

Revelation 18 to 22

Commentary



END-TIME COMMENTARY
from
The Testimony of Jesus

REVELATION 18–22

COMMENTARY

A commentary focusing on spiritual applications to the time just preceding Jesus' return.

Franklin S. Fowler Jr., M.D., Editor

These conclusions are always tentative since new light constantly unfolds.

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Understanding God's Word continually deepens. He designed that the beauty of truth expressed there would continually open to the relentless student. Armed with His Spirit, waves of new understanding would break upon the inquiring mind. The pages of this commentary represent only a few of those waves that have come to shore. We will never tire of discovery nor cease to open new thoughts to our readers. We ask all to pray that each viewpoint will ever move closer to the precise meaning God gave each thought to convey.

This document is a collaborative effort of a volunteer team of individuals who have a dedicated interest in understanding and sharing prophetic truth. An overriding objective in this research is to accurately portray eschatological concerns in the book of Revelation.

Editorial Notice

Many cited quotations draw from ancient apocalyptic and Jewish literature. Though the editors of this commentary do not necessarily endorse these references as appropriate sources for *truth*, per se, they provide linguistic assistance with words, phrases and, at times, ancient understanding to help grasp Biblical expressions. For that reason they are preserved in many quotations inserted in the text of this document.

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Cover Painting:

St. John the Evangelist on the Island of Patmos

MEMLING, Hans 1474-79 – Right Panel of a Triptych

Painted on the “St John Altarpiece”

Oil on oak panel, 173,6 x 173,7 cm (central), 176 x 78,9 cm (each wing)

Memlingmuseum, Sint-Janshospitaal, Bruges

Together with the Gdansk Last Judgment and the Lübeck Passion, this is one of the three biggest triptychs that Memling ever painted. The three altarpieces are also distributed evenly throughout his career, and hence serve as crucial milestones in the development of his oeuvre. The St John altarpiece is dated 1479, and is thus located precisely half-way between the Gdansk (1467) and Lübeck (1491) triptychs.

There are three panels, a triptych. The two wings, each depict episodes from the lives of the standing figures of the two St Johns. The central panel focuses upon a Sacra Conversazione, a gathering of saints around the Virgin. However, the narrow vertical openings between the columns reveal a continuous landscape with ruins and buildings in which small episodes from the lives of the two male saints are enacted. The left wing features the Beheading of St John the Baptist and the right wing St John the Evangelist on the Island of Patmos. In addition to these realistic portrayals, the carved groups on the two capitals above each saint also depict key moments from their lives.

The composition of the triptych as a whole is not only ingenious in narrative terms, with the different components interlocking spatially and thematically;. There is no sign of any other representation prior to Memling in which the Book of Revelation is played out before St John's eyes in its entirety in a single, undivided painting. Only in the Beheading of St John the Baptist did Memling prefer to paraphrase a Van der Weyden composition (St John altarpiece, Berlin, Staatliche Museum). However, the stylized terseness and enclosed character of the latter give way here to dramatic action in the open air, with a high degree of realism.

In view of the historical circumstances and iconography, there can be no doubt whatsoever that this triptych was painted for the High Altar of the chapel of St John's Hospital. An old inscription on the bottom member of the frame gives the date 1479 and the name of the artist Johannes Memling. With the exception of the Floreins triptych in the same hospital, this is the only work by Memling to be authenticated by an original (in this case subsequently overpainted) inscription. The donors were also identified. Jacob de Ceuninc was initially recorded as a monk at the hospital in 1469-70, and later as bursar from 1488 until his death in 1490. Antheunis Seghers was first mentioned in 1455-56 and appears to have been master from 1461 to 1465, bursar from 1466 to 1468, and then master again from 1469 until his death in 1475. Agnes Casembrood was first recorded in 1445-46, and subsequently appears as prioress from 1459 to 1463, and again from 1469 until her death in 1489. Clara van Hulsen makes her initial appearance in the records in 1427-1428, and died in 1479. Given that these are evidently intended as portraits, the altarpiece must have been ordered before the death of Antheunis Seghers in 1475, which means that its production may logically be linked with the expansion of the chapel's apse in 1473-74 though we lack details of Jacob de Ceuninc and Clara van Hulsen in those years.

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REVELATION

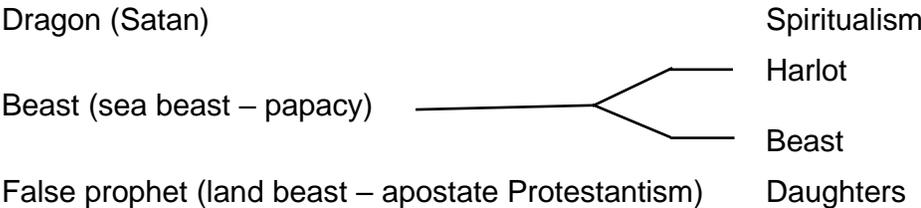
CHAPTER 18

INTRODUCTION

In the previous chapter an interpreting angel, one who had a destructive Vial, told John how the great *whore* would come to her end. That harlot, associated with the beast and her daughters, was seen as Babylon – the “great city.” Tied to all were the spiritualistic influences of the dragon. In chapter 16, during the seven last Vials, Babylon came under God’s judgment (16:19) to receive what He had warned would happen (14:10).

Babylon is fallen (14:8)	That great city
Will receive God’s wrath (14:10)	If worship beast, his image or receive his mark
Receives God’s wrath (16:19)	Final destructive Plagues
Babylon is fallen (18:2)	Cry of angel with power

These are further understood as *three evil spirits* (16:13-14, 19):



Babylon represents the various forms of false or apostate religions.¹ This can be represented through apocalyptic symbols as:

- Babylon – Harlot + her daughters + eighth
- Babylon – Sea beast + earth beast + dragon
- Babylon – Beast + false prophet + dragon
- Babylon – Papacy + apostate Protestantism + Satan

In spite of detailed warnings already given as to why it falls and how it comes to its end, God returns in this chapter to revisit the issue of Babylon in another desperate message of the urgency to cease all attachment to that “city.” This is a dramatic message of recapitulation of what she is doing, who controls her and what her destiny will be.

In an ever more spectacular narrative, this chapter continues what the interpretative angel promised in 17:1 – to reveal the “judgment of the prostitute.” As it ends we will have witnessed the end of Babylon three times – 16:19, 17:16 and 18:9-19.

“The events depicted in ch. 18 are not in chronological order but may be outlined in the following way: (1) the fall of Babylon is predicted (vv 1-3); (2) God’s people are exhorted to separate from Babylon *before* her judgment, lest they suffer with her (vv 4-8);

¹ White, Ellen G.; *The Great Controversy*, p. 381.

(3) those cooperating with Babylon will lament after her judgment (vv 9-19); and (4) the faithful will rejoice over her judgment once it is accomplished (vv 20-24).

“19:1-6 (perhaps including vv 7 and 8) continues to emphasize Babylon’s fall and is the conclusion to ch. 18. In this light the structure of the whole section can be broadly outlined in the following chiasmic manner:

“The coming judgment as a basis for exhorting saints to leave Babylon (18:1-8)
 Kings lament Babylon’s fall (18:9-10)
 Merchants lament Babylon’s fall (18:11-17a)
 Mariners lament Babylon’s fall (18:17b-19).
 The coming judgment as a basis for exhorting saints to rejoice and for glorifying God (18:20-19:6[-8]).²

There are exegetic ties to Old Testament passages.

- Judgment of Babylon – it will be as stubble (Isaiah 47:1-15; cf. Isaiah 21:9)
- Fall of Israel – no more to rise (Amos 5:1-3, 9-19)
- Fall of Babylon (Jeremiah 50-51; LXX 27-28)

Parallels with Jeremiah are plentiful:

“18:2a	Jer 51:8 (LXX 28:8); Isa 21:9
18:2b	Jer 51:37 (LXX 28:37)
18:3	Jer 51:7 (LXX 28:7)
18:4	Jer 51:6 (LXX 28:6)
18:5	Jer 51:9 (LXX 28:9)
18:6	Jer 50:29 (LXX 27:29); cf. Jer 16:18
18:8	cf. Jer 50:32, 34; 51:30, 32, 58
18:20	Jer 51:48 (not in LXX)
18:21	Jer 51:64 (LXX 28:64)
18:22c-23b	Jer 25:10
18:23b	Jer 7:34; 16:9; 25:10; 33:11; cf. Bar 2:23
18:24	Jer 51:49 (LXX 28:49) ³

“Revelation 18 points to the time when, as the result of rejecting the threefold warning of Revelation 14:6-12, the church will have fully reached the condition foretold by the second angel, and the people of God still in Babylon will be called upon to separate from her communion. This message is the last that will ever be given to the world; and it will accomplish its work.”⁴

“‘What terrible scenes will take place when the Lord shall arise to shake terribly the earth! Then the words of Rev. 18:1-3 will be fulfilled.’ The whole of the eighteenth chapter of Revelation is a warning of what is coming on the earth.... Scenes will take place the fearfulness of which we cannot imagine.”⁵

This chapter follows the fifth Seal: “When the fifth seal was opened, John the Revelator in vision saw beneath the altar the company that were slain for the Word of God and the testimony of Jesus Christ. After this came the scenes described in the eight-

² Beale, G. K.; *The New International Greek Testament Commentary; The Book of Revelation* (William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, Grand Rapids, Michigan, 1999), p. 891.

³ Aune, David E.; *52A World Biblical Commentary; Revelation 6–16* (World Books; Publisher, Dallas, Texas), 1997, p. 870.

⁴ White, Ellen G.; *The Great Controversy*, p. 390.

⁵ White, Ellen G.; *The Review and Herald*, July 5, 1906.

teenth of Revelation, when those who are faithful and true are called out from Babylon [Rev. 18: 1-5 quoted] (MS 39, 1906).”⁶

Chapter Associations

Revelation 13, 16, 17 and 18 bond together in a remarkable whole (see Excursus I for a graphic detail).

VERSE 1: “And after these things I saw another angel come down from heaven, having great power; and the earth was lightened with his glory.”

Verse 1 – “And after these things I saw another angel”

“After these things I saw” (*meta tauta eidon*) indicates in John’s writings that there is a transition to a new section (4:1; 7:1, 9; 15:5; 18:1). Though it will embellish the details of Babylon introduced between chapters 13 and 17, it is a distinct communiqué.

“A new visual impression begins. It is introduced by an appearance of an angel, which implies an intensification compared to what has been presented heretofore.”⁷

This “another angel” draws from chapter 14 where similar terminology is expressed:

“Another angel fly in the midst of heaven” (14:6)

“Then followed another angel” (14:8), presumably flying in heaven.

“The third angel followed (14:9), presumably flying in heaven.

“Another angel come down from heaven” (18:1).

There, the midst or middle of heaven meant it was positioned so that all could hear. Those angels conveyed the three angels’ messages by the 144,000. Here, it is their final Loud Cry of warning to the world. They followed, in turn, Jesus – the mighty angel who came down to give John the opened book of Daniel 8–12 with its three timed prophecies (Revelation 10:9-10). The message of the 144,000 is also to include what was written in the “little book” messages.⁸

Here, a fourth angel is coming with a more pointed message, embellishing especially the second and third angels’ communiqués of Revelation 14. Many expositors attempt to show that this angel is the Christ of 10:1. It would, however, be demeaning to speak of Him as “another angel” – one among many (contextually “an *other* among the group”).

“The work of this angel comes in at the right time to join in the last great work of the third angel’s message as it swells to a loud cry. And the people of God are thus prepared to stand in the hour of temptation, which they are soon to meet. I saw a great light resting upon them, and they united to fearlessly proclaim the third angel’s message.”⁹

Verse 1 – “come down from heaven, having great power; and the earth was lightened with his glory.”

“In contrast to the beast, this angel has two characteristics. First, he possesses’ (*exousian megalen*, great authority), compared to the derived authority of the beast (from the dragon, 13:2, and from God, 13:5). Second ... (*he ge ephotisthe ek tes dozes*

⁶ White, Ellen G.; *The Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary*, vol. 7, p. 968.

⁷ Roloff, Jurgen; *The Revelation of John – A Continental Commentary*, (Fortress Press, Minneapolis, MN), p. 204.

⁸ White, Ellen G.; *The Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary*, vol. 7, p. 971.

⁹ White, Ellen G.; *Early Writings*, p. 277.

autou, the earth was illumined with his glory), while the members of the false trinity do not possess 'glory' in the Apocalypse. In fact, no celestial being, angelic or demonic, has 'glory' in the book except here."¹⁰

In addition, the contrasts are heightened further by noting that that beast *ascended* out of the sea (13:1) and the abyss (17:8) and this angel *descends* from heaven. It represents the uniting of God's Spirit with the last work of God's people on the earth.

"This is the last scene we see before the eschaton proper; it is the final climactic scene of the eschatological woes that precede the final coming of the kingdom of God. John has been building toward the scene of the destruction of 'Babylon;' now it is here. These words celebrating/lamenting the fall of Rome are not uttered in the easy wisdom of hindsight but with prophetic insight, while Rome is at the height of her splendor and power."¹¹

"Of none of the six angels of ch 14 or seven angels of ch 15 and 16 is it said that the earth, which I interpret as meaning the whole world, was illumined with heavenly glory. This corresponds to the white horse of ch. 6:2, which 'went forth conquering and to conquer.' These represent the ministry of the 144,000 under the power of the latter rain of the Holy Spirit. So let us hear the message of this powerful angel sometimes spoken of as the fourth angel in a sequence from ch.14:6-12."¹²

They are lightened with God's glory and have great power because of the outpouring of that Latter Rain. This coincides with the message given by the two witnesses in Revelation 11:5-6. They, too, "had power." The word "glory" is usually designated for the presence of God (Revelation 15:8; 21:11, 23).¹³ In this context it depicts a full outpouring of the Holy Spirit, which ties to the "seven Spirits" (1:4) and the Lamb's "seven eyes which are the seven Spirits of God sent forth into all the earth" (5:6). It is the most complete expression of the Spirit working through mankind – His witnesses. This also draws on the two "olive trees" that stand before the "God of the earth." They represent His witness, full of the oil – the Holy Spirit.

"The background of this manifestation of divine glory is the promise in Ezekiel 43:2 to Israel in captivity that God would return to His new temple, from the East. In Rev. 18 the 'glory' refers to the quality of God's presence through those sent by Christ."¹⁴

"Arise, shine; for your light has come! And the glory of the Lord is risen upon you. For behold, the darkness shall cover the earth, and deep darkness the people; but the Lord will arise over you, and His glory will be seen upon you. The Gentiles shall come to your light, and kings to the brightness of your rising." (Isaiah 60:1-3)

"As this world, shaken by great upheavals, is plunged into darkness, this great mission will consist in sending out, with power and authority, a final call to salvation to all nations, like a bright light illuminating the earth."¹⁵

"As the whole earth is 'lightened,' this is a world-wide movement. Every corner of the globe will see this 'lightning' (Psalm 97:4). This is when the righteous shall shine forth as the sun in their Father's kingdom (Matthew 13:43). This light that is shining in the hearts of God's faithful people (2 Corinthians 4:6), now shines on the people that have walked

¹⁰ Osborne, Grant R.; *Revelation* (Baker Book House; Grand Rapids, MI), p. 634.

¹¹ Boring M. Eugene; *Interpretation – A Bible Commentary for Teaching and Preaching* (John Knox Press, Louisville, Kentucky), 1989, p. 185.

¹² Smart, Lois, M.D.; *Study of Revelation 18–19*, p. 1.

¹³ Aune, *Op cit.*, p. 985.

¹⁴ LaRondelle, Hans, Th.D.; *How to Understand the End-Time Prophecies of the Bible*, (First Impressions, Sarasoto, FL), p. 420.

¹⁵ Proulx, Reno, M.D.; LaPlante, Debbie; *The Loud Cry, the Faithful and True Rider & the Marriage of the Lamb* (A Study of Revelation chapters 18 and 19), p. 3.

in darkness (Isaiah 9:2). Now the light shines on them giving them the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ (2 Corinthians 4:6).

“This is the ‘latter rain’ that comes at the close of this world’s history to ripen the precious seeds and bring the harvest (Hosea 6:3; Joel 2:23; Acts 2:17, 21). This is the time of ‘refreshing’ that Peter looked forward to (Acts 3:19-20).

“Servants of God, with their faces lighted up and shining with holy consecration, will hasten from place to place to proclaim the message from Heaven. By thousands of voices, all over the earth, the warning will be given. Miracles will be wrought, the sick will be healed, and signs and wonders shall follow the believers. Satan also works with lying wonders, even bringing fire down from heaven in the sight of men. Revelation 13:13. Thus the inhabitants of the earth will be brought to take their stand.

“The message will be carried not so much by argument as by the deep conviction of the Spirit of God. The arguments have been presented. The seed has been sown, and now it will spring up and bear fruit. The publications distributed by missionary workers have exerted their influence, yet many whose minds were impressed have been prevented from fully comprehending the truth or from yielding obedience. Now the rays of light penetrate everywhere, the truth is seen in its clearness, and the honest children of God sever the bands which have held them. Family connections, church relations, are powerless to stay them now. Truth is more precious than all besides. Notwithstanding the agencies combined against the truth, a large number take their stand upon the Lord’s side.’ *The Great Controversy*, p. 612....

“And how is this glory to be shown to the world? ‘And to you who are troubled rest with us, when the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with His mighty angels ... When He shall come to be glorified *in His saints*, and to be admired in all them that believe ... in that day.’ 2 Thessalonians 1:7,10.”¹⁶

The message and power of this fourth angel is symbolic of the work of the Holy Spirit in God’s servants that comes in a marked manner when giving the third angel’s message of Revelation 14. It is a *promise* of that power, authority and glory that will attend the final work!

“Near the close of earth’s harvest, a special bestowal of spiritual grace is promised to prepare the church for the coming of the Son of man. This outpouring of the Spirit is likened to the falling of the latter rain; and it is for this added power that Christians are to send their petitions to the Lord of the harvest.”¹⁷

The latter rain begins at the time of the first Seal. It swells to a loud cry at the time of the Trumpets. That is the time when wickedness reaches its peak and the abomination of desolation spoken by Daniel (12:11) becomes universal.

“The substitution of the laws of men for the law of God, the exaltation, by merely human authority, of Sunday in place of the Bible Sabbath, is the last act in the drama. When this substitution becomes universal, God will reveal Himself. He will arise in His majesty to shake terribly the earth. He will come out of His place to punish the inhabitants of the world for their iniquity, and the earth shall disclose her blood and shall no more cover her slain.”¹⁸

Of this remarkable time we have been graced with these thoughts:

¹⁶ Brooks, Karen; *Revelation 18*, p. 1-2.

¹⁷ White, Ellen G.; *Acts of the Apostles*, p. 55.

¹⁸ White, Ellen G.; *Testimonies*, vol. 7, p. 141.

“Work of the Holy Spirit goes throughout the earth:

“In the future the earth is to be lightened with the glory of God. A holy influence is to go forth to the world from those who are sanctified through the truth. The earth is to be encircled with an atmosphere of grace. The Holy Spirit is to work on human hearts, taking the things of God and showing them to men.”¹⁹

“Light will be communicated to every city and town. The earth will be filled with the knowledge of salvation. So abundantly will the renewing Spirit of God have crowned with success the intensely active agencies, that the light of present truth will be seen flashing everywhere.”²⁰

“Multitudes to receive the light:

“Jesus commissioned a mighty angel to descend and warn the inhabitants of the earth to prepare for His second appearing.... his mission was to lighten the earth with his glory and warn man of the coming wrath of God. Multitudes received the light.”²¹

“God will soon do great things for us ... More than one thousand will soon be converted in one day.--Review and Herald, Nov. 10, 1885.”²²

“The time is coming when there will be as many converted in a day as there were on the day of Pentecost.--Review and Herald, June 29, 1905.”²³

“God will use simple means and humble instruments:

“There will be those among us who will always want to control the work of God, to dictate even what movements shall be made when the work goes forward under the direction of the angel who joins the third angel in the message to be given to the world. God will use ways and means by which it will be seen that He is taking the reins in His own hands. The workers will be surprised by the simple means that He will use to bring about and perfect His work of righteousness”²⁴

“As the time comes for it to be given with greatest power, the Lord will work through humble instruments, leading the minds of those who consecrate themselves to His service. The laborers will be qualified rather by the unction of His Spirit than by the training of literary institutions. Men of faith and prayer will be constrained to go forth with holy zeal, declaring the words which God gives them.”²⁵

“The Spirit of the Lord will so graciously bless consecrated human instrumentalities that men, women, and children will open their lips in praise and thanksgiving, filling the earth with the knowledge of God, and with his unsurpassed glory, as the waters cover the sea. [RH, October 13, 1904 par. 3]

“Those who have held the beginning of their confidence firm unto the end will be wide-awake during the time that the third angel’s message is proclaimed with great power.”²⁶

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, vol. 9, p. 40.

²⁰ White, Ellen G.; *The Review and Herald*, October 13, 1904.

²¹ White, Ellen G.; *Early Writings*, p. 245.

²² White, Ellen G.; *Evangelism*, p. 693.

²³ *Ibid.*; p. 692.

²⁴ White, Ellen G.; *Testimonies to Ministers*, p. 300.

²⁵ White, Ellen G.; *The Great Controversy*, p. 606

²⁶ White, Ellen G.; *The Reveiw and Herald*, October 13, 1904.

“Largely through the publishing work:

“In a large degree through our publishing houses is to be accomplished the work of that other angel who comes down from heaven with great power and who lightens the earth with his glory.”²⁷

“The publications distributed by missionary workers have exerted their influence, yet many whose minds were impressed have been prevented from fully comprehending the truth or from yielding obedience. Now the rays of light penetrate everywhere, the truth is seen in its clearness, and the honest children of God sever the bands which have held them. Family connections, church relations, are powerless to stay them now. Truth is more precious than all besides. Notwithstanding the agencies combined against the truth, a large number take their stand upon the Lord’s side.”²⁸

“The message of Christ’s righteousness:

“The message of Christ’s righteousness is to sound from one end of the earth to the other to prepare the way of the Lord. *This* is the glory of God, which closes the work of the third angel.”²⁹

“The time of test is just upon us, for the loud cry of the third angel has already begun in the revelation of the righteousness of Christ, the sin-pardoning Redeemer. This is the *beginning* of the light of the angel whose glory shall fill the whole earth.”³⁰

“Unity among the people of God:

“The people of God will draw together and present to the enemy a united front. In view of the common peril, strife for supremacy will cease ... The love of Christ, the love of our brethren, will testify to the world that we have been with Jesus and learned of Him. Then will the message of the third angel swell to a loud cry, and the whole earth will be lightened with the glory of the Lord.”³¹

“A work of preparation on the part of God’s people:

“If God’s people make no efforts on their part, but wait for the refreshing to come upon them and remove their wrongs and correct their errors; if they depend upon that to cleanse them from filthiness of the flesh and spirit, and fit them to engage in the loud cry of the third angel, they will be found wanting. The refreshing or power of God comes only on those who have prepared themselves for it.”³²

“Loud Cry may not be recognized by some:

“Unless those who can help ... are aroused to a sense of their duty, they will not recognize the work of God when the loud cry of the third angel shall be heard. When light goes forth to lighten the earth, instead of coming up to the help of the Lord, they will want to bind about His work to meet their narrow ideas.”³³

²⁷ White, Ellen G.; *Testimonies*, vol. 7, p. 140.

