

Note: It will be helpful to have your bible open to the book of Revelation for ready reference in connection with some of the commentary given.

Many avoid the study of Revelation because they think it too hard. That is a mistake. Revelation is the only book in the Bible that promises a blessing to those who will read it, pay attention to what they are reading and be guided by the truth it reveals (from the Greek).

Revelation 1:3 "Blessed is he that readeth, and they that hear the words of this prophecy, and keep those things which are written therein: for the time is at hand."

Sadly, there are many pastors today who ignore that promise and declare that the teaching of prophecy is a waste of time. Anyone who spends much time in the word of God will quickly learn that a great deal of scripture is devoted to prophecy. Many of the prophecies of scripture have already been fulfilled, and testify to the veracity of those yet awaiting fulfillment. God declares His reason for sharing prophetic events through the words of Isaiah.

Isaiah 48:3-7 "I have declared the former things from the beginning; and they went forth out of my mouth, and I shewed them; I did them suddenly, and they came to pass. Because I knew that thou art obstinate, and thy neck is an iron sinew, and thy brow brass; I have even from the beginning declared it to thee; before it came to pass I shewed it thee: lest thou shouldest say, Mine idol hath done them, and my graven image, and my molten image, hath commanded them. Thou hast heard, see all this; and will not ye declare it? I have shewed thee new things from this time, even hidden things, and thou didst not know them. They are created now, and not from the beginning; even before the day when thou heardest them not; lest thou shouldest say, Behold, I knew them."

In other words, prophecy is one of the primary proofs of the authority and power of God that affirms the truth of His word. According to the Apostle Paul, the witness of creation alone leaves one without excuse when he/she stands before Almighty God in judgment.

Romans 1:18-21 "For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who hold the truth in unrighteousness; Because that which may be known of God is manifest in them; for God hath shewed it unto them. For the invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead; so that they are without excuse: Because that, when they knew God, they glorified him not as God, neither were thankful; but became vain in their imaginations, and their foolish heart was darkened."

The words of the Psalmist echo the witness of creation.

Psalms 19:1-3 "The heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament sheweth his handywork. Day unto day uttereth speech, and night unto night sheweth knowledge. There is no speech nor language, where their voice is not heard."

God is so gracious and merciful and so desires to save us that He goes the extra mile so to speak by testifying of Himself through the declaration and fulfillment of prophecy.

Jesus expected the religious leaders of His day to recognize Him in light of the prophecies from the Old Testament scripture. He obviously thought that the spiritual leaders of the people should have recognized “the signs of the times” pertaining to the coming of the Messiah.

*Matthew 16:1–4 “The Pharisees also with the Sadducees came, and tempting desired him that he would shew them a sign from heaven. He answered and said unto them, When it is evening, ye say, It will be fair weather: for the sky is red. And in the morning, It will be foul weather to day: for the sky is red and lowring. O ye hypocrites, ye can discern the face of the sky; **but can ye not discern the signs of the times?** A wicked and adulterous generation seeketh after a sign; and there shall no sign be given unto it, but the sign of the prophet Jonas. And he left them, and departed.”*

In spite of the doom and gloom and the wickedness of man that pervades the headlines of the news today, I am excitedly anticipating the future based on my study of the prophetic scripture. As a born again child of God, I know that my future is one of happiness and blessing far beyond what I could ever imagine.

1 Corinthians 2:9 “But as it is written, Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him.”

I pray that you too will accept God’s gift of salvation and so be able to look forward to the future with that same anticipation. I also pray that as we take another look at this book of judgment and hope you will read the book of Revelation for yourself. I will share as honestly and simply as I can my understanding of its truth, but you are ultimately held accountable to consider my thoughts in the light of scripture. Paul worded it this way in his commendation of the Bereans.

*Acts 17:10–11 “And the brethren immediately sent away Paul and Silas by night unto Berea: who coming thither went into the synagogue of the Jews. These were more noble than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness of mind, **and searched the scriptures daily, whether those things were so.**”*

Note that the Bereans were eager to hear the teaching of God’s word, but they didn’t blindly accept the teaching as truth just because it came from the mouth of the great Apostle Paul. They compared what was taught to the words of scripture.

The whole purpose of the book of Revelation is to reveal or make known to us the person of Jesus Christ our Savior and King, and the Apostle John was chosen to record that message. This message was addressed with specific words of rebuke and encouragement to seven specific churches, but all of the churches were meant to read each of the seven letters as well as the rest of the Revelation given to John.

*Revelation 1:11 "Saying, I am Alpha and Omega, the first and the last: and, **What thou seest, write in a book, and send it unto the seven churches which are in Asia; unto Ephesus, and unto Smyrna, and unto Pergamos, and unto Thyatira, and unto Sardis, and unto Philadelphia, and unto Laodicea."***

Each letter ends with the following phrase: *"He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches."* (note the plural)

Note that the greeting to the churches is described as being from the Father, the Holy Spirit and the Son, Jesus Christ.

Revelation 1:4–5 "John to the seven churches which are in Asia: Grace be unto you, and peace, from him which is, and which was, and which is to come; and from the seven Spirits which are before his throne; And from Jesus Christ, who is the faithful witness, and the first begotten of the dead, and the prince of the kings of the earth."

I think it is important to note that from the very beginning we are told that one day we can expect the visible return of Jesus as the King of kings.

Revelation 1:7 "Behold, he cometh with clouds; and every eye shall see him, and they also which pierced him: and all kindreds of the earth shall wail because of him."

It is also significant to note that three times in the first eight verses reference is made to the eternal nature of God.

*Revelation 1:4 "John to the seven churches which are in Asia: Grace be unto you, and peace, **from him which is, and which was, and which is to come...."***

*Revelation 1:8 "I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the ending, saith the Lord, **which is, and which was, and which is to come, the Almighty."***

At the time he received this message from God John was serving time as a prisoner on the Isle of Patmos because of his witness of the gospel. One day he heard a voice speaking with him and turned to see a vision of one like the Son of man in the midst of seven golden candlesticks. His clothing bespoke a priest and His physical features bespoke holiness, purity, authority, power and judgment.

Revelation 1:13–15 "And in the midst of the seven candlesticks one like unto the Son of man, clothed with a garment down to the foot, and girt about the paps with a golden girdle. His head and his hairs were white like wool, as white as snow; and his eyes were as a flame of fire; And his feet like unto fine brass, as if they burned in a furnace; and his voice as the sound of many waters."

He was also holding seven stars in His right hand. Out of His mouth John saw a two-edged sword, and His countenance depicted strength as strong as the sun's.

John fainted with fright at the feet of the Man. The Man picked John up and identified Himself as follows: *"Fear not; I am the first and the last: I am he that*

liveth, and was dead; and, behold, I am alive for evermore, Amen; and have the keys of hell and of death." In other words, He was identifying Himself as the Messiah, Jesus Christ the Son of God.

Jesus then told John to write about the things he had seen, the things which are (the letters to the churches), and the things which shall be. This is the basic outline of the book of Revelation. Keep in mind that the last portion of the outline beginning in chapter 4 includes foundational or parenthetical information that facilitate understanding of the unfolding of future events.

Jesus then explains to John that the stars in His hand represent the angels or pastors (from the Greek) of the seven churches, and the seven candlesticks represent the churches. Candlesticks are sources of light, and scripture declares that believers are to be lights in the world that glorify God the Father.

Matthew 5:14–16 "Ye are the light of the world....Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven."

Chapters 2-3 consist of the letters to the seven churches. Each letter begins with a statement that it is from Jesus using a description of Him befitting the needs of that church. Each letter also begins with a declaration that the Lord knows what's going on in the church and includes a word of commendation along with a warning to rectify the things that are wrong. There are a couple of exceptions—neither Smyrna or Philadelphia is rebuked, and Laodicea receives no word of commendation. Each letter closes with a promise to the overcomers, the true believers in the church, and an admonition to pay attention to everything contained in each of the seven letters. This tells me that each and every church could benefit from the truths presented in each and every letter. Just as each type of church existed in John's day, I believe each type of church has existed throughout the subsequent years. These letters contain words of wisdom for every church that exists today.

The first letter is addressed to the church at Ephesus. Jesus identifies Himself to this church as the one providing strength to the church through His presence since they seem to have forgotten that He is present with them. From this letter we learn that we need to be constantly on guard against regarding "service" as more important than "fellowship" with the Lord. I believe that is what is meant by the phrase "leaving thy first love." It is a matter of choice. If we choose to invest time in fellowship with our Lord in prayer, worship and meditation on His word, our service will come naturally and will be more joyful and fruitful. God is not pleased when we serve Him in name only; He wants us to serve Him in love. In fact, the church at Ephesus risks losing its usefulness as a light in this world to the glory of God if its people don't repent and begin serving Him in love once again.

We also learn that the Lord wants us to exercise discernment in judging what is right and wrong. We are to approve the things He approves and hate the things He hates. It is important to note that God hates the deeds of the sinner—not the sinner. The promise to the overcomers in this church (and all other churches)

that needs to return to serving God in love as they did in the beginning is one of eternal life in the presence of God, the One they love.

The second letter is addressed to the church at Smyrna from the Author of life, the risen Savior. In this letter we are encouraged to look at things from God's perspective. Those we consider to be poor from an earthly perspective, such as the church at Smyrna, may actually be rich from a heavenly perspective. It's sad but true that often the persecution of true believers comes from others who claim to be part of the church but are actually impostors from the ranks of the enemy. We need to be mindful that Satan is the "god of this world" and exerts great power and authority. His influence will continue to strengthen on the world stage until Jesus comes to take His throne.

Until the Lord chooses to come and take us home, believers are subject to persecution and imprisonment from those who serve Satan in rejection of Jesus. We are not to fear, however, because we will emerge victorious in Jesus when He comes to take His throne. I think that the persecution of believers by Satan goes beyond physical abuse and/or incarceration. The person of faith, such as Lot, suffers when confronted with all the wickedness with which the enemy surrounds or imprisons us.

2 Peter 2:7-8 "And delivered just Lot, vexed with the filthy conversation of the wicked: (For that righteous man dwelling among them, in seeing and hearing, vexed his righteous soul from day to day with their unlawful deeds;)"

Interestingly enough, persecution and suffering usually result in spiritual growth in the life of true believers because it is when our need is greatest that we turn to God the most. I think it is also important to note that the time of persecution is limited; God is ever in control. The overcomers in this letter are identified as those willing to die for their faith; the promised reward for such faith is eternal life. In death the child of God only gains; he/she moves on to a far better life.

The third letter is directed to the church at Pergamos from He that possesses a sword that cuts in every direction. Pergamos is identified as the place of Satan's seat, his greatest earthly stronghold, where the great altar of Zeus was located. Alexander Hislop states in his book, *Two Babylons*, that Pergamos had inherited the religious mantle of ancient Babylon, the former headquarters of Satan's religious system. Christians in this church had survived despite great persecution; it had resulted in the death of Antipas, evidently a well-known man of faith. This letter reminds us that believers are sometimes called upon to suffer a martyr's death. Thankfully, we have God's promise that such is only allowed for good in accordance with His purpose.

Romans 8:28 "And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose."

We are warned not to compromise with the world and become a stumbling block to others. Also, we are warned to exercise discernment regarding false teaching.

Discernment is only possible when one is familiar with the scripture, which is the only acceptable standard upon which correct discernment can be made.

Arthur Pink made an interesting point: "...in Ephesus it was the deeds of the Nicolaitanes that were mentioned, here it is the 'doctrine of the Nicolaitanes' – false practices had now become articles of faith. Observe that at first the church 'hated' their deeds, here their evil beliefs were tolerated and cherished."

This appears to be a church that is trying to compromise with the world and not offend anyone. That seems to be an apt description of many churches today. They are afraid to speak out strongly on foundational truths in the Word that identify sin. They are not diligent in guarding against the intrusion of those in the body who would pervert the Word of God. This church desperately needs to make use of God's sword, His word, in the matter of discernment.

Ephesians 6:17 "And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God...."

Hebrews 4:12 "For the word of God is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any twoedged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart."

If they do not, the Lord will step in with His sword of judgment. Overcomers are promised hidden manna to eat and the gift of a white stone engraved with a new name that will be known only to him. Manna represents bread from heaven, God's provision and sustenance—a necessity for those suffering persecution. In that day the white stone represented a verdict of acquittal or ticket of admission. I think the white stone with a new name reflects the right to admission to heaven because one has been forgiven of his/her sin through faith in the sacrifice and resurrection of Jesus. The name on the stone I think represents the name the Lord gives us when we are born again that reflects our special relationship to Him.

The fourth letter is addressed to the church at Thyatira from Jesus the Judge. By paying attention to the letter to Thyatira we are again warned that works are not proof of spiritual health. This church is very active in doing good works while supporting and having fellowship with a false teacher.

Again we are warned about exercising discernment in identifying false teachers. We need to recognize that many false teachers begin their ministries by joining a church and gaining a position of leadership or influence. They then begin mixing in the leaven of their lies with the truth. They promote compromise of the truth of God's word in order to bring in the masses. The most dangerous enemies to the true church today have emerged from within its ranks. These people seem to ignore the fact that the Lord sees what is in our hearts and minds. They seem to think that if they can fool the people with their hypocrisy and lies, they can fool God. How tragic it will be for them in the day of judgment!

The Lord clearly declares in this letter that He will never expect more from us than we are able to give Him. The time may come when it will be all we can do to hold fast to our faith. The Lord's promise to overcomers who are doing all they can to hold on to their faith is that they will one day enjoy a position of great strength and influence among the nations. We will reign with Jesus when He rules with complete authority and power from the throne of David during the millennium.

Luke 1:31–32 “And, behold, thou shalt conceive in thy womb, and bring forth a son, and shalt call his name JESUS. He shall be great, and shall be called the Son of the Highest: and the Lord God shall give unto him the throne of his father David....”

Revelation 20:6 “Blessed and holy is he that hath part in the first resurrection: on such the second death hath no power, but they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with him a thousand years.”

The next letter is to the church at Sardis from the living God that empowers His messengers. In this letter the Lord emphasizes the truth that works without faith are dead. It is true that faith without works is dead; but it is also true that works are meaningless unless mixed with faith.

James 2:26 “For as the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without works is dead also.”

Romans 8:1, 8–9 “There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit....So then they that are in the flesh cannot please God. But ye are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you. Now if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his.”

Works without faith may provide some personal satisfaction to our sense of self-pride, but they have no eternal benefit. They may provide some temporary relief to others through the provision of physical needs, but they do nothing to provide for their spiritual needs or their eternal future if not done in conjunction with sharing the gospel and the love of Jesus. In the end what others think about us is not what is important; it's what God knows about us that impacts our eternity.

We also learned that it is possible to find true believers in a dead church. Again, this emphasizes that God is concerned about individuals. A warning is given to this congregation composed primarily of unbelievers to repent and place their faith in the truth of scripture so that the Lord's day of judgment will not catch them by surprise. This reminds me of the words of Paul.

*1 Thessalonians 5:2–4 “For yourselves know perfectly that the day of the Lord so cometh as a thief in the night. For when they shall say, Peace and safety; then sudden destruction cometh upon them, as travail upon a woman with child; and they shall not escape. **But ye, brethren, are not in darkness, that that day should overtake you as a thief.”***

No one will be judged unworthy based on with whom they fellowship here on earth. One is counted worthy who has not defiled his garments because he is

washed in the blood of Jesus Christ. Overcomers that have a true testimony of faith in spite of attending a dead church will walk with Jesus in white because they have been washed clean in the blood of the Lamb. Their names will be listed in the Book of Life, and Jesus will acknowledge them as His before the Father and His angels.

The letter to Philadelphia declares it to be a message from the Lord of all power and authority. Jesus acknowledges this church to be weak in strength but declares that it is strong in faith. It tells us that though believers may suffer trials and/or persecutions in this lifetime while many of Satan's followers seem to prosper in the eyes of the world, the time will come that the Lord will place His children in a position of honor before them. They will know that despite what they may have thought based upon circumstances while here on this earth, we are loved by our Father in heaven. We also learn that those who have proven their faith will be kept from the time of adversity that God has appointed on His prophetic calendar to carry out His vengeance upon His enemies in the world—earth dwellers. We pilgrims of the faith are just sojourners here; we are heaven dwellers. This letter acknowledges that believers will suffer, but their patient endurance in the faith will be rewarded. As noted previously, the suffering Christian can cling to the promise of Romans 8:28.

There are many false teachers today who teach that God wants everyone to be wealthy, healthy and strong. Throughout scripture we learn that great men and women of faith often face great trials and suffering. It is a very powerful witness to the lost world around us when our actions show tenacity of faith and exhibit peace of spirit due to the grace and faithfulness of Almighty God through the ministry of His Holy Spirit during such times.

The overcomer in this weak church is promised a position of strength for eternity and will proudly be identified as belonging to God when He marks us with His name, the name of the New Jerusalem and the new name of Jesus our King.

The last letter is addressed to the church at Laodicea from the one true God of Creation. God pictures this church as making Him sick to His stomach. The message of this letter is primarily a warning against hypocrisy. There are many churches like this church that are churches in name only. This church is a very wealthy church materially speaking, but they are spiritual paupers. I liken this church to the wealthy churches today that provide social functions for the community and humanitarian aid for those in need, but they are really serving self and not God in the process. I am reminded of Jesus words as recorded by Matthew.

Matthew 7:21–23 “Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven. Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity.”

It would seem that those in this church see themselves as spiritually healthy. The Lord reminds them that He rebukes and chastens those He loves. If you are not feeling His rebuke and chastening in your life, it's a danger sign.

It truly is amazing that most people seem to prefer investing time in their own works rather than investing time in fellowship with and worship of God and resting in the work of His Son. Our works should be an outworking of our fellowship with and worship of the Lord. It is through fellowship and worship that we are attuned to the leading of the Spirit to serve others according to God's will and not our own. That leading assures us God's empowerment and provision through His Holy Spirit and will always glorify the Savior—not the servant.

Overcomers are promised the privilege of sharing the throne of Jesus as He rules for eternity over His creation.

We now come to chapter 4 of the Revelation. I believe chapters four and five are setting the stage for events that are in the prophetic future (similar to chapter 12).

The chapter begins with the words "after this." After what? After writing the letters to the seven churches. John is commanded to come up and see what is going to happen "hereafter." The voice giving the command is compared to a trumpet, and since Paul tells us in Thessalonians that we will be taken home to be with Jesus at the sound of the "trump of God..."

