

REVELATION

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The book that I primarily used for this study was Tyndale New Testament Commentaries Revelation by Leon Morris, with some references taken from The Daily Bible Series The Revelation of John by William Barclay, Through the Bible Revelation by Vernon McGee, and Life Application Bible's commentary, and to a lesser degree Plain Talk on Revelation by Manford George Gutzke, and Revelation by Tim LaHaye.

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This work is dedicated to Sheila Smith, my wife.

William S. Smith

REVELATION

What images come to your mind when you think of the 2nd Coming of Jesus?

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.
- 6.
- 7.
- 8.

You'll be surprised how many of things you've listed may not be found in John's Revelation. Many of them come from other sources. If we just stay with the New Testament, you'll find that most of the writings dealing with the above things come from the following:

Matthew 24: 1 - 51

Mark 13: 1 - 37

Luke 21: 5 - 38

1 Thess 4: 15 -17

1 Thess 5: 1 - 10

2 Thess 1: 1 - 10

2 Thess 2: 1 - 12

Let's look through these, and see how many of the items on our list we can find, and where.

Keep in mind as you read through the Gospel accounts that Jesus' teachings cover the destruction of Jerusalem as well as his own 2nd Coming, and that many biblical prophecies covered both current and future events at the same time.

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There are many different and diverse views as to how to interpret the events in the book of Revelation. The good news is that generally, none of these views are “salvation issues”. We can “agree to disagree”. What is important is that we believe in Jesus Christ, as the only begotten Son of God who died for our sins so that we could have salvation by simply accepting Him as our personal Lord and Savior. He, Jesus, will triumph over Satan.

Why do we have these diverse views? Well, it is quite understandable. We are looking at a writing which is both “prophetic” and “*apocalyptic*”. Basically the problem is that the book of Revelation talks about events that had not yet taken place at the time of the writing, and the writing itself is not always crystal clear as to meaning. In addition, we are trying to relate the book of Revelation to other New Testament writings and teachings. Naturally, any time we are left to interpret for ourselves, there will be many views.

When we talk about the book of Revelation, our views or interpretation are usually based on three factors: when will these events take place, when will the 1,000 year reign (millennium) occur, and when will Rapture (when the believers are “caught up in the sky” to join Jesus at the time of His 2nd Coming) occur.

Views of when the events recorded in Revelation will take place:

- Ÿ Preterist: John is referring to events of his own time (about AD 96).
- Ÿ Historical: John is writing about events that would take place throughout the history of the church. Some of the events have already taken place, and some have not.
- Ÿ Futurist: John is writing about future events (especially starting with chapter 4).
- Ÿ Idealist: John is describing (in symbolic terms) the continuing struggle between good and evil throughout the ages. It may be applied to any point in history.

Views of the timing of the 1,000 year reign:

- Ÿ Pre-millennialist: expects Christ’s 2nd coming to initiate the 1,000 year reign, which will occur before Satan’s final defeat.
- Ÿ Post-millennialist: expects Christ’s 2nd coming to follow the 1,000 year reign. The 1,000 year reign is a time of peace on earth (due to the work of the church). Satan is unleashed after the 1,000 years but Satan will be defeated by Christ.
- Ÿ A-millennialist: Views the 1,000 year period as representing the time between Christ’s ascension (about AD 30) and his return (2nd Coming). The reign refers to Christ’s reign in the hearts of believers.

Views of when Rapture will occur:

- Ÿ Pre-tribulation: Believers will be raptured before the 7 year tribulation period. This is the view espoused in popular “Left Behind” series. True believers will not have to go through these terrible events. The non-believers will, and some of them will become believers. Many Christian ministers object to this view as it implies a 2nd chance.
- Ÿ Post-tribulation: Believers will be raptured after the tribulation period. Yuck - I vote to not have to go through the tribulation period - but I don’t think the sovereign God of the universe is going to use a democratic poll to decide this.
- Ÿ Mid-tribulation: Believers will be raptured halfway through the 7 year tribulation period.

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1: 1 - 3 John tells us that this is the revelation of Jesus Christ. That means it is the revelation as revealed by Jesus (through his angel) to John who is writing it down for us. It is not a revelation about Jesus. What is interesting here is that God the Father has shared this information with us (his servants). When Jesus talked to his followers about the end times, he told them that only the Father knew when the events would occur. We still don't know when these events will occur, but God is revealing to us more about these events. Why? My guess is that God wanted to encourage us - not just the people of John's time, but all Christians throughout history.

John also promises us a blessing. Notice that it goes to those that "read", those that "hear", and those that "keep". Today, we all have bibles and can read Revelation for ourselves. What was the situation when John wrote these words? Who would the "readers" be? Who would the "hearers" be. If we're non-believers and we hear these words being read/preached, will we receive a blessing? Why?

John mentions that "the time is near". Well, it's been 2,000 years - so I guess John wasn't saying the time was imminent, but he was saying that we should be ready at all times for the events described. How do we, as Christians, prepare for (or be ready for) these events?

1: 4 - 6 So, why only 7 churches? There were certainly more than 7 churches in Asia. How did John choose these? (can we really say that he chose them when he was told to write to each of them?). Here are some thoughts on this.

- Y The seven churches were chosen because they were the seven centrally located churches in the area. Letters written to them could easily be shared with the other churches nearby. And, don't forget that John couldn't just print off extra copies from his PC. Each letter had to be hand written.
- Y The seven churches represented all churches. The number seven is often representative of the perfect number. Perfect meaning complete, and complete meaning all.
- Y The seven churches were chosen because John had a special relationship with them.
- Y The seven churches represented all churches (yes - I know I already said this). The strengths and weaknesses each of them had were representative of all churches.
- Y The seven churches each represented a specific portion of church history. Which view (preterist, historical, futurist, or idealist) do you think came up with this idea?
- Y The seven churches represented those churches which would be easily visited by a person making a circular journey following the Roman road in a clockwise direction. (This could mean only one letter was written, and that it was then shared - first with the 7 churches and then with the rest of the churches).

What do you think John meant when he said "the province of Asia"? Did this necessarily mean the same thing then as it does today?

We normally talk about the trinity - Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. But John uses the term "seven spirits". Why do you think he did that? I believe that John was referring to the Holy Spirit when he said "seven spirits". There are references to the sevenfold attributes of God (see **Isaiah 11:2**), and this may be one of them. Or, this may simply be a way of referring to the totality (completeness) of God.

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1: 7 What does this verse say about who will see Jesus' return? If someone tells you that Jesus has returned and that he is in the desert (or Florida), you can know they are wrong. All will see him, all will know him to be Jesus.

Who do you think John is referring to when he says "even those who pierced him"? The Roman soldiers who crucified him are long dead now, although some of them may have still been alive when John wrote these words. Do you think he is referring to the Jews who wouldn't acknowledge him, to the people today who refuse to believe in him, to us when we sin, or?

Why do think the peoples of the earth will mourn? I think there is a connection between those who pierced him and those who will have reason to mourn.

1: 8 Alpha and Omega are the first and last letters of the Greek alphabet. So the Lord God is the beginning and the end. Not only that, the Lord God is, was, and is to come. This verse certainly seems to say that the Lord God is eternal. He was there at the beginning, and he will be there at the end. I think the end in mind here is the end of the world, which leads us to the final judgment. For non-believers this could certainly be another reason to mourn.

I like the word "almighty". I often think of God as being the "Lord God Almighty". I found it interesting to learn that the word "almighty" appears several times in Revelation, but only one time in the rest of the New Testament, and that one time is a quote from an Old Testament passage (**2 Cor 6:18**). How do you define the term "almighty"? John was living in exile on the Island of Patmos, and Christians were undergoing persecutions. I think that John used the term "almighty" to describe God to remind his readers who was really in control.

1: 9 Several translations use the term "tribulation" in this verse. But this is NOT the tribulation that we talk about in Revelation. Here John is merely saying that he is suffering the same trials and troubles as his readers. He describes himself as their brother and companion in suffering. I don't know about you - but I always relate more to someone who has gone down the same trail as myself - especially when they are talking about that trail.

The Island of Patmos was a small rocky barren island about 50 square miles in size located about 50 miles off shore from Ephesus. What do you think John meant when he said he was on the Island of Patmos because of the word of God and the testimony of Jesus? John was exiled to Patmos for a period between 2 and 10 years.

Isn't it interesting that John was willing to speak out for Jesus at a time of persecution, while today many of us, living in a land of freedom are afraid to speak out about Jesus. Why do you think that is so?

1: 10 - 11 This is the first mention of "The Lord's Day", meaning Sunday. Have you ever wondered why we celebrate "The Lord's Day" on Sunday (the first day of the week) rather than on Saturday (the Sabbath as the Jews do/did). I believe it is because that was the day that Jesus rose that first Easter morning. Also, **Acts 20:7** tells us that the early church gathered together on Sunday, the first day of the week.

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1: 12 - 20 Write down what images you think of as you read each of these things John saw:

Ÿ I saw seven golden lamp stands.

Ÿ and among the lamp stands was someone "like a son of man,"

Ÿ dressed in a robe reaching down to his feet and with a golden sash around his chest.

Ÿ His head and hair were white like wool, as white as snow,

Ÿ and his eyes were like blazing fire.

Ÿ His feet were like bronze glowing in a furnace,

Ÿ and his voice was like the sound of rushing waters.

Ÿ In his right hand he held seven stars,

Ÿ and out of his mouth came a sharp double-edged sword.

Ÿ His face was like the sun shining in all its brilliance.

Ÿ When I saw him, I fell at his feet as though dead. Then he placed his right hand on me and said: "Do not be afraid. I am the First and the Last. I am the Living One; I was dead, and behold I am alive for ever and ever! And I hold the keys of death and Hades.

What do you think the word "mystery" means here?

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What do you think John meant when he said he “was in the spirit”? I’m not sure, but it brings to mind the thoughts of John being in a highly spiritual/worshipful state. While John was in this state he heard a loud voice like a trumpet. I think we would all agree that he was hearing God’s voice. What image comes to your mind when you read this?

Why do you think John heard the voice coming from behind him? I suspect it was so that when he turned around he would see the vision. (see next set of verses).

Here the seven churches are named. John is to write down what he sees and send it to the churches.

In Daniel 7 Ancient of Days is God the Father. One like a son of man approaches God. In Revelation Jesus is given the description of God the Father. Compare also Paul’s writing in **2 Cor 12: 2-4**.

1: 12 - 20 John turned around to see who was speaking to him. Imagine his surprise when he didn’t just see a man, but saw a man with specific attributes and surrounded by lamp stands.

Let’s look at these verses a little closer:

Ÿ *I saw seven golden lamp stands.* verse 20 tells us these are the churches. What do Lamp stands do? They don’t give light, but they house the lamps/candles that do give light. Jesus is the light. The churches should be letting/helping Jesus’ light shine.

Ÿ *and among the lamp stands was someone "like a son of man,"* Jesus. See **Dan 7:13**

Ÿ *dressed in a robe reaching down to his feet and with a golden sash around his chest.* Robe may imply priests, but their girdles/sashes were not golden. This seems more a sign of authority and power.

Ÿ *His head and hair were white like wool, as white as snow,* Ancient/old and pure.
See **Dan 7:9**

Ÿ *and his eyes were like blazing fire.* Notice that these are not the compassionate eyes that we normally think of, but eyes ready to accuse. See **Dan 7:9** (throne blazed).

Ÿ *His feet were like bronze glowing in a furnace,* Judgment

Ÿ *and his voice was like the sound of rushing waters.* Power & strength. See **Ezk 43:2**

Ÿ *In his right hand he held seven stars,* angels or messengers of the 7 churches. Perhaps a reference to the pastors of the 7 churches.

Ÿ *and out of his mouth came a sharp double-edged sword.* Bible or Word = sword.

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Ÿ *His face was like the sun shining in all its brilliance.* Preeminence.

Ÿ When I saw him, I fell at his feet as though dead. Then he placed his right hand on me and said: "Do not be afraid. I am the First and the Last. I am the Living One; I was dead, and behold I am alive for ever and ever! And I hold the keys of death and Hades.

John is then told to write what he has seen (which represents things present and things future).

What do you think the word "mystery" means here? Something we need to have explained or revealed to us in order for us to understand it. Cults often like to use the word "mystery" to represent some deep significant secret that only they hold the key to.

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WORKSHEET

Chapters 2 & 3

	GOOD POINTS <i>I know thy</i>	BAD POINTS <i>against thee</i>	DO THIS	PROMISE <i>To him that</i>
EPHESUS 2: 1 - 7				
SMYRNA 2: 8 - 11				
PERGAMUM 2: 12 - 17				
THYATIRA 2: 18 - 29				
SARDIS 3: 1 - 6				
PHILADELPHIA 3: 7 - 13				
LAODICEA 3: 14 - 22				

Which church is most like your personal condition?