²⁸ White, Ellen G.; *The Great Controversy*, p. 612 (1888).

²⁹ White, Ellen G.; *Testimonies*, vol. 6, p. 19 (emphasis added).

³⁰ White, Ellen G.; *The Review and Herald*, November 22, 1892 (emphasis added).

³¹ White, Ellen G.; *Testimonies*, vol. 6, p. 401.

³² *Ibid.*, vol. 1, p. 619.

³³ White, Ellen G.; *Testimonies to Ministers*, p. 300.

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

Verse 2 – “And he cried mightily with a strong voice,”

When the words “voice” or “speaking” is used within prophetic literature it means authoritative proclamations or decrees. This draws on a “great voice” theme in 5:2; 7:2; 10:1, 3; 14:b, 9, 15, 18; 16:1 and 19:17. This strong voice repeats the same message of the second angel of 14:8.

Because it is with a strong voice it is to be heard by all.

“The authoritative nature of the announcement is stressed here, as elsewhere, to encourage the readers concerning the certainty of the message’s fulfillment, whether it concerns their salvation or the judgment of the wicked. The angel is more glorious than Babylon (v 1) and is an authority more compelling than Babylon. His glorious appearance and loud voice are meant to get the attention of any who are in danger of falling under the spell of Babylon.”³⁴

The imagery is broadened by comparing the angelic mission in verse 1 with this:

Angel from heaven
 Having great power
 Earth lighted with glory
 Cried mightily with a strong voice
 Babylon is fallen

This is presented as an urgent, powerful declaration for the whole earth. There is a contrast between the heavenly glory and the depravity of Babylon. Revelation 14:8 and here bonds these two chapters together. The former began with a trilogy of warnings. These are revisited in ever-expanding detail describing the horrors of Babylon and how it ends. The pronouncement means it has already been judged.

Enlarging on this: “It is enlightening to discern how Revelation 18 complements Revelation 17. The visions are two sides of the same coin. While chapter 17 reveals Satan’s final grasp for world dominion through the beast which ‘*will come up out of the Abyss*’ (17:8), in chapter 18 God acts through the angel *who comes down from heaven* with great authority (18:1). Only by uniting Rev. 17 and 18 do we become aware of the urgency and timeliness of the final warning message.”³⁵

Verse 2 – “saying, Babylon the great is fallen, is fallen,”

“This alludes to Isa. 21:9a, where Isaiah prophesied the destruction of Babylon via a messenger in a chariot who cries, ‘Babylon has fallen, has fallen,’ followed by ‘all the images of its gods lie shattered on the ground’ (21:29b). Thus, the judgment on the empire includes the destruction of its idols, specifically the Antichrist, who has set up an idol of himself (Rev. 13:14-15). Moreover, it is not seen as a new announcement but one foretold by Isaiah himself, grounded in God’s eternal decree.”³⁶

³⁴ Beale, *Op. cit.*, p. 893.

³⁵ LaRondelle, *Op cit.*, p. 421.

³⁶ Osborne, *Op. cit.*, p. 635.

“Babylon has always been symbolic of opposition to the advance of the kingdom of God. As it fell in times past, so will it be destroyed in the future. Part of the reason for using ‘Babylon’ is that the readers will know what God did to the first Babylon and be quick to recognize that in giving Rome that title he will once again carry out his judgment on the city.”³⁷

God through Daniel had prophesied to Nebuchadnezzar, the king of Babylon, that his kingdom would come to an end (Daniel 2:39). That prediction is a great metaphor for the message of the second angel that now swells to a loud cry in the fourth. This time it is not the “king” that gets the message but the whole apostate world which is comprised of Babylon – it has fallen as in Isaiah 21. With her fall goes her images and idols – they are crushed.

“Babylon the Great” was written on the forehead of the harlot (17:5). As noted, there she is integrally tied to the beast and her daughters. Babylon is further depicted as having three parts when she came to her end (16:19). They were identified as; the beast (which included the woman), the false prophet and the dragon (16:13). This relates to the sea beast (13:1) – the papacy; the earth beast (13:11) – apostate Protestantism; and the satanic spirits (12:3, 9, 12) – spiritualism, deceptive influences.

Babylon falls because of its sin (vs 3). This draws heavily from Old Testament allusions to Babylon (Isaiah 13:21, 34:14, 47:7-9; Jeremiah 50–51), Tyre (Ezekiel 26–28) and Nineveh (Naham 3, Zephaniah 2:15).

Babylon had important sea traffic depicted in 18:17 that was related to the Euphrates River. In ancient times ships were navigable for 500 miles from its mouth to Babylon. Before it fell, it rose to the greatest heights not only in idolatry but material wealth. This end-time Babylon symbolizes the epitome of all false religion and material prosperity³⁸ just before its fall.

When the call went out that Babylon had fallen (Isaiah 21:8-9), many of God’s people were still in Babylon. This same situation is shown here. The 144,000, represented by the white horse of the first Seal, goes out to conquer. They call out those in Babylon represented by the black horse of the third Seal.

“Again we have the fall of Babylon and her judgments prophesied in:

“Jer. 51:7 – Babylon hath been a golden cup in the Lord’s hand, that made all the earth drunken: The nations have drunk her wine: therefore the nations are mad (deranged) (vs 8). Babylon is suddenly fallen and destroyed; howl for her; take balm for her pain, if so she may be healed (vs. 9). We would have healed Babylon but she is not healed: forsake her, and let us go every one into his own country: for her judgment reacheth unto heaven and is lifted up even to the skies (vs. 13). O thou that dwellest upon many waters, abundant in treasures, thine end is come, and the measure of thy covetousness.”³⁹

E. G. White distinguishes the second angel’s message as related to the 1844 “Advent” era from this fourth angel, joining with the third angel at the end.

“The message of the fall of Babylon, as given by the second angel, is *repeated*, with the additional mention of the corruptions which have been entering the churches since 1844. The work of this angel comes in at the right time to join in the last great work of the third angel’s message as it swells to a loud cry.”⁴⁰

³⁷ Mounce, Robert H.; *The Book of Revelation* (Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., Grand Rapids, Michigan, 1977), p. 325.

³⁸ Thomas, Robert L.; *Revelation 8–22 – An Exegetical Commentary* (Moody Press, Chicago), 1992, p. 37

³⁹ Smart, *Op. cit.*, p. 2.

⁴⁰ White, Ellen G.; *Early Writings*, p. 277 (emphasis added).

“The existing confusion of conflicting creeds and sects is fitly represented by the term ‘Babylon,’ which prophecy (Revelation 14:8; 18:2) applies to the world-loving churches of the last days.”⁴¹

Verse 2 – “and is become the habitation of devils, and the hold of every foul spirit, and a cage of every unclean and hateful bird.”

We have an almost tabloid portrayal of how evil Babylon, the apostate churches of the world, have become. They are the home of devils (demons – *daimon*). This brings to fore another great apocalyptic contrast. God wants to dwell in us (II Corinthians 6:16 citing Leviticus 26:11) and the Holy Spirit dwells in believers (Romans 8:11, II Timothy 1:14). Even the word of Christ can dwell in men (Colossians 3:16), even faith can abide within (II Timothy 1:5). BUT – sin can also (Romans 7:17) and here the fallen churches or Babylon have gotten so bad, Satan makes his home (*katoiketerion*) with them.

The dwelling place – habitation – is explicitly described:

Hold – for every foul spirit

Cage – of every unclean and hateful bird.

These “Christian” churches have become a prison for evil spirits. This, once again, relates to Babylon’s association, depicted in 16:13-14, with the devil, beast and false prophet. She is possessed with unclean spirits. This recalls that fateful night when the bloodless hand wrote on the Babylonian wall: “God hath numbered thy kingdom and finished it. Thou art weighed in the balances and found wanting” (Daniel 5:25-26).

The word for “hold” and “cage” is *phylake*, meaning prison. Many expositors go to great lengths to exegete this as a place of desolation. That detracts from what is being said. Babylon has become so evil the demons are permanently retained in its very soul. They are irrevocably there. So permanent is this “prison” they now call it “home.” If it is so totally desolate, as some contend, how can God’s people yet be called out?

“The sins of the popular churches are whitewashed over. Many of the members indulge in the grossest vices and are steeped in iniquity. Babylon is fallen and has become the cage of every foul and hateful bird! The most revolting sins of the age find shelter beneath the cloak of Christianity.”⁴²

“The sins of Babylon will be laid open. The fearful results of enforcing the observances of the church by civil authority, the inroads of spiritualism, the stealthy but rapid progress of the papal power—all will be unmasked. By these solemn warnings the people will be stirred. Thousands upon thousands will listen who have never heard words like these. In amazement they hear the testimony that Babylon is the church, fallen because of her errors and sins, because of her rejection of the truth sent to her from heaven.”⁴³

“Now the Spirit speaketh expressly, that in the latter times some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits, and doctrines of devils.” I Timothy 4:1.

Hailey writes: “Such a prison of unclean spirits stands in contrast to the holy city into which nothing unclean or abominable shall enter (21:27).”⁴⁴

⁴¹ White, Ellen G.; *Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 124.

⁴² White, Ellen G.; *Testimonies*, vol. 4, p. 13.

⁴³ White, Ellen G.; *The Great Controversy*, pp. 606-607.

⁴⁴ Gregg, Steve; *Revelation – Four Views – A Parallel Commentary* (Thomas Nelson Publishers, Nashville, TN), 1997, p. 426.

- Babylon – filled with unclean spirits
- New Jerusalem – filled with the purity of God’s Spirit

VERSE 3: “For all nations have drunk of the wine of the wrath of her fornication, and the kings of the earth have committed fornication with her, and the merchants of the earth are waxed rich through the abundance of her delicacies.”

Verse 3 – “For all nations”

In 13:3 “all the *world* wondered after the beast.” In 17:15 the waters that the harlot sat upon (17:1) or controlled meant the peoples, multitudes, *nations*, and tongues of the world. In the great warning messages of 14:8, it says that “Babylon is fallen, is fallen” “because she made all *nations* drink.” The earth beast of 13:12 exercises all the power of the first beast and causeth the *earth* and them which dwell therein to worship the first beast.”

Babylon (the harlot and the two beasts) has world control and influence, all related to end-time activities. Though Babylon is the harlot’s name in Revelation 13, she is seen in cooperative work with the earth beast (representing her daughters), paralleling the second (red horse) and forth (pale horse) Seals. The red horse was given power to take peace from the *earth*.

This little phrase is a vital key to comprehend that God is conveying that this is the time that Babylon, the power of apostate Christianity, influences the whole earth and all its peoples. This ties directly to the little-horn message of Daniel 8–9 and the King of the North message of Daniel 11–12. It occurs at the time of the Loud Cry when apostasy is universal!⁴⁵

Verse 3 – “have drunk of the wine of the wrath of her fornication,”

Babylon’s wine represents her idolatrous practices, false doctrines and abominable acts. She made (14:8) all nations drink of that wine (prophecy perfect), and now it has happened. The world has adopted its false doctrine and abominations.

The wrath represents Babylon’s anger against those who refuse to identify with the false standards she promotes. She has an illicit relationship with falsehood – thus her fornication. Her reaction to the resistance from God’s people creates mental anguish and a retaliatory spirit. This emotional response is depicted in the fifth Trumpet, where the wicked are “tormented for five months.” The tail of the scorpions (her agents) inflicted painful deceptive stings (9:10). Their king? Abaddon or Apollyon – Satan. It is also the period about to be described when her wealth and material blessings begin to be destroyed.

The Greek word for “drunk” is *pino* and means to drink or imbibe. By drinking the deceptions and practices of Babylon, the world accepts them, and they become part of those nations. Figuratively, they promote the very falsehoods the Bible calls “fornication.” This typifies the union between churches (apostate Christianity) and the nations as they unite (as seen in chapters 13–14, 17 and here). Contextually, because the nations drank of her deceptions, they too are fallen. “In other words, the nations will be destroyed along with the evil empire [Babylon] because they have freely participated in her debauchery.... In a wonderful play on words, ‘drinking the wine that leads to passion ...

⁴⁵ White, Ellen G.; *The Great Controversy*, p. 389.

for her immorality' in 14:8 results in 'drinking the wine of the wrath ... of God' in 14:10. The results of this divine wrath are now [about to be] displayed."⁴⁶

The angel is crying with a strong voice to warn the world of what is occurring. This fulfills Isaiah's cry: "*For Zion's sake will I not hold my peace, and for Jerusalem's sake I will not rest, until the righteousness thereof go forth as brightness, and the salvation thereof as a lamp that burneth. And the Gentiles shall see thy righteousness, and all kings thy glory: and thou shalt be called by a new name, which the mouth of the LORD shall name*" (Isaiah 62:1-2).

"In the OT, the term ... 'fornicate, be a prostitute,' is frequently used in a figurative sense of Israel's faithless behavior through frequent lapses into idolatry, a judgment based on the larger metaphor of ... [a broken] "marriage" between Yahweh and Israel presupposed in many OT texts (Lev 17:7; 20:5-6; Num 14:33;15:39; Deut 31:16; Judg 2:17; 8:27;1 Chr 5:25; 2 Chr 21:11; Ps 73:27; Hos 1:2; 2:4 [MT 6]; 4:15; 9:1; Jer 2:20; 3:2, 9,13; 5:7, 11; 13:27; Ezek 6:9;16; 23; 43:7, 9; see Erlandsson, TROT 4:101-4)."⁴⁷

Verse 3 – “and the kings of the earth have committed fornication with her, and the merchants of the earth are waxed rich through the abundance of her delicacies.”

"Adultery is a well-known figure in the OT for apostasy from God (Hos 4:10; Jer 3:2)... In the last days it will be epitomized by worship of the beast [by supporting all she stands for]."⁴⁸

"The nations 'drinking the wine of her immoral passion' and the kings' readiness to 'fornicate with her' is not literal immorality but a figurative depiction of acceptance of Babylon's religious and idolatrous demands. The nations' and kings' cooperation with Babylon ensures their material security (cf. 2:9, 13; 13:16-17)."⁴⁹

This contrasts with the lack of economic security that Babylon would impose on those who did not cooperate with this adulterous relation. If they refuse to accept the idolatrous standard of falsehoods, they won't be able to "buy or sell" (13:17).

"The wealth and luxury of Babylon–Rome is referred to four times in this chapter (18:3, 9, 16-17, 19), reflecting the fourfold mention of wealth found in Ezek 27 (vv 12, 18, 27, 33), which served as a literary model for much of Rev 18. The OT and subsequent Jewish literature contain occasional denunciations of the wealthy for a variety of reasons (cf. Hengel, *Eigentum*, 20-27 [ET 12-22]) – their dishonest and violent practices (Amos 5:11; LXX Ps 75.5; Sir 13:13), their complacency (Amos 6:4-6), and their arrogance (Isa 2:7-9; 3:16-26; 5:8-10; Sir 13:20;1 *Enoch* 46:7; 94:8; 97:8-9; Sib. Or. 3.179-82, 350-488) – though wealth in and of itself does not have a negative connotation (Schmidt, *Wealth*, 49-60 [OT], 61-103....

"The three groups ... (*panta to ethne ... hoi basileis tes ges ... hoi emporoi tes ges*, 'all the nations ... the kings of the earth ... the merchants of the earth') encompass the entire gamut of the world's population. Everyone has united in an ungodly union with the great city, so mankind is universally morally bankrupt and God has chosen this time to act (Kiddle). The words ... (*tes ges*, 'of the earth') with the last two groupings denotes the loss of mankind as it does so often in this book (Lee). The merchants will suffer

⁴⁶ Osborne, *Op cit.*, p. 636.

⁴⁷ Aune, *Op cit.*, p. 988.

⁴⁸ Mounce, Robert H.; *The Book of Revelation* (Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., Grand Rapids, Michigan, 1977), 1997, *Spiritual Application*, p. 326.

⁴⁹ Beale, *Op cit.*, p. 895.

more than the kings with the fall of the city, because the kings will have their political power left. They have only lost a partner in fornication, but the merchants will have lost everything. Commerce and trade is the major subject of the remainder of the chapter. The NT has frequent references to trade (Matt. 13:45; 22:5 25:14; James 4:13), but none comes near portraying the vast world traffic of this chapter (Swete).⁵⁰

Verse 3 – “and the merchants of the earth are waxed rich through the abundance of her delicacies”

How can Babylon’s evil make the merchants or great men of the earth rich? What are those delicacies?

“The answer begins to emerge as we examine the history of the ‘vile person’ (Daniel 11:21), one of this woman’s [harlot – Babylon] parallels. In verse 24 ‘He shall enter peaceably even upon the *fattest places* of the province; and ... he shall *scatter* among them the *prey*, and *spoil*, and *riches*.’ The ‘fattest places,’ from ‘*mashman*,’ refers to prosperous countries. ‘Scatter,’ from ‘*bazar*’ meaning ‘disperse’ suggests he redistributed the assets of ‘the fattest places’ according to his will. That it was done illegitimately is implied by the words ‘prey,’ (from ‘*bizzah*’ meaning ‘booty’) and ‘spoil’ (from ‘*shalaf*’ meaning ‘plunder’ can also be translated ‘prey, booty, spoil, plunder’ or ‘dubious gain’). In other words, he simply confiscated the ‘riches,’ consequently impoverishing the ‘fattest places.’ That was his *modus operandi* during the Dark Ages. Even though he entered ‘peaceably,’ he was able to extract monetary means by inspiring intimidation in the minds of his victims through falsehood, lying and deceit....

“Another reference to the vile person’s lust for riches is found in Daniel 11:39 where ‘he ... shall divide the land for gain.’ The verb ‘divide’ (from ‘*chalaq*’) could, like ‘*bazar*’ of verse 24, also be translated ‘scatter.’ His motive for doing so is ‘for gain’ (from ‘*m@chiy*’ meaning ‘price, hire, reward’)....

“But, that is not all. According to Dan.11:32 and 33 ‘the people that do know their God ... shall fall by the sword, and by flame, by captivity, and by *spoil* ...’ The noun ‘spoil,’ from ‘*bizzah*’ (‘booty’), is the same word translated ‘prey’ in verse 24.”⁵¹

The Vatican is the wealthiest institution on earth. During the Dark Ages, through plunder, killings and asset confiscation to indulgences, plus massive land endowments, it became “rich.” Evidence is replete, showing massive confiscation of wealth during World War II, especially through the Ustasha of Croatia, indulgences and massive gifts.⁵²

In 1245 Pope Innocent IV decreed that since it was Christ who entrusted Peter and his successors both kingdoms, the heavenly and earthly, the pope not only had spiritual world domination but physical domination over all lands, riches and territories of the entire world.⁵³

The Catholic Church claims all and possesses wealth estimated to be equal to the five largest corporations in the United States. But the meaning of this verse transcends the vile person or harlot. Tyre “played the harlot with all the kingdoms of the earth” with whom the kings of the earth fornicated” (Isaiah 23:17). The Septuagint states that “she will be a market for all the kingdoms” (cf. Ezekiel 26–28).

⁵⁰ Thomas, *Op cit.*, pp. 318-319.

⁵¹ Wood, Robert, M.D.; *Revelation 18-19* (Prophecy Research Initiative document – 2003), pp. 4-5.

⁵² *Avro Manhattan*, Chick Publications).

⁵³ *Ibid.*, Chapter 4.

Babylon includes, as we have seen, not only the papacy but apostate Protestantism, centered in the United States – as well as Satan himself. This end-time message is apocalyptic and implies that the merchants (leaders of commerce) enjoy security because they cooperate with Babylon’s idolatry and power!⁵⁴

Immediately, we can see that this ties to Revelation 13:16-17: “He causeth all ... to receive a mark in their right hand, or in their foreheads: And that no man might buy or sell [commerce], save he that had the mark, or the name of the beast, or the number of his name.”

Ephraim, a symbol of the ox or calf, represents apostate Protestantism in the typology of the second Seal. Dan, symbolized by the eagle, refers to the papacy. Ephraim and Dan together typify Babylon. It says that “Ephraim shall return to Egypt [her Godless past]” (Hosea 9:3). “Ephraim shall receive shame” (Hosea 10:6). “Ephraim compasseth me about with lies” (Hosea 11:12). “He is a merchant, the balances of deceit are in his hands: he loveth to oppress. And yet Ephraim said, Yet I am become rich” (Hosea 12:7-8). “Ephraim provoked [the Lord] to anger most bitterly” (Hosea 12:14). “When Ephraim spoke trembling, he exalted himself in Israel; ... now they sin more and more, and have made molten images of their silver, and idols according to their own understanding, all of it the work of the craftsmen: they say of them, let the men that sacrifice kiss the calves” (Hosea 13:1-2).

Those ancient prophecies are a great Biblical metaphor of what will become of Babylon at the end. Though they are active in worship, it relates to Baal, which honors the sun.

Protestantism apostasizes by accepting the “fornicating” wine of the papacy. That “abomination” relates directly to an idolatrous standard. In the prophetic allusions of Ephraim, that idolatrous ensign was sun-day worship. This will be the pivotal issue at the end, demanding allegiance of the world’s commerce leaders.

VERSE 4: “And I heard another voice from heaven, saying, Come out of her, my people, that ye be not partakers of her sins, and that ye receive not of her plagues.”

Verse 4 – “And I heard another voice from heaven”

We have seen that the three angels of Revelation 14 and the fourth angel in this chapter represent God’s servants, under the Loud Cry, giving the final call to the world. It is easy, as many have done, to personify each “voice” and then speculate as to what “being” is behind it. In prophecy the word “voice” represents a proclamation or decree. This introductory phrase is simply noting that another proclamation is going to be made.