1 Thessalonians 4:16–17 "For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first: Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord."

...many people assume this means that John is a picture of the rapture of the church at this point. I just don't think that understanding is a good fit in the prophetic puzzle as you consider the context of the scripture surrounding it. It makes more sense within the context to represent a change in perspective—from earthly to heavenly.

When John enters heaven, he sees God the Father on the throne. Around the throne are 24 elders sitting on 24 "thronos"—in the Greek defined as "a stately seat ("throne")—that are wearing crowns of gold. Because scripture says that we will rule with Christ and that we can earn crowns of reward, many assume that this has to picture the body of believers. The Greek for "crowns" is the word "stephanos," and is defined as "a chaplet (as a badge of royalty, a prize in the public games **or a symbol of honor generally**)." Again, I think they are trying to force a puzzle piece to fit that doesn't.

I am reminded that both Moses and David were given blueprints as to the building of the tabernacle and temple respectively.

1 Chronicles 28:11–13 *“Then David gave to Solomon his son the pattern of the porch, and of the houses thereof, and of the treasuries thereof, and of the upper chambers thereof, and of the inner parlours thereof, and of the place of the mercy seat, And the pattern of all that he had by the spirit, of the courts of the house of the LORD, and of all the chambers round about, of the treasuries of the house of God, and of the treasuries of the dedicated things: **Also for the courses of the priests and the Levites**, and for all the work of the service of the house of the LORD, and for all the vessels of service in the house of the LORD.”*

1 Chronicles 24:1–4 *“Now these are the divisions of the sons of Aaron. The sons of Aaron; Nadab, and Abihu, Eleazar, and Ithamar. But Nadab and Abihu died before their father, and had no children: therefore Eleazar and Ithamar executed the priest’s office. And David distributed them, both Zadok of the sons of Eleazar, and Ahimelech of the sons of Ithamar, according to their offices in their service. And there were more chief men found of the sons of Eleazar than of the sons of Ithamar; and thus were they divided. **Among the sons of Eleazar there were sixteen chief men of the house of their fathers, and eight among the sons of Ithamar** according to the house of their fathers.”* (16 + 8 = 24 ---- coincidence? I think not.)

I am also reminded that Daniel records a vision of thrones of authority being positioned in judgment.

Daniel 7:9–10 *“I beheld till the thrones were cast down, and the Ancient of days did sit, whose garment was white as snow, and the hair of his head like the pure wool: his throne was like the fiery flame, and his wheels as burning fire. A fiery stream issued and came forth from before him: thousand thousands ministered unto him, and ten thousand times ten thousand stood before him: the judgment was set, and the books were opened.”*

Earlier in Daniel we are told of judgment that is declared against Nebuchadnezzar by decree of the “watchers...the holy ones.”

Daniel 4:13–17 *“I saw in the visions of my head upon my bed, and, behold, a watcher and an holy one came down from heaven; He cried aloud, and said thus, Hew down the tree, and cut off his branches, shake off his leaves, and scatter his fruit: let the beasts get away from under it, and the fowls from his branches: Nevertheless leave the stump of his roots in the earth, even with a band of iron and brass, in the tender grass of the field; and let it be wet with the dew of heaven, and let his portion be with the beasts in the grass of the earth: Let his heart be changed from man’s, and let a beast’s heart be given unto him; and let seven times pass over him. **This matter is by the decree of the watchers, and the demand by the word of the holy ones:** to the intent that the living may know that the most High ruleth in the kingdom of men, and giveth it to whomsoever he will, and setteth up over it the basest of men.”*

It makes sense to me that just as with government on earth, there is a hierarchy among the angels in heaven. Evidently, some have been chosen to serve as part of God’s heavenly supreme court.

In light of this scriptural foundation from the Old Testament, I would also like to point out some other facts. Other beings identified by John at this time include

“seven lamps of fire burning before the throne, which are the seven Spirits of God” and four beasts that seem to mirror the cherubim described in Ezekiel 10. As we continuing reading in chapter 5, we learn that there are so many angels around the throne that John can only describe it as “ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousands of thousands.” In context, the picture is one of a multitude of the heavenly hosts.

Another important observation—Where is Jesus? We are told in scripture that once He returned to heaven, He was seated at the right hand of the Father where He is ever interceding for us.

Romans 8:33–34 “Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God’s elect? It is God that justifieth. Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us.”

Hebrews 1:1–3 “God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets, Hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son, whom he hath appointed heir of all things, by whom also he made the worlds; Who being the brightness of his glory, and the express image of his person, and upholding all things by the word of his power, when he had by himself purged our sins, sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high....”

Hebrews 7:22&25 “By so much was Jesus made a surety of a better testament....Wherefore he is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them.”

Hebrews 8:1 “Now of the things which we have spoken this is the sum: We have such an high priest, who is set on the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in the heavens....”

Another pertinent observation—The 24 elders are already in place when John arrives in heaven, and he is not one of them. This would discredit the teaching of some that these 24 elders include the twelve apostles.

As chapter five opens, we see God the Father seated on His throne and holding a scroll with writing on both sides and sealed with seven seals. Next, John sees a strong angel calling out for He who is worthy to step forward and loose the seals. Point is made that no one was immediately found in earth or heaven that qualified. John began to weep openly because he understood the consequences of that fact; he knew that the eternal future of believers and the fulfillment of God’s covenants with Abraham and David were at stake. One of the elders then speaks up and tells John not to weep because “*the Lion of the tribe of Juda, the Root of David, hath prevailed to open the book, and to loose the seven seals thereof.*”

When John looks up, he sees standing in the midst of the thrones and elders “a Lamb as it had been slain,” and He is identified as possessing the seven Spirits of God. This is obviously the risen Lord returning to heaven victorious over the grave and worthy to take the scroll and loose the seals. John is allowed to witness the Lord’s glorious return to heaven as the risen Savior and King of kings before He takes His seat at the right hand of the Father to await the time

designated to establish His earthly kingdom as determined before the foundation of the earth according to God's plan.

I believe as we continue into the next few chapters, it will become clear that Jesus, the Son of man, God in flesh, is reclaiming man's authority over planet earth and that the scroll represents His right to do so.

Once Jesus takes the scroll, the inhabitants of heaven begin praising God. The 24 elders sing a new song, the words of which are in dispute according to the translation you choose to accept. I base all of my studies on the King James translation of the scripture; but when I look at the original Hebrew or Greek, I sometimes think that the translators could have chosen a better word considering the context. Considering the scriptural foundation established previously and the most logical reading of the context, I believe the NIV (supported by several other translations) gives a better translation in this instance.

Revelation 5:9–10 “And they sang a new song: “You are worthy to take the scroll and to open its seals, because you were slain, and with your blood you purchased men for God from every tribe and language and people and nation. You have made them to be a kingdom and priests to serve our God, and they will reign on the earth.”

The expanded Greek translation of Kenneth Wuest, noted New Testament Greek scholar from Moody Bible Institute, also supported the NIV with the following translation: “you are worthy...you redeemed to God through your blood [men] out of every tribe and language...and constituted them to our God...and they shall reign as kings on the earth.”

The chapter closes with all of the angels around the throne breaking out in praise and worship of the Lamb. It seems clear to me that this is a collective group of angelic beings of all ranks; there seems to be no justification for adding humanity to the mix. That will change in chapter 7.

Chapter 6 begins with Jesus opening the sealed scroll. The opening of each of the first four seals is followed with one of the four beasts telling John to “come and see” what happens on earth as a result of the opening of each seal. I will say up front that my thoughts on this section have continued to evolve over the last several years. I also want to clarify that I believe in the pre-tribulation rapture of the church; I'm just not sure I agree with many that the tribulation starts with the opening of the seals.

Note: I define the tribulation as the last seven years on earth before Jesus returns as King of kings to establish His kingdom. It is also known as the 70th week of Daniel.

Daniel 9:24–26 “Seventy weeks are determined upon thy people and upon thy holy city, to finish the transgression, and to make an end of sins, and to make reconciliation for iniquity, and to bring in everlasting righteousness, and to seal up the vision and prophecy, and to anoint the most Holy. Know therefore and understand, that from the going forth of the commandment to restore and to build Jerusalem unto

the Messiah the Prince shall be seven weeks, and threescore and two weeks: the street shall be built again, and the wall, even in troublous times. And after threescore and two weeks shall Messiah be cut off, but not for himself: and the people of the prince that shall come shall destroy the city and the sanctuary; and the end thereof shall be with a flood, and unto the end of the war desolations are determined."

Note that the 70 weeks are determined upon "thy people" and "thy holy city." This prophecy was given to Daniel, an Israelite who was taken captive to Babylon from Jerusalem. Also important to note is that after 69 weeks Messiah was to be cut off—crucified—and the city of Jerusalem destroyed by the people of the coming prince (i.e., the Antichrist). History proves that to be a reference to the destruction of Jerusalem by the Romans in 70 AD.

As the first four seals are opened, John sees horsemen being sent out to exact judgment upon the earth; therefore, many believe that this begins the tribulation, the 70th week of Daniel.

It is important to be aware that there is also a day of God's wrath, the day of the Lord, that is prophesied throughout scripture. It is a time in which God will exact vengeance against His enemies and all that is wicked in this world. It is also important to recognize that God has exacted judgment against the nations of the world throughout history as recorded in scripture. This "day of the Lord" judgment that I am referencing will happen in conjunction with the events of the tribulation period just before Jesus returns as King.

Isaiah 2:10–12 & 17 "Enter into the rock, and hide thee in the dust, for fear of the LORD, and for the glory of his majesty. The lofty looks of man shall be humbled, and the haughtiness of men shall be bowed down, and the LORD alone shall be exalted in that day. For the day of the LORD of hosts shall be upon every one that is proud and lofty, and upon every one that is lifted up; and he shall be brought low... And the loftiness of man shall be bowed down, and the haughtiness of men shall be made low: and the LORD alone shall be exalted in that day."

Isaiah 13:6&11 "Howl ye; for the day of the LORD is at hand; it shall come as a destruction from the Almighty....And I will punish the world for their evil, and the wicked for their iniquity; and I will cause the arrogancy of the proud to cease, and will lay low the haughtiness of the terrible."

Nahum 1:2 "God is jealous, and the LORD revengeth; the LORD revengeth, and is furious; the LORD will take vengeance on his adversaries, and he reserveth wrath for his enemies."

Malachi 4:5–6 "Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the LORD...."

Acts 2:19–20 "And I will shew wonders in heaven above, and signs in the earth beneath; blood, and fire, and vapour of smoke: The sun shall be turned into darkness, and the moon into blood, before that great and notable day of the Lord come...."

1 Thessalonians 5:1–3 “But of the times and the seasons, brethren, ye have no need that I write unto you. For yourselves know perfectly that the day of the Lord so cometh as a thief in the night. For when they shall say, Peace and safety; then sudden destruction cometh upon them, as travail upon a woman with child; and they shall not escape.”

Most people lump together the tribulation period and this final day of the Lord, but it is clear to me that they are two separate events directed toward different people groups with different purposes. The “tribulation” is directed toward the people of Israel and the city of Jerusalem as a refining fire to produce a purified remnant of believers that accept Jesus as the Messiah and through whom God will fulfill His covenants with Abraham, Isaac, Jacob and David. The “day of the Lord” is directed in wrath, vengeance and destruction against the wicked world and His enemies. Though I believe these two periods of time occur basically in conjunction with one another; I do not believe that God’s wrath necessarily begins at the same point in time as the 70th week.

I am including the scripture from Matthew 24:1-10 to help you better be able to discern the validity of my commentary on this section.

Matthew 24:1–10 “And Jesus went out, and departed from the temple: and his disciples came to him for to shew him the buildings of the temple. And Jesus said unto them, See ye not all these things? verily I say unto you, There shall not be left here one stone upon another, that shall not be thrown down. And as he sat upon the mount of Olives, the disciples came unto him privately, saying, Tell us, when shall these things be? and what shall be the sign of thy coming, and of the end of the world? And Jesus answered and said unto them, Take heed that no man deceive you. For many shall come in my name, saying, I am Christ; and shall deceive many. And ye shall hear of wars and rumours of wars: see that ye be not troubled: for all these things must come to pass, but the end is not yet. For nation shall rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom: and there shall be famines, and pestilences, and earthquakes, in divers places. All these are the beginning of sorrows. Then shall they deliver you up to be afflicted, and shall kill you: and ye shall be hated of all nations for my name’s sake. And then shall many be offended, and shall betray one another, and shall hate one another.”

I think you can see that the information presented there seems to be directly related to the opening of the first five seals. The signs that correlate to the first four seals are described in Matthew as “the beginning of sorrows,” a term that references the pains of childbirth; in other words, they will increase in frequency and intensity as the time for Jesus to return draws near.

As Jesus begins to open the seals, He is preparing the way for the rule of the Antichrist during the seven years of tribulation identified previously. There are some people that think the rider on the white horse is Jesus—I don’t see how; He is the one opening the seals. These riders and horses all seem to be related; they all depict judgment.

When Jesus opens the first seal, a rider emerges on a white horse carrying a bow and wearing a crown that had been given to him. His purpose is to go forth and conquer the world. Note that he is carrying a bow; research indicates that this

word references the arc or crescent shape of the weapon he carries. The scientific names of some organisms were derived from its Greek root "toxon" because of their shape, e.g. toxoplasma. The word is singular and would seem to indicate a bow with no reference to arrows; in other words, he will conquer without using physical force.

In Matthew 24 Jesus first warns His disciples that many will come claiming to be "Christ" and will deceive many. It is posited by many that this rider represents the final antichrist that will emerge as the world dictator of the final days before Jesus returns as King. That person will initially establish himself as a world leader who is able to broker a seven-year peace treaty with Israel.

I think the rider on the white horse represents Satan going forth to exert his power and influence on the world eventually becoming manifest in the person of the being we call Antichrist. He will first appear as a man of peace, an angel of light.

2 Corinthians 11:14–15 "And no marvel; for Satan himself is transformed into an angel of light. Therefore it is no great thing if his ministers also be transformed as the ministers of righteousness; whose end shall be according to their works."

Significant to note is that the crown represents authority, but it has been given to him—not earned. Upon creation God gave man dominion over the earth.

Genesis 1:26 "And God said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness: and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth."

Man basically handed the control of this world over to Satan when he chose to sin by believing Satan rather than trusting God. Satan has been busy ever since seeking control of men.

*1 Peter 5:8 "Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary **the devil**, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour:"*

*2 Corinthians 4:3–4 "But if our gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost: In **whom the god of this world** hath blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them."*

Paul makes it clear that Jesus called him to witness to the Gentiles to deliver them from the power of Satan unto God. His call as stated in Acts 26:18 was to "open their eyes, and to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins, and inheritance among them which are sanctified by faith that is in me."

It has ever been Satan's desire to attain the position of God...

Isaiah 14:12–14 "How art thou fallen from heaven, O Lucifer, son of the morning! how art thou cut down to the ground, which didst weaken the nations! For thou hast said in

*thine heart, I will ascend into heaven, I will exalt my throne above the stars of God: I will sit also upon the mount of the congregation, in the sides of the north: I will ascend above the heights of the clouds; **I will be like the most High.**"*

... and he will attempt to establish his throne as God in the temple in Jerusalem during the tribulation.

*2 Thessalonians 2:3–4 "Let no man deceive you by any means: for that day shall not come, except there come a falling away first, and that man of sin be revealed, the son of perdition; Who opposeth and exalteth himself above all that is called God, or that is worshipped; **so that he as God sitteth in the temple of God, shewing himself that he is God.**"*

Satan will be greatly assisted in accomplishing his objective by producing "lying wonders," apparent miracles that many will assume has to be from God. They will be greatly deceived.

*2 Thessalonians 2:8–10 "And then shall that Wicked be revealed, whom the Lord shall consume with the spirit of his mouth, and shall destroy with the brightness of his coming: **Even him, whose coming is after the working of Satan with all power and signs and lying wonders,** And with all deceivableness of unrighteousness in them that perish; because they received not the love of the truth, that they might be saved."*

When Jesus opens the second seal, John sees a rider emerge on a red horse carrying a sword. Notice that, just as with the first rider, the power of this rider is given to him. By whom? The One who possesses the authority to open the seals—Jesus. The purpose of the rider is to eliminate any kind of peace on earth and encourage people to kill one another.

This rider falls right in line with the next "sign" that Jesus identified to His disciples as part of the birth pains that would precede "the end." He is referencing the end of the world as we now know it under the rule of Satan and the establishment of a true new world order when Jesus returns as King of kings.

Matthew 24:3 "And as he sat upon the mount of Olives, the disciples came unto him privately, saying, Tell us, when shall these things be? and what shall be the sign of thy coming, and of the end of the world?"

Matthew 24:6-7 "And ye shall hear of wars and rumours of wars: see that ye be not troubled: for all these things must come to pass, but the end is not yet. For nation shall rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom...."

I think a look at history proves that beginning in the twentieth century, war and rumors of war on a worldwide scale have increased dramatically both in number and intensity.

At the opening of the third seal, there emerges a rider on a black horse carrying a pair of balances in his hand that are directly related to the world economy. The picture painted is one of famine for many although there will still be those who

will enjoy life with plenty and luxury. There has always been a distinction in social levels among the peoples of the world; however, I think that since the beginning of the 21st century, a marked change has occurred in the world financial picture. The economics of the nations of the world are interdependent on one another more than ever before, and the destruction of the middle class continues at an exponential rate.

Again, this rider and the next directly connect to the final signs identified as birth pains by Jesus in Matthew.

Matthew 24:7-8 "... and there shall be famines, and pestilences, and earthquakes, in divers places. All these are the beginning of sorrows."

The opening of the fourth seal presents a rider on a pale horse identified as "Death," and he is followed by a rider named "Hell." Again they are "given" power to kill over 25% of those on planet earth with sword, hunger, death and wild animals. It just occurred to me that this 25% is in reference to those that have rejected Jesus as Savior—"Death" takes the body and "Hell" takes the soul. We know that when believers die they are absent from the body and present with the Lord.

2 Corinthians 5:6-8 "Therefore we are always confident, knowing that, whilst we are at home in the body, we are absent from the Lord: (For we walk by faith, not by sight:) We are confident, I say, and willing rather to be absent from the body, and to be present with the Lord."