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Chapters 2 & 3

	GOOD POINTS <i>I know thy</i>	BAD POINTS <i>against thee</i>	DO THIS	PROMISE <i>To him that</i>
EPHESUS 2: 1 - 7	Hard works, perseverance, Hated Nicolaitans	Left thy first love	Remember from where you have fallen and repent.	...give to eat of the tree of life.
SMYRNA 2: 8 - 11	Afflictions and poverty	<i>none mentioned</i>	Do not be afraid, be faithful	crown of life, not be hurt by second death
PERGAMUM 2: 12 - 17	Held fast to my name, Didn't deny faith	False teachers (Balaam and Nicolaitans)	Repent	Hidden manna and a white stone
THYATIRA 2: 18 - 29	Love, service, faith, perseverance, doing more	allowed Jezebel to teach idolatry and compromise	Hold fast what you have until I come	give millennial leadership and morning star
SARDIS 3: 1 - 6	A few who have not soiled their clothing	You are dead, works not complete	Watch, strengthen the things that remain, remember, hold fast, repent	will be clothed in white raiment, will not blot name out of book of life
PHILADELPHIA 3: 7 - 13	Little strength but kept my word, not denied my name, endured	<i>none mentioned</i>	Hold fast to what you have	will make a pillar and write name of God and my new name
LAODICEA 3: 14 -22	<i>none mentioned</i>	You are lukewarm, wretched, miserable, poor, blind, and naked	buy gold tried by fire and white raiment. Anoint your eyes, be zealous and repent.	sit with me in my throne.

The Nicolaitans and Balaams were followers of false teachers/teachings. Nicolaus may have been one of the original 7 “deacons” who either went bad (became a heretic) or whose teachings were later misinterpreted/misquoted. We’re told that Balaam was associated with teaching eating meat offered to idols and fornication - two things the Council said Gentile Christians were not to do.

While some people like to associate the 7 churches with various periods of church history, a close look at each church’s situation at the time Revelation was written shows that the letters may very well have been written/applied to the churches at that time. Of course, we can still apply them to ourselves. If Jesus wrote a letter to us, what would be the good things he would praise us for, and what would be the things that He has against us?

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4: 1 -3 Some people like to think that John starts a new vision at this point. I agree that we're changing the "locality" and "time span" of his vision - but I think that this can either be the start of a new vision or a continuation of the one already under way. Either interpretation is fine. As you look at these two verses, what "clues" make you think it was a new vision? the same vision?

People who see it as a new vision refer to phrases like "After this", and "At once I was in the Spirit". The reasoning is that "After this" refers to the end of the vision of the letters to the 7 churches and that "At once...Spirit" refers to the start of a new vision. On the other hand, I've had dreams where I suddenly changed from one location/situation to another. John may have simply been describing a transition in his vision. Either way, the letters to the churches have ended, and now John sees before him a door standing open in heaven. Why a door, why was it standing open, and why was it in heaven?

I think the door represented a symbolic entry point for John to go into heaven. I certainly don't think there is a real door into heaven, and I don't believe that St. Peter will meet me at the "pearly gates" either. But John needed to know (or to convey to us) that he was now leaving one room (earth) and entering another (heaven). If the door had been shut and locked, then he could not have gone in. But the door was standing open - an invitation for him to go through. If it were you or I, we would probably hesitate about going through that door - maybe John did too - because Jesus has to tell him to "Come up here". Jesus is going to show John (and us) events or things that "must take place" (stronger wording than "will take place").

I like the fact that Jesus ("the voice I had first heard speaking to me like a trumpet") invites/tells John to come into heaven. Soon we will be reminded how Jesus was the sacrificial lamb, but for now we have a subtle reminder that Jesus has the "right" to invite us into heaven. After all, He paid the price so that we could enter in.

Well, no sooner has Jesus told John to "come up" than "at once" John is in the spirit there. Now before we talk about what John saw, why do you think John tells us he "was in the Spirit" (1:10)?

Maybe it was to let us know that this was a vision. I think it was so that we would know that this wasn't a physical picture of heaven, but a symbolic picture of heaven. In any case, John is now in heaven, and the very first (central) thing he sees is a throne. And that throne is occupied. The owner/ruler is AT HOME. Naturally, the first thing that John describes is God. We're told God had the appearance of "jasper and carnelian". The jasper may be the same as what we call jasper. It may have been more a jade, a quartz, or even a diamond. The carnelian may have been a ruby or other red stone. What we can say is that they were valuable and precious. John then tells us that a "rainbow, resembling an emerald, encircled the throne". The rainbow may have served to obstruct the view of God, or as a reminder of His covenant not to flood the earth.

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4: 4 - 5 John now tells us about the 24 thrones (with elders), the thunder and lighting, and the 7 lamps. Who were the 24 elders? I like the suggestion that they represent the Old and the New Covenants (the 12 tribes of Israel and the 12 apostles). As such, they are symbolic and we don't need to worry about who exactly were each of the elders. The thunder and lighting originated from the throne, and we easily can see God's presence on the throne being the source. The 7 lamps could easily be misinterpreted as references back to the 7 churches. To avoid that mistake, we're told that they represent the 7 Spirits of God. Of course that makes us ask "what are/is the 7 Spirits of God"?

Well, some people like to talk about leader-type angels. I think it is a reference to the Holy Spirit. Remember - 7 often stands for "completeness". See NIV alternate translation "7-fold".

4: 6 - 11 Before the throne was a "looked like a sea of glass, clear as crystal". Now the key here is that it "looked like" which means it wasn't really. Some people want this to represent an actual sea (body of water). Someone may "look like" Elvis, but they aren't really Elvis (and yes, Elvis really is dead). Well, if it wasn't really a sea of water, what was it? It was glass, really expensive high quality glass. In John's time, glass was not clear like it is today. Mirrors were not clear either. This is why Paul could write about a "poor reflection as in a mirror" (**1 Cor 13:12**). John's readers had no problems understanding just how magnificent this picture really was.

John now tells us about the 4 living creatures. Notice their position in relation to the 24 elders. They are in the center, around the throne. Think of a bulls-eye target. God's throne is the very center. The 24 elders are in the outer ring. The 4 living creatures are in one of the inner rings. By the way, what is a "creature". Angels are creatures. People are creatures. Animals are creatures. Trees and rocks are not creatures. The 4 living creatures are alive. They probably are high types of angels, ready to serve God. Leon Morris says that "their closeness to God's throne shows they are important. They constantly praise God...They are associated with the outpouring of the wrath of God". Some would symbolically see a reference to all earthly creatures thus showing that creation serves God. They would see the strength of the lion, the patience of the ox, the majesty of the eagle, and man. Similarly, some see the lion as the mightiest of the wild animals, the bull as the mightiest of the domesticated animals, the eagle as the mightiest of the birds, and man as the mightiest of earth's creatures. Thus, all nature serves God. The problem with these views is that they want to represent earth (and the number 4 is often associated with earth). But these living creatures also had wings and we usually associate wings with angels. To restrict them to representing earthly nature is too restrictive. I'm sorry to leave you without any clear answer or even my opinion, but I can't say for sure what these 4 living creatures represent, other than that they are powerful servants of God ready to carry out His will.

At the moment, these 4 living creatures are praising God. Now, here's a slight paradox. The 4 living creatures are continuously praising God. But we're also told that whenever they praise God the 24 elders would lay down their crowns and prostrate themselves before God and join in worshipping God. Do we need to worry about this paradox? No. John is painting us a picture of God's being worshipped.

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5: 1 - 5 Chapter 4 dealt with God the Father in the throne room. Chapter 5 deals with God the Son (Jesus, our redeemer). The transition occurs as John sees a scroll held in God the Father's hand. The scroll had writing on both sides. What do you think this means?

If the scroll were in my hand, written by me, the fact that it had writing on both sides would just mean that I'm cheap and I wanted to save paper. Now, God isn't cheap, and He doesn't need to "save paper", so it must mean something else with Him. Actually, using "paper" is not a good example. Scrolls were more parchment or reeds. Often they were formed by pressing several strips of reeds together. One set would be laid out vertically, and the other horizontally. I'm guessing that the vertical ones would give strength and continuity to the scroll, and the horizontal ones would provide a good writing surface. Normally you would want to write on one side only, as it would be easier to write on the horizontal side, and not have to write across the vertical seams. But, there would be a limit to this - if your scroll were too big, it would be unwieldy due to both size and weight. So, if you were going to write a voluminous amount of information, you might need to write on both sides. Now, obviously God isn't held to these constraints - but the imagery that John is using is meant to convey thoughts or concepts to us. This scroll contained a large amount of detailed information about the end times. The scroll was also sealed with 7 seals? What is the significance of 7 seals, and how do you think they were placed on the scroll?

7 seals probably means that the scroll was completely or securely sealed. There seems to be two thoughts about the placement of the seals. One is that they were side by side, all on the front so to speak. The other is that they are somehow layered. One at the outside, and then the other six somehow inside the scroll. After all, as Revelation continues the scrolls will be broken one by one and we will be told what each "contains". I think the seals were all on the outside, as I can't picture any way to apply a seal and then roll a scroll up some more. On the other hand, I think this is a good example of trying to literally interpret John's vision. It's the concept that counts - the scroll is sealed, Jesus will open it, and we will see (through John's vision) what is inside. But I'm getting ahead of myself.

A mighty angel asks "who is worthy to break the seals and open the scroll?" We're told that no one in heaven or on earth or under the earth could open it or look inside. It would be fun to picture a bunch of angels, people, etc. all struggling with the scroll trying to open it (although this was a fun part of the cartoon "Sword in the Stone"). But I don't think that is what John is talking about. John says he wept because no one was found worthy to open it and look inside. All the angels and people knew that they were not worthy. But as John was weeping, one of the elders told him not to weep - for there was one worthy enough to open the scroll - Jesus. What do you think of the descriptions used to describe Jesus?

- the lion of Judah

- the root of David

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The Lion of Judah. See Genesis 49:9. Jacob is giving his final prophecy about his sons and he talks of Judah as a lion's cub. The powerful, regal, and most prominent member of the tribe of Judah can well be described as the adult lion.

The Root of David. We normally think of the "root" as the base of a tree or plant. But compare this to Isaiah 11:1 and 11:10 where root seems to carry the idea of "shoot" or "subsequent growth". Jesse was David's father.

5: 6 - 7 Well, the elder described Jesus as the lion of Judah and the root of David. When John looked, he saw Jesus. His description was different. What do you think of John's description:
- a lamb, looking as if it had been slain

- encircled by the 4 living creatures and the 24 elders

- 7 horns

This is interesting how we go from a regal majestic description of Jesus to a humble servant description of Jesus. But that is who He is. His death on the cross was the act of a humble servant of the Father. That death was the means of not only His sacrifice for our sins, but also lead to His victory over death as He arose again. It was because of that obedience even unto death that He was worthy.

His placement is within the circle of elders and the inner circle of the 4 living beasts. He is next to God the Father. The 7 horns represent His complete power and strength.

The 7 eyes are troublesome for me. Most commentators seem to agree that they represent Jesus' all knowing wisdom. This indeed fits with the 7 horns. The problem that I have is that the text talks about the "seven eyes, which are the seven spirits of God sent out into all the earth.". I want to interpret these 7 eyes as the Holy Spirit, and see in it a picture of the Holy Spirit being with Jesus. The all knowing (all seeing) would be a simple interpretation if the text had said "7 horns and 7 eyes." without adding the "which are...". So, I share with you my problem in fully following this - but point out that much wiser (and well researched) scholars seem to agree that it talks about Jesus' being all powerful (7 horns) and all knowing (7 eyes). Buy their books and send me an e-mail explaining it to me.

5: 8 - 14 The remainder of this chapter deals with Jesus. There is a wonderful picture of Jesus accepting/taking the scroll. The 24 elders and the 4 living creatures all fall down before him. They do this in worship, as indicated by the harps, the bowls of incense, and their song. This worship is offered not just by the 24 elders and the 4 living creatures, but by "every creature in heaven and on earth and under the earth and on the sea, and all that is in them..." What do you think of the reference to our prayers being equated to the incense?

WORKSHEET

Chapter 6

FIRST SIX SEALS

6: 1-2	6: 3-4	6: 5-6	6: 7-8
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6: 9-11	6: 12-17
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Chapter 6

FIRST SIX SEALS

Watch for this pattern in the seals, the trumpets, and finally the bowls. 4-2-1. The first six seals describe events/things. There is an “interlude” followed by the 7th seal which introduces the 7 trumpets. The 7 trumpets have a similar pattern. The 7 bowls either follow or are introduced by the 7th trumpet. The 7 bowls pattern is slightly different as the 7th bowl contains the phrase “it is finished”.

6: 1-2 Rider on a white horse.	6: 3-4 Rider on a fiery red horse.	6: 5-6 Rider on a black horse.	6: 7-8 Rider on a pale horse.
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This section contains “the four horsemen of the Apocalypse”. The description of the four horses is similar to Zechariah 6:1-3 (there they pull chariots and have targeted directions, here they have riders and seem to be aimed at all the earth).

6: 1 - 2 The 1st Living Creature calls “come” and the rider on a white horse is released upon the earth. This rider carries a bow and is given a crown. He rides out “as a conqueror bent on conquest”. The white horse could stand for victory. Some people view the rider as “Christ” (either in person or representing the gospel’s spread across the earth). They support this by references to Christ on a white horse in Rev 19:11-13. Others view the rider as representing war(s) of conquest - one nation against another. They support this by saying that every event here represents a series of unfolding disasters. The rider carries a bow, and it is an interesting side note that a Roman army in AD 62 surrendered to the Parthians who were noted for their use of a bow. I believe that the bow merely represents warfare, and is not a reference to the Parthians. The rider is given a “crown” (a victor’s wreath as opposed to a royal crown).