Revelation has been step by step opening up what the final Loud Cry message will include:

- | | |
|---|-------------------------------|
| • Fear God – worship Him/Creator (14:7) | Commitment |
| • Hour of judgment has come (14:7) | Judgment of living |
| • Babylon is fallen – deceptive practices (14:8, 5) | Warning world, which followed |
| • Anyone worshiping the beast or its image (14:9) | Receive God’s punishment |

⁵⁴ Beale, *Op cit.*, p. 896.

- Anyone receiving the mark of the beast (14:9) Receive judgments of God's punishment
- Come out of her (18:4) Last call

This call comes as a follow-up to the command of Jesus, "Thou must prophesy again" (10:11) and the promise, "I will give power unto my two witnesses, and they shall prophesy" (11:3).

Verse 4 – "saying, Come out of her, my people."

This reveals that God still has people inside Babylon – the apostate Christian church. Those waiting for the call were initially presented symbolically as the black horse of the third Seal. Apostate people, black in color, appeared under the living creature of Reuben. It was going nowhere. It was waiting to be called out (6:5-6). The exhortation came, "Don't hurt the oil and the wine." God's Spirit was already working and the truth of the blood of Jesus was already grasped by those people. Here is the call to that group of individuals.

"The exhortation to separate from Babylon's ways is patterned after the repeated exhortations of Isaiah and Jeremiah, especially Jer. 51:45: 'Come forth from her midst, my people' (cf. also Isa. 48:20; 52:11; Jer. 50:8; 51:6). These prophets exhorted Israel to separate from Babylon's idolatry by leaving it and returning to Israel at the appropriate time of restoration. As here, in Jeremiah 51 and the other OT parallels the coming judgment that Babylon must suffer is the basis for the prophets' exhortation to God's people to separate (see esp. Jer. 51:35-45). Strikingly, the judgment that elicits the exhortation in Jeremiah 51 is portrayed with similar metaphors of desolation as in Rev. 18:2: 'Babylon will become ... a haunt of jackals, an object of horror, without inhabitants' (Jer. 51:37).

"That the exhortation in Rev. 18:4 also strongly echoes the exhortation in Isa. 52:11 is evident from the immediately following phrase in the Isaiah text ('do not touch the *unclean*' ...), which refers to the idols of Babylon. The exhortation in Jeremiah also includes separation from idol worship (see Jer. 51:44,47, 52)."⁵⁵

This separation call for the saints describes a call to holiness – separation from all sin. This is central to the loyal commitment of the remnant of God (16:15, 21:7-8) and all that the Spirit says to the churches regarding how to overcome (Revelation 2–3).

Thomas points out the words "come out" (*exelthate*) is aorist imperative and conveys an urgency to the call. This echoed the call to Lot (Genesis 19:12) and that of Israel to leave Babylon (Zechariah 2:6-7).⁵⁶

"Although the reference to believers as 'my people' would seem to designate God as speaker, the following verse indicates otherwise by placing God in the third person. The people of God are called upon to come out of the doomed city. Prophets of former days had issued similar warnings. 'Depart, depart, go out from there! Touch no unclean thing!' cried Isaiah (52:11). 'Come out of her, my people! Run for your lives!' echoed Jeremiah (51:45). The call to separation has marked the elect throughout the history of God's redemptive activity. The Jewish race had its origin with God's command to Abram, 'Leave your country ... and go to the land I will show you' (Gen 12:1). 'For what do righteousness and wickedness have in common?' asks Paul (2 Cor 6:14). The summons in Rev 18:4 suggests a literal flight from the doomed city (as Christian Jews fled to Pella at the

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 897-898.

⁵⁶ Thomas, *Op cit.*, p. 320.

fall of Jerusalem), but when projected on the larger screen of the consummation it becomes a call to the last generation of believers for 'spiritual withdrawal from Vanity Fair.'⁵⁷

The cry to "come out" or "flee" has been dubbed by scholars as the *summons to flight*. It occurs in various ways throughout the Scriptures. Jesus, in answering the disciples queries regarding the signs and timing of the end, used similar language which this verse echoes in principle: When ye see these Danielic signs, understand and flee (Matthew 24:15-20, Mark 13:14-18, Luke 21:20-23). Though that was an immediate warning when Jerusalem would fall, its great application coincides with Revelation 18 and the apocalyptic end. Paul admonishes the Corinthians, "Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate" (II Corinthians 6:17, citing Isaiah 52:11; cf. Ephesians 5:6-11).

"This correspondence of God's ancient exodus call and God's final call to flee from Babylon shows how God leads His wayward people out of a corrupt society, ripe for judgment, and invites them to proceed to the promised land. This awakening call intends to arouse God's children to the urgency of the situation and to separate from debasing worship. Some scholars realize the seriousness of the appeal of Revelation 18. Leon Morris states: 'In a sense this appeal is the key to the whole chapter. John is not gloating over the city's downfall. He is appealing to Christians to see the realities of the situation and to act accordingly' (*Ibid.*, p. 216). J.P. Ruiz comments: 'Believers are urged to distance themselves from "Babylon" so as not to be associated with the sins for which she is to be punished (in line with Jer. 51, 6)' (*Ibid.*, p. 399).'⁵⁸

When does this call go out?

"When the fifth seal was opened, John the Revelator in vision saw beneath the altar the company that were slain for the Word of God and the testimony of Jesus Christ. After this came the scenes described in the eighteenth of Revelation, when those who are faithful and true are called out from Babylon. [Revelation 18: 1-5, quoted.]'⁵⁹

Can we tie any other event to this time period? E. G. White makes a literal application to these verses.

"I looked at the great buildings going up there, story after story, 'What terrible scenes will take place when the Lord shall arise to shake terribly the earth! Then the words of Rev. 18:1-3 will be fulfilled. The whole of the eighteenth chapter of Revelation is a warning of what is coming on the earth.'⁶⁰

Though the greater message is spiritual, this literal application reveals that at this time also the Trumpet plagues begin.

"That they will 'come out' in response to the loud cry is implied in Dan.11:44 where the 'tidings out of the east' from the 144,000 white horse people infuriates the 'vile person.' Those 'tidings' must come from the 'kings of the east' (Rev. 16:12) who bear the loud cry message. But, it is also called the 'tidings out of ... the north' where the 'vile person' or 'Babylon the great' resides. So, it is not only the content of the message that disturbs him/her, but the response when he/she sees a mass exodus (in the spiritual sense) of 'black horse' people departing from his/her northern, theological domain.'⁶¹

When God "stands up" to begin shaking the earth, it signals the time when mankind is universally insulting His law: "The substitution of the laws of men for the law of God,

⁵⁷ Mounce, *Op cit.*, p. 327.

⁵⁸ LaRondelle; *Op cit.*, p. 423.

⁵⁹ White, Ellen G.; *Manuscript Releases*, vol. 20, p. 14.

⁶⁰ White, Ellen G.; *The Review and Herald*, July 5, 1906.

⁶¹ Wood, *Op cit.*, p. 7.

the exaltation, by merely human authority, of Sunday in place of the Bible Sabbath, is the last act in the drama. When this substitution becomes universal, God will reveal Himself. He will arise in His majesty to shake terribly the earth. He will come out of His place to punish the inhabitants of the world for their iniquity, and the earth shall disclose her blood and shall no more cover her slain.”⁶²

“Not until ‘all nations and the kings of the earth’ have united in legislating a Universal Sunday (false sabbath) Law, can this ‘Loud Cry’ warning go forth in the power and light of this fourth angel’s message of Rev. 18:1-4.”⁶³

“The Lord does not say, ‘Stay in Babylon and heal her.’ He does not say, ‘Find a way to get along with Babylon.’ He does not say, ‘Love Babylon, pray for Babylon and try to help Babylon.’ God says, ‘Come out of her, my people!’ (Jer. 51:7-10). And all of God’s people will deliberately come out of Babylon (2 Cor. 6:16-18).”⁶⁴

“Notwithstanding the spiritual darkness and alienation from God that exist in the churches which constitute Babylon, the great body of Christ’s true followers are still to be found in their communion. There are many of these who have never seen the special truths for this time. Not a few are dissatisfied with their present condition and are longing for clearer light. They look in vain for the image of Christ in the churches with which they are connected. As these bodies depart further and further from the truth, and ally themselves more closely with the world, the difference between the two classes will widen, and it will finally result in separation. The time will come when those who love God supremely can no longer remain in connection with such as are ‘lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God; having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof.’

“Revelation 18 points to the time when, as the result of rejecting the threefold warning of Revelation 14:6-12, the church will have fully reached the condition foretold by the second angel, and the people of God still in Babylon will be called upon to separate from her communion. This message is the last that will ever be given to the world; and it will accomplish its work. When those that ‘believed not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness’ (2 Thessalonians 2:12), shall be left to receive strong delusion and to believe a lie, then the light of truth will shine upon all whose hearts are open to receive it, and all the children of the Lord that remain in Babylon will heed the call: ‘Come out of her, My people’ (Revelation 18:4).”⁶⁵

“God still has a people in Babylon; and before the visitation of His judgments these faithful ones must be called out, that they partake not of her sins and ‘receive not of her plagues.’ Hence the movement symbolized by the angel coming down from heaven, lightening the earth with his glory and crying mightily with a strong voice, announcing the sins of Babylon. In connection with his message the call is heard: ‘Come out of her, My people.’ These announcements, uniting with the third angel’s message, constitute the final warning to be given to the inhabitants of the earth.”⁶⁶

Verse 4 – “that ye be not partakers of her sins, and that ye receive not of her plagues.”

Before judgment always comes warning. With unerring grace this book has repeatedly described sin, apostasy, idolatry and deceit as sins that are at variance with God’s

⁶² White, Ellen G.; *Testimonies*, vol. 7, p. 141.

⁶³ Berry, Marian; *Revelation Workbook*, “Revelation 18” (CHJ Publishing, Middleton, ID), p. 93.

⁶⁴ Fortner, Don; *Discovering Christ in Revelation* (Evangelical Press USA; Auburn, MA), p. 320.

⁶⁵ White, Ellen G.; *The Great Controversy*, p. 390.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 604.

will. Equally forceful has been the declarations that retributive judgment would eventually supervene. These two statements are a succinct summary of what has been unfolding.

- Sin will lead to
- Judgment

Here God calls for not only a sin-less experience but escape from its corrupting influence. Why? The risk of becoming a participant with Babylon is high *and* that proximity will put one in harms way. In reverse, we see visited the second and first angels' messages of chapter 14:

- Babylon is fallen Sin
- Hour for judgment here Plagues

Come out so you will not be partakers of her sin and punishment.

VERSE 5: “For her sins have reached unto heaven, and God hath remembered her iniquities.”

Verse 5 – “For her sins have reached unto heaven.”

This appeals once again to Jeremiah, “For her [Babylon] judgment has reached to heaven, it is lifted up to the skies” (Jeremiah 51:9). The words “have reached” (*ekollethesan*) is aorist passive, meaning to “cleave to,” in this case heaven.⁶⁷

It is ever before God as a reminder of her evil. Something must be done to punish her. Babylon is not repenting. When she is destroyed, it relates to that ever-present reminder (16:19)!

“According to Ezra 9:6, in the context of a penitential prayer, Ezra confesses that the peoples’ iniquities have risen higher than our heads, and our guilt has mounted up to the heavens’ (see Jonah 1:2; 4 Ezra 11:43). The metaphor ‘to the heavens’ is a hyperbolic way of emphasizing the magnitude of something (Gen 11:4; Deut 1:28; 9:1; 2 Chr 28:9).”⁶⁸

“‘Babylon the great’ has become like the tribe of ‘Ephraim’ who was *‘joined* to idols’ (Hos. 4:17) and was therefore, to be left alone suggesting that she has passed the point of no return. Her probation is closed and all her enormous pile of iniquity, unrepented of (like ‘that woman Jezebel’ in Rev. 2:20, 21) and unforgiven, is to be held against her.

“This statement indicates when that point is reached: ‘When do her sins reach unto heaven? When the law of God is finally made void *by legislation*. Then the extremity of God’s people is his opportunity to show who is the governor of heaven and earth. As a Satanic power is stirring up the elements from beneath, God will send light and power to his people, that the message of truth may be proclaimed to all the world.’ (ST 6-12-93)”⁶⁹

“God has not forgotten all of her sins. He has kept them in mind. She should have remembered that He ‘visits: the iniquity of the fathers upon the children’ (Exodus 20:5). ‘Therefore thus saith the Lord God; Because ye have made your iniquity to be remem-

⁶⁷ Thomas, *Op cit.*, p. 321.

⁶⁸ Aune, *Op cit.*, p. 992.

⁶⁹ Wood, *Op cit.*, p. 7.

bered, in that your transgressions are discovered, so that in all your doings your sins do appear; because, I say, that ye are come to remembrance, ye shall be taken with the hand.' Ezekiel 21:24."⁷⁰

"As Babylon of old had its origins in the Tower of Babel, the goal of which was to reach to heaven, so the spiritual Babylon has finally achieved the ancient goal – its sins have reached to heaven (v 5)!"⁷¹

Verse 5 – “and God hath remembered her iniquities.”

"Normally this verb [remembered (*emnemoneusem*)] commands the people of God to remember their past relations with God (see Rev. 2:5; 3:3), but here it is God 'remembering' the transgressions of Babylon. When God 'remembers,' he acts (part of the meaning of the verb). When he remembers his people, he works on their behalf (Ps. 105:8-11; 111:5-6; Ezek. 16:60); when he remembers sin (Ps. 109:14; Jer. 14:10; Hos. 8:13; 9:9), he acts in judgment."⁷²

The wrath of God is a judicial response to iniquity. The outcome is its total destruction under the seventh Vial. "Great Babylon came in remembrance before God, to give unto her the cup of wine of the fierceness of his wrath" (Revelation 16:19). Those iniquities (*adikemata*) or "unrighteous acts" refer to crimes in a legal sense similar to Acts 18:14 and 24:20.

The next verse notes that the punishment will be double the intensity of her evil.

Behind this grim account is the cry of that fourth angel "to separate from Babylon (18:4). The Lord hath made bare His holy arm in the eyes of all the nations; and all the earth shall see the salvation of our God (Isaiah 52:10). Depart ye, depart ye, go ye out from thence, touch no unclean thing; go ye out of the midst of her; be ye clean, that bear the vessels of the Lord (vs 11).

"It is implied that those who refuse or neglect to come out of Babylon will be partakers of her sins and will receive of her plagues."⁷³ The voice of divine retribution is even now speaking.

"Calamities by land and sea, by fire and flood, by pestilence and famine, by horrible accidents, by earthquakes in divers places, all testify in unmistakable language that the end of all things is at hand, and that great Babylon is coming into remembrance before God. The Lord is even at the door, and men's hearts are failing them for fear, and for looking after those things which shall come upon the earth; for the powers of heaven shall be shaken. But there is a defense for those who keep the commandments of God and the faith of Jesus. The prophet declares, 'Thy righteousness shall go before thee.' Whose righteousness? – The righteousness of Christ. And he continues, 'The glory of the Lord shall be thy rearward.'"⁷⁴

A beautiful judicial contrast is made on behalf of God's covenant people: "I will forgive their iniquity and remember their sins no more." "They shall be my people." (Jeremiah 31:33-34).

⁷⁰ Brooks; *Op cit.*, p. 4.

⁷¹ Gregg, *Op cit.*, p. 431.

⁷² Osborne, *Op. cit.*, p. 640.

⁷³ Smart, *Op cit.*

⁷⁴ White, Ellen G.; *The Signs of the Times*, October 1, 1895.

VERSE 6: “Reward her even as she rewarded you, and double unto her double according to her works: in the cup which she hath filled fill to her double.”

Verse 6 – “Reward her even as she rewarded you.”

The KJV word “reward” (*apodote*) is better seen as “give back,” “render” or “recompense” her. Some have questioned who the “you” refers to. Contextually, it goes back to “my people” in verse 4. What happens to “you” formulates how the “plagues” will be met out. Evil against “my people” (His bride – 19:7, cf. Jeremiah 31:32) will guide in the nature of the judgment. [God will give back to Babylon as she rendered evil against His people.] “Paul reminds us we are not to avenge ourselves ‘but *rather* give place unto wrath: for it is written, Vengeance *is* mine’ I will repay, saith the Lord.’ (Rom 12:19).”⁷⁵

We studied in chapter 17 that God often uses earthly agencies to fulfill His plan.

“And the ten horns which thou sawest upon the beast, these shall hate the whore, and shall make her desolate and naked, and shall eat her flesh, and burn her with fire. For God hath put in their hearts to fulfil his will” (Revelation 17:16-17a).

This section unfolds more clearly the *law of retribution*. This completes a promise given as a commentary insert. “He that leadeth into captivity shall go into captivity: he that killeth with the sword must be killed with the sword. Here is the patience and the faith of the saints” (Revelation 13:10; cf. Jeremiah 51:49).

This recalls: “And the third angel followed them, saying with a loud voice, If any man worship the beast and his image, and receive *his* mark in his forehead, or in his hand, The same shall drink of the wine of the wrath of God, which is poured out without mixture into the cup of his indignation; and he shall be tormented with fire and brimstone in the presence of the holy angels, and in the presence of the Lamb” (Revelation 14:9-10).

This chapter details the depth of her punishment. Her sins have piled up to heaven. Now God responds to that record.

Schussler Fiorenza (1991: 99) describes the reaction to the judgment: “The whole scene could be likened to a universal courtroom, in which a class-action suit takes place. Plaintiffs in this suit are Christians together with all those killed on earth (18:24); the defendant is Babylon/Rome, who is charged with murder in the interest of power and idolatry; and the presiding judge is God. As announced previously in 14:8, Babylon/Rome has lost the lawsuit and therefore its associates break out in lamentation and mourning, while the heavenly court and Christians rejoice over the justice they have received.”⁷⁶

Some have attempted to soften this vengeful language because it effaces God’s character. The principle of hating sin, however, is introduced repeatedly (Psalm 97:10; Psalm 119:104, 113, 128, 163; Psalm 139:22; Proverbs 6:16, 8:13; Isaiah 61:8; Jer 44:4, Amos 5:15, 21; Zechariah 8:17; Revelation 2:6). Divine eschatological wrath is a legal expression against sin’s motives. It answers the cry of the martyrs of 6:9-11. The concept of an “eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth” (Exodus 21:23-25) is seen in Proverbs 24:12; Isaiah 3:11, Jeremiah 27:29; Lamentations 3:64, Matthew 7:2, Galatians 6:7-8, Romans 2:6; II Corinthians 11:15, II Timothy 4:14). Repay her for her deeds, do to her as she has done (Jeremiah 50:29).

This is never a prayer for personal vengeance of the persecuted saints, but “a heavenly interpretation of the divine response to cruelty committed by wicked persons who

⁷⁵ Wood, *Op cit.*, p. 8.

⁷⁶ Quoted in Osborne, *Op cit.*, p. 640.

have passed the point of no return in their moral choices. The last hour has now struck, and it is too late for repentance. This is a judicial pronouncement against a sinful civilization that has reached the ultimate limit of evil.”⁷⁷

This apocalyptic punishment is a typological fulfillment of the end of ancient literal Babylon (Jeremiah 50:15). What God does will be sung as part of an anthem in verse 20: “Rejoice, God has judged her for the way she treated you” (18:20).

The theological message describes the great sowing and reaping principles that Paul gave (Galatians 6:7).

“When Babylon is destroyed, it will be revealed that she is responsible for the blood of every person that has been killed on earth: ‘And in her was found the blood of prophets, and of saints, and of all that were slain upon the earth.’ Revelation 18:24.”⁷⁸

“Men who claim to be Christians may now defraud and oppress the poor; they may rob the widow and fatherless; they may indulge their Satanic hatred because they cannot control the consciences of God’s people; but for all this God will bring them into judgment.... They may now indulge in false accusations, they may deride those whom God has appointed to do His work, they may consign His believing ones to prison, to the chain gang, to banishment, to death; but for every pang of anguish, every tear shed, they must answer. God will reward them double for their sins....

“By human tribunals the children of God have been adjudged the vilest criminals. But the day is near when ‘God is judge Himself.’ (Ps. 50:6). Then the decisions of earth shall be reversed.”⁷⁹

“The cries of the oppressed have reached unto heaven, and angels stand amazed at the untold, agonizing sufferings which man, formed in the image of his Maker, causes his fellow man. Said the angel, ‘The names of the oppressors are written in blood, crossed with stripes, and flooded with agonizing, burning tears of suffering. God’s anger will not cease until He has caused this land of light to drink the dregs of the cup of His fury, until He has rewarded unto Babylon double. Reward her even as she rewarded you, double unto her double according to her works; in the cup which she hath filled, fill to her double.’”⁸⁰

Verse 6 – “and double unto her double according to her works: in the cup which she hath filled fill to her double.”

As John so often does, a trilogy emphasizes a key thought. An indelible principle is riveted into these apocalyptic pages:

Double punishment
According to work
Double filling of cup

Isn’t this a contradiction of *moral equivalence*? Doesn’t, here, the punishment exceed the intensity of the crime? Let’s look at this more deeply: “Kline has demonstrated convincingly that the almost unanimous translation ‘double’ in the English versions is inaccurate. He shows that the Hebrew equivalent of LXX uses of ... (*kapal/kapa*) in their respective contexts throughout the OT means ‘produce a duplicate’ (or ‘repeat’; likewise the noun he finds to mean ‘duplicate, twin, matching equivalent’). Though ‘double’ is

⁷⁷ Thomas; *Op cit.*, pp. 322-323.

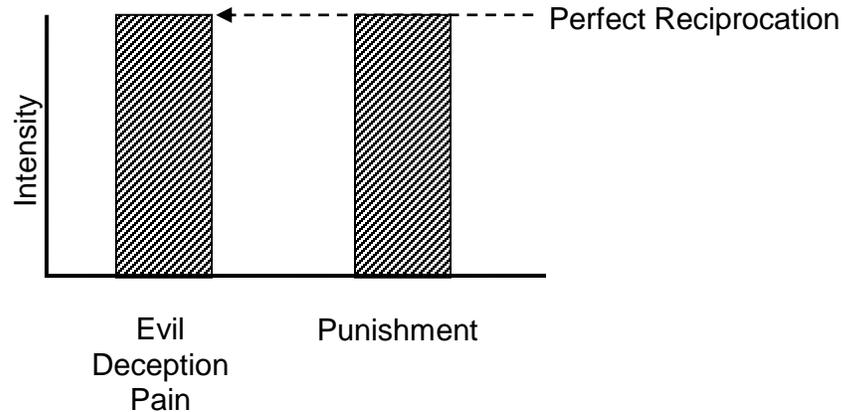
⁷⁸ Brooks, *Op cit.*, p. 5.