At the opening of the fifth seal we see martyred souls under the altar asking God when He will avenge their deaths. Again, this fits right in with the narrative from Matthew.

Matthew 24:9-10 "Then shall they deliver you up to be afflicted, and shall kill you: and ye shall be hated of all nations for my name's sake. And then shall many be offended, and shall betray one another, and shall hate one another."

Though Jesus was talking to His Jewish disciples (and Matthew is writing to the Jews), He is also talking to those that formed the foundational pillars of the church. Though there can be specific address to the Jewish people as a whole in the wording in Matthew, it also addresses the death of true Christian martyrs throughout history whatever their ethnicity.

It is important to note that these martyrs are told to wait "a little season" until their number is complete. I believe this references the death of the final Christian martyr of the church age. The implication—It is then that God will begin to exact His vengeance.

I would also like to remind you that the perspective of time in heaven is quite different from the perspective of time on earth.

Psalms 90:4 "For a thousand years in thy sight are but as yesterday when it is past, and as a watch in the night."

2 Peter 3:8 "But, beloved, be not ignorant of this one thing, that one day is with the Lord as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day."

It is in light of that truth that I believe these seals are already open. As to exactly when each of the first four seals were opened, I do not know. The fifth seal is outside the scope of those described as birth pains, and I believe represents all the martyrs of the church age.

We now come to the opening of the sixth seal. The opening of this seal results in several specific events happening at a specific time in conjunction with one another.

John's terminology does allow for making comparisons to something when he uses the term "as." He is saying that this is what he sees—an actual earthquake, a changing of color of the sun and moon, an actual falling of the stars from heaven to earth (then he gives a word picture of what their falling looks like). It's a little harder to understand what he is saying regarding the heavens being rolled together; he is clearly trying to paint a word picture of what he is seeing in this instance. Then, he goes right back to actual happenings—mountains and islands being moved out of position and men hiding in caves.

These events appear to have worldwide impact. The earthquake is so powerful that it causes the mountains and islands of the earth to change positions. The earthquake in Indonesia in December 2004 and the earthquake in Japan in March 2011 could be foreshadowings of this event. Following are excerpts from Wikipedia regarding these quakes:

Re 2004 - "The magnitude of the earthquake was originally recorded as 9.0 on the Richter scale, but has been upgraded to between 9.1 and 9.3. At this magnitude, it is the second largest earthquake ever recorded on a seismograph. This earthquake was also reported to be the longest duration of faulting ever observed, lasting between 500 and 600 seconds (8.3 to 10 minutes), and it was large enough that it caused the entire planet to vibrate as much as half an inch, or over a centimeter. It also triggered earthquakes in other locations as far away as Alaska."

Re 2011 - It was "one of the five most powerful earthquakes in the world since modern record-keeping began in 1900. The earthquake triggered powerful tsunami waves that reached heights of up to 40.5 metres (133 ft)...The earthquake moved Honshu (the main island of Japan) 2.4 m (8 ft) east and shifted the Earth on its axis by estimates of between 10 cm (4 in) and 25 cm (10 in)."

Scientist Henry Morris provides some scientific insight in his book The Revelation Record: "...the vast worldwide network of unstable earthquake belts around the world suddenly will begin to slip and fracture on a global basis and a gigantic earthquake will ensue. This is evidently, and naturally, accompanied by

tremendous volcanic eruptions, spewing vast quantities of dust and steam and gases into the upper atmosphere. It is probably these that will cause the sun to be darkened and the moon to appear blood-red.”

John sees stars falling towards earth, but God probably supernaturally destroys them since His intent is not to destroy the earth. This could be supported by the terminology in Isaiah talking about the host of heaven dissolving.

Isaiah 34:4 “And all the host of heaven shall be dissolved, and the heavens shall be rolled together as a scroll: and all their host shall fall down, as the leaf falleth off from the vine, and as a falling fig from the fig tree.”

The emphasis seems to be on instilling a godly fear into man. God is trying to get his attention before it is too late to recognize who He is and turn to Him in faith and repentance. This reasoning seems to be supported with a cross reference in Joel talking about this time.

Joel 2:30-32 “And I will shew wonders in the heavens and in the earth, blood, and fire, and pillars of smoke. The sun shall be turned into darkness, and the moon into blood, before the great and the terrible day of the LORD come. And it shall come to pass, that whosoever shall call on the name of the LORD shall be delivered: for in mount Zion and in Jerusalem shall be deliverance, as the LORD hath said, and in the remnant whom the LORD shall call.”

Scripture specifically states that men recognize that the “great day of His wrath is come.” In context, the “His” is in reference is to the One on the throne and the Lamb.

Revelation 6:16–17 “And said to the mountains and rocks, Fall on us, and hide us from the face of him that sitteth on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb: For the great day of his wrath is come; and who shall be able to stand?”

I am convinced that it is these events that begin the “day of the Lord” or God’s wrath and provide the conditions through which the Antichrist can emerge as a world savior and cause the peoples of the world to eventually accept him as their god. Remember—he will be able to cause “lying wonders.”

I have a book by David Lowe, Then His Voice Shook the Earth, in which he points out that there are three instances in scripture of resurrection to immortality, and each is accompanied by an earthquake—the resurrection of Jesus (Matthew 28:2-7); the resurrection of the “many saints” that appeared after Jesus’ resurrection (Matthew 27:51-53); and the resurrection of the Two Witnesses of Revelation (11:11-13).

If it is true that resurrections to immortality occur in conjunction with an earthquake, one can only imagine the magnitude of an earthquake connected to the rapture of the millions of saints when the dead in Christ rise first. I think Mr. Lowe is on to something, and that the earthquake resulting from the opening of

this seal is probably directly connected to the rapture. As you will see, it seems to fit perfectly within the context of events presented in the next chapter.

After the opening of the sixth seal, John is allowed to see some events that seem to occur before the opening of the seventh seal.

First, he sees four angels at the four corners of the earth that seem to be in control of the four winds. They are instructed not to cause any destruction on earth until the servants of God have been sealed with a mark (from the Greek) in their foreheads. These servants are then identified as being composed of 144,000 Jews from the 12 tribes of Israel.

We will find out later in Revelation 14 that this mark is the name of God. Revelation 9 informs us (as implied by the wording in this chapter) that the seal provides protection for these witnesses during the time of their ministry.

In the last post I concluded that there is a strong possibility that the earthquake resulting from the opening of the sixth seal is directly connected to the rapture. The fact that God is sealing witnesses to His truth following the opening of that seal fits right in with the fact that God will not leave the world without a witness to His truth. Though not mentioned yet in the narrative, I believe the two witnesses spoken of in chapter 11 will be witnessing during the first half of the tribulation period (but more on that later). The events of the sixth seal judgment have evidently resulted in many Jews finally accepting the truth of scripture and turning to the Lord in faith. It is also fitting that God's primary witnesses during the tribulation period be Jewish, since the purpose of that time period is to produce a purified remnant of Jewish believers through whom God will fulfill His covenant with Abraham, Isaac, Jacob and David.

The next thing John sees is "a great multitude, which no man could number, of all nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues" standing before the throne and before the Lamb—the victorious risen Savior. That is the very description used of the body of believers in chapter five. It is so very clear to me that this is a picture of all those who have been raptured—a special mystery revealed by Paul.

1 Corinthians 15:51–52 "Behold, I shew you a mystery; We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed."

1 Thessalonians 4:15–17 "For this we say unto you by the word of the Lord, that we which are alive and remain unto the coming of the Lord shall not prevent them which are asleep. For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first: Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord."

This also fits perfectly with the words of Jesus recorded by John in his gospel.

John 14:1–3 “Let not your heart be troubled: ye believe in God, believe also in me. In my Father’s house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also.”

When John was caught up to heaven in the fourth chapter, which many people interpret as meaning that the rapture happens at that point, Jesus is nowhere to be found and the 24 elders are assumed to represent that body of believers. At this point in chapter seven, however, we see a great multitude of believers from every people group standing in the presence of Jesus before the throne of the Father—“that where I am, there ye may be also.” It just makes so much sense to me.

The scene is one of worship and praise by all who are in heaven. Notice that the scene includes the peoples of the nations, the angels, the elders and the four beasts. If the 24 elders represented those raptured, why are they identified separately?

One of the elders actually tells John that these people had come out of great tribulation. I have most often heard it taught that this represents those who have died during the tribulation, but it just doesn’t fit. “The great tribulation” is a reference to the last 3.5 years of that seven-year period; we haven’t gotten to the midpoint yet. I think people forget that Luke tells us that all believers will enter the kingdom of God through “much tribulation”—from the Greek: affliction, anguish, burdened, persecution, tribulation, trouble.

Acts 14:22 “Confirming the souls of the disciples, and exhorting them to continue in the faith, and that we must through much tribulation enter into the kingdom of God.”

I just realized that the Lord is declaring that there will be people from *every* nation in that body of believers. I am reminded that no one will have a valid excuse for rejecting God before His judgment throne. He has promised that those who respond to the revelation He has given and seek to know more will receive accordingly.

Psalms 19:1–3 “The heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament sheweth his handywork. Day unto day uttereth speech, and night unto night sheweth knowledge. There is no speech nor language, where their voice is not heard.”

Romans 1:19–20 “Because that which may be known of God is manifest in them; for God hath shewed it unto them. For the invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead; so that they are without excuse....”

Jeremiah 29:13 “And ye shall seek me, and find me, when ye shall search for me with all your heart.”

2 Peter 3:9 *"The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance."*

Titus 2:11 *"For God's grace, which brings deliverance, has appeared to all people."*

Revelation 21:6 *"And he said unto me, It is done. I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end. I will give unto him that is athirst of the fountain of the water of life freely."*

Many like to limit the promises of God without consideration of the character of God. Scripture is clear that He is the same yesterday, today and forever.

Malachi 3:6 *"For I am the LORD, I change not...."*

Hebrews 13:8 *"Jesus Christ the same yesterday, and to day, and for ever."*

James 1:17 *"Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights, with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning."*

Scripture is clear that the revelation of God is evident in His creation to such an extent that it leaves man without excuse. Scripture is clear that He is not willing that *any* should perish. Scripture is everywhere clear that God is eager to respond to those who seek to know Him.

The immediate impact regarding the opening of the 7th seal is in heaven; there is silence for half an hour. Why the silence? I think it is because the hosts of heaven realize the terrible things that will occur as a result of the coming judgments on planet earth. Even as I think about it now, I wonder what I can do to help rescue more people from this coming judgment knowing, however, that millions and millions will suffer through this time.

After the silence John sees seven angels standing before God and each is given a trumpet. Another angel then comes before the altar carrying a large censer, and he is given much incense to offer up with the prayers of all the saints on the golden altar before the throne. Once the smoke of the incense mixed with the prayers of the saints has been offered, the angel fills the censer with fire from the altar and throws it down to earth. The result is a sound of voices, thunders, lightning and an earthquake. During this time the angels are making ready to blow their trumpets.

After the first angel blows his trumpet, hail and fire mingled with blood are thrown down on earth and effectively destroy a third of the trees and all green grass.

When the second angel sounds his trumpet, what looks like a great mountain burning with fire (possibly a meteor) is cast into the sea causing a third of the sea to turn into blood destroying the life in it. Point is made that a third of the ships on the sea are destroyed as well. The word "sea" is singular and could be referencing just the Mediterranean.

The third angel blows his trumpet and a great glowing star called Wormwood falls from heaven poisoning a third of the rivers and fountains of fresh waters. Many men die after drinking those waters. It makes sense to me that this would be happening in a specific part of the planet that contains a third part of the rivers and fresh water fountains on earth. Or could this be a fragmenting meteor?

Once the fourth angel sounds his trumpet a third of the sun, the moon and the stars are darkened to the extent that there is absolutely no light for a third part of the day and a third part of the night. In my mind this fits right in with the fact that darkness in scripture is connected to evil, and evil is running rampant upon the earth.

John 3:19–20 “And this is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil. For every one that doeth evil hateth the light, neither cometh to the light, lest his deeds should be reproved.”

Suddenly John sees an angel flying through the heavens crying out with a loud voice to warn the inhabitants of earth about the next three trumpet judgments.

When the fifth angel blows his trumpet, a “star” that has been given the key to the bottomless pit falls from heaven to earth. Obviously, this is not a normal star, but an angel. Later in Revelation John also used the term *stars* in reference to the angels that joined Satan’s rebellion.

Revelation 12:3–4 & 9 “And there appeared another wonder in heaven; and behold a great red dragon, having seven heads and ten horns, and seven crowns upon his heads. And his tail drew the third part of the stars of heaven, and did cast them to the earth.... And the great dragon was cast out, that old serpent, called the Devil, and Satan, which deceiveth the whole world: he was cast out into the earth, and his angels were cast out with him.”

The bottomless pit (“abussos” in the Greek) is the place to which a legion of demons begged Jesus not to send them.

Luke 8:30–31 “And Jesus asked him, saying, What is thy name? And he said, Legion: because many devils were entered into him. And they besought him that he would not command them to go out into the deep.”

Since he falls to earth, I would assume the bottomless pit to be in the center of the earth. When the angel opens the pit, a great smoke is released into the atmosphere. Out of the smoke emerge demon locusts that are given the power to torment for five months those that do not have the seal of God in their foreheads. These are not normal locusts; point is made that they do not harm any vegetation. Those that are tormented by these locusts will wish they could die, but will not. It is important to note that these locusts are empowered and commanded by God as to their actions.

John tries to describe these locusts and many try to make comparisons to today's weapons of war. The problem to me is that they are very specific beings that emerge from imprisonment in the bottomless pit. The weapons of war that are used today inflict death—not just torment. I think that maybe they are the angels that are referenced in **Jude 6**—“*And the angels which kept not their first estate, but left their own habitation, he hath reserved in everlasting chains under darkness unto the judgment of the great day.*” Peter seems to confirm this to be the case.

2Peter 2:4 “For if God spared not the angels that sinned, but cast them down to hell, and delivered them into chains of darkness, to be reserved unto judgment....”

John next informs us that these beings have a king whose name is Abaddon, Apollyon in Greek, both of which reference a destroyer, a fitting title of Satan. This also affirms that these are not normal locusts since scripture informs us that they have no king.

Proverbs 30:27 “The locusts have no king, yet go they forth all of them by bands....”

When the sixth angel blows his trumpet, he is told to release the four angels bound in the area of the great river Euphrates. I couldn't help but think of how Daniel explains that there are spiritual entities in control of certain nations or kingdoms on planet earth.

Daniel 10:12–13 “Then said he unto me, Fear not, Daniel: for from the first day that thou didst set thine heart to understand, and to chasten thyself before thy God, thy words were heard, and I am come for thy words. But the prince of the kingdom of Persia withstood me one and twenty days: but, lo, Michael, one of the chief princes, came to help me; and I remained there with the kings of Persia.”

I had a thought that maybe the four angels were associated with the “principalities or powers” connected to the countries bordering the Euphrates—Turkey, Syria, Iraq and Iran (where it connects with the Tigris and flows into the Persian Gulf). It sounds as though they are being “loosed” to go beyond their boundaries to gather a military force 200,000,000 (the number is specific) strong that are empowered to kill a third of the men on earth. Emphasis is made that the timing for this slaughter had been determined for a specific “hour, day, month and year.” As John begins to describe this army, it is clear that he is trying to describe things that are unknown to him. This is definitely a section that could give speculation to his trying to describe modern day weaponry.

Those who survive the attack of this evil force refuse to repent of their evil deeds. They continue to kill each other without guilt or conscience. They continue to use drugs, magic, sorcery and witchcraft. (I believe that Satan and his demons will be empowering more and more people in this area as time goes by.) They continue in all kinds of sexual immorality thinking only of pleasing themselves. They will continue to take what they want, by theft if necessary. Their motto seems to be, “Whatever makes me happy is OK,” or “It's all about me.”

This immediately brought to mind the verse concerning the days of Noah—*Genesis 6:5 “And GOD saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually.”*

At this point the narrative of judgments is suspended to provide foundational information to the events that follow (as was done in chapters 4-5).

John sees another (different) mighty angel/messenger come down from heaven, clothed with a cloud, a rainbow is on his head, his face is as the sun, and his feet as pillars of fire (**Rev 1:15**). As you continue reading in this chapter and follow the pronouns, by the time you come to **Rev 11:3**, it seems to identify this angel as Jesus (“my two witnesses...”). There are other places in the scripture where the pre-incarnate Jesus is referred to as the angel of the Lord:

When talking to Hagar—*Genesis 16:10 “And the angel of the LORD said unto her, I will multiply thy seed exceedingly, that it shall not be numbered for multitude.”*

When talking to Abraham re his willingness to sacrifice Isaac—*Genesis 22:15-16 “And the angel of the LORD called unto Abraham out of heaven the second time, And said, By myself have I sworn, saith the LORD, for because thou hast done this thing, and hast not withheld thy son, thine only son.”*

When appearing to Moses—*Exodus 3:2 “And the angel of the LORD appeared unto him in a flame of fire out of the midst of a bush: and he looked, and, behold, the bush burned with fire, and the bush was not consumed.”*

In the angel’s hand is a little book that is open. He sets His right foot on the sea and His left foot on the earth. I would assume this to be a symbolic gesture indicating that what is in the book will affect the whole earth (land and sea). He cries out with a loud voice, as when a lion roars (**Rev 5:5**). When He cries out, 7 thunders speak, but John is told not to record what they say. It is futile to speculate why.

The picture seems to be of a voice that speaks with power, authority, force, and supernatural strength and knowledge—a voice that reverberates with divine power and truth.

Jesus then announces in the name of the eternal God, Creator of heaven and earth, that it is time (as man understands it) for His plan for the ages to be fulfilled. God is outside the dimension of time.

Evidently, when the angel with the 7th trumpet begins to blow, this will usher in the “great tribulation,” the last 3.5 years before Jesus returns to establish His kingdom. It is interesting that the word *days* (plural) is used to describe the sounding of the trumpet of the 7th angel. This supports the concept of the 7 vials or bowls resulting from the 7th trumpet, which would in turn support the concept of the 7 trumpets resulting from the 7th seal.

John is told to go and take the little book from the hand of Jesus, and he does. He is then told to eat it; and though it may taste sweet, it will become bitter in his stomach. Obviously, asking John to eat the scroll is an expression telling him to absorb the contents. The contents, I believe, spoke of God's glorious victory and the coming reign of Jesus in His earthly kingdom (sweet to the taste). However, they also explained the terrible things that would have to happen on earth before He took His throne in Jerusalem (made the belly bitter).