6: 3 - 4 The 2nd Living Creature calls “come” and the rider on a fiery red horse appears. “It’s rider is given power to take peace from the earth and to make men slay each other.” The fiery red horse could stand for bloody warfare or for bloody civil disturbances. The rider is given a large sword. I personally find it interesting that the first rider is given a bow (a long range weapon) and the second rider is given a sword (a close range weapon). To me, this supports the war (first horse) and civil war or civil disturbances (second horse).

6: 5 - 6 The 3rd Living Creature calls “come” and the rider on a black horse appears. “It’s rider was holding a pair of scales in his hand.” A voice said “a quart of wheat for a day’s wages, and three quarts of barley for a day’s wages, and do not damage the oil and the wine”. The voice comes from within the four living creatures. Since the four living creatures surround God’s throne, it would seem that it is God speaking. The black horse could stand for famine. There will be a shortage of food, and the resulting prices for daily substance will equal a day’s wages. One quart of wheat would basically feed one person - leaving nothing for their families. Three quarts of barley (less nutritious than wheat) would be enough for the person and their family. The scales will be used to measure out the quart of wheat or three quarts of barley.

REVELATION

The statement “do not damage the oil and the wine” would seem to indicate that this famine, while severe, will pass. Oil came from olive trees, and wine came from grape vines. Both of these would represent crops that have deeper roots than wheat or barley would have. The famine possibly is caused by a draught.

6: 7 - 8 The 4th Living Creature calls “come” and the rider on a pale horse appears. The pale horse could stand for death or for terror. The word translated “pale” is “chloros”. Leon Morris says we “should probably understand it to mean the color of a corpse”. William Barclay says it “is used of a face blenched with terror”. “It’s rider was named Death, and Hades was following close behind him. They were given power over a fourth of the earth to kill by sword, famine and plague, and by the wild beasts of the earth.”

Verse 8 may apply to all four horsemen, who together are given power over a fourth of the earth. This sounds bad (and it is), but the good news is that God has placed a limit or boundaries upon these events, which otherwise would destroy all of the earth. It’s possible to interpret these four horsemen this way. The selfish desire for conquest over others leads to wars which leads to famines which leads to plagues and death. This sequence would seem to lay our problems as a result of our own sins. While this is true, the famines may also be caused by droughts (hmmmm, what about the greenhouse effect, etc.). It is interesting to compare the picture of the first four seals with Matthew 24 and the “Olivet Discourse” (Jesus’ sermon given on Mount Olive) found in Matthew 24: 3 - 8. Indeed, read the rest of Matthew 24 as an introduction to the fifth and sixth seals.

6: 9-11 Souls under the altar.	6: 12-17 Cataclysmic disasters
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6: 9 - 11 The fifth seal reveals the souls under the altar. These are martyrs who were “slain because of the word of God and the testimony they had maintained.” They ask how much longer will they need to wait before God judges mankind and avenges their blood (deaths). God tells them they must wait “until the number of their fellow servants and brothers who were to be killed as thy had been was completed.” This tells us that God is in control. He will not act until the proper time, and it also tells us that more people would die. If we assume a timeline where the fifth seal follows the first four seals, then we see that there will be believers undergoing these terrible events. This is even more revealed as we consider the sixth seal.

6: 12 - 17 Cataclysmic events are revealed as the sixth seal is opened. Earthquake, sun turns black, the moon turns blood red, the stars fall from the sky to earth the sky rolling up, and every mountain and island removed from its place. Many like to view the falling stars as meteorites. While this may be true, the full picture seems to be that the reliable order of the universe is now falling apart. The sun turning black and the moon blood red makes me think of volcanoes spewing forth large amounts of dust. The volcanoes could be a natural result of the earthquake. All mankind try to hide from the judgment of God. Kings, princes, generals, rich, powerful, slave, and free man (7 classes and 7 = complete or all) are represented. Here’s another question I don’t know the answer to: are these catastrophes in addition to verse 8 or part of it?

REVELATION

7: 1 - 3 John sees four angels standing at the four corners of the earth. I'm guessing this means North, South, East, and West, thus covering all the earth. The angels are holding back the winds. This could be the actual wind, but I suspect it stands for the winds of God's judgment. A fifth angel appears on the scene and says "hold everything" (loosely translated). The winds of judgment are not to be released until a seal has been placed on the foreheads of God's servants here on earth. Who are these servants? We'll discuss that in the next section. Is this a physical seal or a symbolic seal? What does the seal represent? I don't know, but I'm reminded that we receive the gift of the Holy Spirit as a seal (**Ephesians 1: 13-14**). There it's a proof or sign that we belong to the family of God. I'm also reminded of the story of Passover, when the death angel passed over the homes of the Israelites who had placed the blood of the lamb on their door posts. This acted as a seal that delivered their houses from the final plague by marking them as belonging to God and God's instrument (death angel) didn't harm them. I believe that the seal here in Revelation, whether it be physical or symbolic, tells us that God's people would be brought through this destructive time. Would they suffer? Possibly. Would they perish? No.

7: 4 - 8 Then John hears the number of those to be sealed. 144,000 FROM ALL THE TRIBES OF ISRAEL. 12,000 from each of 12 tribes. I don't believe that the 144,000 is a literal number. I believe that it is a symbolic number (12 x 12 x 1,000) standing for completeness. Some people believe that the people referred to here are Israelites, because of the description of 12 tribes (they also believe that the Christian believers have been raptured already, meaning they don't have to go through these tribulations). I think (and may be wrong) that we will go through these times and that the 144,000 represents all of God's faithful servants living at the time. The list of 12 tribes is a little different than what we normally see. I find that the tribes of Dan and Ephraim are omitted from this list. Joseph is listed instead of Dan. (Often we find Joseph not listed, but his two sons Ephraim and Manasseh listed instead, going back to **Genesis 48: 3-6**). Many lists include both Ephraim and Manasseh in place of Joseph. You would expect that to result in 13 tribes being listed - but often in these lists Levi is not included, as the Levites were spread across the land serving as priests, etc. Here the list deals with God's faithful and so the Levites are included. Why is Dan and Ephraim missing? The Danites were associated with idol worship (see **Judges 18: 30-31**). The Ephraimites were also associated with not following God's commands (see **Hosea 4:17**). So - 12 tribes, all representing those who remain faithful to God seems reasonable to me to represent all of God's believers alive at the time. You decide for yourself whether or not the rapture has occurred before this sealing takes place. By the way, I believe that the 144,000 only represents the people living at the time who are being sealed.

7: 9 - 12 The scene shifts to heaven, where John sees a "great multitude that no one could count, from every nation, tribe, people and language" who are standing before God's throne wearing white robes. They, along with the Elders, four living creatures, and angels are praising God. Who will be saved? People from all over the world, regardless of race, language, or heritage.

7: 13 One of the Elders asks John if John knows who this great multitude is. John replies that he doesn't know, but that the Elder certainly does. I guess the Elder wanted to know if John needed an explanation about who these people wearing white robes were. I'm glad the subject came up, because I certainly want to know.

REVELATION

7: 14 - 17 The Elder tells John that these are those who have come out of the great tribulation. Life Application Bible's commentary section says this: "*The great tribulation has been explained in several ways. Some believe it refers to the suffering of believers through the ages; others believe that there is a specific time of intense tribulation yet to come. In either case, these believers come through their times of suffering by remaining loyal to God. Because they remain faithful, God will give them eternal life with him.*" If you interpret "great tribulation" to be the intense tribulation yet to come, then you have to wonder why John didn't see those of us like you and me who hopefully will not suffer martyr's deaths (the saints under the altar) and who may die before the Great Tribulation. On the other hand, if you interpret it to be daily problems which we all undergo, then why didn't the Elder say "these are those faithful who have already died"? My answer is, as always, "I don't know". But I agree with the Life Application Bible that John wants us to know that those who remain loyal to God will be with Him in heaven. And as William Barclay says "*originally it referred to the immediate circumstances of the people to whom John was writing.*" The people who originally received John's writing were undergoing great tribulation.

He goes on to explain that they have "washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb". It seems funny to think of washing a robe in blood in order to clean it. But this is a reference to Jesus' sacrificial act on the cross where He shed His blood for us. That death was a sacrifice for our sins. The gift of salvation is free - open to any who want to accept Jesus as their Lord and Savior. But it does require us to accept it - just as the martyrs had to wash their robes.

Then there is this beautiful passage: "... he who sits on the throne will spread his tent over them. Never again will they hunger; never again will they thirst. The sun will not beat upon them, nor any scorching heat. For the Lamb at the center of the throne will be their shepherd; he will lead them to springs of living water. And God will wipe away every tear from their eyes." Any time you get too concerned reading about the end times tribulations, just go back and reread this passage (along with last chapter of Revelation).

8: 1 Now, the final, and seventh seal is opened. As it is opened, there is a half hour of silence in heaven. What a dramatic picture. Heaven, which has been filled with the praises and singing by the multitude, the elders, and the angels is now silenced. When do we normally witness silence like this?

8: 2 - 6 Verse 2 tells us that 7 angels are given 7 trumpets. Verse 6 tells us that the angels who had the 7 trumpets prepared to sound (blow) them. In between we're told about another angel, one with a golden censer. It is given incense which it will offer on the altar (along with the prayers of the saints) to God. When it is finished, it fills the censer "with fire from the altar, and hurled it on the earth; and there came peals of thunder, rumblings, flashes of lightning and an earthquake." I picture God's having the final say as to the timing here. Earlier, the saints had asked God how much longer they must wait. It appears that God is ready to act now, or at least to partially begin to act (see later references to one third of earth being destroyed).

REVELATION

WORKSHEET

Chapters 8 & 9

FIRST SIX TRUMPETS

8: 7	8: 8-9	8: 10-11	8: 12
What happens?	What happens?	What happens?	What happens?
What is destroyed?	What is destroyed?	What is destroyed?	What is destroyed?
What is the extent?	What is the extent?	What is extent?	What is extent?

9: 1-12	9: 13-21
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REVELATION

8: 7 The land. The first angel sounds it's trumpet and a mixture of hail, fire, and blood falls on the lands (dry earth) and a third of earth and trees are destroyed. Leon Morris suggests that the hail and fire could be the picture of a thunderstorm and fireball or lightning strike. This makes sense to me, as I was trying to figure out how you would have hail and fire mixed together. (By the way, if you follow the symbolic interpretation for Revelation then you don't have to worry about what exactly is pictured - you only worry about the general picture.) All the bible texts that I checked say that a third of the earth and trees were burned up and all of the grass. So, even though only a third of the earth's land mass is destroyed, it appears that all areas are affected because all the grass is burned up. The good news is that God's wrath is not fully poured out, but the bad news is that if the grass was all burned up what happens to all the grain? Leon Morris points out that in 9:4 the instruction is given that neither grass nor green growth was to be destroyed. He suggests that all of the grass in the one third portion of the earth was destroyed, leaving the rest. Was it terrifying? Think of a wild brush fire.

8: 8 - 9 The oceans. The second angel sounds it's trumpet and "something like a huge mountain, all ablaze, was thrown into the sea. A third of the sea turned into blood, a third of the living creatures in the sea died, and a third of the ships were destroyed". Wow. What was it exactly? We don't know. John describes it as "something like" which means it wasn't exactly that but either had the appearance of or the effect of a mountain all ablaze. You know, a mountain is already pretty big, but here is "something like a huge mountain". Was it a meteorite? Maybe. Whatever it was, the result is that a third of the sea was turned into blood, and a third of the fish, octopus, whales, dolphins, etc. all died, and oh yeah, a third of the ships were also destroyed. I'm thinking of a monstrous tidal wave destroying the ships, with similar force under the water destroying the fish. Is such a thing possible? Well, if a nuclear bomb went off, there would be a tremendous blast which alone (not even including the heat, etc.) would destroy anything in a "x" mile radius. And, no, I'm not saying that this was the result of a nuclear bomb. A bomb would not be described as "something like a huge mountain, all ablaze". What about a volcano?

8: 10 - 11 The fresh waters. The third angel sounds it's trumpet and "a great star, blazing like a torch, fell from the sky on a third of the rivers and on the springs of water" and a third of fresh water (drinking water) became bitter. Now, you can drink it, and it can sustain you - but it won't be very pleasant. According to William Barclay "Wormwood is a general name for the class of plants known as artemisia whose characteristic is bitterness of taste. They are not really poisonous in the sense of being fatal, although they are noxious, but the Israelites dreaded their bitterness." The only problem here is that "many people died from the waters that had become bitter."

8: 12 The light (day and night). The fourth angel sounds it's trumpet and "a third of the sun was struck, a third of the moon, and a third of the stars, so that a third of them turned dark. A third of the day was without light, and also a third of the night." Whether or not a third of the sun was struck, the result was that a third of the day was without light, and a third of the night. My first thought is of a dense fog, or volcanic ash, covering the earth.