⁷⁹ White, Ellen G.; *Christ’s Object Lessons*, pp. 178-179

⁸⁰ White, Ellen G.; *Early Writings*, p. 276.

possible in some OT uses, it is not demanded. Kline especially establishes the meaning 'duplicate/equivalent' in texts to which Rev. 18:6 may allude (Isa. 40:2; Jer. 16:18) and in the two uses of the adjective elsewhere in the NT (Matt. 23:15; 1 Tim. 5:17). Consequently, the clauses in Rev. 18:6 should be translated 'give the *very equivalent* ... according to her work; in the cup in which she mixed, mix for her the equivalent' (for a similar metaphor see on 14:10).⁸¹

The setting emphasizes in these expressions a just retribution. God's legal conclusions are precise. The reprisal is a *perfect reciprocation*:



“‘Double’ has the sense that the punishment should be the exact equivalent of the offence in the same way that a person who looks exactly like someone else is called his ‘double.’ The guideline in meting out the exact equivalent is ... (*kata to erga autes*, ‘according to her works’). This is consistently the basis for God’s future judgment of mankind (Pss. 28:4; 62:12; Prov. 24:12; Isa. 59:18; Jer. 17:10; Rom. 2:6; 1 Cor. 3:8; 2 Cor. 11:15; 2 Tim. 4:14; 1 Pet. 1:17; Rev. 2:23; 20:12, 13; 22:12).⁸²

God’s scales of justice [seen under the third Seal (6:5)] must be balanced. Punishment and evil deeds must equal out.

Verse 6 – “in the cup which she hath filled fill to her double.”

The vessel that Babylon used to deceive and stupefy others has now become the symbolic instrument of her penalty. Since Babylon seduced the world into drinking the cup of sin, she now must take and imbibe its consequences in “full strength.”⁸³

The end-time expression of the harlot’s seduction comes through the false trinity, which is made up of the false prophet or earth beast who “deceiveth them that dwell on the earth” and comes with power to force the world to worship the sea beast (papacy) (13:12), who got its power from the dragon (13:2). The principles of the papacy will be forced on the world by apostate Protestantism under Satan’s influence.

“God’s anger will not cease until He has caused this land of light to drink the dregs of the cup of His fury, until He has rewarded unto Babylon double.”⁸⁴

The next two verses will elaborate on this.

⁸¹ Beale, *Op cit.*, p. 901.

⁸² Thomas, *Op cit.*, p. 325.

⁸³ Osborne, *Op cit.*, p. 641.

⁸⁴ White, Ellen G.; *Early Writings*, p. 276.

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

This verse develops a unique insight into the evil mind of Babylon, depicted as the harlot. It sustains the principle noted in the previous verse that sin will be met with an equality of retribution. That process is provoked further by arrogance.

Self-goodness and power Fornication – illicit relationships	She glorifies herself Lives deliciously	I sit a queen I’m not a widow
Punishment sure – though she claims immunity	Receives torment and sorrow	I will never experience sorrow

This echoes the historical Babylonian fall:

“Isa. 47:7-8 LXX

She has said, “I will be a princess [MT “queen”] forever;” you did not understand these things in your heart.... But now hear these words, you luxurious one, who sits, securely, who says in her heart.... ‘I will not sit as a widow nor will I know bereavement.’

Rev. 18:7b

because she says in her heart, ‘I sit as a queen and I am not a widow and by no means will I see mourning.’

“Widowhood was especially burdensome in the ancient world. ‘In early times the fate most feared and bewailed by a woman was that she should become a widow’ (*Stahlin, TDNT 9:441-42*). In the pagan world, a woman was not supposed to remarry and would often have to stay with her husband’s family in a bad situation. In the Jewish world, she would inherit property only if she had no sons, and she would have no protector, thus being particularly vulnerable to fraud. In the NT, ministry to widows was considered a sign of ‘pure and faultless religion’ (James 1:27), and there was even an official ‘order of widows’ to oversee their needs (1 Tim. 5:3-16).”⁸⁵

“As elsewhere in Revelation, the pride and fall of historical Babylon is taken as a typological pattern of the hubris and downfall of the wide Babylonian system at the end of history. *As with old Babylon, latter-day Babylon sees herself as mother to all her inhabitants, whom she nourishes.* She has complete confidence that she will never be without the support of her children. As with the Babylonian nation, latter-day Babylon’s political and economic security will be removed suddenly.”⁸⁶

This arrogance is noted and claimed by her own declarations of today: “The term Mother Church ... as applied to Rome, has a special significance as indicating its headship of all churches.”⁸⁷

⁸⁵ Osborne, *Op cit.*, p. 642.

⁸⁶ Beale, *Op cit.*, p. 903 (emphasis added).

⁸⁷ <http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/06072a.htm>.

“It must be always clear that the one, holy, catholic and apostolic universal church is not the sister, but the mother of all the churches.”⁸⁸

God already declared that Babylon was the harlot and mother of abominations (17:5). Her self-confidence is delusional. The picture here alludes to her self-idolatry that ties directly to the harlot of 17:3-6. She declares that she is no “widow” because she is a harlot, yet a mother of other harlots (17:5).

Babylon resides in Rome, yet is called the city. This harlot directly relates to the Roman Catholic Church (associated with her daughters). The “city,” the “harlot” Babylon, believed she would never fall (“shall see no sorrow”), but her fall is announced, first by warning in 14:8, then in 16:19 in reality, and here there is recapitulation in greater detail of how that occurred.

“The scrutinizer of motives has detected a self-centeredness that is tantamount to self-deification. Meditations of ... (*te kardia*, ‘the heart’) are an open book to Him, so He knows Babylon’s attitude that is essentially, ‘There is no other God but me.’ This is the extremity of wickedness (Pss. 10:4, 11, 13; 14:1; 53:1; Ezek. 28:2-9). For her to say to herself, ‘I sit a queen’ (... [*kathemai basilissa*]), puts her into the class of Babylon, Tyre, and Nineveh who were noted for such boasting in the OT (Isa. 47:7-9; Ezek. 27:3; 28:2; Zeph. 2:15). This, the third sin of Babylon in v. 7, is a haughty self-confidence (cf. Isa. 47:5, 7, 8). It is a self-sufficiency that puts one beyond the reach of any punishment. Such an overwhelming presumption is bound to draw the wrath of heaven upon itself (Lee, Moffatt, Kiddle).”⁸⁹

“The verb ‘glorified,’ from ‘doxazo,’ could be translated ‘magnify’ bringing to mind the conceit of the ‘little horn’ and ‘king of fierce countenance’ both of whom ‘*magnified*’ themselves in Dan.8:8, 9, 11, 23 and 25. ‘How much she had glorified herself’ is quantified in Dan.11:36 by the vile person who ‘shall exalt himself, and *magnify* himself above every god, and shall speak marvellous things against the God of gods ...’ (Dan.11:36) Correspondingly, ‘the name of blasphemy’ written on the ‘seven ... heads’ of the leopard beast shown ‘speaking great things and blasphemies’ who ‘opened his mouth in blasphemy against God, to blaspheme his name, and tabernacle, and them that dwell in heaven’ (Rev. 13:1, 5, 6) closely parallels the self glorification indulged by the corrupt woman of chs.17 and 18.

“She is not alone in the indulgence of wanton and luxurious living. Note that ‘the kings of the earth [also] lived deliciously with her ...’ (verse 9), not only suggesting a mutual lust for extravagance, excess and pleasure, but that their shared ‘success’ depended upon a close, working relationship. Consider that the ‘king of fierce countenance’ was ‘mighty, but not by his own power’ and that the ‘vile person’ obtained his ‘kingdom by flatteries’ subsequently becoming ‘strong with a small people’ (Dan.11:21, 23) which describes the heritage of this arrogant woman.”⁹⁰

“From her inception, she has taken the glory that should have been given to God and put it on herself. She has praised, extolled, magnified, celebrated, and exalted herself because the one behind the entire system, Satan, said while he was in heaven: ‘I will ascend into heaven, I will exalt my throne above the stars of God: I will sit also upon the mount of the congregation, in the sides of the north: I will ascend above the heights of the clouds; I will be like the Most High.’ Isaiah 14:13-14. He went even further and

⁸⁸ Ratzinger, Joseph; Head, Perfection of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith; *Declaration Dominus Iesus*, August 6, 2000.

⁸⁹ Thomas, *Op cit.*, p. 325.

⁹⁰ Wood, *Op cit.*, p. 8.

said: '... I am a God, I sit in the seat of God, in the midst (heart) of the seas...' Ezekiel 28:2.

"With this in mind, Satan's earthly representative, the king of the north, the Papacy was to '...do according to his (her) will; and he (she) shall exalt himself (herself), and magnify himself (herself) above every god, and shall speak marvellous things against the God of gods, and shall prosper till the indignation be accomplished: for that that is determined shall be done. Neither shall he (she) regard the God of his (her) fathers, nor the desire of women, nor regard any god: for he (she) shall magnify himself (herself) above all.' Daniel 11:36-37. 'Who (the man of sin, the son of perdition, the papacy) opposeth and exalteth himself above all that is called God, or that is worshipped; so that he as God sitteth in the temple of God, shewing himself that he is God.' 2 Thessalonians 2:4. There is no higher position that one could be exalted to, and she has used it only for her advantage."⁹¹

"Moreri (Roman Theologian): 'To make war against the pope is to make war against God, seeing that the pope is God and God is the pope.'

"Nicolaus de Tudeschis, in 'Commentaria' (Ivi, 34): 'The pope can do all things God can do.'

"Pope Leo XIII: 'We hold upon this earth the place of God Almighty.' (June 20, 1894; Great Encyclical Letters of Pope Leo XIII; Benziger Brothers, 'Reunion of Christendom,' p. 304)

"Pope (St.) Pius X: 'The pope is not only representative of Jesus Christ, but he is Jesus Christ Himself, hidden under the veil of the flesh. Does the pope speak? It is Jesus Christ Himself Who speaks.'

"Not to be outdone, Pope Pius XI declared: 'You know that I am the Holy Father, the representative of God on earth, the Vicar of Christ, which means that I am God on earth.' (Butler, Scriptural Truths for Roman Catholics: Dr. B. Brewer, Mission to Catholics, Int.)

"... and in modern times...

"Lest anyone think that things have changed from those triumphal days of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, they have only to read the words uttered recently by Cardinal John O'Connor of New York: 'The Holy Father is the true successor of Christ on earth.' (Sermon, St. Patrick's Cathedral, New York, March 1987)

"Until the ritual was terminated by Pope John Paul I, when the triple crown was placed on the head of a new Pope at his 'coronation' the officiating cardinal proclaimed: 'Receive the tiara adorned with three crowns, and know that thou art the Father of Princes and Kings, Ruler of the World; the Vicar of Our Saviour Jesus Christ...'

"The celebrated New York Catechism states clearly and proclaims, somewhat embarrassingly, that, 'The pope takes the place of Jesus Christ on earth ... the arbiter of the world, the supreme judge of heaven and earth, the judge of all, being judged by no one, God himself on earth.' (Exact Translation)⁹²

Some call her denial of any possibility of widowhood or sorrow as a *fourth sin* of self-sufficiency. This thinking is a similar pattern as with Laodicea (3:17).

"No matter how much loyalty Babylon has removed from God and lavished on the kings of the earth, she still considers herself joined to Christ."⁹³

⁹¹ Brooks, *Op cit.*, p. 6.

⁹² <http://groups.msn.com/TheErrorsofPapism> (adopted).

⁹³ Smart, *Op cit.*, p. 2

“Babylon has been so secure in her power that nothing has been able to hurt or destroy her. Because of this, she has the attitude that nothing can make her bereft of this power. However she is about to be surprised and dismayed.

“She has been sitting in the position of a ruler for such a long time that she thinks she can do no wrong: ‘Such is the way of an adulterous woman; she eateth, and wipeth her mouth, and saith, I have done no wickedness.’ Proverbs 30:20. But God says to her: ‘Sit thou silent, and get thee into darkness, O daughter of the Chaldeans: for thou shalt no more be called, The lady of kingdoms ... And thou saidst, I shall be a lady for ever: so that thou didst not lay these things to thy heart, neither didst remember the latter end of it. Therefore hear now this, thou that art given to pleasures, that dwellest carelessly, that sayest in thine heart, I am, and none else beside me ...’ Isaiah 47:5,7-8.

“She has not been sterile, barren, bereft, or deficient from the lack of a husband. She is, after all, the ‘mother of harlots,’ so she has to have had a husband. She gave birth to all these harlots. As she represents the evil system on earth, her husband is the devil of whom Jesus spoke: “Ye are of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father ye will do. He was a murderer from the beginning, and abode not in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaketh a lie, he speaketh of his own: for he is a liar, and the father of it” (John 8:44).

“This brings in another amazing contrast:

<u>Woman</u>	<u>Husband</u>
Harlot – Babylon Claims to have a husband <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “I am no widow” (18:8) • Daughters 	Dragon (John 8:44) Gave her power, seat and authority (13:2, 5)
Woman – pure church (12:1, 19:8)	Bridegroom (Matthew 25:5-6) – Lamb (19:7, 9)
Remnant of her seed (12:17)	Gives remnant power and authority (1:6, 21:9 – Jerusalem)

“Babylon, the Roman Catholic Church, asserts she has never and will never experience the debilitating loss of lovers, life or substance. God retorts otherwise in this verse. Jesus encapsulated that truth: “For whosoever exalteth himself shall be abased; and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted” (Luke 14:11).

“Excessive pride is one of the hallmarks of the eschatological antagonist.”⁹⁴

The prostitute declares herself a queen and notes she will never be a “widow.” This reflects on “Who is like the beast, and who can fight against him” (13:4).

“Perpetuity, or duration till the end of time, is one of the most striking marks of the Church....The indestructibility of the Catholic Church is truly marvellous, and well calculated to excite the admiration of every reflecting mind....

“Children of the Church, fear nothing, happen what will to her. Christ is with her, and therefore she cannot sink.... Has she not gone steadily on her course amid storm and sunshine?

“The fulfillment of the past is the best security for the future.

“Amid the continual changes in human institutions, she is the one institution that never changes. Amid the universal ruins of earthly monuments, she is the one monu-

⁹⁴ Aune, *Op cit.*, p. 995 (cf. 13:5).

ment that stands proudly preeminent.... Amid the general destruction of kingdoms, her kingdom is never destroyed.”⁹⁵

In the next verse, judgment – her end – overtakes her in a single day.

“According to the sorrow and torment she has dealt out to others, they are to deal to her. She has been accustomed to causing fear in the hearts of men. Now she will receive the same fear, and this fear causes torment (1 John 4:18). She has never had to fear like this before so why does it come now? It comes because she is no longer the one in control. The control has been taken away from her and given to her enemies.

“Now is fulfilled the following prophecy: ‘And they shall be afraid: pangs and sorrows shall take hold of them; they shall be in pain as a woman that travaileth: they shall be amazed (wonder) one at another (every man at his neighbor); their faces shall be as flames.’ Isaiah 13:8. They are giving birth to the ‘baby’ they have been producing. They have been walking in the light of their own fire, in the sparks that they have kindled, and now there is nothing left for them to do except to cry for the sorrow in their heart, and howl because of the vexation of their spirit (Isaiah 50:11; Isaiah 65:14). Every purpose of the Lord will be performed against this Babylonian system because the sorrow that is working in her is the sorrow of the world—sorrow for the consequences of the sin and not the act, and this type of sorrow only works unto death (2 Corinthians 7:10).”⁹⁶

VERSE 8: “Therefore shall her plagues come in one day, death, and mourning, and famine; and she shall be utterly burned with fire: for strong is the Lord God who judgeth her.”

Verse 8 – “Therefore shall her plagues come in one day,”

The word “therefore” (*diatouto*) means “on account of.” This is found elsewhere in prophetic literature (Amos 3:11, Micah 3:12) and looks back to a cause. The Plagues come because of something already described – Babylon became the home of devils and unclean spirits.

The narrative of the Plagues filled chapter 16, the timing message of the final appointed times revealed in Daniel 12, Revelation 10 and 11 suggest the period allotted for this judgment cannot exceed a few days.

This fall or judgment on Babylon has four typological sources in the Old Testament.

1. The first and primary reference is literal Babylon’s fall. Daniel interpreted the handwriting on the wall to reveal probation had closed for Belteshazzar and his kingdom. Within a *single day* the kingdom fell to Darius the Mede on behalf of Cyrus (Daniel 5:30-31).

2. Isaiah paints in apocalyptic language of the same fall, which parallels the details of its end with similar words:

“Therefore shall evil come upon thee; thou shalt not know from whence it riseth: and mischief shall fall upon thee; thou shalt not be able to put it off: and desolation shall come upon thee suddenly, *which* thou shalt not know.” Isaiah 47:11.

“But these two *things* shall come to thee in a moment in **one day**, the loss of children, and widowhood: they shall come upon thee in their perfection for the multitude of

⁹⁵ Cardinal James Gibbons, Archbishop of Baltimore, *Faith of Our Fathers*, (First published – 1876 – 10/1980, Rockford, IL 61105; Tan Books and Publishers, Inc.), pp. 72-73, 83-84.

⁹⁶ Brooks, *Op cit.*, p. 6.

thy sorceries, *and* for the great abundance of thine enchantment.” (Isaiah 47:9; – emphasis added) (refers to Babylon from verse 1).

Babylon’s fall makes her a widow, something we just saw that she denied would ever happen (vs 8). Satan, instead of supporting her, now turns to her destruction. Her children are lost – the Euphrates River is dried up so the way for the kings of the east (Christ’s second coming with His redeemed kings and priests) can occur.

3. Babylon’s demise is predicted in Jeremiah 50 and 51.

“Babylon is **suddenly fallen** and destroyed: ... forsake her ... for her judgment reacheth unto heaven, and is lifted up *even* to the skies” (Jeremiah 51:8-9).

4. The symbolism of Tyre for Babylon is paralleled dramatically in Ezekiel 26–28.

“Now shall the isles tremble **in the day** of thy fall; yea, the isles that *are* in the sea shall be troubled at thy departure.... thou *shalt be no more*” (Ezekiel 26:18, 21).

In these references the timing of the fall is noted as:

- “In that night” (Daniel 5:30)
- “Suddenly ... in a moment in one day” (Isaiah 47:11, 14)
- “Is suddenly fallen” (Jeremiah 51:8)
- “In the day” (Ezekiel 26:18)
- “In one day” (here in Revelation 18:8)

Revelation echoes simply *a-moment* or *within-a-day* period the destructive Plagues came upon arrogant and haughty Babylon. In a short time she experiences what she boasted would never happen to her. This is reemphasized in verses 10 and 17 where it states that her judgments came in “one hour.”

Verse 8 – “death, and mourning, and famine; and she shall be utterly burned with fire:”

Death

Mourning

Famine

“These are her three ‘plagues’ (... [*plegaf*]). ‘Death’ (... [*Thanatos*]) comes in response to her scorn of the prospect of widowhood, ‘sorrow’ (... [*penthos*]) in return for her reveling, and ‘famine’ (... [*limos*]) *in response to her* abundance (Alford).”⁹⁷

The phrase “she shall be utterly burned with fire” draws on 17:6 and is a parenthetical comment of the final or utter end of Babylon. She is totally destroyed as the result of this final judgment at the time of the sixth and seventh Plagues.

“Judgment by fire is a common Biblical concept. In one chapter in Jeremiah the Lord says that Babylon will be a ‘burned-out mountain’ (51:25) whose dwellings (v. 30), marshes (v. 32), and high gates (v. 58) will all be set on fire....

“In ancient times the smoke of a burning city signaled its collapse. Once under way, nothing can prevent the spread of its hungry flames until the city is left in smoldering ruins. In the case of Rome it is the Lord God in his strength who will bring about judgment by fire.”⁹⁸

⁹⁷ Thomas, *Op cit.*, p. 326 (emphasis added).

⁹⁸ Mounce, *Op cit.*, p. 329.

“The burning of a besieged city following its capture was a typical act of retribution in the ancient world (Jeremiah 34:27).”⁹⁹

“Interestingly, the entire phrase ‘she shall be utterly burned’ is from the future, passive indicative form of ‘katakio’ ‘to burn down to the ground, consume wholly.’ The phrases ‘he will burn up (Matt.3:12), burned (Matt.13:40), he will burn (Luke 3:17), and burned them (Acts 19:19), shall be burned (1 Cor.3:15), are burned (Heb.13:11),’ and ‘shall be burned up (2 Pet.3:10)’ are all from ‘katakio’ ...

“It is defined as an “unquenchable fire” in Matt. 3:12 and ‘fire unquenchable’ in Luke 3:17. It is a ‘fire’ at ‘the end of this world’ in Matt.13:40.”¹⁰⁰ Its results are total destruction.

“As Jeremiah (51:1-64) prophesied that the destruction of ancient Babylon would be accompanied by fire (Jer 51:25, 30, 32, 58), so too apostate Christianity and the false church will be destroyed by fire (cf. Ezek 23:25-31). This reference to fire is affirmed in Rev 19:11-16: when the Son of Man returns at the End, ‘the beast’ and ‘the false prophet’ will be thrown into ‘the lake of fire’ (19:20).”¹⁰¹

Verse 8 – “for strong is the Lord God who judgeth her.”

The word “strong” (*ischuros*) is described as an attribute of God. This is the only place in the New Testament where this occurs. It explains the “why” of Babylon’s judgment. He is *ischuros* (mighty).