This is not a new concept. Ezekiel had been given similar instructions—*Ezekiel 3:1-4* “Moreover he said unto me, Son of man, eat that thou findest; eat this roll, and go speak unto the house of Israel. So I opened my mouth, and he caused me to eat that roll. And he said unto me, Son of man, cause thy belly to eat, and fill thy bowels with this roll that I give thee. Then did I eat it; and it was in my mouth as honey for sweetness. And he said unto me, Son of man, go, get thee unto the house of Israel, and speak with my words unto them.”

Just as with Ezekiel, John is then told to go and share the message with many peoples, nations, tongues and kings. John is still prophesying through the written word today.

The opening words of chapter 11 include “the angel stood.” The word for “stood” in the Greek is defined as “stood, abide, continue, stand by.” In other words, the angel continued to stand in the position he had assumed in chapter 10.

The first thing that jumps out to me is that there is a temple to measure. Much preparation is already being made for the building of the third temple. Research reveals that there are groups in Israel that have made all the required vessels for the temple to function properly. Using genetic research they have identified and trained men from the tribe of Levi to serve as priests, and the required garments are made and ready for use. The Temple Institute already has the blueprints for construction of the temple proper.

John is told to measure the temple of God, the altar and them that worship therein; this is an act that sometimes pictures possession and preservation in scripture. He is not to measure the outer court of the Gentiles. The Gentiles will have control in Jerusalem for 42 months—the last 3.5 years. It's like John is being told that although the Gentiles will be in control for that period of time, Jesus will preserve that which is holy and separate to Him—including the worshippers.

The Antichrist breaks his covenant in the middle of the 7-year period, the 70th week of Daniel.

Daniel 9:27 “And he shall confirm the covenant with many for one week: **and in the midst of the week** he shall cause the sacrifice and the oblation to cease....”

During the first 3.5 years the temple will be a place of worship to God once again. After that 3.5 years, at the mid-point of the 70th week, Antichrist will step

in to desecrate the holy place. Paul talks about this in his letter to the Thessalonians.

2 Thessalonians 2:3–4 “Let no man deceive you by any means: for that day shall not come, except there come a falling away first, and that man of sin be revealed, the son of perdition; Who opposeth and exalteth himself above all that is called God, or that is worshipped; so that he as God sitteth in the temple of God, shewing himself that he is God.”

It's at this point that we are told about the “two witnesses” who are sent as modern day prophets to witness for a specific time period—1260 days or 3.5 years (based on the biblical use of a 360 day calendar). During their ministry they will be supernaturally protected and will be able to destroy with fire anyone that threatens them. They will be empowered to stop the rain, to turn water into blood, and cause all types of plague at will.

Since they are not specifically identified, we can only speculate as to the identity of these witnesses. I used to believe that it would be Enoch and Elijah since they are the two men who never saw physical death, but I no longer believe that.

I think Enoch is a type of those in the church who will not die physically and will be taken in the rapture. It should also be noted that Enoch is not a Jew, and it would make more sense in the 70th week for God to be using Jewish witnesses in Jerusalem. I also think Hebrews 11:5 has application here; it states that Enoch was translated “that he should not see death.”

We are told in Malachi that Elijah will precede the coming of the Lord—*Malachi 4:5 “Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the LORD.”*

I agree with many others that believe that the other witness will be Moses because the powers demonstrated by these two men are very similar to those that Moses and Elijah demonstrated during their time as prophets and because of their appearance at the transfiguration.

When their ministry has been completed, the “beast” that ascends from the bottomless pit will be allowed to kill them. Their bodies will be left on display in the streets of Jerusalem for 3.5 days for all the peoples of the nations to see. There will be worldwide celebration and rejoicing at their death. After 3.5 days they will suddenly be resurrected to life and called up to heaven causing great fear in those that see them. That very same hour Jerusalem is hit by an earthquake that destroys a tenth of the city and kills 7,000 men provoking further fear in those who survive.

Point is made that the death of the witnesses completes the judgment of the 6th trumpet, the 2nd woe, and the third woe, the 7th trumpet, will follow quickly.

When the 7th trumpet is blown, the inhabitants of heaven begin rejoicing in the fact that the eternal Kingdom of God (“our Lord and His Christ”) on earth will

soon be established. John sees the 24 elders fall on their knees in worship before God. Notice what they say.

Revelation 11:17–18 “Saying, We give thee thanks, O Lord God Almighty, which art, and wast, and art to come; because thou hast taken to thee thy great power, and hast reigned. And the nations were angry, and thy wrath is come, and the time of the dead, that they should be judged, and that thou shouldest give reward unto thy servants the prophets, and to the saints, and them that fear thy name, small and great; and shouldest destroy them which destroy the earth.”

The wording supports the conclusions drawn in chapter 4 (addressed in Post #6). These elders seem to be referencing the prophets and saints as distinct from themselves.

Next John sees the temple in heaven open, and in the temple he sees the ark of God’s covenant. I believe this is the ark of the covenant that has been missing for over 2,000 years and that so many seek to find.

Once again those on earth experience “lightnings, and voices, and thunderings, and an earthquake, and great hail.” The “great” tribulation is about to begin.

Chapter 12 opens with another one of those foundational visions that are meant to provide better understanding of what is to follow. John sees a great wonder in heaven of a woman clothed with the sun; the moon is under her feet, and she is wearing a crown of twelve stars. She is suffering the pains of childbirth.

This sight is immediately followed by another vision of a great red dragon with seven heads, ten horns and seven crowns on his head. His tail is said to drag a third of the stars from heaven and cast them to earth. He is in position to destroy the woman’s child as soon as he is born. The woman gives birth to her son whom God has chosen to rule the nations with a rod of iron. The son escapes the destruction of the dragon and is caught up to the throne of God.

John then sees the woman flee to the wilderness where God has prepared a place to protect her for 1,260 days, or 3.5 years.

Next he sees a great war in heaven; the archangel Michael, defender of Israel, leads his angels in battle against the dragon and his angels.

This would seem to be a pretty confusing picture unless you are familiar with scripture. In Genesis 37 we read of the dream of Joseph, a son of Jacob, the father of the twelve tribes of Israel.

Genesis 37:9 “And he dreamed yet another dream, and told it his brethren, and said, Behold, I have dreamed a dream more; and, behold, the sun and the moon and the eleven stars made obeisance to me.”

In that dream one can see a picture of the nation of Israel in the sun, moon and stars (mother, father and sons). In context with the rest of the vision, it makes

sense to understand the woman as the nation of Israel giving birth to Jesus. The prophet Isaiah also prophesies picturing Israel as giving birth.

Isaiah 66:7–8 “Before she travailed, she brought forth; before her pain came, she was delivered of a man child. Who hath heard such a thing? who hath seen such things? Shall the earth be made to bring forth in one day? or shall a nation be born at once? for as soon as Zion travailed, she brought forth her children.”

We don't have to wonder who the dragon is; John tells us in verse 9— *“And the great dragon was cast out, that old serpent, called the Devil, and Satan, which deceiveth the whole world: he was cast out into the earth, and his angels were cast out with him.”*

In context we can infer that the “third of the stars” refer to the angels that joined in his rebellion against God. Satan worked hard at trying to thwart God's plan and prevent the birth of the Messiah. Having failed at that, he turned his focus to destroying the nation and people of Israel. He will fail in this endeavor as well. Many scriptures declare that Jesus will rule the nations from the throne of David.

Luke 1:31–33 “And, behold, thou shalt conceive in thy womb, and bring forth a son, and shalt call his name JESUS. He shall be great, and shall be called the Son of the Highest: and the Lord God shall give unto him the throne of his father David: And he shall reign over the house of Jacob for ever; and of his kingdom there shall be no end.”

Revelation 2:26–27 “And he that overcometh, and keepeth my works unto the end, to him will I give power over the nations: And he shall rule them with a rod of iron; as the vessels of a potter shall they be broken to shivers: even as I received of my Father.”

Psalms 2:7–9 “I will declare the decree: the LORD hath said unto me, Thou art my Son; this day have I begotten thee. Ask of me, and I shall give thee the heathen for thine inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for thy possession. Thou shalt break them with a rod of iron; thou shalt dash them in pieces like a potter's vessel.”

John sees that the child that is born is taken to heaven to the throne of God. Scripture affirms this truth as well.

Hebrews 12:2 “Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith; who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God.”

Colossians 3:1 “If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God.”

Next John sees the people of Israel (represented by the woman) running to a place that has been prepared by God for her protection for a specific period of 1260 days or 3.5 years. I believe the context of the following chapters will prove this to be the last 3.5 years of the 70th week of Daniel, more commonly known as the “great” tribulation. Jesus warned of this time as recorded by Matthew.

Matthew 24:15–21 “When ye therefore shall see the abomination of desolation, spoken of by Daniel the prophet, stand in the holy place, (whoso readeth, let him understand:) Then let them which be in Judaea flee into the mountains: Let him which is on the housetop not come down to take any thing out of his house: Neither let him which is in the field return back to take his clothes. And woe unto them that are with child, and to them that give suck in those days! But pray ye that your flight be not in the winter, neither on the sabbath day: For then shall be great tribulation, such as was not since the beginning of the world to this time, no, nor ever shall be.”

Notice that it is at this point that we see the great Archangel Michael, the guardian angel of Israel, leading his angels in battle against Satan and his angels to cast them out of heaven for good. No more will Satan have access to the Father to accuse the believers. Point is made that he knows his time is short and he is angry—especially at Israel.

Satan is really angry when he fails to prevent the safe escape of the Jews, so he turns his attention to persecuting the remnant of her seed who “keep the commandments of God.” I believe this includes the 144,000 servants from the 12 tribes of Israel who were sealed in chapter 7. Note that they are keeping the commandments and declaring the truth of Jesus Christ—just as we should be doing today. For some reason we seem to think we can ignore the commandments of God and just embrace the message of the love and grace of Jesus. Those who operate with this outlook are ignoring a good portion of God’s word. I believe that the Word teaches that our actions prove our faith.

James 2:14–17 “What doth it profit, my brethren, though a man say he hath faith, and have not works? can faith save him? If a brother or sister be naked, and destitute of daily food, And one of you say unto them, Depart in peace, be ye warmed and filled; notwithstanding ye give them not those things which are needful to the body; what doth it profit? Even so faith, if it hath not works, is dead, being alone.”

Matthew 7:17–21 “Even so every good tree bringeth forth good fruit; but a corrupt tree bringeth forth evil fruit. A good tree cannot bring forth evil fruit, neither can a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit. Every tree that bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down, and cast into the fire. Wherefore by their fruits ye shall know them. Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven.”

It’s also important to note that God is always preserving a remnant of His people until the time they turn to Him in repentance and recognition of His Son Jesus as their Messiah.

It makes sense to me that the Antichrist is revealed as a beast at this point in John’s narrative. It is at the mid-point of the tribulation that he reveals his true colors. Remember, he arose on the world stage as a man championing peace.

John now sees a great beast arising from the sea that has seven heads and ten horns wearing ten crowns; the heads are described as displaying blasphemous names. The beast is described as looking like a leopard with the feet of a bear

and the mouth of a lion. John reveals that this beast is empowered with the authority of the dragon—identified in the previous post as Satan.

This description of the beast is directly connected to Daniel's vision (described in Daniel 7).

Daniel 7:2–8 “Daniel spake and said, I saw in my vision by night, and, behold, the four winds of the heaven strove upon the great sea. And four great beasts came up from the sea, diverse one from another. The first was like a lion, and had eagle's wings: I beheld till the wings thereof were plucked, and it was lifted up from the earth, and made stand upon the feet as a man, and a man's heart was given to it. And behold another beast, a second, like to a bear, and it raised up itself on one side, and it had three ribs in the mouth of it between the teeth of it: and they said thus unto it, Arise, devour much flesh. After this I beheld, and lo another, like a leopard, which had upon the back of it four wings of a fowl; the beast had also four heads; and dominion was given to it. After this I saw in the night visions, and behold a fourth beast, dreadful and terrible, and strong exceedingly; and it had great iron teeth: it devoured and brake in pieces, and stamped the residue with the feet of it: and it was diverse from all the beasts that were before it; and it had ten horns. I considered the horns, and, behold, there came up among them another little horn, before whom there were three of the first horns plucked up by the roots: and, behold, in this horn were eyes like the eyes of man, and a mouth speaking great things.”

I think it is significant to note that the first three beasts in Daniel's vision were of a leopard with four wings and four heads, a bear and a lion with eagle's wings. These beasts are identified as representing four kings. The first three are interpreted in chapters 2&8 of Daniel as Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon, Cyrus of Medo-Persia and Alexander the Great of Greece. The fourth kingdom is a reference to Rome, but the fourth king is in reference to the Antichrist, the most powerful ruler to emerge from that empire (depicted by the legs and feet of the image from Nebuchadnezzar's dream in Daniel 2).

I know—the Roman Empire fell long ago. That is true, but scripture declares that there will be a confederacy of ten kings or rulers (pictured by the ten toes of the image in Nebuchadnezzar's dream) that will once again come to power from the remains of that fallen empire that will unite under the leadership of the Antichrist to control the world. Otherwise, a fifth kingdom would have been identified as part of the statue. Daniel seems to indicate that the Antichrist, “another little horn,” will begin to assume more control by usurping three of these kings and taking control of the areas they governed.

I believe that Satan indwells the Antichrist at the time he gains worldwide authority and establishes his throne in the temple at the midpoint of the tribulation. Note that the beast has seven heads. I believe these heads represent the seven major kings/kingdoms that have had direct impact on the nation of Israel—Egypt, Assyria, Babylon, Medo-Persia, Greece, Rome and the final tenfold confederacy of the Antichrist. The fact that they are pictured as heads on the beast controlled by the dragon affirm that they were under Satan's influence as well.

Why were other great kings and kingdoms of the world (e.g., the Ottomans or Mongols) not included in Daniel's/John's visions? Because God is using the scripture to tell His-story as revealed through His dealings with the nation of Israel. After 70 AD that nation no longer existed. Since it once again became an active nation on the world scene in 1948, we can now look for the resurgence of last world kingdom from the remains of the Roman Empire. Its interaction with Israel will be used by God to fulfill scripture and bring about the fulfillment of the promises of God to Abraham.

I think it is significant that we are told at this point that one of the heads appeared to have suffered a deadly wound, but was healed. According to verse 12 this is an apparent resurrection of the first beast, the Antichrist, from the dead.

Revelation 13:12 "It exercises all the authority of the first beast in its presence; and it makes the earth and its inhabitants worship the first beast, the one whose fatal wound had been healed."

It is probably this apparent miracle that will convince the world as a whole to invest him with the authority of leading a "new world order." John tells us that the world will worship the dragon (Satan) and the beast (Antichrist) since he appears to be invincible. John again specifically declares that this beast will be allowed his authority for 42 months, or 3.5 years. Significant point: God limits his time of authority in accordance with the fulfillment of His plan.

It seems obvious to me that the Antichrist is trying to mirror Christ in every way possible. He credits his authority as "god" to Satan in the same way that Jesus accredited His authority to His Father in heaven. He works lying wonders to deceive in contrast to the true miracles Jesus worked to inspire faith. He stages an apparent resurrection from the dead in light of the resurrection of Jesus from the dead.

As Satan always does, he blasphemes God and everything connected to Him. He is even allowed to assert his authority over the saints, those who have placed their faith in the Son of God. Sad note, John tells us that those who choose to worship the beast face eternal damnation because their names are not included in the Lamb's book of life—that Lamb, Jesus the Son of God, whose death and resurrection for our sin was determined before creation. He declares himself to be "god" just as Jesus declared Himself to be God. The HUGE difference—Satan is a liar with no real authority, and Jesus is righteous and true in all He represented Himself to be.

John now records a warning for those who are reading this scripture during the tribulation to pay careful attention to what he is about to read. Many saints will suffer captivity and death during this time. They are to be prepared for this and persevere in their faith; in the end, they will emerge as overcomers.

1 John 5:4 "For whatsoever is born of God overcometh the world: and this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith."

Revelation 2:11 "He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches; He that overcometh shall not be hurt of the second death."

Revelation 21:7 "He that overcometh shall inherit all things; and I will be his God, and he shall be my son."

John's attention is now directed to the emergence of a second beast arising out of the earth. This beast has two horns like a lamb but speaks with the mouth of a dragon. Again, notice Satan's continued agenda to mirror the Christ. Jesus is known as the Lamb of God, and horns represent power and authority. It would seem that this "beast" will emerge as a powerful spiritual leader, but his words will prove him to be in league with the dragon, Satan. In action he will actually mirror the work of the Holy Spirit in that this man will be empowered to perform great wonders with the purpose of getting people to worship the Antichrist. One of the wonders he is able to do—call down fire from heaven. This will show that he is as powerful as Elijah and Moses (who had just been killed). John reveals that his deception will be successful.

Revelation 13:14 "And deceiveth them that dwell on the earth by the means of those miracles which he had power to do in the sight of the beast; saying to them that dwell on the earth, that they should make an image to the beast, which had the wound by a sword, and did live."

John then tells us that this false prophet will create some type of image of the beast that will be able to speak—not at all surprising with today's technology. He will then put to death those that refuse to worship this image. He will also implement a system of buying and selling that requires one to have a mark in his forehead or right hand that identifies him/her as a follower of the beast in order to make transactions. That mark will be either the name of the beast or the number of his name—666, the number of man. Again, with today's technology that is quite feasible.

It is always amazing to me as I see how graciously God so carefully reveals future events so as to testify to the truth of His word and to encourage people to repent and turn to Him in faith and salvation. I'll never understand why people choose to ignore such revelation to their own peril when once they are made aware of the past accuracy of the biblical record. Obviously, these words of warning from John are specifically directed to those who will be living during that terrible time.

Chapter 14 opens with a vision before John of the 144,000 standing on Mt. Sion with Jesus. I believe these are the witnesses that were identified and sealed in their foreheads in chapter seven to protect them so that they could testify of God's truth during the first part of the tribulation. Once Satan takes control in the person of the Antichrist, he is given the power to "overcome the saints."

Revelation 13:7 "And it was given unto him to make war with the saints, and to overcome them...."