8: 13 And a lone, solitary eagle flying high above tells us that it's about to get worse.

In preparation for Chapter 9, you might want to read Joel (it's only 3 chapters long).

REVELATION

9: 1 - 12 The locusts. The fifth angel sounds it's trumpet and a star is given a key which opens the abyss and allows the locusts to come out. What does John say about this "star"? What/who does it represent? What does it mean that it was "fallen from heaven"? Some interpret the star as symbolic of the Gospel. Man's refusal to accept it leads him into problems. Some interpret the star as being Jesus (He came from heaven to earth to save, and He holds the keys). Some interpret the star as being an angel (either a "fallen" angel, or an angel of God sent to earth). However you interpret the star, the key here is that the star is given the keys. God is in control, and God is allowing the abyss to be opened.

What is the abyss? Barclay says *"In the Revelation we read fairly often of the abyss or the bottomless pit. The abyss is the intermediate place of punishment of the fallen angels, the demons, the beast, the false prophet and of Satan (Rev. 9:1-2,11; Rev. 11:7; Rev. 20:1,3). Their final place of punishment is the lake of burning fire and brimstone (Rev. 20:10,14,15). To complete the picture of these terrors we may add that Gehenna - which is not mentioned in the Revelation - is the place of punishment for evil men."*

Barclay also says *"This idea of the abyss underwent a development. In the beginning it was the place of the imprisoned waters. In the creation story the primaeval waters surround the earth and God separates them by creating the firmament (Gen. 1:6-7). In its first idea the abyss was the place where the flood of the waters was confined by God beneath the earth, a kind of great subterranean sea, where the waters were imprisoned to make way for the dry land. The second step was that the abyss became the abode of the enemies of God, although even there they were not beyond his power and control (Am. 9:3; Isa. 51:9; Ps. 74:13). Next the abyss came to be thought of as a great chasm in the earth. We see this idea in Isa. 24:21-22, where the disobedient hosts of heaven and the kings of the earth are gathered together as prisoners in the pit."*

The key opens the shaft to the abyss. If you think of a mine deep down inside the earth, there would be a shaft opening unto the surface. This shaft becomes the route in and out of the abyss. When the shaft is opened, smoke billows out of it. And out of the smoke comes the locusts.

These weren't really locusts. Unlike normal locusts, these would not destroy grass, plants, or trees; but instead would attack men. What do you think of their description? Aren't you glad that God said they were not to harm those with His seal? How extensive was the agony? Bad enough that people longed to die. The five months is interesting. Certainly it means that it was temporary. Leon Morris offers several thoughts on the meaning of 5 months. One of them is intriguing to me (but likely not the real explanation). 5 months is about the normal life span of an actual locust. The locusts had a king or a ruler - "the angel of the Abyss, whose name in Hebrew is Abaddon, and in Greek, Apollyon." These terms could be translated Destruction or Destroyer.

The first woe is past. Jump ahead to **Revelation 11:14** which says the 2nd woe is past, and the 3rd woe is coming soon. What immediately follows the first woe, and what immediately follows the 2nd woe? This somewhat narrows down the 2nd woe. The 2nd woe is a) associated with the sixth trumpet's events; b) associated with the "interlude" events between the sixth and seventh trumpet; or c) both. What do you think?

REVELATION

9: 13 - 21 The sixth angel sounds it's trumpet and a voice from heaven says to release the four bound angels who are promptly followed by an army of two hundred million.

Whose is the voice? It comes from within the horns on the altar. It is probably God the Father's voice or Jesus' voice. It could be a messenger angel, but I don't think so. The voice may serve to remind us that once again God is in control of the situation. Like the demon locusts, these appear to be demons as well. But they can only do what God allows them to do - which in this case is plenty. If you take a fully symbolic view of Revelation, what do think these locusts, bound angels, and horses (and riders) represent? I basically view them as evil and horrible events.

Real or symbolic, there is a key point here. They have been "kept ready for this very hour and day and month and year". In other words, they have been kept ready until this exact planned moment. They haven't been kept as a "contingency plan", or a "backup plan".

These verses do not include any prohibition from harming those sealed to God. I believe that the same injunction still applies. What do you think? Why?

Do you think the four angels are "good" angels or "bad" angels? I believe they are bad angels, as God would not have "bound" them otherwise.

Do you think that the two hundred million (or two hundred thousand thousand) is symbolic or an actual number? Some people believe it is an exact number because John was told the number (I "heard their number". Others believe that John is telling us that there was a huge uncountable number - so huge that if he hadn't heard the number he could not have counted them himself. Either way this is certainly a vast army.

John describes the horses and riders. But it's the horses that are the real threat here. The horses heads resemble lions heads. So, the horses, like the locusts, are either symbolic or demonic. From their mouths come three plagues: fire, smoke, and sulfur. These three plagues kill a third of mankind. If this weren't enough, there is destructive power in the tails as well. Does all this represent cannons, artillery, and other instruments of war? Maybe.

Let's take a moment to take another look at the number "one third". Like "one fourth", it may be an exact representation of the level of damage/death occurring. Or, it may represent a large number, large but not a majority. However you want to interpret it, it's pretty scary.

What's really scary though is this: *"The rest of mankind that were not killed by these plagues still did not repent of the work of their hands; they did not stop worshipping demons, and idols of gold, silver, bronze, stone and wood--idols that cannot see or hear or walk. Nor did they repent of their murders, their magic arts, their sexual immorality or their thefts"*.

I can only speculate as to why the rest of mankind didn't repent. I suspect either hardened hearts or total commitment to Satan. It's also interesting to compare verse 21 with the 10 Commandments. Magical arts would include drugs as well as sorcery (dealing with satanic forces). I think it goes without saying that the rest of mankind is the non-sealed to God people.

REVELATION

10: 1 - 7 Exactly who is this angel? Some people think it is actually Jesus Christ. Others think not. What do you think?

What would support the idea that it is Jesus?

What would support the idea that it is not?

People who believe that it is Jesus point to the rainbow above the head, face like the sun, legs like fiery pillars (judgment), the fact that the angel is holding a scroll, speaks with 7 thunders, and seems to have ownership/control over both the land and the sea.

People who believe that it is not point out that Jesus is not referred to as an angel in the New Testament, and that Jesus would not be swearing an oath to God. For what it's worth, I support the "not" theory.

What about the scroll? What do you think it was?

Some people think it was the original scroll with 7 seals that only Jesus could open. This seems unlikely to me as the original scroll was so full that it had writing on both sides. Why would they now call it small? Which is another reason I don't think it is the same. Revelation uses two different words. The original scroll is "biblion". This one is "biblaridion". The final answer will have to wait until we get to heaven, because we're not told.

I'm not even sure why this part is here. John is told something, but he is then told not to write it down for us. If what John was told deals with the end times, then it would seem that we are being told that there is even more to the story/events than what we find recorded here.

There's an interesting side note here. Some people use verse 6 to show that there won't be any time in heaven. The King James translation reads that "there should be time no longer". Almost every other translation reads something like "there should be no more delay". Even the New King James reads "there should be delay no longer". What will no longer be delayed?

REVELATION

There are several possible interpretations as to what will no longer be delayed. Some believe that the final judgment is upon us. Some believe that the antichrist is now close to hand. Some believe that the answer lies in verse 7 (God's mystery is about to be accomplished).

10: 8 - 11 John is told to take the scroll and eat it. It will taste sweet, but will sour in his stomach. There are other scriptures that tell us that we need to "ingest" God's word, and that it is sweet. This is the only (or one of the few) instances where we are told that it will turn sour or bitter once inside us. I'm not sure what this is. The best explanation that I've come across is that the knowledge of the final judgments to come was bitter for John. What do you think?

11: 1 - 13 John is told to measure the temple and altar, and to count the number of worshippers there. Now, Revelation was written about 20-30 years after Jerusalem was besieged by the Romans and the temple destroyed. So, either John is talking about a new temple to be rebuilt in the future (just in time for the last days), or he is talking about a symbolic temple. With my apologies to the Left Behind series, I believe that a symbolic interpretation is correct. This is not an unreasonable stretch, as the church is often referred to as the bride of Christ, and we are told that our bodies are temples of God. These are symbolic representations.

Much more of interest is the question why is John measuring the temple and counting the worshippers? And why is the outer court to be excluded? If you take a symbolic interpretation, then the church is being sealed for protection. (If you believe that the church has already been raptured at this point, then you would need to interpret the temple as representing the Jewish believers.)

What is the significance of the 42 months? What about the 1,260 days? Both of these expressions represent 3 and ½ years. $42 \text{ months} = 12 \times 3 + 6$. $1,260 \text{ days} = 3 \times 360 + 180$. Now, what's interesting about 3 and ½ years is the expression from Daniel of time, times, and a half, which represents $1 + 2 + \frac{1}{2}$. This is approximately the amount of time that Leon Morris says "Antiochus Epiphanes tyrannized in Jerusalem". Other references to 3 and ½ years can be found in Rev 11:3, 12:6, 12:14, 13:5, and Daniel 7:25 and 12:7 (Daniel 12: 11-12 refers to 1290 and 1335 days).

If you want to take a literal view of the temple here, then you will also need to expect a literal 3 and ½ years. If you take a symbolic view of the temple here, then you can interpret the 3 and ½ years to stand for a period of time when anti-Christian forces will appear to prevail.

But, even while the gentiles (non-believers) are trampling over the outer court, etc. God's church will still be witnessing to the world. This, I believe, is what the Two Witnesses represent. Some people believe that they represent Enoch and Elijah (both of whom were taken into heaven without suffering death). Others believe that they represent Moses and Elijah, or Elijah and Elisha, or even that they are symbolically representative of the Old and New Testaments, or Jews and Christians.

REVELATION

The two witnesses will have all the powers of the OT prophets. Their wearing sackcloth indicates they are calling for repentance.

Is their preaching in verse 3 being done at the same time as the trampling in verse 2? If so, then to me this gives the picture that God's message is being put forth, but that the world is not listening. This picture could depict many times in history, including our own time right now. Just consider the various initiatives and attacks on marriage that we are seeing.

Some people like to suggest that the two faithful witnesses are the two faithful churches (see chapters 2 and 3). The reference to the olive trees along with the lamp stands would suggest that the lamp stands are continuously being fed with (olive) oil. Throughout this whole period the gospel message is continuously being proclaimed to the world.

There is a problem here with verse 5. Verse 5 seems to say that the message cannot be stopped, and that any attempts to do so result in the destruction of those trying to impede or quiet the message. The fire may be an indication of their final resting place. Or, verse 5 may be a simple indication that God is with the church during this time period, and that the church itself will survive. The problem with this view is that in verse 7 the two witnesses are killed. But, are they? The church may seem to be destroyed, but then it rises again, as the 2 witnesses rose after 3 and ½ days. Some see a reference to Christ's resurrection here, but I think it is merely a continuation of the time, times, and a half theme. The faithful church, I mean witnesses, are then called to heaven.

Their death is caused by the beast from the abyss. So, Satan himself is behind this. The world goes along with and cheers this.

11: 14 The second woe is past. The third is coming soon.

11: 15 - 19 The seventh angel sounds it's trumpet, and there were loud voices in heaven and more praises from the 24 elders. Compare this to the silence that followed the opening of the 7th seal. This is an example of the wonderful literary style that is present in this book. We find certain themes repeated, but with variations; and we find changes of locale.

Can you sense the "it's now" sentiment expressed by the loud voices as well as by the 24 elders? The kingdom of the world HAS become the kingdom of the Lord who will (now) reign for ever. (parenthesis mine). Notice too verse 17 where the familiar "was, is, and will be" becomes "is and was". The "will be" is NOW.

What do you think the significance is of the ark of the covenant being in the heavenly temple? I believe that it symbolizes God's presence. That's not too surprising since this is taking place in heaven. So, what else does it represent? Well, the ark is visible. That shows that the temple has been opened to all believers - not just the high priest. Remember how the temple curtain was torn in half when Jesus died on the cross?

REVELATION

12: 1 - 17 We're now introduced to the woman and the dragon. The woman will play a part in this chapter, and then will not be discussed again. The dragon, along with the beast (chapter 13) will be mentioned again. At first, you might want to describe this chapter as a struggle between the woman and the dragon. But that would be wrong. The struggle is between the dragon, Christ, and Christ's followers.

Let's start with the dragon. Who, or what, is the dragon? Well, a quick look at verse 9 reveals that the dragon is Satan.

The woman, however, is a little harder to define. Certainly, the woman could represent good (clothed with the sun, child taken to God, delivered to the desert and taken care of, etc.) Because she gives birth to the child that Satan wants to destroy, the woman is either Mary, mother of Jesus or she represents the nation of Israel and/or the New Testament church. Which do you think is more likely?

I lean towards the woman initially representing the nation of Israel, and possibly representing the New Testament church as well. Why? Because of two things: first, there is the reference to the crown of 12 stars. This, to me, represents the 12 tribes of Israel. The Jewish people were the people/nation of God because they were to prepare the way for the Messiah.

Back to the dragon. In verse 4 the dragon's tail sweeps a third of the stars out of the sky (they are flung to earth). There is an old Jewish tradition that a third of the angels followed Satan's revolt. Satan and his followers were thrown out of Heaven.