“While God is not called ... [*ischuros*] elsewhere in the Apocalypse (though his angels are in 5:2; 10:1), he is called ‘mighty’ often in the LXX (2 Sam. 22:31-32, 48; Neh. 1:5; 9:31, 32; Job 36:22,26; Ps. 7:12; Jer. 27:34-[50:34 MT]; 39:18 [32:18 MT]; Dan. 9:4; 2 Macc. 1:24), and there is a direct contrast with the pretentious ‘mighty city’ of 18:10. God alone is ‘mighty,’ and he is the sovereign ‘Judge.’”¹⁰²

“Now it shall be, when you have finished reading this book, that you shall tie a stone to it and throw it out into the Euphrates. Then you shall say, “Thus Babylon shall sink and not rise from the catastrophe that I will bring upon her.” (Jeremiah 51:63,64)

“Then a mighty angel took up a stone like a great millstone and threw it into the sea, saying, “Thus with violence the great city Babylon shall be thrown down, and shall not be found anymore.” (Revelation 18:21)

“The fall of literal Babylon was symbolized by a stone thrown into a river. However, it is a millstone thrown into the sea that will confirm the fate of spiritual Babylon: a total destruction.

“‘For I will rise up against them,’ says the Lord of hosts, ‘and cut off from Babylon the name and remnant, and offspring and posterity.’ says the Lord. ‘I will also make it a possession for the porcupine, and marshes of muddy water; I will sweep it with the broom of destruction.’” (Isaiah 14:22,23)¹⁰³

“A solemn warning is given to those who set themselves against Christ, his church and the gospel of his grace. The God of heaven is a God who can, must and will punish sin. Here the Lord himself tells us five things about divine judgment (v. 5).

⁹⁹ Aune, *Op cit.*, p. 996.

¹⁰⁰ Wood, *Op cit.*, p. 9.

¹⁰¹ Brighton, Louis A; *Revelation, Concordance Commentary* (Concordance Publishing House, St. Louis), 1999, p. 469.

¹⁰² Osborne, *Op cit.*, p. 644.

¹⁰³ Proulx and LaPlante; *Op cit.*, p. 15-16.

1. God remembers all the iniquities of his enemies. He has forgotten the sins of his people, because they are thoroughly removed by the blood of Christ. But he will never forget any iniquity of his enemies.
2. God will punish sinners exactly in proportion to the evil they have done, according to strict justice (vv. 6-7). There are no degrees of reward in heaven, but there are degrees of punishment.
3. Divine judgment comes suddenly, swiftly, without warning (v 8).
4. It is thorough, complete, without mercy (v 8).
5. God is both willing and able to punish sin (v 8).¹⁰⁴

VERSE 9: “**And the kings of the earth, who have committed fornication and lived deliciously with her, shall bewail her, and lament for her, when they shall see the smoke of her burning,**”

Verse 9 – “And the kings of the earth, who have committed fornication and lived deliciously with her,”

Verses 9-19 now form a whole new section with verses 15-19, virtually repeating 9-11. Verses 12-14 in the center amplify the mourning begun with this verse. The kings prospered from their cooperation with harlot Babylon (see discussion under 17:12, 16, 18). Because of its moral downfall (18:1-8) and now destruction, the kings suffer loss of power and loss economically. This despair functions as an announcement to the apocalyptic student that they fear destructive judgments also. Babylon’s fall foreshadows the end of the wicked world.

These kings represent the ten horns or “ten kings” that gave power to the beast for a short period (17:12-13). In subsequent verses we will see the enormity of Babylon’s judgment, which began with the first four Trumpets and which touches all of the business world (vv 11-13, 15-17a) and those in charge of transportation (vv 17b-19).

“These ‘three groups have roles relating to Tyre in Ezekiel 26-28 (the kings in 26:15-18, the traders very briefly and indirectly in 27:36, and the mariners in 27:29-36). Reasons for the sadness vary. The kings regret having lost their power so suddenly (Rev. 18:10). The merchants have lost their most profitable market (18:11, 16), and the severe crippling of the shipping trade has hurt the sea people (18:19) (Moffatt).”¹⁰⁵

“None of these groups mourns their sin, only all the luxurious living they have lost. In other words, they remain self-centered to the bitter end. There is no true sorrow for Babylon, only sorrow for all they have lost [with the breakdown of this coalition].”¹⁰⁶

The “kings of the earth” along with others will be among those who finally call for the rocks and mountains to fall on them (6:15). Many expositors declare these “kings” could not be the ones of chapter 17:12-13. There, they give power and strength to the beast, then turn against her (17:16). This was, however, graphically foretold in the sixth Vial when all earthly support for Babylon is “dried up.” What once was full honor, even worship, ceases at the very end. They do not have to be mutually exclusive (see discussion under verse 18).

¹⁰⁴ Fortner, *Op cit.*, pp. 320-321.

¹⁰⁵ Thomas, *Op cit.*, pp. 329-330.

¹⁰⁶ Osborne, *Op cit.*, pp. 644-645.

Verse 9 – “shall bewail her, and lament for her,”

“The earthly rulers express despair in response to the destruction of Babylon, echoing Jer. 51:8: ‘suddenly Babylon has fallen ... wail over her,’ thus continuing the allusions to Jeremiah 50-51 in Rev. 18:4-8. The rulers weep because they, have lost their lover. They have been conducting an idolatrous relationship with her (they have ‘fornicated,’ ... 2:14, 20; 14:8;17:2; 18:3). This idolatrous involvement allowed ‘the kings of the earth’ to ‘live in luxury,’ which is a partial allusion to Ezek. 27:33 (according to which Tyre ‘enriched all the kings of the earth’). The close connection between idolatry and economic prosperity was a fact of life in Asia Minor of John’s time, where allegiance to both Caesar and the patron gods of the trade guilds was essential for people to maintain good standing in their trades (see esp. on 2:9-10, 12-21).”¹⁰⁷

Idolatrous worship of the papacy, or the beast, is seen in 13:4. That has been the spirit of the world towards Babylon.

The Greek word here for “bewail” is *klausousin*, meaning they are crying openly. The Greek word for lament is *kopsontai*, suggesting that they are mourning from deep inside. Though contextually this response is associated with “her,” referring to Babylon, it draws on the concept of “weeping and gnashing of teeth” (Matthew 8:12; 13:42; 13:50; 22:13; 24:51; 25:30; Luke 13:28). There, the weeping is an expression of remorse associated with judgment when everything is lost, particularly from God’s people for rejected opportunities.¹⁰⁸

This ties to Revelation 1:7 where the unrepentant will mourn (*kaposontai*) at the sight of Christ’s coming in the clouds.

Verse 9 relates directly to the “king of the north” imagery in Daniel where “he shall have power over the treasures of gold and of silver, and over all the precious things of Egypt [Babylon in this setting]: and the Libyans and the Ethiopians [rest of the world] *shall be* at his steps” (Daniel 11:43). A strange bond – religious and economical – is depicted here. As chapter 17 notes, it is very brief – “for one hour” (17:2, 12-13, 18).

Verse 9 – “ when they shall see the smoke of her burning,”

“In this book there is a contrast between smoke as incense and prayer (8:2-3) and smoke as a symbol of fiery judgment (9:17-18; 18:9, 18). The two aspects are combined in 14:11, where the ‘smoke of their torment rises [to God as incense] forever and ever.’ This is part of the motif that says the judgment of the sinners is God’s answer to the prayers of his saints for vengeance and vindication.”¹⁰⁹

A literal understanding of fiery destruction of Babylon is seen by Thomas: “‘The smoke of her burning’ (... [ton *kapnon tes pyroseos autēs*]) is the sight that provokes the misery of the kings. The expression looks back to the destruction of Sodom (Gen. 19:28), the destruction of Tyre (Ezek. 28:18), and later to the fall of Edom (Isa. 34:10). Other plagues contribute to Babylon’s downfall (cf. 18:8), but fire is the main cause of the city’s ruin (14:11; 17:16; 18:8, 18; 19:3) (Beckwith).”¹¹⁰

“The burning (vv 9, 18) of the city is to be taken as the downfall of the papal power, whether figurative, as Barnes thinks, or with actual fire as Jay Adams writes, the blood

¹⁰⁷ Beale, *Op cit.*, p. 905 (emphasis added).

¹⁰⁸ Brown, Collin, General Editor; *New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology*, vol. 1, vol. 2, p. 417.

¹⁰⁹ Osborne, *Op cit.*, p. 645.

¹¹⁰ Thomas, *Op cit.*, p. 328.

of the prophets (vv. 20, 24) is better associated with Jerusalem, but the blood of apostles (v 20) seems more applicable to Rome.”¹¹¹

The daughters of the harlot regret when it is too late, as noted by E. G. White: “God’s word has given warning of the impending danger; let this be unheeded, and the Protestant world will learn what the purposes of Rome really are, only when it is too late to escape the snare. She is silently growing into power.”¹¹²

“When the voice of God turns the captivity of His people, there is a terrible awakening of those who have lost all in the great conflict of life. While probation continued they were blinded by Satan’s deceptions, and they justified their course of sin. The rich prided themselves upon their superiority to those who were less favored; but they had obtained their riches by violation of the law of God. They had neglected to feed the hungry, to clothe the naked, to deal justly, and to love mercy. They had sought to exalt themselves and to obtain the homage of their fellow creatures. Now they are stripped of all that made them great and are left destitute and defenseless. They look with terror upon the destruction of the idols which they preferred before their Maker. They have sold their souls for earthly riches and enjoyments, and have not sought to become rich toward God. The result is, their lives are a failure; their pleasures are now turned to gall, their treasures to corruption. The gain of a lifetime is swept away in a moment. The rich bemoan the destruction of their grand houses, the scattering of their gold and silver....

“The wicked are filled with regret, not because of their sinful neglect of God and their fellow men, but because God has conquered. They lament that the result is what it is; but they do not repent of their wickedness.”¹¹³

Under the first four Trumpets Babylon begins to be destroyed. Babylon, Rome, Tyre or Sodom – all symbolize the world in apostasy against God and specifically His apostate church. They all represent Jezebel of the Thyatira Church – the harlot of Babylon. In the settings of these prophecies, however, the harlot (Babylon) is presented with her seat in Rome to make sure the correct papal allusion is not missed. That represents the Roman Catholic Church, which the world gives allegiance to, as seen in chapter 17. Here comes her final end (Revelation 16:19–14:10) under the Vial Plagues.

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

Verse 10 – “Standing afar off for the fear of her torment.”

This relates to the previous verse. When they shall see the smoke of her burning they will:

- Bewail her and lament her
- Standing afar off for fear of her torment

Why this fear? The interpretive *Good News Bible* says “because they are afraid of sharing in her suffering.”

“That the fear is focused on the economy is indicated by the verbal parallel in vv 15-16a. There the same words (v 15a: ‘they will stand at a distance *because of fear of her torment*’) are followed by an expression of alarm that such a great economic system

¹¹¹ Gregg, *Op cit.*, pp. 432, 434.

¹¹² White, Ellen G.; *The Great Controversy*, p. 581.

¹¹³ *Ibid.*, p. 581.

could be dismantled so quickly (v 17: ‘in one hour such great wealth has been laid waste;’ so also v 19).”¹¹⁴

This literary device shows what will happen to all who remain part of Babylon. Thus, the implication comes again: “Come out of her – she’s going to fall.” “Be not part of her.” “Woe to you who laugh now, for you will mourn and weep” (Luke 6:25).

“The phrase ... [*apo makrothen*] ‘from a distance,’ is repeated three times in this text unit vv 10, 15, 17) and characterizes the stance of each of the three groups who witness the destruction of Babylon: kings, merchants, and the maritime professionals. This spatial separation from Babylon not only expresses the horror they feel at its sudden and unexpected destruction; it also reflects their attempt to distance themselves from a judgment they deserve to share (*TDNT* 4:373).”¹¹⁵

The disdain and rejection is *completed* during the sixth Vial. The Euphrates River is dried up. Her earthly support is gone. She had controlled or sat “on many waters” [peoples, multitudes, nations and languages (17:1, 15)]. Now she is alone to suffer.

“‘Babylon has suddenly fallen and been destroyed. Wail for her! Take balm for her pain; perhaps she may be healed. We would have healed Babylon, but she is not healed. Forsake her, and let us go everyone to his own country; for her judgment reaches to heaven and is lifted up to the skies.’ (Jeremiah 51:8, 9)”¹¹⁶

Verse 10 – “saying, Alas, alas that great city Babylon, that mighty city!”

“In order to understand why John portrays the city of Rome both as the city of Babylon and as a harlot, we must briefly consider his Old Testament sources. John is very conscious of writing in a long tradition of prophetic oracles and so is constantly echoing and reapplying the oracles of his predecessors. His portrayal of the fall of Babylon is a remarkable patchwork of skilful allusions to Old Testament prophecies of the fall of Babylon and the fall of Tyre. There are two major sources: Jeremiah’s great oracle against Babylon (Jer 50-51) and Ezekiel’s great oracle against Tyre (Ezek 26-28). But allusion is also made to all of the shorter oracles against Babylon and Tyre to be found in the Old Testament prophets (Babylon: Isa 13:1-14:23; 21:1-10; 47; Jer 25:12-38; Tyre: Isa 23). It seems that John has quite deliberately fashioned a prophetic oracle against Rome which gathers up all that his prophetic predecessors had pronounced against the two cities of Babylon and Tyre. For John these oracles are more than a literary source. They are oracles which, because they applied to Rome’s predecessors in evil, apply also to Rome. He sees Rome as the culmination of all the evil empires of history. Just as the beast, as portrayed in Revelation 13:1-2, combines in itself the features of all the beasts which in Daniel’s vision symbolized the evil empires before Rome (Dan 7:3-8), so the Babylon of Revelation 17-18 combines in itself the evils of the two great evil cities of the Old Testament prophetic oracles: Babylon and Tyre.”¹¹⁷

“It is important to notice that Ezekiel’s oracle against Tyre contributes as much to John’s account of the fall of Babylon as Jeremiah’s and Isaiah’s oracles against Babylon do. If Rome was the heir of Babylon in political and religious activity, she was also the heir of Tyre in economic activity....

¹¹⁴ Beale, *Op cit.*, p. 907.

¹¹⁵ Aune, *Op cit.*, p. 997.

¹¹⁶ Proulx and LaPlante, *Op cit.*, p. 10.

¹¹⁷ Bauckham, Richard; *The Climax of Prophecy* (T&T Clark; Edinburgh, Scotland), pp. 344-345.

“If Babylon gave Rome its name in John’s oracle, it is probably Tyre that supplied the image of the harlot for Rome.” The Old Testament prophets do not portray Babylon as a harlot, but Isaiah 23:15-18 uses the image of the harlot for Tyre.”¹¹⁸

“The ‘woe, woe’ (18:10) is a wail that voices a feeling of horror over a hopeless situation from which there is no escape. The kings’ lover would *never come back*, and their love affair with her and the resulting pleasure were now gone forever. The woes also give expression to a fear that strikes their *own chests*, a fear which acknowledges that *the* judgment that hit their lover would sooner or later *come to* them (cf. Rev 8:13; Mt 11:21-24).”¹¹⁹

This all begins at the first woe of the fifth Trumpet and is complete at the sixth Vial. The destruction is in the seventh Vial.

Verse 10 – “for in one hour is thy judgment come.”

“The kings’ mournful exclamation is a cry of ‘woe, woe, the great city, Babylon, the strong city, because in one hour your judgment has come’ (vv 16 and 19 repeat the dual woe. The awe expressed is not merely due to the severity of the judgment itself but to the suddenness with which it has occurred (note the emphatic placement of ‘in one hour’ after ‘because’). This last phrase of v 10 shows that the unbelieving kings perceive in Babylon’s doom the judicial hand of God. This could be an underlying reason for their lament, since they may fear the same judgment for their complicity in Babylon’s crimes.”¹²⁰

The “one hour” echoes Daniel 4:19 (KJV), which refers to the time of Daniel’s troubled thoughts over Nebuchadnezzar’s dream – the time the king’s judgment was being revealed. The brief hour of the harlotry relationship between the kings and Babylon was noted in 17:12. Their judgment was sealed in a brief time also.

“That the time reference is taken from Daniel 4 is confirmed by its direct connection with a paraphrase of ‘Babylon the Great’ from Rev. 14:8; 16:19; and 17:5 in 18:10, 21, which is an allusion to Dan. 4:30(27 MT) (see on 14:8 and cf. Ezek. 26:17 LXX: ‘how you are destroyed ... the renowned city’). Also, in 18:10 the reference is to the time in which the worldly system is to be judged by God, which results in removal of its prosperity. As in Daniel 4, the sins for which judgment comes are refusal to acknowledge God’s sovereignty (Dan. 4:26[23 MT]; Rev. 18:7) and contributing to the economic destitution of faithful saints and of others (cf. Dan. 4:27[24 MT]; Rev. 17:6; 18:20, 24; 19:2). The particular reference to the sudden fall of the Babylonian king in Daniel 4 becomes escalated as a typological pointer to the fall of the worldwide economic-religious system at the end of history.”¹²¹

To the ancient mind an hour was the shortest period of time alluded to. It represents a brief period.

Again, this woe is synonymous with the first woe of the fifth Trumpet. This parallel is made without comment by some scholars. The time that Trumpet blows, much of the world will have been destroyed. It will clearly be an economic issue by then. The “fear” of the “kings” would parallel “in those days shall men seek death and shall not find it.” It is the time when the king of the bottomless pit makes himself manifest (8:11) and paral-

¹¹⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 346.

¹¹⁹ Brighton, *Op cit.*, p. 471 (emphasis added).

¹²⁰ Beale, *Op cit.*, p. 907.

¹²¹ *Ibid.*, p. 908.

lels “the eighth” king of the beast, assuming the role as leader of Babylon (Satan usurping the power of the papal leaders – Revelation 17:11).

The Greek word for “woe” is *ouai*. This comes from an ancient Hebrew root meaning to “howl.” In the Trumpets it denotes judgments or pain coming. In Jesus’ seven woes upon the Scribes and Pharisees (beginning in Matthew 23:13), it represented judgments of pain to come. The wicked apostate world has seen sudden destruction and devastation in the first four Trumpets. The papal center, their lover, is no longer in charge. The context here shows that in a brief period “thy judgment is come” and would fit exactly the first woe of the fifth Trumpet. This is reemphasized again in verses 17 and 19.

The “judgment’ of Babylon has arrived suddenly. This is the judicial act of the ‘mighty ... Lord ... who judges’ in 18:8. This is the third of four times ... (*krisis*, judgment) occurs: the angel in 14:7 announces, ‘The hour of his judgment has come,’ and in 16:7 ‘one from the altar’ says, ‘Your judgments are true and just’ (repeated verbatim in 19:2). Again theodicy is stressed, that is, the absolute justice of divine judgment. It is interesting that it is the kings who decry the ‘judgment’ of Babylon, for it is they who have been the judges in this earthly sphere.”¹²²

At the time of the Loud Cry with the final appeal to the world, comes the howl of pain in the first woe of the fifth Trumpet – “Alas, alas.”

“Most of the imagery in this section comes from passages in Ezekiel 27 and 28 referring to the fall of the city of Tyre. Since Tyre was the principal port city on the eastern Mediterranean coast, Ezekiel describes the wailing laments of shipmasters and merchants at their lost revenues as a result of the collapse of that trading center. Papal Rome is here likened to Tyre with respect to its pride, luxury, and economic strength. Caringola writes:

“We must remember that the European Economic Community was formed with the Treaty of Rome, 1957. Roman Catholicism is totally intertwined with the heartbeat of Europe’s economic system. It is estimated by some scholars that the Vatican owns one-third of Europe’s real estate.”¹²³

VERSE 11: “And the merchants of the earth shall weep and mourn over her; for no man buyeth their merchandise any more.”

Verse 11 – “And the merchants of the earth shall weep and mourn over her;”

“Rome was the first nation to develop a truly international market, with enormous profits coming from Africa, India, Arabia, and China in addition to the Roman world (see Beasley-Murray 1978: 267).”¹²⁴

The amount of trade was large. Thus, the symbolic partnership loss of Babylon or Rome (the wealthy harlot of Revelation 17) causes grief.

“This alludes to Ezek. 27:27 [vv 25-31] (where the merchants and all on board the great ship Tyre ‘sink into the heart of the sea,’ and 27:36, where the merchants ‘hiss’ at the destruction, ‘an expression intense grief’ (Block 1998: 84 n. 190).”¹²⁵

We viewed first the lamenting of the kings of the earth that share power for one hour with the Vatican. Now the world’s merchants mourn because Babylon – the papacy, the Vatican – has fallen. This reveals that in the period of this religious–political marriage

¹²² Osborne, *Op cit.*, p. 646.

¹²³ Gregg, *Op cit.*, p. 432.

¹²⁴ Osborne; *Op cit.*, p. 647.

¹²⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 646-647.

(Babylon, kings and merchants), financial power is associated with that relationship to Babylon.

This is alluded to in Daniel 11:43, “But he [King of the North – Vatican/papacy] shall have power over the treasures of gold and of silver, and over all the precious things of Egypt [non-Christian pagan world – atheism]: and the Libyans and Ethiopians [rest of the world] shall be at his steps.”

This weeping and mourning has little or nothing to do with a love or spiritual relationship to Babylon or Rome. The context and imagery draws distinctly on economic issues.

Verse 11 – “for no man buyeth their merchandise any more:”

If this whole scene with the kings, merchants and seafaring trades is an allusion to the first woe, the fifth Trumpet (and the evidence points that way), one third of the world (vegetation, earth, sea and sky) have been destroyed as a final warning. Thus, commerce is hurt, transportation is impeded and man’s resources are gone.

“The time of God’s destructive judgments [see first four Trumpets] is the time of mercy for those who have had no opportunity to learn what is truth. Tenderly will the Lord look upon them. His heart of mercy is touched; His hand is still stretched out to save, while the door is closed to those who would not enter.”¹²⁶

In verse 3 we learned that these merchants “waxed rich through the abundance of her delicacies.” There is a yet-to-be-fulfilled relationship between Babylon–papacy and apostate Protestantism and economic/business ties to the world. But: “The papacy will appear in its power. All must now arouse and search the Scriptures, for God will make known to His faithful ones what shall be in the last time. The word of the Lord is to come to His people in power.”¹²⁷

“Yet under *one head* – the papal power – the people will unite to oppose God in the person of His witnesses. This union is cemented by the great apostate.”¹²⁸

The earth not buying their merchandise is ironic because they belonged to the apostate’s system that denied the right to buy and sell to those who refused the mark of the beast (10:17).¹²⁹

“Go to now, ye rich men, weep and howl for your miseries that shall come upon *you*. Your riches are corrupted, and your garments are moth-eaten. Your gold and silver is cankered; and the rust of them shall be a witness against you, and shall eat your flesh as it were fire. Ye have heaped treasure together for the last days.” James 5:1-3.

Is there wealth in the Vatican/papacy?