These men have completed their ministry and died as martyrs and are now reaping their eternal reward. In light of the context and a verse in Hebrews, I believe these witnesses are on Mt. Zion in heaven in this vision. God has accepted them as the first fruits of the harvest of the redeemed remnant of Israel that will enter the Messiah's Kingdom. They will not have to endure the hardships of the "great" tribulation, the last 3.5 years before Jesus returns as King of kings.

Hebrews 12:22 "But ye are come unto mount Zion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to an innumerable company of angels...."

Point is made that these men are singing a special worship song that only they can learn. These men are identified as celibate and totally committed to following the Lamb.

As always, God provides a witness to the message of salvation. The 144,000 witnesses and the two prophets are no longer on the scene, so God sends an angel to fly throughout the heavens urging the people on earth to worship the one true God, Creator of heaven and earth.

Revelation 14:6-7 "And I saw another angel fly in the midst of heaven, having the everlasting gospel to preach unto them that dwell on the earth, and to every nation, and kindred, and tongue, and people, Saying with a loud voice, Fear God, and give glory to him; for the hour of his judgment is come: and worship him that made heaven, and earth, and the sea, and the fountains of waters."

Questions arise because of the message preached by the angel. It's not *Romans 10:9*, "That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved."

The word "everlasting" (perpetual, eternal) indicates to me that the gospel has always been essentially the same. The full revelation of that gospel has come in increments. In every "increment" the required response of the individual has been faith in God for salvation—even when how He would accomplish that was not fully known or understood. I am at peace in the knowledge that God is righteous and is the One Who determines whether one has responded in faith to His revelation or not.

The angel that declares the gospel is followed by another angel that announces the destruction of the city of Babylon—the birthplace of false religion. This will be discussed in more detail when we reach chapters 17-18; but, yes, I believe it will be the rebuilt city of Babylon in the land today known as Iraq.

Yet a third angel follows loudly warning that anyone that worships the beast or his image and receives his mark in hand or forehead will suffer the wrath of God and be unrelentingly tormented by fire and brimstone forever—time without end. This announcement is also to serve as encouragement to the saints to persevere in their faith and obedience to God. I believe that everyone that is saved at any time past, present or future is saved by faith. We in the church today are

privileged to have the seal of promise of the Holy Spirit. In Old Testament times that was not true; David feared having the Spirit of God taken from him.

Psalms 51:10–11 “Create in me a clean heart, O God; and renew a right spirit within me. Cast me not away from thy presence; and take not thy holy spirit from me.”

Ephesians 1:13–14 “In whom ye also trusted, after that ye heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation: in whom also after that ye believed, ye were sealed with that holy Spirit of promise, Which is the earnest of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession, unto the praise of his glory.”

It makes sense to me that since the first 69 weeks of this prophecy occurred during the Old Testament dispensation, that God would deal with His people in like manner during the 70th week of Daniel. I tend to think (and I most certainly could be wrong) that the seal of the Spirit is unique to the church age. Scripture is clear in declaring that the One that indwells the believer today is greater than he that is “the god of this world.”

1 John 4:2–4 “Hereby know ye the Spirit of God: Every spirit that confesseth that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is of God: And every spirit that confesseth not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is not of God: and this is that spirit of antichrist, whereof ye have heard that it should come; and even now already is it in the world. Ye are of God, little children, and have overcome them: because greater is he that is in you, than he that is in the world.”

2 Corinthians 4:3–4 “But if our gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost: In whom the god of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them.”

It is for this reason that I think John is inspired to add these words of encouragement for people of faith to hold on to their faith—just as he did when it was revealed that the Antichrist would be allowed to overcome the saints. The troubles of that time will be so bad that one would be tempted to give up and/or question God’s word. God is so gracious; He supernaturally provides for the gospel to be declared throughout the world with a warning of the dire consequences of worshipping the Antichrist and with extra encouragement for people of faith to hang on and persevere to the end—because there will be an end and the reward is great!

John now hears a declaration from heaven that those believers who die during the last half of the tribulation will be blessed; they will be at rest and free from the struggle and suffering that will characterize the life of every believer on the planet during this time—except the Jewish remnant that is being supernaturally nurtured and protected in the wilderness. This reminds me of a precious verse in Isaiah.

Isaiah 57:1–2 “The righteous perisheth, and no man layeth it to heart: and merciful men are taken away, none considering that the righteous is taken away from the evil to come. He shall enter into peace....”

At this point, John seems to be getting an explanation of what is going to happen as the angels pour out the last plagues on planet earth. The judgment will be so great that it will seem like the men of earth are being pressed in a great winepress. He sees one like unto the Son of man, Jesus, sitting on the cloud and wearing the crown of a victor; He has won the right to judge. He is holding in His hand a sharp sickle.

Another angel comes out of the heavenly temple and tells Jesus that the time has come for Him to put His sickle to use and reap the harvest of the earth. It is obvious to me that the angel is serving as a messenger from God the Father. Jesus readily complies since he is the Father's chosen instrument of judgment.

John 5:22 "For the Father judgeth no man, but hath committed all judgment unto the Son...."

John 5:26-27 "For as the Father hath life in himself; so hath he given to the Son to have life in himself; And hath given him authority to execute judgment also, because he is the Son of man."

I think it is significant that there is a time that has been predetermined as right for this judgment. It seems that sin has reached its fullness worldwide. I think that God's statement regarding the withholding of judgment from the Amorites establishes the precedent for revealing God's timing for exacting judgment.

Genesis 15:13-16 "And he said unto Abram, Know of a surety that thy seed shall be a stranger in a land that is not theirs, and shall serve them; and they shall afflict them four hundred years; And also that nation, whom they shall serve, will I judge: and afterward shall they come out with great substance. And thou shalt go to thy fathers in peace; thou shalt be buried in a good old age. But in the fourth generation they shall come hither again: for the iniquity of the Amorites is not yet full."

Next John watches as the angels begin to complete the process authorized by the thrust of the sickle from Jesus. One angel emerges from the temple carrying a sharp sickle and another angel invested with power over fire comes forth from the altar. The angel from the altar commands the angel with the sickle to reap the earth and cast the harvest into the great winepress of God. This is obviously a picture of judgment that I think summarizes the wrath of God being poured out on the wicked and culminating in the last seven judgments. I think this section parallels the teaching of Jesus recorded in Matthew 13.

Matthew 13:36-43 & 49-50 "Then Jesus sent the multitude away, and went into the house: and his disciples came unto him, saying, Declare unto us the parable of the tares of the field. He answered and said unto them, He that soweth the good seed is the Son of man; The field is the world; the good seed are the children of the kingdom; but the tares are the children of the wicked one; The enemy that sowed them is the devil; the harvest is the end of the world; and the reapers are the angels. As therefore the tares are gathered and burned in the fire; so shall it be in the end of this world. The Son of man shall send forth his angels, and they shall gather out of his kingdom all things that offend, and them

which do iniquity; And shall cast them into a furnace of fire: there shall be wailing and gnashing of teeth. Then shall the righteous shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father. Who hath ears to hear, let him hear....So shall it be at the end of the world: the angels shall come forth, and sever the wicked from among the just, And shall cast them into the furnace of fire: there shall be wailing and gnashing of teeth.

The passage in Matthew also seems to provide a clue as to why the angel in charge of fire is give direction to the angel with the sickle—he is likely in charge of the fires of hell.

The winepress is identified as being located without the city (of Jerusalem, I believe). I think this verse is making reference to the last great battle at Armageddon in the Valley of Megiddo and appears to include the Valley of Jehoshaphat, the Valley of Decision, if the verses in Joel apply here.

Joel 3:12-14 Let the heathen be wakened, and come up to the valley of Jehoshaphat: for there will I sit to judge all the heathen round about. Put ye in the sickle, for the harvest is ripe: come, get you down; for the press is full, the vats overflow; for their wickedness is great. Multitudes, multitudes in the valley of decision: for the day of the LORD is near in the valley of decision.

Another section of verses that seems to be related to this verse is found in Isaiah:

Is. 63:1-4 Who is this that cometh from Edom, with dyed garments from Bozrah? this that is glorious in his apparel, travelling in the greatness of his strength? I that speak in righteousness, mighty to save. Wherefore art thou red in thine apparel, and thy garments like him that treadeth in the winefat? I have trodden the winepress alone; and of the people there was none with me: for I will tread them in mine anger, and trample them in my fury; and their blood shall be sprinkled upon my garments, and I will stain all my raiment. For the day of vengeance is in mine heart, and the year of my redeemed is come.

The statement regarding the amount of blood indicates the intensity of the battle that will take place. I have a hard time not accepting that the amount of bloodshed stated is not an actual figure since the figure is specific.

Joseph Seiss gives a possible explanation: “The probabilities are...that a line of encamped forces shall extend from Bozrah, on the southeast, to Megiddo, on the northwest. And, singularly enough, this would measure exactly 1600 stadia (furlongs), the distance named in the text as that over which the blood from this great winepress of Jehovah’s anger flows.”

This meshes with the verses from Isaiah that picture Jesus headed to Jerusalem from Bozrah in garments drenched in blood. Bozrah is a reference to Petra, a place that many believe scripture indicates will be that special place in the wilderness in which God will protect the Jewish remnant.

John’s attention is once again turned to heaven to behold seven angels with the seven last plagues of God’s wrath against evil on earth. Then he sees a group of people with harps standing on what looks like a glass or clear, peaceful sea that

is pictured mingled with fire. The people are identified as having gotten victory over the beast and refused to take his mark. They may not have felt like they were on the winning side for however long they had to endure through the tribulation, but once they got to heaven they realized the great reward of their faith. This group is distinct from those in Revelation 7:9 and are specifically identified as tribulation believers. This tells me that those believers who die during the tribulation are immediately translated into incorruptible bodies to the presence of the Lord.

John notes that they are singing praise and worship songs authored by Moses and Jesus in honor of the Father. Maybe Psalm 90 is one of the songs; maybe they are new songs composed in heaven. The songs emphasize the truth and righteousness of God in light of His judgments.

Once again John sees the temple in heaven opened. Note that the temple is identified as the place that houses the testimony, the Decalogue (from the Greek), the Ten Commandments.

*Revelation 15:5 "And after that I looked, and, behold, **the temple of the tabernacle of the testimony in heaven** was opened...."*

This is just an affirmation to me that the ark of the covenant is in heaven as I concluded in chapter 11.

John then sees the angels with the seven plagues emerge from the temple; they are wearing clothing of pure and white linen with golden breast bands. I think this is indicative of the righteous justice they will dispense. They are not ashamed of what they are doing; they are not unwilling servants. They are totally loyal and committed to obeying God. They know His character. They know His actions are holy, just and righteous.

One of the four beasts then gives them vials full of the wrath of God to mix with their plagues. This will cause the worst possible torment and destruction once they are poured out on planet earth. Jesus declared this very truth.

Matthew 24:21–22 "For then shall be great tribulation, such as was not since the beginning of the world to this time, no, nor ever shall be. And except those days should be shortened, there should no flesh be saved: but for the elect's sake those days shall be shortened."

Chapter 15 closes with a statement that reminds me of God's appearance to Moses on Mt. Sinai.

Revelation 15:8 "And the temple was filled with smoke from the glory of God, and from his power; and no man was able to enter into the temple, till the seven plagues of the seven angels were fulfilled."

Exodus 19:16–18 "And it came to pass on the third day in the morning, that there were thunders and lightnings, and a thick cloud upon the mount, and the voice of the trumpet

exceeding loud; so that all the people that was in the camp trembled. And Moses brought forth the people out of the camp to meet with God; and they stood at the nether part of the mount. And mount Sinai was altogether on a smoke, because the LORD descended upon it in fire: and the smoke thereof ascended as the smoke of a furnace, and the whole mount quaked greatly."

The angels are commanded by a great voice from the temple to go and pour out their vials of wrath. The Greek implies that the vials will be emptied quickly and with a drowning like impact. All the angels receive the command to go at the same time, and the next few verses indicate that these judgments come in rapid succession.

When the first angel empties his vial on the earth, those who have received the mark of the beast and worshipped his image will develop an ulcer-like sore that causes great anguish.

The second angel empties his vial on the sea, and it thickens or becomes semi-solid like the blood of a dead man. This causes every living soul in the sea to die.

The third angel empties his vial upon the rivers and fountains of waters; these represent the fresh waters necessary for life. They became blood; it doesn't say "as" blood or "like" blood. I think this is a good point to note the difference in these judgments and the trumpet judgments. The trumpet judgments were limited in their impact (thirds). The vial judgments are universal in their impact. I just don't see how you can't accept that these judgments unfold chronologically.

It's interesting that after the third vial is poured out, the angel of the waters (which I believe is the angel pouring out the vial) takes the time to declare the righteousness of God in using this judgment. Water is necessary to sustaining life. Unrepentant man deserves this judgment since he is responsible for taking the life, "shedding the blood," of the saints and prophets. They deserve being given blood to drink.

Another angel then speaks from the area of the altar affirming God's righteousness.

I think it is significant that the angels seem to take every opportunity to speak of God's eternal state and praise Him as Lord God Almighty and affirm the rightness and righteousness of His judgments.

The fourth angel pours out his vial upon the sun. He is given power to scorch men with fire. What does man do when he experiences this great heat? Does he repent and beg for mercy? No. He blasphemes the name of God, the power behind the plagues. They still refuse to repent and give Him glory. I found a verse in Malachi that seems to apply here.

Malachi 4:1 "For, behold, the day cometh, that shall burn as an oven; and all the proud, yea, and all that do wickedly, shall be stubble: and the day that cometh shall burn them up, saith the LORD of hosts, that it shall leave them neither root nor branch."

Once the fifth angel pours out his plague of wrath, the kingdom of the beast is covered in darkness. The wording allows for the thought that this "darkness" could be a reference to spiritual darkness, the overwhelming evil and wickedness that covers the world at this time. No reference is made to the sun or moon as specifically referenced in previous judgments. Many verses in scripture use darkness as a reference to evil.

Matthew 6:23 "But if thine eye be evil, thy whole body shall be full of darkness. If therefore the light that is in thee be darkness, how great is that darkness!"

Luke 11:34 "The light of the body is the eye: therefore when thine eye is single, thy whole body also is full of light; but when thine eye is evil, thy body also is full of darkness."

John 3:19 "And this is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil."

Ephesians 6:12 "For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places."

Men are pictured gnawing their tongues for pain; they are still suffering from ulcers, scarcity of water and scorching heat—let alone the suffering caused when evil is allowed to run rampant. Do they turn to God in repentance? No, they actually choose to blaspheme His name rather than seek His forgiveness.

The effects of the sixth plague will occur over a period of time. The vial is poured out over the waters of the Euphrates River to dry it up to prepare a crossing for a great army from the kings of the east.

John also sees spirits that look like "frogs" emerge from the mouths of the dragon/Satan, the Antichrist and the False Prophet—the false trinity. We are not left to wonder at their purpose.

Revelation 16:14 "For they are the spirits of devils, working miracles, which go forth unto the kings of the earth and of the whole world, to gather them to the battle of that great day of God Almighty."

It is significant to note that these spirits are said to work miracles. I think this will be crucial to the success of their mission in light of the disastrous plagues striking the world during this time. They will need to be able to convince world leaders that they are joining up with a winning cause.

The first part of the next verse is a bit harder for me to understand in light of the biblical record that is so readily available.

Revelation 16:15 "Behold, I come as a thief. Blessed is he that watcheth, and keepeth his garments, lest he walk naked, and they see his shame."

A thief comes unexpectedly. I think it must be that the world is so full of evil that the words of scripture will not be widely known. The forces of evil will truly be taken by surprise when Jesus returns as King. Once again, for those who have turned to God in faith and treasure His word, He gives a word of encouragement for them to persevere and not give up. The next verse is also very interesting.

Revelation 16:16 "And he gathered them together into a place called in the Hebrew tongue Armageddon."

This is a very interesting "he" used here. You immediately think of the Antichrist as the one who is gathering his forces together to do battle. The last person speaking to whom the *he* would apply is Jesus. Jesus is the one in control and has been all along—He will dictate the time and place of this gathering. Where did He choose? Armageddon—the hill country of Megiddo.

Once the armies of the Antichrist are gathered, or maybe while they are gathering, the seventh angel pours out his plague into the air; and a great voice from the temple declares "It is done"—God's wrath is complete. The time has come for Jesus to remove Satan from power and assume His kingship on earth.

David Guzik made another good point, "The fact that the bowl is poured into the air may show judgment against the prince of the power of the air and his allies."

Ephesians 2:2 "Wherein in time past ye walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience...."

*Revelation 16:18-19 "And there were voices, and thunders, and lightnings; and there was a great earthquake, **such as was not since men were upon the earth**, so mighty an earthquake, and so great. And the great city was divided into three parts, and the cities of the nations fell: and great Babylon came in remembrance before God, to give unto her the cup of the wine of the fierceness of his wrath."*

As I have continued to meditate in Revelation, it occurs to me that this seems to indicate that there might have been an earthquake that would have compared to this earthquake before man was on the earth. This again takes my thoughts back to the fall of Satan and his angels and that event's probable impact on our planet. (But that is another study; see my journal on Genesis 1.)

This earthquake causes Jerusalem to divide into three sections and causes the cities of the nations to fall; in fact, we are told that it causes islands and mountains to disappear. Along with the earthquake, people are bombarded from the skies with huge hailstones weighing somewhere between 85-95 lbs.

In my studies I found an interesting quote attributed to John Abent regarding the sixth seal and the seventh vial judgments. He states that they “form a giant inclusio in the Greek. With the sixth seal open we are told that the great Day of God’s/the Lamb’s wrath ‘has come’ and with the seventh vial we are told ‘it is done.’”

The Apostle John then points out that God has not forgotten Babylon, the birthplace of false religion.

For those truly interested in gaining the best understanding of these next two chapters (17-18), I recommend that you take the time to read Isaiah 13-14 and Jeremiah 50-51, companion scripture passages that prophesy of the final destruction of Babylon.

Revelation 17 opens with one of the angels that emptied out one of the last seven vial judgments taking John into the wilderness to show him “the judgment of the great whore that sitteth upon many waters (v1).” This woman is later identified by the angel as “that great city, which reigns over the kings of the earth (v18).” The angel also reveals that the waters she sits on are “peoples, and multitudes, and nations, and tongues (v15).” In other words, her influence is worldwide. This woman is said to have committed fornication with the kings of the earth and to have made those that dwell on earth “drunk with the wine of her fornication (v2).” I believe context will prove the reference is primarily to spiritual adultery, though it cannot be denied that many who have followed her practiced physical adultery as well.