Satan wanted to destroy Christ. Herod killed all the baby boys in an attempt to kill the Christ child. But, Joseph had been pre-warned in a dream and took Mary and the child to Egypt until after Herod's death. I don't know how long they were in Egypt. I would love to learn that it was for 3 and a half years. But, the time doesn't matter, it could easily represent the fact for a certain amount of time the woman was delivered. The time could also represent a period of time that Satan was not allowed to try to destroy Jesus. It could represent the time between Jesus' birth and His death on the cross (which was an event that Satan initially thought of as a victory for Satan). When Christ arose, death (and Satan's plans) were defeated. Satan then "went off to make war against the rest of her offspring - those who obey God's commandments and hold to the testimony of Jesus."

Now, you should be asking yourself "why does Bill refer to Mary being in Egypt with Joseph and the Christ child if Bill is claiming that the woman represents the nation of Israel?" I don't know. It just seems right. Israel, the Old Testament, represents the woman before Jesus' birth. Then, the New Testament church takes over, and I see the reference in verse 17 as being to Christians throughout the ages. The key, to me, is that the child is kept safe. Also, the woman being kept safe could represent the church which was persecuted, and had martyrs, but survived. Certainly God kept the church safe (alive) during these times.

REVELATION

13: 1 - 8 We're now introduced to the 2 beasts. Compare the description of the dragon (12:3), the first beast (13:1), and the 2nd beast (13:11). The description of the first beast is very close to that of the dragon. Both have 7 heads and 10 horns. The dragon has 7 crowns on it's 7 heads. The 1st beast has 10 crowns on it's 10 horns. I believe that the similarity is intended to show us that there is a strong tie between Satan (the dragon) and the 1st beast. The 1st beast represents a person or power that will work to help Satan attend his goals. The 2nd beast is similar to the 1st beast, but less so. The 2nd beast has but two horns, but note also that the 2nd beast speaks like a dragon. The 2nd beast will be the servant of the 1st beast, a servant who strives to bring about the supremacy of the 1st beast.

The first beast is also described as a leopard, bear, and a lion (verse 2). This is much like Daniel's description in Daniel 7, although Daniel was describing several beasts, and John only one. Daniel was describing empires. Does this mean that John's beast represents a multinational empire made up of the same empires that made up Daniel's beasts? Perhaps. Some see such things as the European Union, the United Nations, etc. They may be correct. Or perhaps, John is talking about a person who will attain leadership over several nations. Some see a reference to the Roman empire and the myth about Nero returning some day. Some think John combined Daniel's four beasts into one beast simply to show that it was much worse. And some think John's beast has nothing to do with Daniel's at all. Whatever the case, we can agree that the 1st beast serves the dragon. Verse 4 tells us that men worshipped the dragon because the dragon had given authority to the beast. Men also worshipped the beast saying no one could up against the beast.

Again we see a reference to 42 months. The beast will be allowed to say and do many things, but only for 42 months. I see the 42 months not so much as a literal time period, but as an indication of a limited time. Two days is a very short period. Two centuries is a very long period. But 42 months is a period of time that will last a while, but not last forever.

Verse 7 is interesting. Up until now, we've seen "every tribe, people, language and nation" used to describe those John is to write to. Now, we see the beast being given authority over every tribe, people, language and nation. We might interpret this to mean that the beast comes to a position of world leadership. But maybe it only means that Satan (through his agent) is able to combat Christianity all over the world (it feels like we are under attack throughout all the world).

ALL inhabitants of the earth will worship the beast - all expect for those whose names are written down in the book of life. God's faithful will not be misled.

13: 9 - 10 What do you think John has in mind here?

I suspect that John is telling us that some will be imprisoned, and some will lose their lives. It would be nice if bad things never happened to us, but sometimes they do. I do not believe that John is saying that some of us are predestined to be imprisoned or die, merely that some will suffer these things. We need to be prepared to patiently endure these things, and we also need to remain faithful when undergoing these trials and sufferings.

REVELATION

13: 11 - 18 The 1st beast came from the sea. The 2nd beast comes from the land. I believe that the only reason for this is to distinguish the 2nd beast from the first.

The 2nd beast had “two horns like a lamb, but he spoke like a dragon”. Based on just this, you might think that this 2nd beast was the antichrist (the 2nd beast had two horns like a lamb could be a reference or false similarity with Christ, and spoke like a dragon indicates the alliance with Satan). But, it is the 1st beast, if any, that should be considered the antichrist. Why? Because the 2nd beast serves the first. The 2nd beast exercises authority on behalf of the 1st beast. The 2nd beast makes everyone worship the 1st beast.

Because of the miraculous things that he does, the 2nd beast deceives the world, and has an image of the 1st beast set up which everyone must worship. Sound farfetched? Don't forget the Roman empire and Caesar worship. Images of the emperor were set up and people who would not worship the emperor's image could be put to death. Those that did received a “certificate”. I suspect that John's readers thought of this when they read this portion of Revelation, especially the following part about receiving a mark. Satan is truly the great deceiver. The 2nd beast is able to cause fire to come down from heaven (compare this to the Holy Spirit descending at Pentecost), and is also able to give breath to the image. What comes to mind when you read this? I can't help but think of the image coming to life, because I think of God breathing life into Adam. This by the way is a key difference between this and the Roman emperor worship. Caesar's image never came to life or spoke.

Some see the 1st beast as representing world political and economic power, and the 2nd beast as representing organized (false) religion supporting that power base.

Everyone was forced to receive a mark on their right hand or forehead. Those that refused could not buy or sell. These are very prominent locations on the body. Many people are right handed, and so their right hand would be visible. And certainly, the forehead is very visible.

And finally, we come to the mark of the beast, the infamous 666. Many people think of this as an actual number that represents belonging to Satan. They would refuse to buy a house if the address were 666. They take the number very literally. But this isn't really the case. We're told that we can calculate the number of the beast, and that it is man's number. Some people talk about how we can assign numbers to letters and add them up to get 666. In a simple sample, we could assign 1 to the letter a, 2 to the letter b, 3 to the letter c, and 26 to the letter z. Bill would then be “2+9+12+12” or 35. There is indeed a way to make Nero's name come out to be 666, but I think it is too convoluted to be correct. In fact, the problem with this whole approach is very similar to the DaVinci code, and other so called theories that show how Hitler was mentioned in the bible, along with other hidden mysteries. Give me a computer and plenty of time and I can find a code to do all sorts of things. But this doesn't make them real. God inspired scripture is not a book of mysteries waiting to be revealed by self-proclaimed prophets and other false messiahs. I think a simpler way to view 666 is this. If 7 is the perfect (or whole) number standing for completeness ($7 = 4 + 3$, which stands for heaven and earth), then 777 would be a great number and 666 would be a number that falls short of it (because 6 is 1 off from 7).

REVELATION

14: 1 Again we get a little respite with a picture of Christ and the 144,000. Now, the last time we saw the 144,000 was back in chapter 7. Take a moment and review it. Did you notice where the 144,000 were? They were on earth, and they were still living at the time. Now, here in chapter 14 we find them with Christ. John tells us that they have “been redeemed from the earth”. I like what Vernon McGee (Through the Bible) has to say about this. He says “And notice that He doesn't have 143,999 sheep; He has 144,000 sheep -- He did not lose one! He redeemed them, He sealed them, and He kept them, for He is the Great Shepherd of the sheep. These sheep are of a different fold from the one we are in today, and the Good Shepherd brought them through the Great Tribulation.” What does this say to us? It says that there will be some terrible times ahead, and the 1st Beast and the 2nd Beast will seem to be in full control and winning all the battles. But, in point of fact, no Christians will be lost. There may be pain, suffering, and death, but there will be eternal salvation - guaranteed.

Jesus is seen standing on Mount Zion. Leon Morris points out that if you take this literally, then you are talking about Jerusalem and Israel and the millennial reign. If you take this symbolically, then you are talking about Mount Zion as a symbol or place of deliverance as in **Joel 2:32**. One of the problems with taking this literally and seeing it as the beginning of the millennial reign is verse 13 which seems to say that there will still be people who will die in the Lord. I'm not really very knowledgeable in any of this - so maybe some people expect a millennial reign during which there are still believers and non-believers living on the earth.

John hears a sound, and he describes it 3 ways: rushing waters, peal of thunder, and harps being played. Isn't this amazing. The first two make me think of power. Rushing waters is the noise of Niagara Falls. Thunder is close, not far away. And then, suddenly, a total change to the gentle sounds of a harp being played by someone who knows how to play it. Keep in mind that these aren't the noises that John heard - these are ways to describe the noises he heard. What then do they represent? The powerful voice of God is certainly one interpretation. Another is that he is describing the song being sang by the 144,000. This is possible since that is what John now tells us about. They sing a new song that only they can sing. What do they have in common that no one else would have? They have all been redeemed by Christ. A non-redeemed person could not sing about God's amazing grace. Another thing they have in common is that they have been through the tribulation. They have one more thing in common.

They have kept themselves pure - they have not defiled themselves with women. Does this mean that they are all single males? No! Defiling themselves with women would be a spiritual reference to avoiding idolatry or the worship of other gods. They did not acknowledge the beast.

John now introduces another series of angels. The first one flies overhead proclaiming the eternal gospel. Some people like to tie this in with **Matthew 24:14** where Jesus says that the gospel will be preached throughout all the world before the end times. This seems a little stretching to me. It implies that Jesus said something would happen, and it hasn't happened, so God sends an angel flying to satisfy what Jesus had said. I think Jesus said the gospel about the kingdom would be preached, and this implies people telling people. Some people want to interpret this verse as meaning that the gospel needs to be translated into every language of the world. I suspect that has to do with the “every nation, tribe, language, and people”. I personally think it means that the

REVELATION

angel is telling people that the end has arrived. They had their chance, and either they became believers or they didn't. But now the end has arrived and the "hour of his judgement has come". So much for waiting until the last minute before accepting Jesus. If you snooze, you lose (did I really say that?).

A second and third angel tell us that Babylon has fallen, and that those who worshipped the beast and received his mark will now suffer God's punishment. What does this say about "God is good and everyone will be saved, no matter whether they accept Jesus or not"?

Those who did not believe will have no rest from their suffering. Why does John tell us this? I don't believe that it's meant so much as a warning to non-believers as a promise to believers that their tormentors will receive their just reward in the end. We believers, on the other hand, need to patiently endure the sufferings and tribulations that come to us as believers. We need to patiently endure, obey God's commands, and remain faithful.

And once again the locale of the vision changes, and we see one "like a son of man" sitting on a cloud. Who do you think John is referring to here, and why?

Many people see this as a reference to Jesus. They base this on 1) sitting on a cloud, 2) one like a son of man, 3) wearing a crown of gold, and 4) holding a sharp sickle. They may be correct, but I think this is a reference to an angel, and not to Jesus. Why? Because another angel (verse 15) comes from God's presence and gives him an order. And I just can't picture any angel giving Jesus an order. But, Jesus or angel, it doesn't really matter. What we see here is a continuing picture of final judgment time arriving.

One quick simple swing of the sickle and the job is done. Now, I know that harvesting isn't really that simple or easy. But, this is symbolic. There isn't a reason to draw it out. It's a simple picture of the harvesting taking place.

Another angel, also with a sharp sickle, comes on the scene. This angel is told by yet another angel from God's presence to harvest the clusters of grapes. Now, before we talk about the grapes let's review a key point here. Every command is coming from an angel who has just come from God's presence. So it is God who is giving the commands, and it is God who is in full control. The grapes seem to represent sinful man, who is symbolically thrown into the wine press of God's wrath, where the resulting grape juice (blood of the sinners) rises as high as "as high as the horses' bridles for a distance of 1,600 stadia.". WOW - this is high. A horse's bridle would be in it's mouth, and this makes the height or depth equal to 4 - 6 feet high. The 1,600 stadia represents a large distance. If this were a literal number, it would be about 180 miles in length. Whether the number is literal or symbolic (40x40 or 4 squared times 10 squared) - it's big.

REVELATION

15: 1 - 8 John tells us of a great and wondrous sign that he saw. Now, I don't know about you, but I think just about everything he's seen so far was great and wondrous. What was the sign? It was "seven angels with the seven last plagues - last, because with them God's wrath is completed."

John saw more than the seven angels. He saw what seemed like a sea of glass. How does this sea of glass compare to the one found in **4:6**?

That's right - this time John describes it as being "mixed with fire". What does this suggest to you?

Many commentators suggest either a symbol of martyrdom or a symbol of God's wrath. Either one is fine with me.

Standing next to the sea of glass were those who had been victorious over the beast. Who do you think these were?

It appears to me that these are the 144,000 because of the harps given to them by God. Now this is interesting. Many people feel that many or all of the 144,000 were martyrs. (I'm not sure if this is correct or not). But, whether they were martyrs or not, I find it interesting that John describes them here as being victorious over the beast. Why do you think John does this?

It would seem likely that they were victorious because they did not give in. They did not worship the beast, they did not take his number. They remained faithful to Jesus and now they are with him. This made them victorious.