Again, “We must remember that the European Economic Community was formed with the Treaty of Rome, 1957. Roman Catholicism is totally intertwined with the heart-beat of Europe’s economic system. It is estimated by some scholars that the Vatican owns one-third of Europe’s real estate.”¹³⁰

¹²⁶ White, Ellen G.; *Testimonies*, vol. 9, p. 97.

¹²⁷ White, Ellen G.; *Manuscript Releases*, vol. 21, p. 437.

¹²⁸ White, Ellen G.; *Testimonies*, vol. 7, p. 182.

¹²⁹ Smart, *Op cit.*, p. 3.

¹³⁰ Gregg, *Op cit.*, p. 432.

VERSE 12-13: “The merchandise of gold, and silver, and precious stones, and of pearls, and fine linen, and purple, and silk, and scarlet, and all thine wood, and all manner vessels of ivory, and all manner vessels of most precious wood, and of brass, and iron, and marble, And cinnamon, and odours, and ointments, and frankincense, and wine, and oil, and fine flour, and wheat, and beasts, and sheep, and horses, and chariots, and slaves, and souls of men.”

“The list of cargoes ... demonstrate the kind of wealth involved in the lucrative trade. To some extent, it builds on the list in Ezek. 27:12-24 (fifteen of the twenty-nine items here are in Ezek. 27), but the list is exclusively Roman. As Bauckham (1993b: 351) shows, the arrangement of the two is quite different, with Ezekiel’s organized geographically by country and Revelation’s topically by types of cargo. Moreover, most of the items here were especially prized by the Roman elite.”¹³¹

These are the items that the merchants no longer can sell. Of these, purple, scarlet color, gold, precious stones and pearls were part of the adornment of the harlot papacy. This draws on another contrast. Jesus invites all to “buy of me gold tried in fire, that thou mayest be rich; and white raiment, that thou mayest be clothed, and that the shame of thy nakedness do not appear; and anoint thine eyes with eyesalve, that thou mayest see” (Revelation 3:18).

“The great Redeemer represents himself as a heavenly merchantman, laden with riches, calling from house to house, presenting his priceless goods [Revelation 3:18-20 quoted].”¹³²

Gold (pure) – faith and love

White raiment – His robe of righteousness

Oil (eyesalve) – His grace, His Spirit – spiritual discernment

“Open your doors, says the great Merchantman, the possessor of spiritual riches, and transact your business with me. It is I, your Redeemer, who counsels you to buy of me.”¹³³

The man-made, formed or extracted merchandise is contrasted with the spiritual symbols of the same. Babylon entices with “things” and offers the cup of deception. In the curtailment of commerce we are suddenly introduced to the concept: Time has ended to trade idolatrous items, things to covet, merchandise to cover the sins of fornication.

“The twenty-nine items fall into six groups of four to six each: (1) precious metals and gems, (2) fabrics’ for expensive clothing, (3) ornamental pieces, (4) aromatic substances, (5) foodstuffs, and (6) animals and people. The purpose of the long list is to impress the reader with the tremendous flow of trade that poured into Rome, enabling her to live luxuriously as the mistress of the world.”¹³⁴

Looking at these six groups:

¹³¹ Osborne, *Op cit.*, p. 647.

¹³² White, Ellen G.; *The Review and Herald*, July 23, 1889.

¹³³ *Ibid.*, August 7, 1894.

¹³⁴ Mounce, *Op cit.*, p. 333.

Precious stones and metals

Spiritual Meaning

- | | |
|-----------------|--|
| Gold | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Faith – love¹³⁵ • True Christian converts who are foundation of church¹³⁶ • True moral worth¹³⁷ • It is a symbol of purity (Job 23:10) of nobility (Lamentations 4:1) and of great value (Isaiah 13:12, Lamentations 4:2). Literal Babylon was called the “golden city” (Isaiah 14:4) and represented by Nebuchadnezzar’s Babylonian head of gold (Daniel 2:38). |
| Silver | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Word of God. Is a symbol of a treasure of knowledge (Luke 15:8-10). |
| Precious stones | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Precious truth.¹³⁸ Precious stones were used in the high priest breastplate and served as the foundation of the New Jerusalem (Revelation 21:18-21). They represent strength and values. |
| Pearls | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Time and strength¹³⁹ |

Collectively, they represent true knowledge of the Word.¹⁴⁰

The spiritual value contrasts with the outward “decking” of the harlot Babylon (gold, precious stones and pearls) (17:4) – she symbolized the apostate church promoting falsehood.

Luxurious Fabrics

Spiritual Meaning

- | | |
|------------|---|
| Fine linen | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Righteousness of saints (Revelation 10:8, Ephesians 5:27) • Righteousness of Christ¹⁴¹ • The pure garments are white |
| Silk | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Means “fine linen” or “expensive covering.” This also symbolizes the covering that God gives those whom He loves (Ezekiel 16). |
| Purple | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The covering of God’s worthy people (Proverbs 31:22). It’s a sign of dignity and honor. |
| Scarlet | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Similar to purple |
| Thyine | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Valuable aromatic furniture used in worship liturgy |

The spiritual significance contrasts with the harlot’s fabric arrayed in purple and scarlet color. Not satisfied with the purity of white, she is clothed with the expensive colors of royalty. This depicts the haughty See in Rome of the Catholic Church.¹⁴² The archbishops and cardinals are arrayed in purple and scarlet, respectively, often draped with precious stones and costly metallic ornaments.

¹³⁵ White, Ellen G.; *The Review and Herald*, July 23, 1889.

¹³⁶ White, Ellen G.; *Sketches from the Life of Paul*, p. 156.

¹³⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 155.

¹³⁸ White, Ellen G.; *Testimonies*, vol. 5, p. 425.

¹³⁹ White, Ellen G.; *The Review and Herald*, August 1, 1899.

¹⁴⁰ White, Ellen G.; *Fundamentals of Christian Education*, p. 169.

¹⁴¹ White, Ellen G.; *Christ’s Object Lessons*, p. 310.

¹⁴² White, Ellen G.; *The Great Controversy*, p. 382.

Isaiah depicts our sins as scarlet and promises that they can be made white as snow (Isaiah 1:18) if we are willing and obedient.

Another remarkable contrast is made in Ezekiel. God's people were in captivity (Babylon) because of their sins and unfaithfulness. God laments, through Ezekiel, all that He has done for Jerusalem (His people or church).

- His great loving care
- His treatment of her wounds
- His clothing
 - Fine linen
 - Silk
 - Ornaments (jewels, gold, silver)

God had challenged Ezekiel, "Cause Jerusalem to know her abominations" (Ezekiel 16:2). Then He says, "But thou didst trust in thine own beauty, and playest the harlot because of thy renown, and pourest out thy fornications on every one that passed by" (vs 15). God had beautiful plans for His people. Everything He did for them was turned to idolatry, deception and the prostitution of truth.

Wood and Building Materials

Spiritual Meaning

Thyine wood (rarest wood in the Middle East)
Ivory (imported)

- Not to use things like wood to build character that can be burned (I Corinthians 3:10-13)
- Symbol of Christ (Song of Solomon 5:14)
- Making houses of ivory will perish (Amos 3:15)
- All is vanity. Items of ivory depicted a life of selfish ease (Amos 6:3-6) – not caring for the souls of others.

Brass

- To the wicked it symbolized an obstinate, unyielding viewpoint (Isaiah 48:4), insensible to sin (Ezekiel 22:18).
On Christ's feet it represented moral purity (Daniel 10:5-6, Revelation 1:15). True brass was not known until the 13th century. It is Biblically "copper" or bronze.

Iron (weapons and statues)

- A yoke of iron depicted an oppressed church¹⁴³ or the activities of a false church¹⁴⁴ – but was a great metaphor for strength of God's sacred work¹⁴⁵ (II Chronicles 18:10).
- This is symbolic of strength (Job 40:18), fortitude (Jeremiah 1:18) and power (Daniel 7:7).

Marble (imported)

- Used often in statues – a lifeless form of whom-ever they wanted to represent. The Catholic Cathedral of Milan is the most expensive and extravagant church in the world, made of solid white marble. Our work is not to be chiseled into

¹⁴³ White, Ellen G.; *Testimonies*, vol. 4, p. 172.

¹⁴⁴ White, Ellen G.; *The Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary*, vol. 4, p. 1168.

¹⁴⁵ White, Ellen G.; *Manuscript Releases*, vol. 1, p. 51

marble but to impress upon the soul the image of the divine.¹⁴⁶ We are not to be cold lifeless statues of marble but vibrant vessels, rejoicing unto God.¹⁴⁷

- This is used to represent a costly stone, seen as part of the body in Song of Solomon 5:15.

Spices and Perfumes

Cinnamon, odours, ointments
frankincense

Spiritual Meaning

- These were part of the incense or anointing oil of the earthly sanctuary symbolism – the merits of Christ (Song of Solomon 1:3, 3:6; Exodus 30:23, 25; Job 41:31).
- Costly items used to seduce – sometimes these were to honor man. Similar gifts were used to honor the Messiah from the wise men of the east (Matthew 2:6-11).
- Since it gives a fragrant odor when burned, it was used in the sanctuary perfume (Exodus 30:34). It became a symbol of the Divine name (Malachi 1:11).

Food Items

Wine

Oil

Fine flour, wheat

Spiritual Meaning

- Blood of Jesus – but in judgment, His wrath (14:8). To the harlot it symbolized intoxicating deceptive doctrines.¹⁴⁸
- Symbolized the Holy Spirit (Zechariah 4:12, Revelation 4:5), His grace being poured out to us,¹⁴⁹ and character.¹⁵⁰ For the merchants it symbolizes a false standard of character.
- Used in the shewbread of the sanctuary (Exodus 29:2), representing His presence.
- “The wheat harvest had to do with the feast of weeks (Exodus 34:22). Wheat was used to make the *fine flour* of the shewbread (Exodus 29:2). This grain represents the speaking of God’s word faithfully (Jeremiah 23:28). An abundance of it comes as a result of the latter rain (Joel 2:23-24), and goes into the garner, while the tares, which have grown up with it, are burned (Matthew 13:40). Wheat represents the people who belong to God.”¹⁵¹

¹⁴⁶ White, Ellen G.; *Counsels to Parents, Teachers, and Students*, p. 130.

¹⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 371.

¹⁴⁸ White, Ellen G.; *The Great Controversy*, p. 388.

¹⁴⁹ White, Ellen G.; *The Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary*, vol. 4, p. 1179.

¹⁵⁰ White, Ellen G.; *Testimonies to Ministers*, p. 233.

¹⁵¹ Brooks, *Op. cit.*, p. 9.

Animals and Slaves

Beasts, sheep, horses, chariots
and slaves, souls of men

“All the trade products in the list in vv 12-13 are good in and of themselves, but the telltale mark of their sinful use is the reference to slaves at the end of the list. The term used is ‘bodies and souls of humans,’ which can also be translated ‘bodies, even the souls of humans’....

“Whereas in Ezek. 27:12-24 slaves come early in the list, to Rev. 18:12-13 they come ‘at the end of a list which is in descending order of value, *human souls* in the category of livestock,’ to issue ‘an indictment of that world’s values.’”¹⁵²

What do these “souls of men” refer to? In I Chronicles 5:21 we find “souls of people” represent captives. This parallels the concept that Babylon has taken into its grip or power those with whom she committed fornication.

“Anyone who is under the control of another is a slave to that power (Galatians 2:4), having lost their liberty in Christ. If one wears a yoke other than Christ’s, it causes slavery (Galatians 5:1). Those who have been overcome by another are in the deepest slavery (2 Peter 2:19). Those spoken of in this text have been overcome by this system.”¹⁵³

Bredenkamp makes this unique deeper observation: “It is also clear that Babylon has a monopoly in trade since her destruction leaves the traders with no clientele. The trade was comprised of all sorts of ware which included human souls. The Catholic Church will on good payment claim to translate a person’s loved one from purgatory to heaven. This must certainly be one way they trade with human souls.”¹⁵⁴

Most of the “merchandise” items either literally or symbolically were tied to the earthly or heavenly sanctuary. God adorned His people, His church, with costly symbols, all pointing to the character of God and the restoration of His people. Babylon appropriated these great symbols to herself as *Vicar of Christ*. Her spiritual power and leadership defined through her control of these symbols has come to an end. The world laments.

VERSE 14: “And the fruits that thy soul lusted after are departed from thee, and all things which were dainty and goodly are departed from thee, and thou shalt find them no more at all.”

This verse suddenly goes from third person to second person, present tense to aorist tense, and signals a continuation of the laments of verse 11. This mourning trilogy doesn’t cease because:

- *The fruits* that thy soul lusted after
- *All things* which were dainty and goodly
- Thou shalt find them *no more* at all.

¹⁵² Beale, *Op. cit.*, p. 910.

¹⁵³ Brooks, *Op. cit.*, p. 10.

¹⁵⁴ Bredenkamp, Martin, Ph.D.; *Revelation 18*, (Prophecy Research Initiative document – 2003).

Verse 14 – “And the fruits that thy soul lusted after are departed from thee,”

Fruits (*opora*) are literal ripe autumn fruits and are used only here in the New Testament, but contextually symbolizes the craving for fornication or illicit relationships. The seasoned passionate friendships of her soul or heart are forever gone [departed (*apelthen*)].

This parallels the sins that lead to *desolation* in Daniel 8:13, 9:27, 11:31, 12:11; Matthew 24:15; Mark 13:14. The Hebrew word *shameno* means utter disaster, usually as the result of divine judgment. Everything is gone.

The implication suggests that the end of satisfying herself instead of God's glory (vss 7, 23) has come.¹⁵⁵

Verse 14 – “and all things which were dainty and goodly are departed from thee,”

All the expensive and beautiful things have disappeared.¹⁵⁶ The glittering luxuries that appeal to the senses have ceased. Some expositors see this as the attachment Babylon has to this world. Others view it as the incredible wealth of the Vatican, which comes to an end. The imagery of Babylon would include both.

This is another contrast between good and evil. God's glory is the reward of the faithful (21:11, 23-24; 22:16). Babylon had reveled in her glory, wealth and name, taking glory away from God.¹⁵⁷ Now God permits that to be taken from her.

Verse 14 – “and thou shalt find them no more at all.”

These items are gone forever. This cross references with verse 22.

“The doubled double negative ... (*ouketi ou me*, ‘in no way ... any longer’) says in as emphatic a way as the Greek language is capable of that they will not return. With the verb ... (*heuresousin*, ‘they will ... find’) the person changes abruptly once again, this time to an impersonal third person (Beckwith).”¹⁵⁸

“The fruits of her labor that she has worked so to accomplish have been taken away: ‘And gladness is taken away, and joy out of the plentiful field; and in the vineyards there shall be no singing, neither shall there be shouting: the treaders shall tread out no wine in their presses; I have made their vintage shouting to cease.’ Isaiah 16:10.

“The things she has accustomed herself to having in order to live a sumptuous lifestyle she cannot find, for they have vanished away: ‘Thy riches, and thy fairs, thy merchandise, thy mariners, and thy pilots, thy calkers, and the occupiers of thy merchandise, and all thy men of war, that are in thee, and all thy company which is in the midst of thee, shall fall into the midst of the seas in the day of thy ruin.’ Ezekiel 27:27.

“Babylon has now lost what is described in Revelation 17:4: ‘And the woman was arrayed in purple and scarlet colour, and decked with gold and precious stones and pearls...’”¹⁵⁹

The “dainty” or *luxurious* things represent food and the “goodly” items or *splendid* things means clothing. The context of verse 14 does reveal a literal economic loss but also spiritual impoverishment.

¹⁵⁵ Beale, *Op. cit.*, p. 910.

¹⁵⁶ Osborne, *Op. cit.*, p. 651.

¹⁵⁷ Beale, *Op. cit.*, p. 911.

¹⁵⁸ Thomas, *Op. cit.*, p. 337.

¹⁵⁹ Brooks, *Op. cit.*, p. 10.

VERSE 15: “The merchants of these things, which were made rich by her, shall stand afar off for the fear of her torment, weeping and wailing,”

Verse 15 – “The merchants of these things, which were made rich by her,”

The merchants are identified or associated with “of these things” and refers back to the items listed in verses 12-13 and the “dainty and goodly” things in verse 14. Business gain and economic security came to those merchants.

In verse 3 it was first noted that the merchants of the earth became rich from their association with Babylon’s wealth and lifestyle. A study into the first four Trumpets shows that God’s destructive judgments affected commerce, “the third part of the ships were destroyed” (8:9). Soon the shipping trade will be specifically addressed (18:17). Since land, water and sea are affected in those plagues, a significant devastation of world trade is destroyed. Then it is noted that they wept and mourned over Babylon because their merchandise couldn’t be sold (18:11). These verses reveal once again the economic advantage in the association between Babylon and the business community of the world, all tying back to Daniel’s prophecy in 11:43.

God’s judgments appear to be the immediate reason that Babylon is not prospering – “is fallen.” Does that mean that those closing Plagues single out Babylon? Since it is clear in Ezekiel 9 and Revelation 11 that judgment begins at the house of God, it suggests that the first destructive intensions are at apostate Christianity. The fall of Babylon is complete under the seventh Vial. However, the commencement of that process appears to begin spiritually with the third angel’s message (Revelation 14 – which relates to her abominations) and economically–physically with the first four Trumpets (Revelation 8), representing three phases of her demise.

With this understanding, it is clear how Satan can use this to his advantage under the first woe while appearing as the “savior” of the world (II Corinthians 11:14).

“And then the great deceiver will persuade men that those who serve God are causing these evils.... He will convince men that strict adherence to Sunday observance will restore divine favor and temporal prosperity.”¹⁶⁰

“By the decree enforcing the institution of the papacy in violation of the law of God, our nation will disconnect herself fully from righteousness....

“[When] our country shall repudiate every principle of its Constitution as a Protestant and republican government, and shall make provision for the propagation of papal falsehoods and delusions, then we may know that the time has come for the marvelous working of Satan and that the end is near.”¹⁶¹

As he appears to represent the world’s answer to its destructive financial peril, he is responsible for its ruin.

“He will bring disease and disaster, until populous cities are reduced to ruin and desolation.”¹⁶²

“As men depart further and further from God, Satan is permitted to have power over the children of disobedience. He hurls destruction among men.”¹⁶³

¹⁶⁰ White, Ellen G.; *The Great Controversy*, p. 590.

¹⁶¹ White, Ellen G.; *Testimonies*, vol. 5, p. 451.

¹⁶² White, Ellen G.; *The Great Controversy*, pp. 589-590.

¹⁶³ White, Ellen G.; *Maranatha*, p. 216; *The Review and Herald*, July 16, 1901.

Verse 15 – “shall stand afar off for the fear of her torment, weeping and wailing,”

They are afraid of being tormented with her and stand “afar off” – this is the same litany of the kings in 18:9-10 and the sea people later (18:17). “There is no actual sympathy but a self-centered sorrow at all they have lost and a terror of suffering the same fate (which they will).”¹⁶⁴

The word “torment” (*basanismou*) refers to Babylon. The “crying and mourning” (*klaiontes kai penthountes*) describes the grieving of the merchants.¹⁶⁵ It actually reflects a religious–business association. The kings imaged a religious–civil association.

“The merchants have been enriched by her riches and merchandise. But now all is at an end and their weeping and wailing knows no bounds: ‘In their streets they shall gird themselves with sackcloth: on the tops of their houses, and in their streets, every one shall howl, weeping abundantly.’ Isaiah 15:3. ‘Then all the princes of the sea shall come down from their thrones, and lay away their robes, and put off their brodered garments: they shall clothe themselves with trembling; they shall sit upon the ground, and shall tremble at every moment, and be astonished at thee.’ Ezekiel 26:16. ‘Therefore the Lord, the God of hosts, the Lord, saith thus; Wailing shall be in all streets; and they shall say in all the highways, Alas! alas! and they shall call the husbandman to mourning, and such as are skilful of lamentation to wailing. And in all vineyards shall be wailing: for I will pass through thee, saith the Lord.’ Amos 5:16-17. All that they have ever wanted is at an end, and what they should have wanted they can never attain.”¹⁶⁶

A distinct continuation into post-probation time from this verse is also suggested by this thought: “Such are the judgments that fall upon Babylon in the day of the visitation of God’s wrath. She has filled up the measure of her iniquity; her time has come; she is ripe for destruction.

“When the voice of God turns the captivity of His people, there is a terrible awakening of those who have lost all in the great conflict of life. While probation continued they were blinded by Satan’s deceptions, and they justified their course of sin. The rich prided themselves upon their superiority to those who were less favored; but they had obtained their riches by violation of the law of God. They had neglected to feed the hungry, to clothe the naked, to deal justly, and to love mercy. They had sought to exalt themselves and to obtain the homage of their fellow creatures. Now they are stripped of all that made them great and are left destitute and defenseless. They look with terror upon the destruction of the idols which they preferred before their Maker. They have sold their souls for earthly riches and enjoyments, and have not sought to become rich toward God. The result is, their lives are a failure; their pleasures are now turned to gall, their treasures to corruption. The gain of a lifetime is swept away in a moment. The rich bemoan the destruction of their grand houses, the scattering of their gold and silver. But their lamentations are silenced by the fear that they themselves are to perish with their idols.

“The wicked are filled with regret, not because of their sinful neglect of God and their fellow men, but because God has conquered. They lament that the result is what it is; but they do not repent of their wickedness. They would leave no means untried to conquer if they could.”¹⁶⁷

¹⁶⁴ Osborne, *Op. cit.*, p. 651

¹⁶⁵ Thomas, *Op. cit.*, p. 338.

¹⁶⁶ Brooks, *Op. cit.*, p. 10.

¹⁶⁷ White, Ellen G.; *The Great Controversy*, pp. 653-654.

VERSE 16: “And saying, Alas, alas, that great city, that was clothed in fine linen, and purple, and scarlet, and decked with gold, and precious stones, and pearls!”

Verse 16 – “And saying, Alas, alas, that great city,”

This phrase parallels the kings’ lament song, “Woe, woe, the great city” (18:10). Babylon is fallen. It no longer serves the world’s religious and economic needs.

Verse 16 – “that was clothed in fine linen, and purple, and scarlet, and decked with gold, and precious stones, and pearls!”