Jeremiah uses some of the same terminology as he prophesies of the final destruction of Babylon.

Jeremiah 51:7 & 13 “Babylon hath been a golden cup in the LORD’S hand, that made all the earth drunken: the nations have drunken of her wine; therefore the nations are mad.... O thou that dwellest upon many waters, abundant in treasures, thine end is come, and the measure of thy covetousness.”

Note that Jeremiah reveals that the actions of Babylon have always been under the sovereign power of God and that He has used her in accomplishing His purposes. This thought can be troubling. Truth is, however, that God in His sovereign will chose to give man freedom of choice even though He knew that man would choose to rebel against Him and follow the lead of the very first rebel—Satan. I believe He did that because He wanted a love relationship with us; He wasn’t interested in the love of programmed robotic entities. His plan of redemption would require that His people suffer times of judgment and discipline that He would often accomplish using the desires and choices of wicked men that chose to reject Him. All of these wicked men were followers of the false religions that were birthed in Babylon, but I am getting ahead of myself.

When John actually sees the whore, she is sitting on a scarlet colored beast that has seven heads and ten horns; this beast is said to be full of names of blasphemy. Note that this description mirrors that of the dragon identified as Satan in

chapter 12 and the beast that arose from the sea identified as the Antichrist, the puppet of Satan.

Revelation 12:3 "And there appeared another wonder in heaven; and behold a great red dragon, having seven heads and ten horns, and seven crowns upon his heads."

Revelation 13:1 "And I stood upon the sand of the sea, and saw a beast rise up out of the sea, having seven heads and ten horns, and upon his horns ten crowns, and upon his heads the name of blasphemy."

John makes the point that the woman is sitting on the beast. This is a picture of the fact that she is supported by and derives her power from the beast. This woman is wearing purple and scarlet and is adorned with gold, pearls and other gems. She is holding in her hand a golden cup "full of abominations and filthiness of her fornication." There is a name written on her forehead—"MYSTERY, BABYLON THE GREAT, THE MOTHER OF HARLOTS AND ABOMINATIONS OF THE EARTH."

I found a quote in the writings of E. W. Bullinger with which I agree. "The cup is one. This tells us that the corrupt streams which flow from this one fountainhead are all one in essence, character, and effect. It is the religion originally instituted at Babylon, by Nimrod, at the instigation of Satan. It is seen in all the great religions of the world. They are all alike in substituting another God for the God of the Bible: a god made either with the hands or with the imagination; but equally made. And a religion consisting of human merit. These things are common to all systems of false religion, and unite them in one."

I believe the writing in her forehead affirms Bullinger's statement. She is the mother city, Babylon, of all harlots or false religions that developed throughout the world. There is nothing good about these false religions; they all lead to eternal damnation.

John is said to look at this woman with wonder much the way we are drawn to watch "terrible" accidents or situations (e.g., 9-11-01) and try to process what we are seeing. He sees her drunk with the blood of the saints and the martyrs of Jesus.

The angel goes on to explain to John that the beast carrying her "was, and is not; and shall ascend out of the bottomless pit, and go into perdition." We've already learned that the scripture uses the term "mountains" to describe both kings and kingdoms. In this case we know that the woman represents a city, so it would make sense for the beast to represent not only Satan in the person of Antichrist but the kingdom she rules on his behalf. Reminder—Her sphere of authority is spiritual or religious, but that influence is powerful and results in economic prosperity as well.

It's like the angel is trying to help us understand by telling us that the seven heads of the beast are seven mountains upon which she sits. Those seven mountains have had seven kings; "five are fallen, and one is, *and* the other is not

yet come; and when he cometh, he must continue a short space (v10).” It would seem that this woman has held sway in each of these kingdoms—each one rooted in the false religion of Babylon of old, the place where Nimrod led the world of that time in rebellion against God and went on to establish his kingdom.

Micah 5:5–6 “And this man shall be the peace, when the Assyrian shall come into our land: and when he shall tread in our palaces, then shall we raise against him seven shepherds, and eight principal men. And they shall waste the land of Assyria with the sword, and the land of Nimrod in the entrances thereof: thus shall he deliver us from the Assyrian, when he cometh into our land, and when he treadeth within our borders.”

The kings / kingdoms that had fallen were Egypt, Assyria, Babylon, MedoPersia and Greece; the kingdom that “is” to John would have been Rome. The one “not yet come,” according to Daniel’s interpretation of Nebuchadnezzar’s dream, would arise from the remains of the Roman Empire as a ten-part confederacy. This would mirror the ten horns of the beast on which the whore is sitting and are identified as ten kings who will enjoy power for a short time in confederacy with the beast (v12).

The angel identifies the beast “that was and is not” as the eighth that is one of the seven. In other words, he emerges as the eighth king but was originally one of the first seven and is headed to perdition. Just so you know, I am trying to think this through afresh as I write this. Crazy as it seems, my first thought was that it could be a reference to Nimrod reincarnate. As I continued to think it through, it makes more sense to be a reference to the resurrection of the Antichrist from the “apparently” fatal blow that he suffers as detailed in chapter 13. I believe what makes him distinct after his resurrection is that Satan then takes possession of his body. There is only one other person in scripture that is described as a son of perdition—Judas Iscariot; and he was indwelt by Satan before betraying Jesus. Satan will declare himself to be God in the person of Antichrist and will actually end up leading the armies of the world in battle against Jesus at His return.

Point is made that those whose names are not written in the book of life will be filled with awe at the resurrection of the Antichrist. This implies that those whose names are in the book of life will not be so awestruck. Why? I think it is because they will understand what is happening from the word of God.

The angel continues to explain to John what he is seeing and now directs his attention to the ten horns on the beast. He points out that these horns are future kings that will enjoy a short time of power and authority in league with the beast. Emphasis is made that they will be of “one mind” and will submit to the will of the beast.

I believe these ten kings are the rulers of the ten-nation confederacy revealed through the prophecy of Nebuchadnezzar’s dream. Later, God revealed to Daniel that three of these kings will be subdued by the Antichrist.

Daniel 7:23–24 “Thus he said, The fourth beast shall be the fourth kingdom upon earth, which shall be diverse from all kingdoms, and shall devour the whole earth, and shall

tread it down, and break it in pieces. And the ten horns out of this kingdom are ten kings that shall arise: and another shall rise after them; and he shall be diverse from the first, and he shall subdue three kings."

This makes me think that there will be a powerful ten-part confederacy that first comprises the coming new world order. The Antichrist will begin His rise to supremacy by in some way taking control of three of these parts. Daniel goes on to affirm that the Antichrist will blaspheme God and persecute the followers of God. Again it is pointed out that his reign will be limited to "a time and times and the dividing of time," or 3.5 years, the last half of the tribulation period. This is also confirmed in Revelation.

Daniel 7:25 "And he shall speak great words against the most High, and shall wear out the saints of the most High, and think to change times and laws: and they shall be given into his hand until a time and times and the dividing of time."

Revelation 13:4-5 "And they worshipped the dragon which gave power unto the beast: and they worshipped the beast, saying, Who is like unto the beast? who is able to make war with him? And there was given unto him a mouth speaking great things and blasphemies; and power was given unto him to continue forty and two months."

The angel is clear in telling John that this confederacy of kingdoms led by the Antichrist will make war with the Lamb, Jesus, the Lord of lords and King of kings; but they will ultimately be defeated.

The last verses of chapter 17 are very interesting.

Revelation 17:16-17 "And the ten horns which thou sawest upon the beast, these shall hate the whore, and shall make her desolate and naked, and shall eat her flesh, and burn her with fire. For God hath put in their hearts to fulfil his will, and to agree, and give their kingdom unto the beast, until the words of God shall be fulfilled."

The ten rulers that make up the coming new world order will hate the whore, the city and the false religion she promotes, and will determine to destroy her. In this, they will be acting in accordance with God's will and will eventually be successful.

Many teach that the reference is to Rome and the Roman Catholic Church. I understand their rationale, but I believe the fact that she is identified as the "mother of harlots" and is specifically identified with the city of Babylon negates that possibility. The fact that the ranks of Islam are quickly rising and that the base of this future religious authority is in Babylon is thought-provoking at least. The fact that those who are killed for refusing to worship the beast and rejecting his mark are beheaded, readily identified with Islamic "justice," provides even more food for thought in that connection. Is it coincidental that the rider of the first horse in chapter six is carrying a bow, a crescent-shaped weapon (as explained in chapter 6)?

Revelation 20:4 "And I saw thrones, and they sat upon them, and judgment was given unto them: and I saw the souls of them that were beheaded for the witness of Jesus, and for the word of God, and which had not worshipped the beast, neither his image, neither had received his mark upon their foreheads, or in their hands; and they lived and reigned with Christ a thousand years."

Only time will reveal the truth and believers of that time will understand. Frankly, I think it references a one-world religion that will assimilate practices of the major false religions of our day that will once again establish its seat of influence from the place that false religion was birthed.

After his revelation concerning the great whore riding the beast, John sees another powerful angel come down from heaven emanating great light. This angel is announcing the destruction of Babylon, a place that has become the dwelling place of devils and evil spirits. I think the reference to "every unclean and hateful bird" has a direction connection to the Lord's parables in Matthew 13 that picture those doing the work of Satan as birds.

Revelation 18:2 "And he cried mightily with a strong voice, saying, Babylon the great is fallen, is fallen, and is become the habitation of devils, and the hold of every foul spirit, and a cage of every unclean and hateful bird."

Matthew 13:3-4 "And he spake many things unto them in parables, saying, Behold, a sower went forth to sow; And when he sowed, some seeds fell by the way side, and the fowls came and devoured them up.... Hear ye therefore the parable of the sower. When any one heareth the word of the kingdom, and understandeth it not, then cometh the wicked one, and catcheth away that which was sown in his heart."

The angel is loudly and strongly announcing the coming destruction of Babylon. The reason for the judgment against her—Babylon has seduced the world and its leaders to practice spiritual fornication through its false religion and has used that influence to emerge as the leading economic power base in the world.

I couldn't help but make a comparison to what is happening in the church today. The "business" of church is growing day by day. It's becoming more like a picture of the Laodicean church on hormones. This scripture makes it clear that the one world religion of the tribulation will be totally consumed by the love of money, as the rest of the chapter will detail. Scripture is very clear in declaring the love of money to be the root of all evil—and evil is unbridled at this point in time.

1Timothy 6:10 "For the love of money is the root of all evil: which while some coveted after, they have erred from the faith, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows."

John next hears another voice from heaven warning those that have come to their senses and chosen to place their faith in God to get out of Babylon. God is always faithful to warn His people of judgment to come. There will be those who are saved in the tribulation years, and some of these people will live in

Babylon (either by choice—just as Lot chose Sodom—or circumstances beyond their control).

This truth mirrors that foretold by the prophet Jeremiah.

Jeremiah 51:41–45 “How is Sheshach taken! and how is the praise of the whole earth surprised! how is Babylon become an astonishment among the nations! The sea is come up upon Babylon: she is covered with the multitude of the waves thereof. Her cities are a desolation, a dry land, and a wilderness, a land wherein no man dwelleth, neither doth any son of man pass thereby. And I will punish Bel in Babylon, and I will bring forth out of his mouth that which he hath swallowed up: and the nations shall not flow together any more unto him: yea, the wall of Babylon shall fall. My people, go ye out of the midst of her, and deliver ye every man his soul from the fierce anger of the LORD.”

The angel declares that God is going to exact judgment in direct proportion to the wickedness she has practiced—the root of which lies in her pride.

*Revelation 18:7 “How much she hath glorified herself, and lived deliciously, so much torment and sorrow give her: **for she saith in her heart, I sit a queen, and am no widow, and shall see no sorrow.**”*

As with most all that reject God as Lord in their lives and “enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season” as they indulge in all this world has to offer to fulfill the desires of the flesh, she thinks herself immune to judgment. The prophet Isaiah also prophesied the same concerning Babylon.

*Isaiah 47:7–10 “And thou saidst, I shall be a lady for ever: so that thou didst not lay these things to thy heart, neither didst remember the latter end of it. Therefore hear now this, thou that art given to pleasures, that dwellest carelessly, that sayest in thine heart, I am, and none else beside me; **I shall not sit as a widow, neither shall I know the loss of children: But these two things shall come to thee in a moment in one day, the loss of children, and widowhood:** they shall come upon thee in their perfection for the multitude of thy sorceries, and for the great abundance of thine enchantments. For thou hast trusted in thy wickedness: thou hast said, None seeth me. Thy wisdom and thy knowledge, it hath perverted thee; and thou hast said in thine heart, I am, and none else beside me.”*

Isaiah points out that the lifestyle predominant in Babylon is based on sorcery, magic and wickedness—all prominent methods of deception employed by Satan and his forces. Continuing to read in Revelation, John informs us that Babylon will suffer death and mourning due to famine and ultimately be burned with fire. As I looked again at the root words in the original language, it occurred to me that the reference to “famine” is probably that of spiritual destitution. This would seem to fit the context better in reference to destruction “in a moment in one day” and that fact that she is prosperous until she falls. In fact, Revelation narrows it to one hour.

Revelation 18:10 “Standing afar off for the fear of her torment, saying, Alas, alas, that great city Babylon, that mighty city! for in one hour is thy judgment come.”

When Babylon is destroyed, John reveals that the kings of the earth and others who have profited from intercourse with her will weep and mourn for their loss. It is interesting to note that they will “see” the smoke of her burning. This is no surprise to those of us living in the day of 24-hour television news, but quite impossible to imagine in John’s day.

Babylon’s control of the world economy will be so great that it will destroy the business fortunes of all who are involved in marketing her prime commodities.

- 1) Gold, silver, precious stones and pearls.
- 2) Fine/ white linen, purple garments, silk, scarlet
- 3) Thyine wood (citron wood, a fragrant tree)
- 4) Vessels/ goods of ivory
- 5) All types of vessels/ good of precious wood, brass, iron and marble
- 6) Cinnamon, odours (incense), ointments (perfumed oils), and frankincense
- 7) Wine, oil, fine flour, wheat (grain, especially wheat and corn)
- 8) Beasts (domesticated animals), sheep
- 9) Horses and chariots
- 10) Slaves (forced labor), and souls of men (those willing to sell themselves)

Although there is very little with which I can agree with Vernard Eller concerning his understanding of Revelation, I liked this quote from his writings concerning this section. “And you can be sure it is not accidental on John’s part that ‘slaves and the lives of men’ come at the bottom of the list, following ‘sheep and cattle, horses, chariots.’ This is accurate; the world does not value persons, it uses them; it consumes, exploits, and manipulates people for the sake of the ‘higher values’ of gold and silver, jewels and pearls. The splendor of the world customarily is bought at the expense of the *people* of the world.”

I think a good comparison today would be to consider the response today if the worldwide stock market crashed on one day. Those whose fortunes were dependent on Babylon will weep and mourn but will be helpless to do anything on her behalf.

The response in heaven, however, will be a stark contrast to that on earth. There will be rejoicing by the holy apostles and prophets who were martyred at the hands of those who followed her false religions; they will take satisfaction in God’s vengeance against her.

John then watches as a mighty angel picks up a great millstone and throws it into the sea to illustrate the sudden swiftness with which Babylon will be completely destroyed. The chapter ends by emphasizing that Babylon will never be allowed to arise again after this destruction. I want to end this post with a quote from Joseph Seiss, a theologian of the 19th century.

“When did Babylon ever fall with so complete a fall, or meet with such an utter obliteration from the earth, “as when God overthrew Sodom and Gomorrah?” Sodom and Gomorrah were completely blotted out. But this has never yet been

the case with Babylon. Such was not its fate when the Medes and Persians seized it from the hands of the infamous Belshazzar, for they made it one of their royal cities. In the time of Alexander it still stood, and was the chosen capital of the Graeco-Macedonian empire, the second city of Alexander's dominions, where he himself lived and died. It continued to be a populous place under the Syrian kings, who succeeded Alexander in the rule over it. In the time of the apostles it was still a populous place, for both Peter and Bartholomew preached the Gospel there, and there Peter wrote his first Epistle. As late as A.D. 250, there was a Christian church there, and an influential bishopric for many years thereafter. Five hundred years after Christ there were Jewish academies there, who issued the celebrated Babylonian Talmud. Here, then, was a lengthening out of the existence of Babylon as a populated city for more than a thousand years subsequent to the taking of it by Cyrus. And even to this present hour there is a city in the middle of the area occupied by old Babylon containing 10,000 people, and which pays to its governor a revenue of 342,000 Turkish piastres, more than \$17,000, a year. Shepherds do make their folds there, as testified by all modern travelers, and the Arabians do pitch their tents there. It is not an utter desolation without inhabitant, and never has been since Nimrod laid its first foundations. The sentence upon Babylon is therefore not yet fulfilled, and cannot be unless that city comes up again into something of its former consequence."

Chapter 19 opens with a great worship and praise service in heaven in light of the destruction of Babylon—a consequence of her evil influence on man throughout millennia through the deceptions of the false religions she birthed.

Revelation 19:1–2 "And after these things I heard a great voice of much people in heaven, saying, Alleluia; Salvation, and glory, and honour, and power, unto the Lord our God: For true and righteous are his judgments: for he hath judged the great whore, which did corrupt the earth with her fornication, and hath avenged the blood of his servants at her hand."

God has avenged the death of those that had died as martyrs because of their faith in Him. Then John hears a voice emanating from the throne that encourages ALL God's servants, those that fear Him, to praise Him because it is time for the public presentation of the bride of the Lamb; she is prepared and waiting to be revealed. Point is made that she has been granted ("given and received" from the Greek) the privilege of being robed in fine, clean, white linen—evidence of the righteousness bestowed by Jesus upon all believers. I can't help but be reminded of the words of Isaiah, the encouragement given in the letters to the churches and the vision of the raptured believers before the throne.

Isaiah 1:18 "Come now, and let us reason together, saith the LORD: though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool."

Revelation 3:5, 18 "He that overcometh, the same shall be clothed in white raiment; and I will not blot out his name out of the book of life, but I will confess his name before my Father, and before his angels....I counsel thee to buy of me gold tried in the fire, that thou

mayest be rich; and white raiment, that thou mayest be clothed, and that the shame of thy nakedness do not appear; and anoint thine eyes with eyesalve, that thou mayest see."