They sing two songs: the song of Moses and the song of the Lamb. How do you think these two songs would relate to each other? What common theme might they have?

REVELATION

I see a common theme about deliverance. Moses is the story where God delivers his chosen people from Egypt. Jesus' act as sacrificial lamb delivers us from the punishment due us for our sins. As you read the song, do you think it supports the deliverance theme?

John looks up to heaven, and sees the temple of the tabernacle of the Testimony. Now, the King James, New King James, NIV, and the New American Standard all describe it this way. The Revised Standard talks about the temple of the tent of witnesses. The Simple English translation talks about the special tent of the temple sanctuary. They're all pretty much the same. The tabernacle/tent of the Testimony/witness. These are mostly Old Testament ideas, taken from the 40 years of wandering in the desert and before Solomon built the first temple. I don't think there is any special significance here beyond the tie to Moses.

Out of the temple came seven angels with the seven plagues. John describes them as being "dressed in clean, shining linen and wore golden sashes around their chests." What do you think this represents?

While the clothing is similar to priestly garb, these are not priests, but God's angels. I think a safe interpretation is that these angels are pure and are serving God's purposes. Then, one of the four living creatures gives the seven angels seven bowls. We're not told which one of the four living creatures it was. Why? Because it doesn't really matter. All four living creatures served God. Now, go back to the discussion about these four living creature in 4: 6 - 11. Some commentators talk about the seven plagues as nature related, and the living creatures as representing nature. As so often the case in this study, I don't know.

John returns to the temple. He describes it as being filled with smoke from the glory of God and his power; and he tells us that no one could enter the temple until the seven plagues were completed. What does this suggest to you?

To me, it suggests that there is no way that man or Satan can stop God's purpose. These last final plagues are going to be delivered upon the earth.

WORKSHEET

Chapter 16

THE 7 BOWLS

16: 1-2	16: 3	16: 4-7	16: 8-9
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16: 10-11	16: 12-16	16: 17-21
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REVELATION

What are some differences that you see between the 7 trumpets, and now the 7 bowls?

16: 1 Who do you think the voice from the temple was? What do the bowls represent (or contain)?

I think it was God's voice that John heard. He Himself told the angels to go and pour out the bowls. The angels are better than most of us - they don't need to be told twice by God to do something.

16: 2 The first angel pours his bowl out upon the land. What happens and who suffers?

Those who worshipped the beast and wore his mark receive painful sores. Has the rapture occurred yet? There are lots of opinions about this, and one of them may even be right.

16: 3 The second angel pours out his bowl out upon the sea. This time EVERY living thing in the sea dies.

16: 4 - 7 The third angel pours out his bowl upon the rivers and springs. Without water, the end is very near. Who is the "angel in charge of the waters"? Barclay says "In Hebrew thought every natural force - the wind, the sun, the rain, the waters - had its directing angel." McGee says this angel "is the superintendent of God's water department here on earth. This reveals another ministry of angels as it affects creation. They are in charge of the different physical departments of the universe. We have seen four angels who control the winds. This angel, who knows the whole story, now declares that God is right and holy in this act of judgment."

16: 8 - 9 The fourth angel pours out his bowl on the sun. Reread verse 9. Can you believe anyone having such hardened hearts? It is hard for us believers to try and comprehend how anyone could fail to worship God, especially in light of such events as these. But, then again, I suspect that we've all come across someone who just wouldn't admit that they were wrong. Did you notice the affect on the sun. The bowl being poured out caused it have or produce intense heat which scorched people with fire. Now, briefly look ahead to verse 10 where the beast's kingdom is plunged into darkness. Normally, darkness would make me think that it was getting cooler, and I would say that the sun was now "burnt out" so to speak, or that at least the effects of this bowl were diminishing somewhat. But Vernon McGee says that "As the sun's wattage is increased, it grows darker instead of lighter. The heat will be greater, but the light will be less."

16: 10 - 11 The fifth angel pours out his bowl on the throne of the beast, and his kingdom is plunged into darkness. Darkness can be very disorienting, but at least it is cooler. But, refer to verses 8-9 where we discover that this darkness may be an extension of the heat problems.

REVELATION

Men suffer. I like to think that this suffering is limited to the followers of the beast, and that any believers are protected. I call that “Bill-ology” which means that it is not inspired and probably not even correct, but it does make me feel better. Notice too that once again the beast’s followers again/still refused to repent.

16: 12 The sixth angel pours out his bowl on the Euphrates River and it dries up, preparing a way for the kings from the East. Who were these kings? We really don’t know because John does not mention them again. They could be kings fighting on God’s behalf/side. They could be evil kings fighting against other evil kings (evil divided against itself). They could be coming to participate in the great battle of Armageddon, and they could be just about anything you want.

What then is the point in mentioning them at all? We are being told that God is preparing the way for destruction of His enemies. Drying up of the river would make it easy for an “army” to advance.

The Euphrates River is not new to us. See **9: 13 - 15** . The Euphrates River was prominent in the bible. McGee tells us that it was mentioned over 25 times in the bible.

16: 13 - 16 Would you prefer to have a pet frog or a pet cat/dog? Why? Other than Kermit (Muppets), we don’t think of frogs as cute and cuddly. So when John describes the spirits as having the appearances of frogs, they aren’t anything we would think of as pure and innocent. Indeed, they go to gather the beast’s followers to prepare them for battle against God. Notice how the battle is described: “the battle on the great day of God Almighty”. Why do you think it is described that way? In verse 15 we’re told to be ready. This would seem to imply that there are still believers present. What do you think of when you hear about “Armageddon”?

Isn’t it interesting to know that apart from this mention here, the only other place that Armageddon is talked about in the book of Revelation is 19: 19 - 20. It’s exact location is not known. It seems to stand for the mountain of Megiddo or the city of Megiddo. Possibly a hill on which the city stood. Barclay tell us “Megiddo is in the Plain of Esdraelon, which was part of the great highway from Egypt to Damascus. From the most ancient times to the time of Napoleon it was one of the great battle-grounds of the world. This was the plain where Barak and Deborah overthrew Sisera and his chariots (Judg.5:19-21); where Ahaziah died by the arrows of Jehu (2Kgs.9:27); where the good Josiah perished in battle with Pharaoh Necho (2Kgs.23:29-30), a tragedy which burned itself into the Jewish mind and which the Jews never forgot (Zech.12:11).

(NOTE: 19: 19-20 doesn’t mention Armageddon by name. So it may not be the same. Also, there is one other battle scene found in 20: 8 - 9 that talks about Gog and Magog).

16: 17 - 21 The seventh angel pours his bowl upon the air and God pronounces “it is done”. With that there is a great earthquake, so great that we are told that none like it has ever occurred. Think what that means. What are some earthquakes you’re familiar with? What happened? Islands are washed away, mountains are leveled, and hailstones (weighing 45 pounds each or more) fall from the sky. And the beast’s followers continue to curse God.

WORKSHEET

PART I

With Chapter 17 we come to the tale of the great prostitute. Before we start, take a moment and look through the entire chapter and write down the various facts or information about the great prostitute.

PART II

1. Does the great prostitute represent a real person, a real city, a real institution, or?
2. In biblical usage, what is the difference between an adulteress and a prostitute?
3. What do the “waters” represent?

REVELATION

17: 1 - 2 One of the 7 angels that poured out the bowls comes to John and says come and see the punishment of the great prostitute who sits on many waters. This great prostitute does not represent a real person, or an institution, or even a great political power, but she does represent a city that is either the seat of a political power or that represents all cities and people on earth who are not true believers. Why do I say this? Because in verse 15 the angel tells John that "The waters you saw, where the prostitute sits, are peoples, multitudes, nations and languages." and in verse 18 the angel tells John that "The woman you saw is the great city that rules over the kings of the earth." Can a city represent something evil? Well, when you think of Sodom & Gomorah, what do you think of? Quick - name some things that come to mind when you think New York? What about San Francisco? What about the Yukon? Now, is it the city, or those who live in or possible rule/lead it that is at the heart of the city's reputation?

We note two things about the great prostitute: how she committed adultery with the kings and how the inhabitants of earth were intoxicated with the wine of her adulteries. Now the adultery with the kings represents the involvement with false religions and false gods. The non-believers became caught up with this following of false religions and false gods. Isn't it interesting how so many people today are caught up with so many false religions?

17: 3 - 6 John now sees the woman. Up to now he has just heard her described by the angel. Where is it that John sees her? It's in the desert, where the angel has taken him. Why do you think the "scene" takes places in the desert rather than in the city?

It's possible that the change of location merely points to a new aspect of the vision of the bowls. The other possibility is that this takes place in the desert so that the woman can more easily be seen for what she is. Everything about her will stand out in stark contrast to the desert surroundings.

Before we're told more about her, we're told that she is sitting on a scarlet beast. The beast is explained in more detail later on in this chapter, so we'll skip it for the moment.

Back to the woman. We're told that she is dressed in purple and scarlet. What comes to your mind when you read this? To me, several images come to mind. I think royal colors, gaudy colors, and expensive colors. However you interpret it, she is richly dressed. Today, we don't think of dying our own clothes. The clothing industry does this for us. And, most colors are all pretty much the same price. But in John's day, purple and scarlet dyes were very expensive. That is how they came to be associated with royalty and wealth.

She's wearing precious jewelry: gold, precious stones, and pearls. I don't think she's missing anything. She has a golden cup, but look at what's in it. I see a link between this cup's contents and the blood of the saints mentioned in verse 6.

Now, add in the title on her forehead and it's no wonder John tells us he was astonished.

REVELATION

17: 7 Confusing, isn't it? I'm glad the angel helps explain everything to us, even if I don't always understand the explanation.

17: 8 - 11 The beast once was, now is not, and will come (again). Evil is not new, and during "safe" times we think it has been eliminated, but it always comes back again. Satan doesn't give up, he merely bides his time. We know that the beast is a henchman of Satans, because he will come up out of the Abyss. The good news for us is that his final destination is destruction. The seven heads represent both a location (seven hills) and it's rulers (seven kings). We know that the woman represents a city, so if she (the city) sits on seven hills, then we naturally think of Rome. But at the same time, if the waters are important, then we also think of Babylon. Maybe she symbolically stands for all cities that oppose God.

The seven kings represent five that are in the past, one that is (ruling) now, and one that will follow. On the surface, this is straightforward enough. But, do these kings represent actual rulers (and if so, who) or do they represent empires? Some commentators who favor rulers look to the Roman Emperors. They usually skip Julius Caesar and start with Augustus. This makes Nero the fifth. If you then skip the three short term emperors, the sixth (current) becomes Vespasian and the seventh will be Titus. Now look ahead to where the beast is the eighth then becomes Domitian, whom many people likened to Nero. Of course, there are many other views on the makeup of this list. Since John was writing at the time of Domitian, you would expect him to be the sixth ruler; unless he was projecting back to the time of Vespasian. If you prefer to go with the empire approach, then you can play more guessing games.

Me, I don't have a clue.

17: 12 - 14 We now turn our attention to the ten horns. We're told that they are kings who have not yet come to power. When they do, their purpose will be to give their power and authority to the beast. This to me seems to imply that they will all be rulers at the same time. So, unlike the Roman emperors who ruled one after the other, these 10 kings must represent 10 different countries. They will make war against the Lamb, but the Lamb will overcome them.

Keep in mind that both seven and ten are numbers representing perfection and completeness. This may mean that there is no need to worry about exactly who we're talking about. Instead we need to see that the beast is supported by a majority of the world. In deed, this is what we expect/worry about as the end times approach.

17: 15 - 18 We already talked about the waters, and the fact that the woman is a city. What's new here is the fact that the beast and the 10 horns will turn on the woman. Satan and his followers have no loyalty to anyone or anything. When the woman no longer serves their purpose they turn on her. They take everything from her (her jewelery, her fine clothes, her high position). But, lest there be any doubt, John reminds us that God is in full control, even of this.

REVELATION

18: 1 John tells us that he saw another angel coming down, one with great authority, and that the earth was illuminated from his splendor. What picture does “the earth was illuminated” bring to your mind?

To me, the angel has a glow about him. A very strong and brilliant glow. This brings to mind Moses, and how he had to cover his face after coming down the mountain from having talked to God. This in turn causes me to believe that the angel’s great authority comes from God.

18: 2 - 3 The angel shouts (for all to hear) “Fallen! Fallen...” Why do you think the angel repeated the word “fallen” twice?

Note the “time line” difference between verse 2 and verse 3. Verse 2 tells us what has become of the fallen Babylon. What pictures does verse 2 bring to your mind?

Desolation, rubble, buildings fallen down with bricks and concrete laying in mounds. Rats and other unclean animals running about. Scavenger birds, etc. People ... none in sight. Those are the images that come to my mind. Why did this happen? We look to verse 3 for the answer. What groups do you think are represented by the kings, and the merchants?

I see the rulers and the politicians represented by the kings. I see business people of all sorts represented by the merchants. And I see everybody represented by the nations.

Did you notice the NIV translation where it uses the phrase “excessive luxuries”. What does this mean to you?

Here’s some other translations: King James “abundance of her delicacies”, New American Standard “wealth of her sensuality”, and New Jerusalem “debauchery”. I unfortunately think of America today where we have come to expect “excessive luxuries” as our due. Is there any wonder that obesity has become such a rampant health problem?

