church - but with an emphasis, he now believes, on events that were "shortly to come to pass" (or begin to do so) in the Roman Empire particularly, from the days of the earliest readers till the overthrow of the empire, with a great deal of recapitulation from different viewpoints rather than a continuous chronological account of significant developments in the world in the centuries to come, though it does finally (in the last three chapters) sweep centuries forward, giving a preview of the end-of-time events and a glimpse into eternity itself. And, of course, it provides lessons profitable for all saints of all time, as is true of all other parts of the Bible.

Major Concepts and Schools of Interpreters Compared. Having been held by non-Catholic scholars from shortly before the Protestant Reformation, the continuous-historical concept became the most popular one for a long time afterward. With little consideration given to what must have been the book's intended purpose for its original readers, obviously a definite weakness, it was seen primarily as a forecast of the history of western Europe from the time of John till the second coming of Christ. The greater part of it, beginning with Chapter 10, came to be applied to the development of Roman Catholicism through a succession of various popes, the Protestant Reformation in western Europe begun in the 16th century, the French Revolution of 1789-99, and (by some) the Restoration Movement begun in America in the turn of the 19th century, with reference also to individual leaders along the way such as Charlemagne and (with some) even Mussolini and others of late vintage.

By Premillennialist, however, who for the most part are futuristic interpreters, it was believed that Christ would soon come and set up an earthly kingdom to last one thousand years and the world governed from Jerusalem. The 19th century saw spawning a rash of premillennial sects; and dispensational premillennialism, which applies everything in Revelation from Chapter 4 (and even part of Chapter 3) to the future - the very near future - is especially rife in our day.

Postmillennialist, on the other hand, are nearly all continuous-historicist interpreters, believing Christ's kingdom to be spiritual and to have been established following his first coming, but that the thousand years of Revelation 20 would be its golden age, ushered in by the Protestant Reformation begun in the 16th century, or (as some later believed) by the Restoration Movement begun at the turn of the 19th century A. D. Their numbers, however, have been declining since the first quarter of our century.

Earliest leaders of the Restoration Movement were confident that it would be so successful as to carry to its logical conclusion the Protestant Reformation and usher in the millennium. For example, when Alexander Campbell began his second paper, he called it *The Millennial Harbinger*, and in its first paragraph he announced: "This work shall be devoted to the destruction of sectarianism, infidelity, and antichristian doctrine and practice. It shall have for its object the development and introduction of that political and religious order of society called THE MILLENNIUM, which shall be the consummation of that ultimate amelioration of society proposed in the Christian Scriptures" ("*Prospectus*," *Millennial Harbinger*, January 1830, p.1).

That consummation to be preceded by the downfall of Mohammedanism, the demolition of the Papacy, the conversion of the Jews, and the abolition of Atheism, brought about by the triumph of the gospel (*Ibid.*, January 1841, p.7), accompanied by "the judgments threatened by Daniel, by Paul and by John the apostle, against Paganism, Mohammedanism, Papalism, and all other apostasies from pure, original Christianity [which] must be consummated in their full import and significance, antecedent to the triumphant reign of the Lord Jesus over the ransomed world" (*Ibid.*, August 1861, p.465).

At the time of his debate with Owen in 1829, Campbell shared the widely held view that "some time soon, perhaps in the present century, "the millennium would begin; that it would end "the seven-thousandth year from creation"; and "that soon after its completion, the present state of things will terminate" Alexander Campbell and Robert Owen, *The Evidences of Christianity; a Debate*, 1852, pp.108-09). But by 1856 he stated that "the signs of

an immediate Millennium, such as the majority of Protestants contemplate, are not very flattering" (Millennial Harbinger, May 1856, p. 276). Finally, he was saying "we may on all our premises anticipate a glorious consummation of the present campaign [to restore primitive Christianity throughout the world and thus usher in the Millennium] in some one hundred forty years hence" (Ibid., January 1861, p.20) - which would make it about the year 2000 A. D. Were he living today, he would no doubt revise his figures forward considerably more or else cease date setting altogether, if not even revise his concepts of the Millennium itself.

Since World War I in the first quarter of the present century, the continuous-historicist and postmillennial viewpoints have been eroding, and dispensational premillennialism with its futuristic interpretation of the greater part of Revelation gaining momentum. The principal reasons are that (1) a corollary of the former was that the world would get better and better until the millennium eventuated, and the events of the century have seemed to conspire to refute such a concept whereas (2) a corollary of the later has been that the world will wax worse and worse until Christ comes, and every great catastrophe, calamity, war or every turn of history, has been sensationalized as a fulfillment of prophecy of the soon coming of Christ to destroy the present world order and establish his own kingdom (to last a thousand years).

Both the postmillennial and the premillennial theories envisioned programs that the scriptures themselves do not furnish. Revelation 20 is the only passage that mentions the millennium, with only two aspects described: (1) Satan bound for a thousand years so as not to be able to deceive and manipulate the nations into an international and universal persecution of the saints during that period as he had done previously through the Roman Empire and as he will endeavor to do, and almost accomplish, after being released; and (2) the living again and reigning with Christ for that thousand years of those who had been martyred for Christ or who had not worshipped the beast or his image (that is, had not succumbed to emperor worship) though escaping martyrdom.

Neither does the amillennial theory do violence to the scripture as a whole. But it does not seem to comport with Revelation 20 itself.

Some amillennialist believe the thousand years not to be a segment of Christ reign but to embrace the entirety of the Christian age. This, however, does not confirm to Revelation 20. According to the latter, the millennium begins after there have been Christian martyrs and after efforts to impose emperor worship upon them, and ends at least a little time before the final consummation of events on earth. Other amillennialist believe no time element is symbolized by the thousand years, but simply the completeness of the victory of Christ and his saints over Satan and all his agents. Yet the completeness of victory over Satan, according to the Revelation text itself, does not come till after the end of the thousand years.

The concept of These Note Characterized. How, then, characterize the concept set forth in these notes? It is somewhat eclectic, accepting some elements of most all schools of interpretation but not all of any of them. It is historical in that it accepts Revelation 2 and 3 as representative of historical conditions in the churches of Asia at the time of writing, and the greater part of the book, Chapters 6 through 19, as setting forth historical events that would come to pass "shortly" (between then and the overthrow of the Roman Empire and corporate paganism within the empire), but not without a great deal of recapitulation with a variety of emphases and symbolism instead of being continuous chronological sequence. It is moderately preterist in that it accepts the events set forth in Chapter 19 as having taken place in time now past, though having results symbolized as lasting another "thousand years" which are not yet expired. It is also partially futuristic in that it views the events recorded after Chapter 20:7 as all being future. It is even mildly spiritualist in that it recognizes the book as setting forth great principles of divine government applicable at all times, and that its symbolism to have been intended to set forth a series of specific historical events, contrary the radical spiritualistic concepts.

As to the millennium, the concept of these notes is neither premillennial nor amillennial. It is postmillennial in that it views the millennium as only a segment of the Christian era occurring prior to the second personal coming of Christ, but it does so without concurring with all the expectations and supposed

historical context associated with traditional postmillennialism. So we might say that it is a modified postmillennial view.

4. Gog and Magog (v.8): On page 4 After History and Eternity (Notes on Revelation 20 - 22), "Gog and Magog" are described as Gog and the and of Gog in keeping with Ezekiel 38:2, which speaks of "Gog, of the land of Magog." But some think that in Revelation "Gog" has come to be not a person but a land, and that "Gog and Magog" represent all the nations of the earth - which from the Revelation text alone would seem to be true - and which may very well be the case. It is true from a practical standpoint, whether from a philological point of view or not.