Revelation 7:9 "After this I beheld, and, lo, a great multitude, which no man could number, of all nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues, stood before the throne, and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes, and palms in their hands...."

I believe the scripture teaches that the bride of Christ is specific to the body of believers that comprise the church, those that came to saving faith in Jesus during the time between the resurrection of Jesus and the rapture of the saints.

*Ephesians 5:23–32 "For the husband is the head of the wife, even as Christ is the head of the church: and he is the saviour of the body. Therefore as the church is subject unto Christ, so let the wives be to their own husbands in every thing. Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it; That he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word, That he might present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish. So ought men to love their wives as their own bodies. He that loveth his wife loveth himself. For no man ever yet hated his own flesh; but nourisheth and cherisheth it, even as the Lord the church: For we are members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones. For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother, and shall be joined unto his wife, and they two shall be one flesh. **This is a great mystery: but I speak concerning Christ and the church.**"*

I therefore conclude that all those invited to the marriage supper are the Old Testament saints and the tribulation saints. John seems to be overwhelmed by the revelation at this point, so he falls in worship before the messenger. That is one of the weaknesses of believers in the church today; we tend to mix up the messenger with the message and the One the message proclaims. The angel is quick to correct John and instruct him to worship God. Oh that those in leadership in our churches today would do the same!

I thought it would be interesting to note some of the prophetic insights we can glean from the Jewish wedding ceremony.

The Father chooses the bride.

John 6:37 "All that the Father giveth me shall come to me; and him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out."

The bride accepts and loves the groom.

John 16:27 "For the Father himself loveth you, because ye have loved me, and have believed that I came out from God."

The law requires a bride price that is paid by the Father and reflects the value of the bride.

1 Corinthians 6:20 "For ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's."

John 3:16 "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life."

After the betrothal, the Groom goes to prepare a home for His bride.

John 14:2–3 “...I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also.”

The Father determines when the Groom is to take His bride.

Matthew 24:36–37 “But of that day and hour knoweth no man, no, not the angels of heaven, but my Father only. But as the days of Noe were, so shall also the coming of the Son of man be.”

The bride anticipates the coming of her Groom.

Titus 2:12–13 “Teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world; Looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ....”

The wedding feast provides a time for close family and friends to celebrate the marriage as pictured in this chapter of Revelation.

Next, John sees Jesus come through an opening in the heavens astride a white horse. Point is made that He is coming to judge and make war in righteousness—for all the morally correct reasons that He embodies as God. Who is He coming to judge and war against? All those that have rejected Him and aligned themselves with Satan—the original sinner, the father of lies and great deceiver.

Jesus is called “Faithful and True.” Those titles declare that He is trustworthy and completely transparent (from the Greek) as He comes forth to exercise judgment according to the will of the Father.

John 5:22-30 “For the Father judgeth no man, but hath committed all judgment unto the Son: That all men should honour the Son, even as they honour the Father....For as the Father hath life in himself; so hath he given to the Son to have life in himself; And hath given him authority to execute judgment also, because he is the Son of man....I can of mine own self do nothing: as I hear, I judge: and my judgment is just; because I seek not mine own will, but the will of the Father which hath sent me.”

As John continues to describe the returning King, John compares His eyes to a flame of fire; He is angry with righteous anger. John also notes that He is wearing a wreath of many crowns and displays a name that only He knows—a special name between Father and Son. I think it is significant to note that John describes Jesus as wearing a garment that is stained with blood, but the armies accompanying Him are dressed in white. He is wearing this garment as He appears in the heavens, and, I think, represents His own shed blood as well as the blood of all those who died martyrs for their faith in Him. The prophet Isaiah adds a bit more information. Jesus is the sole source of our deliverance.

Isaiah 63:1–3 “Who is this that cometh from Edom, with dyed garments from Bozrah? this that is glorious in his apparel, travelling in the greatness of his strength? I that speak in righteousness, mighty to save. Wherefore art thou red in thine apparel, and thy

garments like him that treadeth in the winefat? I have trodden the winepress alone; and of the people there was none with me: for I will tread them in mine anger, and trample them in my fury; and their blood shall be sprinkled upon my garments, and I will stain all my raiment."

This causes me to believe that Jesus indeed goes first to Bozrah to deliver the believing remnant who have been under His protection there for the last 3.5 years of the tribulation before proceeding on to the Mount of Olives outside Jerusalem to face the armies of Satan and Antichrist. John also points out that the name of Jesus is "The Word of God." He is God in flesh—fully God and fully man.

John 1:1&14 "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.... And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth."

Along with blazing eyes, John sees a sharp sword coming from His mouth; and scripture tells us that this is a reference to His word.

Ephesians 6:17 "And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God...."

Hebrews 4:12 "For the word of God is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any twoedged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart."

The only weapon that the Lord will need to use is His spoken word. That He is treading the winepress of God indicates a judgment of intense and fierce passion, punishment and vengeance on the part of Almighty God—the absolute and universal sovereign, the Omnipotent. There will certainly be no atheists in that day!

The fact that John declares that Jesus will rule the nations with a rod of iron implies that there will be those that survive this final battle. The Greek for the word "rule" states to "tend as a shepherd." The shepherd's rod was used to control the entry to the sheepfold for the purpose of counting, examining, and protecting the sheep. The fact that it is a rod of iron indicates that He will be in total control. He will identify and protect His own—His sheep. Only those that belong to Him will be allowed to enter His kingdom. I think this is what Jesus is referencing as recorded by Matthew.

Matthew 25:31–34 "When the Son of man shall come in his glory, and all the holy angels with him, then shall he sit upon the throne of his glory: And before him shall be gathered all nations: and he shall separate them one from another, as a shepherd divideth his sheep from the goats: And he shall set the sheep on his right hand, but the goats on the left. Then shall the King say unto them on his right hand, Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world...."

John then finishes his description by telling us the garment Jesus is wearing is engraved or emblazoned with His name—KING of kings and LORD of lords. I think that is self-explanatory.

I believe scripture declares that all those in heaven who have placed their faith in God through the sacrifice of His Son Jesus for their salvation will be part of the multitude of saints that accompany Jesus on His return.

*1 Thessalonians 3:12–13 “And the Lord make you to increase and abound in love one toward another, and toward all men, even as we do toward you: To the end he may stablish your hearts unblameable in holiness before God, even our Father, at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ **with all his saints.**”*

*Jude 1:14–15 “And Enoch also, the seventh from Adam, prophesied of these, saying, Behold, **the Lord cometh with ten thousands of his saints**, To execute judgment upon all, and to convince all that are ungodly among them of all their ungodly deeds which they have ungodly committed, and of all their hard speeches which ungodly sinners have spoken against him.” (The Greek references a “myriad” or indefinite number.)*

John next sees an angel standing in the sun (an amazing picture in my mind) sending out a call to all the carnivorous birds to come to a great feast that the Lord is preparing for them that will consist of kings, captains, mighty men, and horses and their riders—the armies of the Antichrist that are gathered to make war against Jesus. This invitation seems directly connected to that foretold by Ezekiel.

Ezekiel 39:17–20 “And, thou son of man, thus saith the Lord GOD; Speak unto every feathered fowl, and to every beast of the field, Assemble yourselves, and come; gather yourselves on every side to my sacrifice that I do sacrifice for you, even a great sacrifice upon the mountains of Israel, that ye may eat flesh, and drink blood. Ye shall eat the flesh of the mighty, and drink the blood of the princes of the earth, of rams, of lambs, and of goats, of bullocks, all of them fatlings of Bashan. And ye shall eat fat till ye be full, and drink blood till ye be drunken, of my sacrifice which I have sacrificed for you. Thus ye shall be filled at my table with horses and chariots, with mighty men, and with all men of war, saith the Lord GOD.”

I think it is significant to note that no record is made of actual conflict. I couldn't help but think how John described the armies of heaven as being dressed in “fine linen, white and clean,” and I think that is how they remain. They are not required to fight, but only to witness the Lord's great victory.

The next thing we read is that the beast and the false prophet are cast alive into the “lake of fire burning with brimstone.” All Jesus has to do is speak the word to achieve victory. At His word the armies of the Antichrist will fall dead to provide the great feast for the birds.

John again makes the point that it is the false prophet that is responsible for deceiving those that had taken the mark of the beast and worshipped his image

with the miracles he was able to perform. I think that this is a truth that many in the church today tend to ignore. The prevalent school of thought today is that "seeing is believing." Satan and his forces are well aware of that weakness as a point of attack to deceive people and move forward their agenda. Scripture is everywhere clear that our fight is against spiritual forces that can perform miracles and lying wonders.

Deuteronomy 13:1–3 "If there arise among you a prophet, or a dreamer of dreams, and giveth thee a sign or a wonder, And the sign or the wonder come to pass, whereof he spake unto thee, saying, Let us go after other gods, which thou hast not known, and let us serve them; Thou shalt not hearken unto the words of that prophet, or that dreamer of dreams: for the LORD your God proveth you, to know whether ye love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul. "

Ephesians 6:12 "For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places."

2 Thessalonians 2:7–10 "For the mystery of iniquity doth already work: only he who now letteth will let, until he be taken out of the way. And then shall that Wicked be revealed, whom the Lord shall consume with the spirit of his mouth, and shall destroy with the brightness of his coming: Even him, whose coming is after the working of Satan with all power and signs and lying wonders, And with all deceivableness of unrighteousness in them that perish; because they received not the love of the truth, that they might be saved."

2 Corinthians 11:13–15 "For such are false apostles, deceitful workers, transforming themselves into the apostles of Christ. And no marvel; for Satan himself is transformed into an angel of light. Therefore it is no great thing if his ministers also be transformed as the ministers of righteousness; whose end shall be according to their works."

Note that Paul was very clear in telling the Thessalonians that the mystery of iniquity was already at work in their day. I believe that these works will continue to manifest themselves more openly as the time for the end approaches. No one knows the day or hour of the return of Jesus, but we are certainly expected to understand the time of its approach. Personally, I think Satan has an even greater understanding than we do.

Hebrews 10:24–25 "And let us consider one another to provoke unto love and to good works: Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is; but exhorting one another: and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching."

Next John sees another angel coming down from heaven carrying a great chain and the key to the bottomless pit. He takes hold of Satan, binds him with the chain and shuts him up in the bottomless pit for a thousand years. All Jesus has to do is speak the word to bind Satan, but He provides a vision for John to relate to that speaks to human understanding.

If you remember in our study of chapter nine, an angel was given a key to the bottomless pit; here again an angel emerges from heaven with a key to the pit.

The One in control of the key is obviously the One in control of heaven—and the rest of creation—God. He is delegating use of the key in accordance with the fulfillment of His purposes.

A special seal is put upon Satan that prevents him from deceiving the nations during the millennial kingdom. I think that includes a reference to restraining the activity of his demonic forces.

During the 1000 years that Jesus reigns on earth, popularly known as the millennium, Jesus will reign over the nations from the throne of David in Jerusalem. Jesus will govern in righteousness and will be immune to the influences that resulted in the corrupt governments of the nations throughout history. Those who had been beheaded and died as martyrs for their testimony of Jesus and the truth of God's word during the tribulation will be given positions of authority in the millennial kingdom. The rest of the wicked dead, however, will not be resurrected until the end of the 1000 years.

John records that the resurrection of the tribulation saints will complete the first resurrection. This tells me that everyone who accepts Jesus as Lord and Savior during the millennial kingdom will experience the same transformation to immortality that the raptured saints experienced prior to the tribulation.

John then goes on to reveal that all those who have been a part of the first resurrection (Old Testament saints, church age saints and tribulation saints) will be "priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with Him a thousand years."

We can't all be on thrones, but we will all be in positions of service and leadership in the millennial kingdom it would appear. It would seem to me that as part of a "royal priesthood," the Old Testament saints and church age saints would serve in positions of spiritual leadership as opposed to the governmental leadership delegated to the tribulation saints.

It would be easy to get side-tracked from Revelation to study what scripture reveals concerning the millennium, but I won't. I will summarize and say that scripture declares it to be a time of enforced peace in which the promises to Abraham and David find complete fulfillment. The curse on creation will be lifted to the point that the wolf will lie down with the lamb, the calf with the lion, and children will not even have to fear the bite of a snake.

Isaiah 2:3–4 "And many people shall go and say, Come ye, and let us go up to the mountain of the LORD, to the house of the God of Jacob; and he will teach us of his ways, and we will walk in his paths: for out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the LORD from Jerusalem. And he shall judge among the nations, and shall rebuke many people: and they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruninghooks: nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more."

Isaiah 11:6–9 "The wolf also shall dwell with the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the kid; and the calf and the young lion and the fatling together; and a little child

shall lead them. And the cow and the bear shall feed; their young ones shall lie down together: and the lion shall eat straw like the ox. And the sucking child shall play on the hole of the asp, and the weaned child shall put his hand on the cockatrice' den. They shall not hurt nor destroy in all my holy mountain: for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the LORD, as the waters cover the sea."

At this point John reveals one of the most amazing prophecies of all.

Revelation 20:7–8 "And when the thousand years are expired, Satan shall be loosed out of his prison, And shall go out to deceive the nations which are in the four quarters of the earth, Gog and Magog, to gather them together to battle: the number of whom is as the sand of the sea."

At the end of the 1000 years God will release Satan for a short time. I believe it will be a time of proving for all those that have professed allegiance to the Lord similar to that referenced by Moses in Deuteronomy.

*Deuteronomy 13:1–3 "If there arise among you a prophet, or a dreamer of dreams, and giveth thee a sign or a wonder, And the sign or the wonder come to pass, whereof he spake unto thee, saying, Let us go after other gods, which thou hast not known, and let us serve them; Thou shalt not hearken unto the words of that prophet, or that dreamer of dreams: **for the LORD your God proveth you, to know whether ye love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul.**"*

Incredibly, in spite of 1000 years of experiencing life in a peaceful and prosperous kingdom, Satan will be able to gather an army "the number of whom is as the sand of the sea." As soon as they are positioned for battle outside the city of Jerusalem, God will destroy them with fire from heaven. Satan will then be cast into the lake of fire to suffer eternal torment with the beast and false prophet.

John then sees the great white throne of judgment positioned in a dimension outside the confines of our universe. ALL the "dead," those who have had no part in the first resurrection and have rejected life in Jesus, are gathered together before the throne to await judgment according to their individual works as recorded in heaven in "the books" and the record of "the book of life." Twice John tells us that these people are judged according to their works, and scripture reveals that the result will be eternal condemnation.

*John 6:28–29 "Then said they unto him, What shall we do, that we might work the works of God? Jesus answered and said unto them, **This is the work of God, that ye believe on him whom he hath sent.**"*

*John 3:17–18 "For God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through him might be saved. He that believeth on him is not condemned: **but he that believeth not is condemned already**, because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God."*

2 Thessalonians 1:7–9 “... the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with his mighty angels, In flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ: Who shall be punished **with everlasting destruction** from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power....”

Small comfort though it be to those eternally damned, there does seem to be an indication that there are different levels of eternal punishment just as there will be different levels of reward for the believers.

Matthew 11:21–24 “Woe unto thee, Chorazin! woe unto thee, Bethsaida! for if the mighty works, which were done in you, had been done in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented long ago in sackcloth and ashes. But I say unto you, It shall be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon at the day of judgment, than for you. And thou, Capernaum, which art exalted unto heaven, shalt be brought down to hell: for if the mighty works, which have been done in thee, had been done in Sodom, it would have remained until this day. But I say unto you, That it shall be more tolerable for the land of Sodom in the day of judgment, than for thee.” (Though the reference is to the cities, it is obvious that the message is intended for the people of those cities.)

1 Corinthians 3:11–15 “For other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ. Now if any man build upon this foundation gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, stubble; Every man’s work shall be made manifest: for the day shall declare it, because it shall be revealed by fire; and the fire shall try every man’s work of what sort it is. If any man’s work abide which he hath built thereupon, he shall receive a reward. If any man’s work shall be burned, he shall suffer loss: but he himself shall be saved; yet so as by fire.”

Matthew 6:19–20 “Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth, where moth and rust doth corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal: But lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steal....”

This chapter closes with death and hell being consumed by the lake of fire and all those not found in the Book of Life cast into it as well. Point is made that this lake of fire had not been intended for man; it had been created for the devil and his angels, those who first brought sin into God’s creation.

Matthew 25:41 “Then shall he say also unto them on the left hand, Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels....”

By choosing to follow Satan as Lord, men essentially chose to share his eternal destiny.

We are now ready for Revelation 21 and given a glimpse into the eternal hereafter.

Revelation 21:1 “And I saw a new heaven and a new earth: for the first heaven and the first earth were passed away; and there was no more sea.”

The Greek defines "new" as referencing something "fresh"; Kenneth Wuest translates it like this: "...a heaven new in quality and an earth new in quality...."

I think this understanding is supported in other sections of scripture.

Isaiah 51:6 "Lift up your eyes to the heavens, and look upon the earth beneath: for the heavens shall vanish away like smoke, and the earth shall wax old like a garment, and they that dwell therein shall die in like manner: but my salvation shall be for ever, and my righteousness shall not be abolished."

*Hebrews 1:10–12 "And, Thou, Lord, in the beginning hast laid the foundation of the earth; and the heavens are the works of thine hands: They shall perish; but thou remainest; and they all shall wax old as doth a garment; And as a vesture shalt thou fold them up, **and they shall be changed**: but thou art the same, and thy years shall not fail."*

Paul adds more food for thought.

Colossians 1:17 "And he is before all things, and by him all things consist." ["He" being Jesus.]

Maybe this is a reference to His letting go for a moment only to speak the word to bring it back together as a "new" creation. I found an article by Lambert Dolphin who reasons it as follows.

The nucleus of the atom contains positively charged and neutral particles-to use a simplistic model. Mutual electrostatic repulsion between the like-positive protons would drive the nucleus apart if it were not for the "strong force" which binds the nucleus together....Similarly, accelerated electrons circling the nucleus should quickly radiate all their energy away and fall into the nucleus unless there exists an invisible energy source to counteract this.