18: 4 - 5 Now we seem to return to a time right before the fall. God’s people are told not to stay lest they too partake in the coming judgment. Why would they share in the coming judgment?

Because if they stay, they would end up sharing in the sins. It is very hard to remain in the midst of sin and not fall to temptation.

And finally, we’re reminded that the sins aren’t a few occurrences, but “piled up to heaven”.

REVELATION

18: 6 - 8 Make her pay the price for her transgressions. Repay her in kind, even double. Straight forward enough. But who is being told to do this?

The answer to “who is being talked to” depends on “who is doing the talking”. We know that in verse 2 an angel is doing the talking. But verse 4 starts with “I heard another voice”, so this is a different speaker. It could be another angel. But why would an angel use the phrase “my people”. That phrase leads me to think that it is God talking. Some people would disagree because of the references to God in verse 5 and 8. Some people get around this by saying it was Jesus talking and that he was referring to God the Father. Then again, maybe the angel was quoting God about “my people”. And, to make matters more complicated, I’m not sure that verses 9 - 20 would come directly from God, but they could easily come from an angel, which would explain why angels aren’t mentioned in verse 20. As so often the case, I don’t really know.

So, back to “who is being talked to”. It would seem to be either God’s people (those alive at the time) or God’s angels. I lean towards angels. What do you think?

In any case, Babylon is to get what she deserves. And remember, there is a biblical principal involving thieves paying back double (remember Zacheus who climbed the tree).

Not only do we have Babylon’s actions, but we also have her attitude. In her heart she boasts, I will never mourn, etc. Oh well, pride cometh before a fall. Therefore, in light of her actions and her attitude, her punishment/judgment will come swiftly - in a single day she will be brought to ruin.

18: 9 - 20 These verses appear to be spoken by the same speaker as above. Except for the last verse they deal with those who profited from Babylon and who will miss her. I find it very interesting that the same people who wouldn’t repent and worship God feel so bad about Babylon’s passing. More interesting is the fact that they don’t miss Babylon for Babylon’s sake, but instead miss her because of how they profited from her.

18: 21 - 24 We’re reminded once again how swift, terrible, final, and complete will be Babylon’s destruction. There is a certain poetry to this section. It’s the “sounds” of the city that will be gone. What makes a place really lonely. One thing is the lack of sound. A city with no laughing children, with no music to enjoy, with no workplace sounds is a picture of not solitude, but of emptiness.

REVELATION

19: 1 - 2 Sometimes John says he heard what sounded like an ocean's roar, which tells us that it was a really large noise, but not necessarily the actual sound of the ocean. It helps bring a picture of awesome power to our head. But, in this verse John says he heard what sounded like the roar of a great multitude. What do you think he has in mind here?

I think he's describing a large number of people, or angels, or both. There are so many that the noise they make is the roar of a great multitude. If you're not sure what that noise is, then you've never been to any football games where the home team wins by a touchdown in the last few seconds of the game, or a basketball game at the coliseum when the home team wins by a basket as the final horn goes off.

Count the number of times "Hallelujah" is used in the verses 1 - 6 of this chapter. Did you know that this is the only place in the NIV translation where this word is used? The word itself is a transliteration of the Hebrew words "halal jah" (transliterated in Greek to "*Allelouia*"), much like the word baptism is a transliteration of the Greek word "*baptisma*". In the Old Testament the two words are translated "Praise God".

What are some of the things that God is praised for here?

If we just stopped with "salvation, glory, and power belong to God", then we might (repeat might) be able to make a case for God will save everyone, regardless of their spiritual beliefs. This would really be stretching this point, and no one that I have ever read has ever suggested this. I bring it up here only so that I can immediately point out the following verse where God is also praised for his just and true judgments, as shown here where he has condemned Babylon for leading men astray and for spilling the blood of God's servants.

19: 3 - 4 Again "they" shouted. Who is the "they"?

We don't know. It would seem to be angels, men, or both. They are in heaven, so we can safely say that these do not include those that worshipped the beast.

Where is God during all of this?

That's right. He's on the throne, surrounded by the 24 elders and the 4 Living Creatures. We've already talked about these 24 elders and how they probably represent the 12 tribes of Israel (Old Testament) and the 12 Apostles (New Testament).

REVELATION

19: 5 Normally, when John speaks about a “voice coming from the throne”, we would expect it to be God the Father or Jesus. But this doesn’t seem to be the case this time. Why do you think I say this?

There’s an interesting description of God’s servants here. They are described as those that fear him. We like to think of God as our friend, a big mentor in the sky, a loving father figure. But we need to also think of God as the awesome creator. We need to fear him. What does “fear him” mean?

This isn’t the same as being “fearful” of being robbed or beaten up by a big bully. This is more of an awesome fear where we realize that this is the sovereign Lord of the universe.

God’s servants come in two sizes. Large and small. Isn’t it wonderful to know that God values each of us, regardless of whether we are a great servant like Moses, Paul, Billy Graham, etc. or just plain ol’ us.

19: 6 - 8 Again John hears a sound like... Normally, we would again think of God speaking when we read about sounds of rushing waters and loud peals of thunder. But the words that John hears would not be spoken by God, but about God. This time the voices are praising God and giving Him glory because it is time for the wedding. Who is the lamb, and who is the bride?

The Lamb is Jesus. The bride is the church. If it is time for the wedding, do you think that rapture has occurred yet? The bride is wearing fine linen, which represents the righteous acts of the saints.

An angel tells John “blessed are those invited to the wedding supper of the lamb”. Now, some people might want to chop logic at this point and say “how can we be the bride and also be the wedding guests”? We need to keep in mind that this is a vision. On one hand, the church (all of us collectively) are the bride. At the same time each of us individually is invited to be a guest at the wedding banquet.

19: 10 At this point, John falls down to worship the angel. The angel stops him, saying “do not do it! I am (only) a fellow servant with you...”. I’m reminded of Paul and Barnabus in Acts 14.

How does this angel differ from Satan?

REVELATION

19: 11 Well, you would expect John to tell us about Jesus the groom now. Instead John tells us about Jesus the conqueror. We're told that Jesus was on a white horse, that His name is Faithful and True, and that He judges and makes war with justice. What do these things imply to you?

To me, white is the sign of purity. But it was also the color that triumphant Roman generals would ride into town to celebrate victories. Faithful and True would be descriptive of Jesus's actions and character. His judgment is not biased or based on partiality, but instead is one of justice. There are no miscarriages of justice with God.

19: 12 John gives us a further description of Jesus. His eyes are like blazing fire, He is wearing many crowns, and He has a name written on Him that no one knows. What do you think these all mean?

His eyes are not actually blazing fire. John said that Jesus' eyes were LIKE blazing fire. So we ask what this might mean. To me, it implies eyes flashing in righteous anger. Wearing many crowns to show that He is the King of Kings. The unknown name can have several interpretations. It may simply mean that Jesus has much more to Him than we can possibly understand. That's not too surprising, as He is God. It may mean that He has a name unknown to others so that they can not hold any power over Him. It may mean that He is about to show a side of Himself that has not been seen prior to this. When He walked on the earth 2,000 years ago, He was a humble servant of God, filling His role as unblemished sacrificial lamb. Now He will be the conqueror, administering justice and defeating evil.

19: 13 - 16 Jesus is dressed in a robe that is dipped in blood. Some suggest that this is the blood of enemies, but that doesn't make sense as the battle has not yet started. I agree with those who feel that this is Jesus' blood, offered as a sacrifice on our behalf. His angels have white robes, but theirs are not dipped in blood. This is a further "proof" to me that it is not the blood of enemies slain in battle, as the angels might then also have blood on their robes. Out of His mouth is a sharp sword - the word of truth. On His robe and thigh are written "King of Kings and Lord of Lords". Was the name actually written on Jesus' thigh or is this a description of where on the robe it was written? I don't know. But don't use this text as justification for getting a tattoo.

19: 17 - 21 Here we have a brief description of the big battle. I can only call it big because there were so many people gathered on the side of the beast. We don't know how long it lasted, but it doesn't appear to have lasted very long. In verse 19 the armies are gathered together for the battle and in verse 20 the beast and the false prophet are captured and thrown into the fiery lake of sulfur. The rest were killed. Compare this feast to the wedding feast. Which do you want to join in? (NOTE: There is still one last battle scene to come. It's covered in the next chapter.)

REVELATION

20: 1 - 3 John sees an angel coming down from heaven, having a key to the abyss and a chain (possibly used to bound Satan). Satan will be kept there for a thousand years during which time he will be prevented from deceiving the nations. Then, he will be released for a short time. What do you think the key, the chain, and the 1,000 years represent? Do you think they are literal or symbolic?

I see them as symbolic. The key to the abyss indicates the ability to open and close the abyss, which to me represents control over it. The chain symbolizes the ability or power to bound Satan in the abyss for the 1,000 years. The 1,000 years is also symbolic. 1,000 is 10 cubed, and 10 is a number for completion. Satan will be bound for the full time God intends. Why was Satan bound?

Satan was bound to prevent him from deceiving the nations. It seems to me that Satan has been active for the entire time that the world has existed. So, either this “1,000 years” has not yet occurred, or we need to interpret this as meaning that Satan is prevented (by God) from doing his worst. Finally, we are told that Satan is set free for a short time. Does this mean that Satan is given free rein to do whatever he wants?

I think it merely means that Satan will be released so that God can bring everything to a close.

20: 4 Isn't it amazing how one little verse should spark so much controversy? I'm talking about “they reigned with Christ a thousand years”. This is the MILLENNIUM, and related to it (though unmentioned in Revelation) is the big question of when Christ's 2nd return occurs in relation to this 1,000 years, and whether this reign occurs on earth or heaven. If that weren't enough, we also get to ask whether all the saints are reigning and judging here?

Here's the kind of fun you can expect if you want to take this section literally. John seems to be on earth because he sees an angel coming down from heaven. If, then, the thrones are on earth, then we must be talking about a reign on earth. But, the martyrs were earlier seen in heaven, so maybe the thrones are in heaven. Of course, you can say “they were in heaven, but now they have come to life on earth for the 1,000 year reign”. A final point on this 1,000 year reign. If it were literal, and if it occurs on earth, then why are there “bad people” still here who will rally round Satan when he is finally loosed at the end of the 1,000 years. I guess you can always opt to go with “Christ reigns over part of the earth, while the other part is filled with those who reject him”. I have trouble envisioning Christ ruling on earth, but only partially ruling.

Before we totally throw up our hands on this, let's also, just for fun, compare this judging to the judging in **Matthew 19:28** and **1 Corinthians 6:2**. In Matthew, the 12 Apostles will be sitting on the thrones and judging the 12 tribes of Israel. In Corinthians, we saints will be doing the judging. But here in Revelation John seems to be talking about those who lost their lives or otherwise suffered for Christ.

REVELATION

I've already gone on record as saying that I think Satan's 1,000 years of being bound is symbolic. Since Christ's 1,000 year reign seems to occur during the same time period (take a quick peek at verse 7), I also believe that His reign of 1,000 years is symbolic. Now, we've already talked about the 1,000 years as standing for the complete time set aside by God for everything to take place. I think we should view Christ's reign as a counter point to Satan's being bound. Christ reigns and Satan is bound. There is a message of triumph here. There is also a message that God is in control. Repeat that with me ... God is in control! This would have been reassuring to the people John originally wrote to, and it should still be reassuring to us today.

This is a good time to remind everyone that it is never safe to try and establish a major theological issue based on a single passage. Biblical principals and truths will be recurring themes in the bible. Those beliefs that are based on a single verse are more likely to be subject to interpretation error.

20: 5 - 6 The above could be a segway into verse 5. We're told that "the rest of the dead did not come to life...". Does the "rest of the dead" refer to sinners and unbelievers, or to unpersecuted saints? But wait, there's more. (Sounds like a TV infomercial, doesn't it). Since there is a reference to a "first resurrection", does that mean there is a "second resurrection"? After all, there is a reference to a "second death".

Well, if Christ's reign is symbolic, then so is the martyr's reign with Him. What then does it represent?

Possibly their reign represents, again, a message of hope. The martyrs weren't defeated by death. They instead have triumphed and now reign with Christ. This is true whether you choose to view this passage as literal or symbolic.

John refers to a "second death". Some views of Revelation refer to a "second resurrection" (not mentioned by John, but inferred from his reference of a "first resurrection". I think we can agree that the martyrs certainly don't have to worry about dying a second time. There are multiple views of what the first and second death/resurrection represent.

- 1) The first death is when our body dies here on earth and the second death would be those who do not go on to live with God for eternity. For Christians there would be only one resurrection.
- 2) The first death is when we are baptized, with the first resurrection being raised with Christ to a newness of life. The second death is when we die here on earth, and the second resurrection is when we are raised to life to live with God for eternity.
- 3) The first resurrection is for the martyrs (and those that suffered) only. The rest of us, sinners and saints, wait until the general resurrection on Judgement Day. Symbolic or literal, there will be a reward for those who suffer for Christ's sake. And if we're lucky enough not to suffer for our faith, then we'll also be rewarded - at the very least with eternal life.