“Now the ‘strength’ ... of Babylon is defined as her wealth. The city is personified as a woman and her wealth is figuratively pictured as composing her clothing, which consists of six luxurious trade products, a list that follows the pattern of the longer list in Ezek. 27:12-24, where part of the list is metaphorically applied to the clothing upon Tyre: cf. 27:7 LXX, ‘to clothe you with blue and purple from the islands,’ where the phrase ‘fine linen ... from Egypt became your couch’ also occurs. The sixfold list of Rev. 18:16 is also partly inspired by the figurative portrayal of the king of prosperous Tyre in Ezek. 28:13: ‘every precious stone was your covering: the ruby, the topaz, and the diamond; the beryl, the onyx, and the jasper; the lapis lazuli, the turquoise, and the emerald; and the gold.’ *Targ.* Ezek. 28:13 explicitly says that the stones were on *clothing*: ‘your robe was adorned with all kinds of jewels....’ The inspiration of Ezek. 28:13 is clear because there is little doubt that the list of trade goods in Rev. 18:12-13 is based partially on Ezek. 27:12-24.”¹⁶⁸

The greater significance lies in the spiritual contrast this imagery brings. Satan’s agencies are continuously trying to mimic God. This picture is of the high priests’ garments in his sanctuary duties. It draws on the costly items related to the sanctuary ministry and structure [Exodus 25:3-7; 26:31-32, 36; 28:2-9, 15-20, 33-34(29-30); 31:4; 35:6; 36:9-12, 15-21, 31(32)-32(33); 37:3-5; II Chronicles 2:13(14)].

<u>Revelation 17:4</u> <u>(Harlot)</u>	<u>Revelation 18:16b</u> <u>(Babylon)</u>	<u>Exodus 28</u> <u>(High Priest)</u>
Dressed	Who were dressed	Garments
In purple and scarlet	In fine linen and purple scarlet	Fine linen, blue, purple
And adorned	And adorned	Holy garments
With gold and precious stones	With gold and precious stones	With gold, breastplate of precious stones
And pearls	And pearls	

Satan, through the Little Horn, is depicted as magnifying himself to the equality of Jesus, to the “prince of the host,” removing God’s authority (daily) and corrupting the sanctuary work (in heaven and church on earth) (Daniel 8:9-11). Here in Revelation the functioning imagery of Jesus as our High Priest is mimicked by Babylon (harlot – papacy) with “outward adornments” in an arrogant display, mocking God. Yet, now, that has

¹⁶⁸ Beale, *Op. cit.*, pp. 911-912.

all ended, continuing the promise of the Vial angel of 17:1, “I will show unto thee the judgment of the great whore.”

Wood brings out an excellent point. Because in this passage the merchants (as well as kings and seamen) mourn Babylon’s loss, the harlot or papacy must have achieved total control of the world’s economy.¹⁶⁹

These costly adornments draw on other similarities: Contrasting “the making of Babylon’s jewelry, precious stones and pearls appear in the vision of the New Jerusalem (21, 11.19.21). This heightens the contrasting parallelism between the two cities, Babylon the Great and the New Jerusalem (*Ezekiel in the Apoc.*, p. 435).

“Rev. 18:16 describes the impure harlot/city in such a way as to contrast her with Christ’s pure bride/city (21:1, 10-23; see on 17:4, 16). Indeed, the Lamb’s bride/city is also ‘adorned with every kind of precious stone’ and ‘gold,’ and the list of twelve stones there is based on the description of the high priest’s garments in Exod. 28:17-20. The Exodus–Ezekiel imagery suggests further that God’s true people, the pure bride, are contrasted not merely with the economic–religious world of paganism, the whore, but also with those from the Christian community who have compromised (i.e., prostituted) and effectively become part of the pagan system. In the light of this background, the whore may also call to mind the ‘synagogue of Satan’ (see on 2:9; 3:9), in antithesis to the true temple to be portrayed in ch. 21.”¹⁷⁰

The same materials, save the precious stones, were used in the veil of the sanctuary (Exodus 26-28). In Ezekiel 16:13 God adorned Israel in a similar fashion before she became an apostate harlot (vss 15-18). Intriguingly, the prophet also announced, “Woe, woe” to the harlot Israel because of her idolatry (vss 24-34).¹⁷¹

The saints will be adorned but without purple and scarlet colors that are associated with this world, power and the beast. They will be adorned with pure white fine linen, washed in the blood of the Lamb (7:13-14; 19:7-8).

VERSE 17: “For in one hour so great riches is come to nought. And every ship-master, and all the company in ships, and sailors, and as many as trade by sea, stood afar off,”

Verse 17 – “For in one hour so great riches is come to nought.”

This phrase belongs to the merchants because the riches “come to naught” – rather than in this verse with the seamen. The kings received power for *one hour* with the beast (17:12). In *one day* the plagues came (18:8), then it says the work of judgment came in *one hour* (18:10), and here the merchants lost all their riches in *one hour* (18:17). It would appear that the *one day* represents the period of time during which everything was destroyed. The “*one hour*” suggests that when it did, it occurred quickly. The “one hour” of verses 10 and 17 are the same period – *a brief moment*. This will be repeated in verse 19.

The Greek word for “naught” is *eremathe* and is more accurately seen as “has become desolate.” Jesus had noted that at the end of time an abomination (which is first presented by Daniel in chapters 8–12) will lead to desolation. An idolatrous standard, a sin, leads to loss of everything. This all relates to the abominations in the cup the harlot is holding. God had repeatedly said that they would lead to desolations (Daniel 8:13;

¹⁶⁹ Wood, *Op. cit.*, p. 13.

¹⁷⁰ Beale, *Op. cit.*, pp. 912-913.

¹⁷¹ *Ibid.*, p. 912.

9:27; 11:31; 12:11; Ezekiel 8:6, 15, 17; Matthew 24:15; Mark 13:14; Revelation 17:4, 16).

Verse 17 – “And every shipmaster, and all the company in ships, and sailors, and as many as trade by sea, stood afar off,”

The captain, crew and passengers (merchants) are fearful and stand back because with Babylon’s fall their riches through shipping have ended (vs 19). This alludes to Ezekiel 27:29-36, where it notes that the seafarers express their grief over Tyre’s fall.

The laments of verses 8-9 were in the future tense. Verse 11 was in the present tense, and here (17-19), it is in the past tense. It is not clear why there is this progression, unless it is depicting that when this “moment in time” comes, it is quickly completed.

Here are important parallels to the second Trumpet, where a third of the ships were destroyed (8:8-9). As previously alluded to, it appears as though the judgment of apostate Christianity begins with the Trumpets and is complete with the seven Vial Plagues.

“Something great and decisive is soon to take place ... The character of God will not be compromised. Under the wrath of God, universal desolation will soon reach all parts of the known world.”¹⁷²

VERSE 18: “And cried when they saw the smoke of her burning, saying, What city is like unto this great city!”

Verse 18 – “And cried when they saw the smoke of her burning,”

Babylon, the harlot, comes to an end in chapter 17 by the ten kings who shared power with her: “These shall hate the whore, and shall make her desolate and naked, and shall eat her flesh, and burn her with fire” (vs 16). But in 18:9 it says that those kings bewail her, and lament for her, when they shall see the “smoke of her burning.” These are two opposite responses to Babylon (the papacy and her daughters). They must depict two separate times.

The great hail and fire depicted in the first Trumpet begins the destruction of apostate Christians and their leaders. Subsequent devastation on commerce and natural resources follow with the next three Trumpets. One-third of the world is destroyed with loss of life. The economic tie between Babylon (previously reviewed as related to Daniel 11) and the leaders of the world is broken. Something has weakened or destroyed the papal center of power that the world had submitted to and was in partnership with.

Calamities from natural disasters have brought loss of temporal prosperity.¹⁷³ There will be crying and lamenting over the destruction of her power and the effectiveness of the coalition. This includes kings (leaders of the world), merchants (businessmen) and shipmasters (those guiding world commerce). A point is reached where the deceptive character of Rome is seen and hatred will follow.¹⁷⁴

Thus, the Scriptures present these contrasts. The “burning,” as is the “eating of her flesh,” are Biblical metaphors for total destruction. At the end nothing will remain. This is finally seen in Vial five when she is in darkness and her influence has ceased, in Vial six

¹⁷² White, Ellen G.; *The Review and Herald*, November 27, 1900.

¹⁷³ White, Ellen G.; *The Great Controversy*, pp. 589-590.

¹⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 581.

when her past support is gone (dried up) and in Vial seven when the coalition of Protestantism, Catholicism and spiritualism has fully ended.

As was addressed in verse 9, the question arises if there will be a literal destruction of the Vatican. That is possible. However, the issues relate to a loss of “power” and the outcome of a coalition centered in Rome. That perception helps to keep in balance the great controversy themes that are at work within these prophecies.

Also, the judgment of “God’s wrath” is mixed in the “cup of his indignation” and includes “fire and brimstone” and the “smoke of their torment” that has ascended up (Revelation 14:10). This terminal imagery is couched in great symbolic language – the end is eternal desolation.

Verse 18 – “saying, What city is like unto this great city!”

This question is associated with the one asked in 13:4: “Who is like the beast?” The world is enamored at the beast (papacy). The leaders of the world, businessmen and those heading up commerce share power with Babylon (the beast or harlot). It is obviously an arrogant coalition with infatuation toward Rome by the world [they worship her (13:3-4)].

“The influence of Rome in the countries that once acknowledged her dominion is still far from being destroyed. And prophecy foretells a restoration of her power. [Revelation 13:3 quoted]....

“In the events now taking place is seen a rapid advance toward the fulfillment of the prediction....

“Marvelous in her shrewdness and cunning is the Roman Church. She can read what is to be....

“History testifies of her artful and persistent efforts to insinuate herself into the affairs of nations....

“She is silently growing into power. Her doctrines are exerting their influence in legislative halls, in the churches, and in the hearts of men.”¹⁷⁵

“The woman which thou sawest is that great city, which reigneth over the kings of the earth” (Revelation 17:18).

The world will soon reach a point where a codependency with the Vatican will be part of this Biblical prophesy, a coalition of power. But – for only a brief period of time.

The question of idolizing Rome or the beast is drawn from Ezekiel 27:32: “Who is like Tyre, surrounded by the sea?” or “How could Tyre surrounded [by water] be silenced?” (paraphrased).

VERSE 19: “And they cast dust on their heads, and cried, weeping and wailing, saying, Alas, alas, that great city, wherein were made rich all that had ships in the sea by reason of her costliness! for in one hour is she made desolate.”

Verse 19 – “And they cast dust on their heads, and cried, weeping and wailing,”

“Casting dust on one’s head is a symbol for grief throughout the OT (Josh. 7:6; 1 Sam. 4:12; 2 Sam. 1:2; 13:19; 15:32; Job 2:12; Lam. 2:10). This is in imitation of the grief over Tyre’s demise (Ezek. 27:30).”¹⁷⁶

¹⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 578-581.

¹⁷⁶ Thomas, *Op. cit.*, p. 340.

“The pattern of Ezekiel 27 continues to be followed: since there, [there] are also those who conduct the business of sea trade [who] lament and throw dust on their head because the demise of Tyre means the demise of the sea commerce by which they make their living:

“Ezek. 27:28-33

At the sound of the cry of your pilots ... and all who handle the oar, the sailor, and all the pilots of the sea ... they will stand on the land, they will make their voice heard over you and will cry bitterly. They will cast dust on their heads.... And they will weep for you ... with bitter mourning. Moreover, in their wailing they will take up a lamentation for you and lament over you: ‘Who is like Tyre? ... When your wares went out from the seas, you satisfied many peoples; with the abundance of your wealth ... you enriched the kings of the earth.

Rev. 18:17b-19

For in one hour so great riches is come to nought. And every shipmaster, and all the company in ships, and sailors, and as many as trade by sea, stood afar off, And cried when they saw the smoke of her burning, saying, What [city is] like unto this great city! And they cast dust on their heads, and cried, weeping and wailing, saying, Alas, alas, that great city, wherein were made rich all that had ships in the sea by reason of her costliness! for in one hour is she made desolate.”¹⁷⁷

We have seen in the previous verse the great contrast between the crying and lamenting over Babylon to the hatred the leaders of the earth have for her shortly thereafter (17:16), when they even contribute to her demise.

Tyrus falls (Ezekiel 26:2-4)	Babylon falls (Revelation 14:8; 18:2)
Princes astonished, lament (Ezekiel 26:16-17)	Kings bewail – lament (18:9)
Pilots’ sea cry – dust heads (27:30)	Sea people cried – weeping, wailing – dust heads (18:19)
Kings afraid – troubled (27:35)	Kings stand far off (18:10)
Merchants hiss [scorn] (27:36)	Merchants fear (18:15)
King was covering cherub (28:12-16)	Dragon gave power (13:4)
Nations destroy her (26:3-4)	World hates – destroys (17:16)

The world’s response to Babylon’s fall follows this prophetic pattern:

Mourn – cry – lament → Astonishment – fear → Scorn – hate

A double woe *begins* the laments of the kings and merchants (18:10, 16) and is implied by their “Alas, alas” response. What is that double woe? The first four Trumpets bring judgment on the world, especially apostate Christianity. The next three Trumpets are called “woes.” The first two woes are unique.

¹⁷⁷ Beale, *Op. cit.*, p. 914.

Trumpet Five – First Woe

- Plague that does harm without death (though they wished for death)
- Mental anguish
- What kind of plague could cause that? Economic devastation from the first four Trumpets.

Trumpet Six – Second Woe

- Plague of judgment – death
- Coincides with the Seven Vials

What two woes bring laments to the kings (leaders of the world), merchants (business of world) and the mariners (all those involved in commerce)? Economic loss and fear of destruction just like Babylon has experienced. What or who is Babylon? Apostate Christianity (papacy and all her daughters – apostate Protestantism). Since the papacy–Vatican is tied to the sea beast (Revelation 13 and 17) and apostate Protestantism to the United States, the Vatican and the United States are likely affected in the first four Trumpets. Then the world reacts *because* Babylon has fallen. This is the story of chapter 18.

E. G. White noted long ago with her grasp of these truths that the end of the United States would come, all because she related to the principles that have Rome at their source.

“It is at the time of the national apostasy, when, acting on the policy of Satan, the rulers of the land will rank themselves on the side of the man of sin – it is then the measure of guilt is full; the national apostasy is the signal for national ruin.”¹⁷⁸

“Roman Catholic principles will be taken under the care and protection of the state. This national apostasy will speedily be followed by national ruin.”¹⁷⁹

“When Protestant churches shall unite with the secular power to sustain a false religion, for opposing which their ancestors endured the fiercest persecution, then will the papal sabbath be enforced by the combined authority of church and state. There will be a national apostasy, which will end only in national ruin.”¹⁸⁰

“When the state shall use its power to enforce the decrees and sustain the institutions of the church – then will Protestant America have formed an image to the papacy, and there will be a national apostasy which will end only in national ruin (ST March 22, 1910).”¹⁸¹

Verse 19 – “saying, Alas, alas, that great city, wherein were made rich all that had ships in the sea by reason of her costliness! for in one hour is she made desolate.”

This is a telling portion of the narrative. The lament goes up over the “great city” – but it suddenly turns to cost. Babylon the harlot with her daughters have deep ties to the world. When she falls there are laments, but deep in those wails is the secular world’s pain at material or economic loss.

“The cry regarding the suddenness of her destruction (‘in one hour you have been made desolate’) follows closely the wording of 18:17b. All the glory, the magnificence,

¹⁷⁸ White, Ellen G.; *Selected Messages*, vol. 2, p. 373 (1891).

¹⁷⁹ White, Ellen G.; *The Review and Herald*, October 15, 1897.

¹⁸⁰ White, Ellen G.; *Evangelism*, p. 235 (1899).

¹⁸¹ White, Ellen G.; *The Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary*, vol. 7, p. 976.

and the extravagance are gone forever, and the seamen realize their future has gone with it. As Michaels (1997:207) says, ‘They do not know it yet, but before long the sea itself will be gone’ (cf. 21:1).¹⁸²

“The mourning is not from sorrow of heart for sin, but because of the great monetary and power losses being suffered. For she is ruined and stripped of her treasures.

“Long ago God said to her: ‘Behold, I am against thee, O destroying mountain, sayeth the Lord, which destroyest all the earth: and I will stretch out Mine hand upon thee, and roll thee down from the rocks, and will make thee a burnt mountain. And they shall not take of thee a stone for a corner, nor a stone for foundations; but thou shalt be desolate for ever, saith the Lord.’ Jeremiah 51:25-26. Jeremiah saw the mountain, but John saw it burning. The ones who set her up will make her desolate.”¹⁸³

The forces of evil created a barrier for God’s people to buy or sell (13:17), now the economic state of the world falls and they are unable to buy or sell. This brings to the fore another amazing contrast between agencies of good and evil depicted in this book. All human efforts to build a great world of lasting peace will self-destruct.

VERSE 20: “Rejoice over her, *thou* heaven, and ye holy apostles and prophets; for God hath avenged you on her.”

Verse 20 – “Rejoice over her, *thou* heaven, and ye holy apostles and prophets;”

This echoes Jeremiah 51:48, “Then the heaven and the earth, and all that is therein ... shall come [will have come] unto her from the north, saith the Lord.”

The invitation to “rejoice” (*euphraino*) stems largely from events or situations that give rise to *communal* rejoicing. Its exegetic ties allude to eschatologic gladness. Whatever has occurred to Babylon is eternal and now opens the door for Jesus to return.¹⁸⁴ That voice from heaven that began in Revelation 18:4 tells those in heaven as well as earth its time to rejoice, Babylon is fallen. A mission prophesied in Jeremiah’s day has come to pass. This also ties to several thoughts in Isaiah, chapters 25 and 26, of the fall of Babylon (chapter 21) and Tyre (chapter 23).

“O LORD, thou *art* my God; I will exalt thee, I will praise thy name; for thou hast done wonderful *things*; *thy* counsels of old *are* faithfulness *and* truth. For thou hast made of a city an heap; of a defenced city a ruin: a palace of strangers to be no city; it shall never be built. He will swallow up death in victory; and the Lord GOD will wipe away tears from off all faces; and the rebuke of his people shall he take away from off all the earth: for the LORD hath spoken *it*. And it shall be said in that day, Lo, this *is* our God; we have waited for him, and he will save us: this *is* the LORD; we have waited for him, we will be glad and rejoice in his salvation.... Open ye the gates, that the righteous nation which keepeth the truth may enter in” (Isaiah 25:1-2, 8-9; 26:2).

In all these verses God is vindicated in heaven and earth by the destruction of apostasy and the restoration of His people. The mood of the kings, merchants and mariners has been negative and full of laments. This verse opens the beautiful contrast of God’s people. At the end they will be the ones praising God.

Most scholars believe a scribe missed part of the translation in this verse. It should read, “Rejoice over her, heaven, *and saints*, even apostles and prophets.” This calls upon many who have passed away and draws on the fifth Seal where the martyrs are call-

¹⁸² Osborne, *Op. cit.*, p. 653.

¹⁸³ Brooks, *Op. cit.*, p. 11.

¹⁸⁴ Brown, *Op. cit.*, pp. 352-354.

ing in a loud voice for vindication and to avenge of their blood through judgments (Revelation 6:9-10). Many messages afterwards suggest that God was doing just that. Here is pointed and accomplished the narrative of 18:8-19, which has fulfilled that request.

The actual words of rejoicing will be presented shortly in 19:1-4 (cf. Isaiah 26).

“This joy is not at all a vindictive joy over the torments of personal enemies. It is a righteous agreement with God. It is God’s saints taking sides with God, vindicating him in his justice and saying, ‘Amen,’ to all that he does, because of their hearts’ agreement with him (Ps. 139:21-22). God’s saints will rejoice when God’s enemies are destroyed, because God’s name and honour will then be vindicated.”¹⁸⁵

Verse 20 – “for God hath avenged you on her.”

This verse finishes the proleptic thought: “As Babylon hath caused the slain of Israel to fall, so at Babylon shall fall the slain of all the earth” (Jeremiah 51:8). This follows the command: “recompense her according to her work; according to her work” (Jeremiah 50:29).

In a phrase that has challenges in translation, it notes in essence, “God has pronounced on her judgment she passed on you.” This principle was presented as a commentary insert in the middle of the sea and land beast narrative: “He that leadeth into captivity shall go into captivity: he that killeth with the sword must be killed with the sword” (Revelation 13:10). It has been also a theme elsewhere in the Apocalypse (2:23; 6:9-11; 11:5, 18; 14:8, 10; 16:5-7; 19:2; 20:12-13).

“The focus is not on delight in Babylon’s suffering but on the successful outcome of God’s execution of justice, which demonstrates the integrity of Christians’ faith and of God’s just character. God will judge Babylon just as severely as she persecuted others, thus making the punishment fit her crime. This ‘eye for eye’ judgment is apparent from the fact that those commanded to rejoice over Babylon’s judgment are the very same ones who suffered from her persecution. This principle of justice is a fitting conclusion to a chapter that was introduced by the pronouncement of the same judicial principle (vv 5-7).

“Together with 19:1-5, 18:20 is the climax of the response to the saints’ cry for vindication in 6:10, though this climax has been anticipated in various ways in 11:18; 14:18; 15:4; and 16:5-6. The rejoicing does not arise out of a selfish spirit of revenge but out of a fulfilled hope that God has defended the honor of his just name by not leaving sin unpunished and by showing his people to have been in the right and the verdict rendered by the ungodly world against the saints to be wrong. This is in keeping with the OT law of malicious witness: ‘if he has accused his brother falsely, then you will do to him just as he intended to do to his brother’ (Deut. 19:16:19).”¹⁸⁶

The word “rejoice” (*euphraino*) was also used in Revelation 11:10, describing the “joy” of the wicked over the death of the two witnesses.¹⁸⁷ Thus, in another contrast, the principle of retribution has been met out. In verse 8 the punishment appears to be in the future tense. Here it is in the past tense.¹⁸⁸

“It is justice that is being celebrated, not just the punishment itself. Similar to verse 6, this is a legal scene, and the spectators at the trial are rejoicing as the just sentence is

¹⁸⁵ Fortner, *Op. cit.*, p. 323.

¹⁸⁶ Beale, *Op. cit.*, pp. 916-917.

¹⁸⁷ Thomas, *Op. cit.*, p. 341.