The third New Testament creation-related passage which talks about atomic structure and physics is found in the Apostle Peter's Second Epistle: But the day of the Lord will come like a thief, and then the heavens will pass away with a loud noise [rhoizedon, a rushing roar] and the elements [stoicheion, atoms] will be dissolved with fire and the earth and the works that are upon it will be burned up. (2 Peter 3:10) The Greek word translated "elements" in the above-mentioned passage from Colossians (and in 2 Peter also) is stoicheion, which can mean "the building blocks of the universe," or "the ordered arrangement of things." It can also mean the "atomic elements." The word translated "dissolved" in 2 Peter 3:10 is literally (in Greek) luo, meaning "unloosed." This language suggests that there will come a time in the future when God lets go of the nuclear forces which hold the atom together. This passage, like the one in Colossians, strongly suggests that the active power of God is behind the mysterious strong force that holds every atomic nucleus together. If this is so, all the other fundamental forces of nature are likewise forces that originate with Christ and His sustaining direction of the old creation.

If God "sustains the universe by His mighty word of power," moment by moment, were He to merely relax His grasp on the universe, every atom would come apart "by fire" (that is, by nuclear fire). It is inescapable that the Bible claims that God dynamically sustains the universe, including the very atoms themselves. Atoms, it would seem, are "stable" only because force and energy are being supplied into their physical nuclear binding fields from "outside" the system. [end excerpt]

In light of the above, I think it is interesting to note that "earth and the heaven fled away" from the great white throne and then suddenly appear as a new heaven and new earth after that judgment has taken place.

John also tells us that there will be no more sea—a reference to the salt waters. I think this is probably because fresh waters will be all that is needed for the environment of the new earth. I would assume that earth will once again be characterized by Eden-like conditions and that man will enjoy the bounty of its provision in the same way as Adam and Eve did before they chose to sin. Everything in the new creation will be for the benefit of man just as it was in Eden in the beginning.

After seeing the emergence of the new heaven and new earth, John is now given a vision of the new Jerusalem.

Revelation 21:2 "And I John saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband."

I can't help but think of a section in Hebrews.

Hebrews 11:8–16 "By faith Abraham, when he was called to go out into a place which he should after receive for an inheritance, obeyed; and he went out, not knowing whither he went. By faith he sojourned in the land of promise, as in a strange country, dwelling in tabernacles with Isaac and Jacob, the heirs with him of the same promise: For he looked for a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God.... These all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off, and were persuaded of them, and embraced them, and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth....But now they desire a better country, that is, an heavenly: wherefore God is not ashamed to be called their God: for he hath prepared for them a city."

The New Jerusalem is the city God prepared for them—and for all those who have placed their faith in Him. John describes the city as looking as beautiful as a bride adorned for her husband. Finally, the creation of God will enjoy the blessing of true fellowship with God rooted in a relationship of unconditional love. His people will finally understand and completely embrace the truth that God's way is the best and His will an expression of His love. Then he reveals a precious promise.

Revelation 21:4 "And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away."

All of these things are associated with the curse connected to sin. Sin and the curse are things of the past, a part of the old heaven and earth. The new creation is fresh—as things were before pride, rebellion, or sin entered the picture. All those who enter this new creation have already “passed the test” so to speak. They have chosen of their own free will to follow and serve God; they are new creations in Christ Jesus. They will never suffer temptation or testing again. They only have to look forward to sweet fellowship with their Creator, their Father, their Savior.

John then hears Jesus declare that He has made all things new, and He instructs John to make a written record of this truth. Jesus then declares that John has seen a vision of the culmination of God’s plan—It is done! He declares Himself to be the “Alpha and Omega”—the beginning and the ending, the originating Source and the One who brings things to fulfillment, the One in whom we have our being.

Jesus follows this statement with a declaration that He is the Source of the water of life and freely gives to all who thirst. I think this statement is directly connected to the truth He told the Samaritan woman at the well.

John 4:14 “But whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst; but the water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life.”

His next statement: *“He that overcometh shall inherit all things; and I will be his God, and he shall be my son.”* We learned about the overcomer in chapters two and three as He addressed His letters to the churches. The overcomer is one who listens to and heeds (acts on or lives according to) the message of God’s truth. John explained this clearly in his first epistle.

1 John 5:3–4 “For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments: and his commandments are not grievous. For whatsoever is born of God overcometh the world: and this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith.”

1 John 2:15–17 “Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world. And the world passeth away, and the lust thereof: but he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever.”

It is our faith in God that equips us to overcome the world, all that is associated with sin—the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes and the pride of life. As overcomers, we get to enjoy God’s blessings as part of His family.

Sadly, there is a contrasting truth. There will be those that chose the ways of the world and rejected the authority and salvation of God in Jesus.

Revelation 21:8 "But the fearful, and unbelieving, and the abominable, and murderers, and whoremongers, and sorcerers, and idolaters, and all liars, shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone: which is the second death."

I think it is significant that the first two identifying characteristics of those who are condemned for eternity are "fearful and unbelieving." The Greek makes a reference to being "faithless and disbelieving." All the other sins we consider heinous (or at least used to) follow after those two because they are actually rooted in one's rejection of God. No matter how often or how boldly the Rob Bell's of this world deny its reality; those who reject the provision of God in Jesus will have their part in hell—"the lake which burns with fire and brimstone."

John then records that one of the angels that had released one of the vial judgments called him over to see the Lamb's wife. Point is made that John is carried away in the spirit to a great high mountain to be shown the new Jerusalem descending from heaven; he needed to be closer to appreciate the details. It is interesting to note that in the beginning of the chapter the city is described as a bride adorned for her husband, but in this section point is made that she is "the Wife of the Lamb."

Once again, I am seeing this section with new eyes. We have entered eternity. I am not sure the distinction between believers of different times or dispensations in the working of God are any longer valid. In fact, the description of the city honors both Old Testament and New Testament servants of God; and the last verse in this chapter informs us that all may enter "whose names are written in the Lamb's Book of Life."

John declares that the city shines with the glory of God—a glory described later in the chapter as negating the need of the sun or moon within its confines. The brilliance of her shining is compared to a crystal clear diamond. This brilliance is the full revelation of the Shekinah glory of God and the Lamb and will be all the light that is needed.

The walls of the city are very high and have 12 gates or entry points that are attended by 12 angels. Three gates are designated on each of the four sides of the city facing east, north, south and west respectively. Each of the 12 gates is named for one of the tribes of Israel, or each gate is inscribed with the names of all 12 tribes. I tend to think that they will be individually named since that will be the case for the gates in the walls around Jerusalem in the millennial kingdom as revealed by Ezekiel and possibly in accordance with the same designation.

Ezekiel 48:31–34 "And the gates of the city shall be after the names of the tribes of Israel: three gates northward; one gate of Reuben, one gate of Judah, one gate of Levi. And at the east side...one gate of Joseph, one gate of Benjamin, one gate of Dan. And at the south... one gate of Simeon, one gate of Issachar, one gate of Zebulun. At the west side...one gate of Gad, one gate of Asher, one gate of Naphtali."

John also describes the wall of the city as being built on twelve foundations. Each foundation is named for one of the twelve apostles of Jesus, or each

foundation is inscribed with the names of all twelve apostles. Again, I would tend to think that each foundation will be individually named as well. Is the 12th apostle being referenced Paul or Matthias? Sentiment goes with Paul; he, however, refers to “the twelve” in his letter to the Corinthians, which at that time included Matthias. Only the future will reveal the truth.

1 Corinthians 15:3–5 “For I delivered unto you first of all that which I also received, how that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures; And that he was buried, and that he rose again the third day according to the scriptures: And that he was seen of Cephas, then of the twelve....”

John next clarifies that the city is four-square, a cube that measures the same in length and width and height—a distance of 12,000 furlongs or 1500 miles each. The thickness of the wall measures 144 cubits, or approximately 216 feet. This is the record of actual measurements made by the angel as witnessed by John.

John also reveals the materials used in constructing the city. The walls are made of diamond and the city itself of pure, transparent gold that looks like glass. Each of the twelve foundations of the city are adorned with precious stones (some of which we are unsure of their reference)—the first with diamond, the second with sapphire, the third with chalcedony, the fourth with emerald, the fifth with sardonyx, the sixth with sardius, the seventh with chrysolite, the eighth with beryl, the ninth with topaz, the tenth with chrysoprasus, the eleventh with jacinth and the twelfth with amethyst. Each of the 12 gates is made of a single pearl, and the street of the city is of pure, transparent gold.

The next revelation is that the new Jerusalem will have no temple. This is a first; it emphasizes the truth that God will be dwelling among His people with unrestrained personal access. The temple on earth always represented the place of God’s presence among His people. In eternity the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are omnipresent among His people and anticipating our every desire as we love and serve Him for eternity.

Revelation 21:24–27 “And the nations of them which are saved shall walk in the light of it: and the kings of the earth do bring their glory and honour into it. And the gates of it shall not be shut at all by day: for there shall be no night there. And they shall bring the glory and honour of the nations into it. And there shall in no wise enter into it any thing that defileth, neither whatsoever worketh abomination, or maketh a lie: but they which are written in the Lamb’s book of life.”

As this chapter comes to a close, we are told that the nations of them that are saved will walk in the light of the city. That includes everyone whose name was found written in the Lamb’s book of life. It implies to me that the new earth will be the primary dwelling place of man for eternity, but that we will be free to come and go as we please in fellowship, worship and service to the Lord. The gates will never be closed and there will be no night. The reference to the kings of the earth implies to me that there will be a governing hierarchy, possibly related to heavenly rewards.

I think emphasis is made that nothing that defiles, works abomination or makes a lie will be allowed to enter it because that was what ruined the original creation. Our Father does not want us thinking that there is even a possibility that could happen again.

The next thing that catches John's attention is a *"pure river of water of life, clear as crystal, proceeding out of the throne of God and of the Lamb."* On either side of the river is the tree of life that produces twelve different fruits. It either produces a different fruit each month or a new supply of all twelve fruits each month. The leaves of the tree are for the "healing" of the nations. This didn't make sense in light of the perfection that will characterize our surroundings, so I looked at the Greek, and it includes a reference to adoration and worship. That makes me think that we will use them in some way to honor God. The next verse actually emphasizes that there will be no more curse and that His servants will serve Him (in reference to both God and the Lamb).

John then reveals that we, His servants, will be able to see His face—without danger, with intimacy. We will proudly have His name etched in some way in our foreheads. This reminds me of the seal of the 144,000.

Revelation 7:3–4 "Saying, Hurt not the earth, neither the sea, nor the trees, till we have sealed the servants of our God in their foreheads. And I heard the number of them which were sealed: and there were sealed an hundred and forty and four thousand of all the tribes of the children of Israel."

Revelation 14:1 "And I looked, and, lo, a Lamb stood on the mount Sion, and with him an hundred forty and four thousand, having his Father's name written in their foreheads."

The angel also tells John that this revelation has been given him to show God's servants the things that they can expect to happen "shortly," in a fixed place in time. Point is made that everything he has been shown is true and will be fulfilled. I am reminded again of the unchanging character of God. He always prepares His people and tells them what to expect in light of coming judgment.

Jesus suddenly speaks up and declares that He is coming "quickly"—shortly, i.e. without delay, soon, or (by surprise) suddenly. The Greek gives a full understanding according to scripture. He is coming soon according to God's reckoning of time, and He will come suddenly by surprise.

2 Peter 3:8 "But, beloved, be not ignorant of this one thing, that one day is with the Lord as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day."

Revelation 3:3 "Remember therefore how thou hast received and heard, and hold fast, and repent. If therefore thou shalt not watch, I will come on thee as a thief, and thou shalt not know what hour I will come upon thee."

With the reminder of His soon return, the Lord declares that those who keep or hold fast to the "sayings of the prophecy of this book" will be blessed. This is a powerful rebuke to those that declare the study of prophecy to be unimportant

and a waste of time. Sadly, there are many recognized leaders in the church today who hold that view. Whatever their motive, it is self-serving and/or in disobedience to the will of God for His people.

Right after recording the words of Jesus, John immediately confirms that He witnessed all that He recorded. The voice of Jesus prompted John to fall down in a position of worship before his angelic guide. As every true servant of God should always do, he quickly rebukes John; he identifies himself as a fellowservant, a prophet of God and one who also holds fast to the truth revealed in this book. Though it can be confusing at times, we must remember that the word for “angel” simply means “messenger.” It would seem that there is a likelihood that some of God’s prophets will get to participate in the events about which they prophesied; this angel was originally identified as one that had poured out one of the seven vials of judgment. The angel then rightly declares that our worship is to be directed to God. There are many pastors and leaders in the church today that need to be reminded of that truth.

Unlike Daniel, whose message was directed towards those who would live at the time of the end, John is told not to seal the message of this book; its truth is applicable even now—at the time John received it (around 90 AD).

Verse 11 is a hard verse.

Revelation 22:11 “He that is unjust, let him be unjust still: and he which is filthy, let him be filthy still: and he that is righteous, let him be righteous still: and he that is holy, let him be holy still.”

I think it is a statement of man’s free will. Those who have chosen to be unjust and filthy have that choice; those who have chosen to be righteous and holy also have that choice. It could, however, be a statement of the finality and eternal condition resulting from the choices of men as revealed to John.

Once again John hears Jesus declare that He is coming quickly to reward every person according to his/her works. Once again Jesus declares Himself to be the “Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end, the first and the last.”

John begins to close the book with a reminder that to “do” the will of God gives proof to our position in Christ, one who has the right to partake of the fruit of the tree of life and enter the gates of the New Jerusalem. This takes us back to the Garden of Eden. I am reminded that it was only the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil that was forbidden to Adam and Eve. It was after they disobeyed God and died spiritually that they were sent out of the garden and no longer allowed access to the tree of life. It seems that the fruit of this tree is only intended for the consumption of those who are indwelt by the Spirit of God.

Those left on the outside of the New Jerusalem are identified as “*dogs, and sorcerers, and whoremongers, and murderers, and idolaters, and whosoever loveth and maketh a lie.*” In John’s day “dogs” was understood as a reference to that which

was unclean. Every person in hell will be judged and condemned for their works in connection with that identification.

Once again John hears the voice of Jesus.

Revelation 22:16 "I Jesus have sent mine angel to testify unto you these things in the churches. I am the root and the offspring of David, and the bright and morning star."

I am reminded that this whole book was given as a revelation of Jesus Christ. Jesus is testifying to the truth of John's record and its application to the churches. Jesus declares Himself as the root and offspring of David, a reference to the prophecy of Isaiah.

*Isaiah 11:1–5 & 10 "And there shall come forth a rod out of the stem of Jesse, and a Branch shall grow out of his roots: And the spirit of the LORD shall rest upon him, the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of counsel and might, the spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the LORD; And shall make him of quick understanding in the fear of the LORD: and he shall not judge after the sight of his eyes, neither reprove after the hearing of his ears: But with righteousness shall he judge the poor, and reprove with equity for the meek of the earth: and he shall smite the earth with the rod of his mouth, and with the breath of his lips shall he slay the wicked. And righteousness shall be the girdle of his loins, and faithfulness the girdle of his reins.... And in that day there shall be **a root of Jesse**, which shall stand for an ensign of the people; to it shall the Gentiles seek: and his rest shall be glorious."*

John then issues an invitation through the ministry of the Holy Spirit in the true church saying, "Come. And let him that is athirst come. And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely." There is no better understanding of this invitation than that which Jesus gave to the Samaritan woman at the well.

John 4:9–14 "Then saith the woman of Samaria unto him, How is it that thou, being a Jew, askest drink of me, which am a woman of Samaria? for the Jews have no dealings with the Samaritans. Jesus answered and said unto her, If thou knewest the gift of God, and who it is that saith to thee, Give me to drink; thou wouldest have asked of him, and he would have given thee living water....Whosoever drinketh of this water shall thirst again: But whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst; but the water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life."

Jesus is obviously comparing living water to salvation, and He made it even clearer in another teaching.

John 7:37–39 "In the last day, that great day of the feast, Jesus stood and cried, saying, If any man thirst, let him come unto me, and drink. He that believeth on me, as the scripture hath said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water. (But this spake he of the Spirit, which they that believe on him should receive: for the Holy Ghost was not yet given; because that Jesus was not yet glorified.)"

Our spiritual life is directly connected to the presence of the Holy Spirit in us.

Romans 8:10–11 “And if Christ be in you, the body is dead because of sin; but the Spirit is life because of righteousness. But if the Spirit of him that raised up Jesus from the dead dwell in you, he that raised up Christ from the dead shall also quicken your mortal bodies by his Spirit that dwelleth in you.”

I take the message of the next two verses very seriously.

Revelation 22:18–19 “For I testify unto every man that heareth the words of the prophecy of this book, If any man shall add unto these things, God shall add unto him the plagues that are written in this book: And if any man shall take away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part out of the book of life, and out of the holy city, and from the things which are written in this book.”

I try to be very clear in all the studies I share that I am presenting the truth of scripture as I understand it. I continually ask the Lord to protect me from presenting anything that would be dishonoring to Him. I am trying to follow the instruction given by the Apostle Peter.

1 Peter 3:15 “But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts: and be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you with meekness and fear....”

I am not a scholar. There are many very learned men who disagree on “the truth” of God’s word. Although I feel very strongly about many of the “truths” in scripture as I see them, I tremble at the thought of ever leading someone in the wrong direction. It’s always a hard thing to process that we all have the same word from God and the same Holy Spirit to teach us, yet we come away with such different understandings regarding many sections of Scripture. I truly pray that the Lord will keep my heart and mind sensitive to the leading of the Spirit, and that I will not miss out on understanding the truth He wants to share with me due to not being willing to listen to something that may go against “what I have always believed.” I believe that is one of the greatest lessons to learn from trying to take each verse of scripture and asking the Spirit to help you understand. It keeps you humble by revealing all that you don’t know and have yet to learn regarding God’s word.

May I echo the words of Joseph Seiss once again, “If I have read into this book anything which He has not put there, or read out of it anything which He has put there, with the profoundest sorrow would I recant....If I err, God forgive me! If I am right, God bless my feeble testimony. In either case, God speed His everlasting truth!”

The book closes with a declaration that Jesus is coming quickly—“soon or suddenly” from the Greek. I take it as “soon” from a heavenly perspective and “suddenly” from an earthly perspective. I wholeheartedly agree with John as he answers, “Even so, come, Lord Jesus.”

I pray this study has been a blessing and/or a challenge to you as you study the scripture on your own.

Revelation 22:21 "The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all. Amen."