REVELATION

20: 7 - 10 When the appointed time is up, Satan is released. He immediately goes out to deceive the nations in the four corners of the earth. What do you think the four corners represents?

I think it represents the entire earth. Next there is a reference to Gog and Magog. Since this is right between “the four corners of the earth” and “to gather them for battle”, my first thought was this was an expression. “Gog and Magog” or “Blazing Thunder”, etc. Of course it isn’t that at all. There was an Old Testament reference in Ezekiel 38-39 about a Gog of Magog. According to Barclay “As time went on, in Jewish thought Gog and Magog came to stand for everything that is against God. The rabbis taught that Gog and Magog would assemble themselves and their forces against Jerusalem, and would fall by the hand of the Messiah.” According to Leon Morris “In later Judaism Gog and Magog were thought of as two leaders. In apocalyptic writings, for example, they often symbolize the forces of evil.”

Well, no surprise there. Satan is mustering all the evil followers and forces for the big final (and this time I really do mean final) battle. Literally or symbolically, Satan is gathering the forces of evil against God’s followers. How many were there?

A lot! They numbered like sand on the seashore. They surrounded God’s people. And now ... the big battle. It’s over. Like the big battle in chapter 19 this one is a non event. “Fire came down from heaven and devoured them”. The devil “was thrown into the lake of burning sulfur, where the beast and the false prophet had been thrown.”

Here we get to ask “is this the same battle as chapter 19 or a different battle”? We’ve seen how John sometimes covers things in layers, talking about the same thing more than once, from different viewpoints. In this vein, John first dealt with the beast and false prophet, and now is dealing with Satan. On the other hand, the wording here seems to indicate either two different battles or two stages of the same battle. If this is two different battles, then I have to wonder whether or not the 1,000 year reign was before or after the chapter 19 battle. But, trying to rationalize a vision is like trying to make sense of a dream (ie: how did I get to school in my PJs).

Let’s just remember that John wants us to realize that God is dealing with evil in all of it’s various manifestations. And there isn’t really any battles here at all.

20: 11 - 15 We come to Judgment Day. Earth and the heavens have been destroyed. Everyone stands before God and is judged based on what they’ve done, all of which is recorded in books. I may be wrong, but I sense that everyone fails this test. All would be thrown into the lake of fire if only their actions were used for the judging. But, luckily for us, there is another book - the book of life. When we make Jesus our Lord and Savior our names are written in the book of life. His blood, His life, His sacrifice on the cross pay our debt and we are able to enter Heaven.

REVELATION

21: 1 - 4 John tells us that he “saw a new heaven and a new earth”. Normally we think of “new” as something that was just built, but along standard or expected lines. New in that case stands for unused and hopefully unmarred. But the word that John uses for “new” is *kainos*, which carries the idea of something so new that no one has seen it’s like before. So, keep in mind two things: First, that John is sharing his vision with us, which means that he may be talking in symbolic terms. Second, that he going to be using “old” terms and descriptions to describe *kainos* things.

The old heaven and the old earth had passed away (boy, talk about urban renewal). Why do you think John adds the phrase “there was no longer any sea”?

In John’s time, people feared the sea. Now, my wife and I were lucky enough to go on a Caribbean Cruise, and we looked forward to it. Why were we so comfortable with the sea? Well, for several reasons: we trusted the ship we would be sailing on, we knew that the ship would be fairly close to land the entire trip, and finally, we knew that the ship had nice GPS (global positioning system) devices to help track it’s location. No worries about rough seas and no worries about getting lost. The people John wrote to not only didn’t have a GPS unit, they didn’t even have a compass. They could rely on the stars at night, but what do you do about cloudy nights? They often associated the sea with evil forces and evil beasts. They would have been happy to read that “there was no longer any sea”. For us, we should understand that there will be no evil and nothing to fear in the new earth and the new heaven.

John then sees the Holy City, the new Jerusalem coming down out of heaven. Coming down to where? Presumably to the new earth. But let’s not get too carried away with worrying about whether we’ll be living with God in heaven or on the new earth. I think the purpose of this is to tell us two things: that God will dwell with us, and that it will be GREAT. Why do you think John used Jerusalem as the name for the city?

Jerusalem was where the temple was located. It is thought of as God’s city. So, a reference to the Holy City or to Jerusalem is most likely a reference to God’s people. They will be beautifully dressed, as a bride on her wedding day. This is a beautiful warm picture. But most importantly, we will be with God. Look at verse 3: “the dwelling of God is with men”, “he will live with them”, and “God himself will be with them”. And we have God’s word on it.

Not only will He be our God, but he will care for us (“He will wipe every tear from their eyes”). If this weren’t comforting enough, we’re told that there “will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain”.

How can this be? Well, the old order will be gone. Death and corruption will be gone. There will be no pain or hurts to mourn or cry over. The new earth will not suffer because of Adam’s sin, and sin will no longer have any control over us. WOW - talk about reassuring.

REVELATION

21: 5 - 8 No “voice from the throne” here. John tells us that He who sat on the throne said “I am making everything new”. Why do you think John included the “write this down” part?

Some have suggested that John had stopped writing and needed to be reminded. But remember - this is a vision. I think John is emphasizing this next part (verses 6 - 8). What message(s) do you see here?

I see several things: First, God is speaking. Second, God is eternal (alpha and omega = first and last letters of Greek alphabet; and the reference to beginning and end). Third, God will take care of us (“to him who is thirsty...”). Fourth, he who overcomes will inherit and become part of God’s family. And finally, fifth, those who don’t persevere through to the end will perish. This was written to encourage John’s readers. Not just them, but all Christians, past and future. God will win. If we stay the course, we will join God. If we don’t, then we will perish with the others in the second death. What does John say about the second death?

John says the second death is being (thrown/put) in the fiery lake of burning sulfur. This is what I refer to as eternal separation from God. And, it doesn’t sound like just a simple place of exile.

I don’t believe the list in verse 8 is meant to be complete. It is simply to tell us some of the things that God won’t tolerate.

21: 9 - 27 What are some of things that you notice about John’s description of the city?

Gold streets, precious gems, gates made from single pearls are all ways of saying that the city is very, very nice. Talk about houses of the very rich.

The names of the twelve tribes on the gates and the names of the twelve apostles on the foundations show that people from both the old covenant (Law) and the new covenant (grace) will be there - all of God’s people. It’s size shows that there is plenty of room for all of God’s people.

The angels standing guard help us understand that no one gets in that doesn’t belong. The gates don’t need to be closed at night (there isn’t any night). The size of the walls goes along with the idea that no one can enter whose name is not in the book of life (no impure, deceitful, or shameful).

God’s glory lights up the city. The temple isn’t needed because God and Jesus are there with the believers. We’ll be face to face with them so to speak.

REVELATION

22: 1 - 2 Barclay points out that in chapter 21 John's vision deals mostly with the outside of the city, and that here in chapter 22 his vision turns to the inside of the city. J. Vernon McGee adds this insight: "Up to this chapter, the New Jerusalem seems to be all mineral and no vegetable. Its appearance is as the dazzling display of a fabulous jewelry store; we wonder if there is no soft grass to sit upon, no green trees to enjoy, and no water to drink or food to eat." Keep in mind that McGee is taking a literal view of John's writing.

What do you think the river of the water of life represents? What about the tree of life? And why do we need healing in eternity?

John may be using some Old Testament references. See **Genesis 2: 8-10**, and **Ezekiel 47: 1-12**. He may also be thinking of what he wrote in **John 7: 38-39**. The river in the garden of Eden was not referred to as the river of the water of life, though it is true that water is the source of life for us. The Genesis reference does refer to the tree of life, as well as the tree of knowledge of right and wrong. The Ezekiel passage does not refer to either the river or the tree as "of life", but the trees do bear fruit every month and their leaves serve for healing. John's gospel reference explained Jesus' reference to streams of living water as representing the Holy Spirit.

I think the river of life and the tree of life in the new city represents God providing for our needs. The water is clear and pure and comes direct from the throne of God and Jesus. The trees bear fruit throughout the entire year. Some people use this reference to show that we will eat and drink in heaven. I take it to symbolize God's taking care of all our needs. If you want to take the eating and drinking literally, then you will have to expect the literal need for healing as well. But if you take it symbolically, then the healing reference indicates that there won't be any resultant pains, etc. in heaven as they are provided for. This sounds like double talk, but I hope you understand what I am saying. (Leon Morris mentions that "Walwood takes the word to mean health-giving..."). Barclay adds this: "The tree of life is no longer forbidden; it is there in the midst of the city for all to take. Nor are its fruits confined to the Jews; its leaves are for the healing of the nations. Only in the Spirit of God can the wounds and the breaches of the nations be healed."

22: 3 - 5 What curse do you think John is referring to?

I think he is referring to the "Genesis incident". Sin entered the world and God cursed the earth (**Genesis 3**).

John is also telling us that we will be with God and Jesus and that we will all serve Him and that we will SEE His face. See **Exodus 33: 19-20** and **Ezekiel 48:35**. His name will be on our foreheads because we belong to Him. John reminds us that there will be no night. He also says that we will reign. Don't worry about who we will reign over - the point is that we will reign with God and Jesus. Morris says "... indicates a blessed and exalted state ... share in royalty."

REVELATION

22: 6 - 13 Notice that in verse 6 an angel is speaking, but by verse 13 it is Jesus who is speaking. When do you think the speaker changed?

I would normally think that verse 7 (“I am coming”) would be Christ speaking. But John would not fall down to worship an angel if Christ were present. So I think that maybe verse 10 and definitely verse 12. Maybe John is just giving us several thoughts and mixing up their order.

I like verse 6, especially in light of verse 5. We’re going to reign forever, and you can count on it because these words are true. Then, immediately, more encouragement - Jesus is coming soon.

What do you think “Blessed is he who keeps the words of the prophecy in this book.” means?

It seems to me that we keep the words not so much by obeying them (they’re not a set of rules laid down for us to follow), but by keeping them in our heart. We read them, we think about them, we try to follow them (by staying true to Jesus). We don’t lose faith.

Then John tries to worship an angel and the angel stops him. Now, maybe John really did try and the angel really did stop him. Or, maybe this was part of John’s vision, and it serves to remind us that neither angels or prophets are worthy of our worship - only God.

Then John is told NOT to seal up the words of this prophecy because the time is near. It seems strange to us 2,000 years later to read that the time is near. We can say “well, they expected Christ’s return a lot sooner”. Or, we can say “well, in God’s scope, 2,000 years is like 2 days”. Or, we can say “well, all of us will see Christ soon - either at our death or upon His return”. Leon Morris quotes Torrance as saying “The New Testament does not think of the difference between the presence of Christ here and now and His Second Advent so much in terms of a passage of time as the difference between the veiled and the unveiled. That is why the whole of the New Testament by an inner necessity of personal faith thinks of that day as imminent.”

22: 14 - 15 Here’s an interesting verse (v 14). King James and New King James translate “those that do His commandments”, while most other translations say “those who wash their robes”. The Greek for these two statements is very, very close, and it is felt by everyone but the King James translators that a copy mistake was made. I find it interesting that there is no doctrinal difference between the two statements. Keeping Jesus’ commands would involve being baptized, and being baptized is the picture I see when I read of someone washing their robes (in the blood of Christ).

Well, interesting as that is, the point of these two verses is that those who accept and follow Jesus will be within, while those who reject Him and follow other ways will be outside.

REVELATION

22: 16 Trick question time. Who is Jesus talking to?

Jesus is actually talking to us. That's you and me and everyone else who hears or reads this book. You see, the "you" in "sent my angel to you" is actually plural. Kind of neat, don't you think?

What do you make of Jesus' reference to Himself as 1) the root, 2) the offspring, and 3) the morning star?

We already saw in **5:5** that root, as used here carries the idea of a shoot or off-branch of the root. The emphasis is that Jesus is of not just Abraham, Issac, and Jacob's line, but that He is of David's line (or one of David's descendants). This fits with Messianic prophecy. So, we have a double idea (both "root" and "offspring") that Jesus is a descendant of the royal line.

Now, some see the "morning star" as a reference to **Numbers 24:17**, a reference to Jacob's line.

22: 17 Before we worry about the "spirit and the bride", let's take a look at the rest of the passage. There is a wonderful thing here. We're told that he who hears is to pass the message on. If you ever wondered whether or not you're responsible for telling others about your faith and about Jesus, then this is one of the passages that will help you. First we have to hear "come", then we have to repeat to others "come". What? How can I extend the word "come" to a gospel invitation? Simple, the rest of the verse talks about "he who is thirsty ...let him come ...let him take... free gift of water of life..."

OK. Back to the "spirit and the bride". What do you think John is referring to here?

"Bride" stands for the church. And so the church (representing all of us believers) invites others to come. "Spirit" stands for God. Yes, I know that Jesus is talking. But nevertheless, I see here the idea that God wants us to come to Him. The invitation is for all, even if all do not accept it. The Spirit stands for God, talking to us through the prophets.

22: 18 - 19 A reminder not to add, change, or remove anything from this book.

22: 20 - 21 Closing prayer. Come now (soon) Lord Jesus.

AMEN.