¹⁸⁸ Ford, J. Massingberde; *The Anchor Bible* (Doubleday, New York), 1975, p. 306.

handed down and the just penalty imposed on the guilty. Caird (1966: 229-30) understands ... in terms of two OT laws, the law of bloodshed (those who kill will be killed, Gen. 9:5-6) and the law of malicious witness (the perjurer will suffer the same penalty he has sought for the innocent party, Deut. 19:16-19). Babylon/Rome has condemned the saints in their courtroom. Since they have murdered the saints, apostles, and prophets (Rev. 6:9; 7:14; 11:7; 13:7, 15; 14:13; 17:6; 18:24; 19:2), God has justly destroyed them. Therefore, the same ones who suffered under her repression and persecution are the ones who rejoice over her destruction (see Krodell 1989: 306; Mounce 1998:336).¹⁸⁹

In Revelation 17:1 one of the Vial angels told John, "I will show unto thee the judgment of the great whore." Chapter 17 depicted its final end. Chapter 18 depicts the world's reaction as it began to fall *when* there was still time for the faithful in Babylon to come out.

This new imagery of verse 20 suggests *fata completus* – both chapters appear to have been fulfilled and the stage for the marriage supper of the Lamb is now open (19:6-9). Thus we can move back to the original prophecy of Babylon's ultimate end of 16:19.

"Deut. 32:35 – 'To Me belongeth vengeance, and recompense; their foot shall slide in due time for the day of their calamity is at hand, and the things that shall come upon them make haste.'

"Isa. 63:4 – 'For the day of vengeance is in mine heart, and the year of my redeemed is come.'

"Isa. 59:17-18 – 'For he put on righteousness as a breastplate and an helmet of salvation upon his head; and he put on the garments of vengeance for clothing, and was clad with zeal as a cloak. According to their deeds, accordingly will he repay, fury to his adversaries, recompense to his enemies.'"¹⁹⁰

VERSE 21: "And a mighty angel took up a stone like a great millstone, and cast *it* into the sea, saying, Thus with violence shall that great city Babylon be thrown down, and shall be found no more at all."

Verse 21 – "And a mighty angel took up a stone like a great millstone, and cast *it* into the sea."

Ever since 17:1 there has been a progressive revelation of how Babylon comes into judgment. In new imagery this verse begins to once again describe metaphorically how Babylon ends. Previously, terrible apostasy brought its fall, then economic ruin, now its final end. Its annihilation is described as it was depicted in 17:16 and 16:19.

"This is the third angel to participate in the revelation of this chapter. The task he is to perform requires that he be 'strong'.... Strong angels have participated earlier in the book (5:2; 10:1), but this one is not called 'another' strong angel. The two earlier strong angels had duties connected with the great scroll and the little scroll. This raises the possibility that this new strong angel has something to do with the consummation of what those two scrolls represent (Caird, Mounce)."¹⁹¹

The message is first presented in future tense, then the last half in present tense. Thus this phrase is prophetic and the next part is fulfillment.¹⁹²

¹⁸⁹ Osborne, *Op. cit.*, p. 655.

¹⁹⁰ Smart, *Op. cit.*, p. 5.

¹⁹¹ Thomas, *Op. cit.*, p. 342.

¹⁹² Ford, *Op. cit.*, p. 306.

Verse 21 – “saying, Thus with violence shall that great city Babylon be thrown down, and shall be found no more at all.”

“The huge millstone does not fall but is violently hurled into the sea. This stresses how suddenly and spectacularly the judgment of God will be executed not only upon an ancient city but ultimately upon the entire antichristian world in its opposition to God.”¹⁹³

“In consideration of this tremendous violence, it might be well for us to contemplate why the ‘kings, merchants’ and seamen all stood ‘afar off for the fear of her torment’ (Rev.18:10, 15 and 17) instead of, in view of their obvious sympathy for her, rushing to her aid. Note that this is exactly what will happen when the ‘vile person ... shall come to his end ... **none** shall help him.’ (Dan.11:21, 45)”¹⁹⁴

“The judgment of Babylon is expressed parabolically in the vision of an angel who lifts ‘a large millstone’ and ‘casts it into the sea.’ The picture is based on Jer. 51:63, where Jeremiah commands his servant Seraiah to ‘bind a stone’ on a book containing the prophecy of Babylon’s judgment and to ‘cast it into the midst of the Euphrates.’ Here, the angel interprets his symbolic action to mean that ‘in the same manner ... Babylon the Great City will be thrown down and will not be found any longer.’ Likewise, the symbolic action of Jer. 51 (28 LXX):63 is interpreted to mean that ‘in the same manner (... in LXX) Babylon will sink down, and not rise’ (v 64).”¹⁹⁵

The imagery of Ezekiel 26-27 is drawn into view. Tyre, another typological parallel to Babylon had its stones cast into the midst of the sea (26:21) and “you will never be found again.” These, in turn, are modeled after Pharaoh’s army being cast into the midst of the Red Sea – “their pursuers you did hurl into the depths, like a stone into mighty waters” (Nehemiah 9:11; cf. Exodus 15:4-5, 10).

The sea which was the source of Babylon’s trade has become its watery grave. This ties back to its final end during the Vial Plagues (16:19). Babylon became the subject of God’s wrath. Here, the strong angel with violence brings it to a final end.

Jesus had used the finality of a millstone cast into the sea related to anyone causing a child to stumble. “Whoso shall offend one of these little ones which believe in me, it were better for him that a millstone were hanged about his neck, and *that* he were drowned in the depth of the sea” (Matthew 18:6).

VERSE 22: “And the voice of harpers, and musicians, and of pipers, and trumpeters, shall be heard no more at all in thee; and no craftsman, of whatsoever craft *he be*, shall be found any more in thee; and the sound of a millstone shall be heard no more at all in thee;”

Babylon – the city – will be marked by the absence of music, trades and business activity.

Economic Collapse For:

- World leaders
- Business men
- Commerce and trade leaders

Activities Affected

- Entertainment
- Trades
- Industry

¹⁹³ Mounce, *Op. cit.*, p. 338.

¹⁹⁴ Wood, *Op. cit.*, p. 16.

¹⁹⁵ Beale, *Op. cit.*, p. 918.

Verse 22 – “And the voice of harpers, and musicians, and of pipers, and trumpeters, shall be heard no more at all in thee;”

Musicians (*mousikon*) is a general word for those who play all kinds of instruments. It is intermingled with those that sing and play the flutes and trumpets.

“The gaiety of the tambourines is stilled, the noise of the revelers has stopped, the joyful harp is silent’ (Isa 24:8; cf. Ezek 26:13). In Isa 5:12 the harp and flute are associated with carousing, and in 2 Sam 6:5 David and the house of Israel make merry before the Lord with harps, lyres, and various percussion instruments. Flutes were used both at festivals (Isa 30:29) and at funerals (Matt 9:23). Trumpets served for games and in the theater.”¹⁹⁶

“The words ... (*ou me akousthe en soi eti*) emphasize the complete and permanent disappearance of all types of music from the city. The sixfold use of *ou me ... eti* in vv. 21-23 increases the forcefulness of expression of cessation in various realms. The angel turns abruptly to the second person ... (*soi*, ‘you’) in addressing Babylon, making the words even more pointed (cf. vv. 11-13). Such changes as this are common in the prophets (e.g., Pss. 52:4-6; 62:3-4; 81:10-12; Ezek. 32:11-2; Amos 6:3-7) (Beckwith).”¹⁹⁷

As previously noted, Babylon still stands and the call to come out of her because of moral degradation (fornication) is made. This degradation relates to the breaking of the covenant in Daniel by an abomination or transgression that leads to desolation. This is what is now being depicted of Babylon (Daniel 8:13; 9:27; 11:28, 30-32), revealing the second rise of the little horn, the man of sin, Babylon as King of the North. Then she experiences economic ruin. Now we are seeing the results of its final destruction as noted under the seventh Vial.

“The prophet Ezekiel had prophesied similarly that when Tyre would be destroyed in God’s judgment and the maritime city had become a heap of rubble, the noise of song and the music of harps would no longer be heard (Ezek 26:13). Only a deathly and chilling silence would remain. Also when God would devastate the entire earth (as described by the prophet Isaiah in 24:1-23), a mark of such total destruction would be the silence of musical instruments like the tambourine and the flute together with the complete absence of the sound of noisy revellers (Is 24:8; cf. Jer 7:34).”¹⁹⁸

Verse 22 – “and no craftsman, of whatsoever craft *he be*, shall be found any more in thee; and the sound of a millstone shall be heard no more at all in thee;”

“The crafts typically included metalworking, brick-making, glassmaking, carpentry, perfume-making, tent-making, spinning, weaving, tanning, dyeing, pottery-making, carving, sculpture, and stonemasonry....

“Because meal and flour were staples, milling was a daily activity performed by slaves (Exod 11:5; Judg 16:21) or the woman (and daughters) of the household (Isa 47:2), and the possession of a handmill was absolutely essential (Deut 34:6; Jos. Ant.4.270). This incessant scraping sound of the handmill, a normal and frequent sound coming from all homes, is referred to here.”¹⁹⁹

¹⁹⁶ Mounce, *Op. cit.*, p. 338.

¹⁹⁷ Thomas, *Op. cit.*, p. 345.

¹⁹⁸ Brighton, *Op. cit.*, p. 480.

¹⁹⁹ Aune, *Op. cit.*, p. 1009.

“Cities in the ancient world were subdivided so that different sections of the town would belong to the various trades (see the introduction to the letter to Thyatira, 2:18-29). The removal of the craftsmen means the abandoning of the city itself. Without them there would be no economy, and here we see the fulfillment of 18:6-7, the ‘double portion’ that God would return upon Babylon for the ‘glory’ and ‘sensuous luxury’ she heaped on herself. She lived for her material pleasures, and so God has now taken them all away.

“Not only is there to be no economy, there will not even be food. That primary staple of life in the ancient world, grain, will also disappear forever, for there ‘the sound of a millstone will never be heard in you again.’²⁰⁰

“In Babylon’s desolation ... the sound of the promising stir of business will be absent (*ou me akousthe en soi eti*, cf. v. 22a) (Swete, Moffatt).²⁰¹

She attempted to annihilate the church, now God permits her demise.

VERSE 23: “And the light of a candle shall shine no more at all in thee; and the voice of the bridegroom and of the bride shall be heard no more at all in thee: for thy merchants were the great men of the earth; for by thy sorceries were all nations deceived.”

Verse 23 – “And the light of a candle shall shine no more at all in thee”

The loss of candlelight (the type used in a home) is the fourth deprivation. It alludes to Jeremiah 25:10, “Moreover I will banish from them ... the light of the lamp.”

“This system has rejected Jesus, the *Sun of righteousness* (Malachi 4:2), who *lights* the *candle* of influence to others. Babylon’s is evil, so her body is *full of darkness*. This spiritual darkness is reflected in the physical darkness of the fifth plague (Revelation 16:10-11). She has rejected Christ’s instruction: ‘...Walk while ye have the light, lest darkness come upon you: for he that walketh in darkness knoweth not whither he goeth.’ John 12:35. She is now full of darkness, and has no more influence with the people of earth.”²⁰²

Verse 23 – “and the voice of the bridegroom and of the bride shall be heard no more at all in thee:”

“There is no stronger metaphor for ‘joy and gladness’ (Jer. 25:10, where the ‘voice of the bridegroom and the voice of the bride’ is placed first as the primary example of joy; see also Jer. 7:34; 16:9; 33:11) than the wedding, so the stilling of such sounds of joy has a special poignancy. Also, we have here another contrast between the sinner and the saint. The nations will never again know the joy of a wedding, while the church will become the ‘bride’ of Christ (Rev. 19:7-8; 21:2, 9).”²⁰³

“Before the flood, earth’s inhabitants were marrying and giving in marriage, until it came, and took them all away (Matthew 24:38-39). Now that the great city, Babylon, has been destroyed, the same thing has happened. Christ is represented in the scriptures as the Bridegroom (Matthew 25:6). This city has rejected Him, and His voice is now heard no more in it.

²⁰⁰ Osborne, *Op. cit.*, p. 657.

²⁰¹ Thomas, *Op. cit.*, p. 345.

²⁰² Brooks, *Op. cit.*, p. 12.

²⁰³ Osborne, *Op. cit.*, p. 657.

“The *bride* is the *Lamb’s wife* (Revelation 21:9), and represents the 144,000 [New Jerusalem – the church]. These have previously given the Loud Cry, which this city rejected, and they persecuted the *bride*. The message has been given, and the voice of the *bride* is now heard no more at all in the great city, Babylon. There are no more calls to come to the marriage feast (Matthew 22:2-10).”²⁰⁴

Verse 23 – for thy merchants were the great men of the earth; for by thy sorceries were all nations deceived.”

“The great men of the earth” alludes to those with wealth and, thereby, power.

“Rome not only dominated but exploited the rest of the empire for its own benefit (so Aune 1998b: 1010). This line refers back to Isa. 23:8 in the prophecy against Tyre, ‘whose merchants are princes, whose traders are renowned in the earth.’ ... In other words, like Tyre the merchants have exalted themselves as the ‘rulers of the earth’ and left God out of the picture. Beale (1999: 921) calls this self-glorification “economic self-idolatry,’ linking it also with Ezekiel’s condemnation of ‘the prince of Tyre’ in Ezek. 28:1-9 for ‘lifting [his heart] up because of your riches,’ which in effect was saying, ‘I am a God.’”²⁰⁵

The nations were led astray by sorcery (*pharmakeia*) or the deception of Babylon. Jezebel seduced believers into immorality and idolatry (2:20; cf. II Kings 9:22) and is a functional part of Babylon (Isaiah 47:12) and of Nineveh (Naham 3:4). The false trinity, which comprised Babylon, deceived the nations (12:9; 13:14; 19:20; 20:3, 8, 10) into worshiping the beast of papacy. The United States with all its wealth and power caused the “earth, and them which dwell therein to worship the ... [papacy]” (Revelation 13:12). She brought the nations under a spell by a potion of deception.

The implication of idolatry for sorcery is suggested by the direct connection between “idolatry” (or idols) and “sorcery” in Revelation 9:20-21 and Galatians 5:20. Naham 3:4, with backing of the Quman scrolls (4 QpNah), equates “sorcery” with fornication²⁰⁶ – the illicit teachings of Babylon, the harlot.

“Revelation 21:8 and 22:15 note the exclusion of sorceries from the heavenly city.”²⁰⁷

VERSE 24: “And in her was found the blood of prophets, and of saints, and of all that were slain upon the earth.”

This verse continues the reasons for Babylon’s judgments begun in the previous verse. The apostate Christians will be punished for shedding the blood of God’s faithful.

This chapter has drawn on Old Testament ties to Babylon, Tyre and Nineveh as metaphors for the fallen Babylon depicted here. Those ancient wicked cities were pagan and represented incompletely the great apostate theme. This is why two other images in this book were chosen to clarify the greater issues – the beast and harlot. Each of these beautifully added the dimension of a kingdom and church which unmistakably points to the Vatican State and the Roman Catholic Church. Historically and prophetically, that agency is implicated in the shedding of blood (persecution and martyrdom). Her end will come; this verse continues to clarify why.

²⁰⁴ Brooks *Op. cit.*

²⁰⁵ Osborne, *Op. cit.*, p. 658.

²⁰⁶ Beale, *Op. cit.*, p. 922.

²⁰⁷ Thomas, *Op. cit.*, p. 347.

Historical Babylon came to its end because of the “slain of Israel” (Jeremiah 51:49a).²⁰⁸ The word Babylon must be seen symbolizing all apostate religions pretending to represent God, but killing His people. Jesus said to the Pharisees after calling them a generation of vipers: “That upon you may come all the righteous blood shed upon the earth, from the blood of righteous Abel unto the blood of Zacharias son of Barachias, whom ye slew between the temple and the altar. Verily I say unto you, All these things shall come upon this generation” (Matthew 23:35-36; cf. Ezekiel 24:6, 9; Luke 13:33).

Jesus is developing a fascinating principle that He opens up in greater detail in the following chapters – “This generation shall not pass; till all these things be fulfilled” (Matthew 24:34).

In the generation of Christ’s day the end of the Jewish world would cease and its desolation come. Between 66 and 73 A.D., over one million people would die, fulfilling Christ’s words *and* their own condemnation, “His blood be on us, and on our children.” A parallel image is seen from ancient Babylon, the apostate Jewish nation and the end-time Babylon with the papacy as its head. In the *final generation* its end will be fulfilled because of its teachings, illicit claims only belonging to God and its death of saints (17:6, 19:2; cf. with earthdwellers 6:10, beast from the abyss 11:7, 13:7 and beast from the earth 13:15).²⁰⁹

This prophecy looks to the future at a global apostate power mimicking the horrors of the past, which God holds them morally accountable for. “For John, the judgment brought against the city of Rome was at the same time the eschatological judgment that would bring history to its close.”²¹⁰

“That the Church of Rome has shed more innocent blood than any other institution that has ever existed among mankind, will be questioned by no Protestant that has a complete knowledge of history. The memorials, indeed, of many of her persecutions are now so scanty, that it is impossible to form a complete conception of the multitude of her victims, and it is certain that no powers of the imagination can adequately realize their sufferings.... These atrocities were not perpetrated in the brief paroxysms of a reign of terror, or by the hand of obscure sectaries, but were inflicted by a triumphant Church, with every circumstance of solemnity and deliberation.”²¹¹

Revelation shows history will be repeated by the same key player. Only this time it will be its last.

“Babylon has been in existence since shortly after the flood. This is the kingdom of Satan that has been built and rebuilt throughout the centuries that this earth has been in existence. Now, in the last remnant of time, every part of Babylon has been perfected and welded into a whole by all the wicked forces of this earth and hell. It has become that *great city, Babylon*. However, it comes to its end, and shall be no more at all.

“After its fall, many discoveries are made about it. One of the most surprising has been that this system has been responsible for all of the blood shed upon the earth, both of good and evil people. Not one has died upon this earth for which she is not responsible. What a shock this has been for those who helped to build her up! How right those who proclaimed her fall have been; what vindication they now receive for the position they took! There is no more sound of celebration within the walls of Babylon, but

²⁰⁸ Beale, *Op. cit.*, p. 923.

²⁰⁹ Thomas, *Op. cit.*, p. 347.

²¹⁰ Mounce, *Op. cit.*, p. 340.

²¹¹ Cachemaille, E. P.; *The Visions of Daniel and Revelation Explained*, pp. 620-622 quoted by Caringola, Robert in *The Present Reign of Jesus Christ: A Historical Interpretation of the Book of Revelation* (Springfield, MO: Abundant Life Ministries Reformed Press; 1995).

there is rejoicing in heaven and among the saints on the earth, for God has kept His promise, and vengeance has indeed been His!"²¹²

²¹² Brooks, *Op. cit.*, p. 12 (emphasis added).

REVELATION

CHAPTER 19

INTRODUCTION

The dual themes of the saints' mission and then reward associated with the antagonism and final destruction of their enemies runs throughout both the Old and New Testaments. At times the attention to those contrasts is detailed and intense. This chapter unfolds the sequel to Babylon's fall, the last enemy in the struggle against sin. There is heavenly jubilation because the legal way has been finalized for the marriage of the Lamb, the eschaton and destruction of the wicked.

As there were three groups singing dirges over Babylon, we are introduced to a trilogy of worship adulations by a heavenly multitude (vss 1-3), the twenty-four elders and, finally, the four living creatures (vs 4). This is followed by an invitation from the throne to earthlings to join these mighty choirs.

"Of all the heavenly songs in Revelation (cf. 4:8, 11; 5:9-10, 12-14; 7:10, 12, 15-17; 11:15, 17-18; 15:3-4; 16:5-7), this one is the most solemn and formal because of the event that occasions it: God's judgment of the enemy of His people (Alford, Lee)."¹

They portray the victory scenes of the end, beginning with a remarkable voice from the throne to worship God (vs 5). Then – the announcement of the marriage of the Lamb (19:5-9).

Conquering Christ (10:11-16)

Victory supper (19:17-18)

Babylon's final moments (19:19-21)

"The dual theme of reward to the saints and destruction of their enemies announced by the seventh trumpet (11:15-19) is picked up again in ch. 19, as is evident from the verbal similarities, especially in 19:5-6, specifically the threefold description of believers (11:18), the declaration of the commencement of God's reign (11:15-16), and the roar of thunder (11:19). 19:1-6 (perhaps extending to v 8) actually continues the last segment of ch. 18 (18:20-24) and may be seen as the conclusion of that segment in its emphasis on Babylon's fall."²

VERSE 1: "And after these things I heard a great voice of much people in heaven, saying, Alleluia; Salvation, and glory, and honour, and power, unto the Lord our God:"

Verse 1 – "And after these things I heard a great voice of much people in heaven,"

"After" the messages of Babylon's fall (chapters 17 and 18), John is given an auditory vision. He hears a loud or great voice.

¹ Thomas, Robert L.; *Revelation 8–22 – An Exegetical Commentary* (Moody Press, Chicago), 1992, p. 355.

² Beale, G. K.; *The New International Greek Testament Commentary; The Book of Revelation* (William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, Grand Rapids, Michigan, 1999), p. 926.

Who is this great multitude of “people” (*ochlos*)? Since they are part of a doxology preceding God’s invitation to the saints to join the heavenly ranks, it is felt that they are angels. Also, there is responsive singing between this group and other beings, reminiscent of what was previously described between the various heavenly hosts in heaven (4:8, 11; 5:12-14). This praise setting complements what occurred before between the angelic beings, four living creatures and the twenty-four elders.

Verse 1 – “saying, Alleluia; Salvation, and glory, and honour, and power, unto the Lord our God:”

These words begin the lyrics of the final hymn of Revelation. Its composition fits the literary context of the end of Babylon and the anticipated marriage supper of the Lamb.

The word “alleluia” is a transliteration of the Hebrew word *halelu-ya*, meaning “praise Yahweh.”³ It is used four times in this hymn, the only place in the New Testament.

“The song first celebrates the arrival of God’s salvation, glory, and power. Two earlier songs have celebrated the note of victory based on divine justice that ... (*he soteria*, ‘the salvation’) suggests (cf. 7:10; 12:10). The victory that results in God’s kingdom coming on earth coincides with the removal of all that stands in its way, including the beast and Babylon (Ladd). This is the first motive for praise to the Lord.”⁴ A praise principle is being unfolded that ties to Psalms 58:10-11, 104:35, 113:1 and 115:13. Thanksgiving over the judgment of the wicked is presented.

The song comes at Babylon’s fall – from heavenly beings. The legal basis for judgment is now understood by the universe. The next verse opens up the reason why all accusations against God’s character are now finally neutralized. Neither mercy nor justice did away with the law. God’s character is vindicated. Sin was inexcusable. The judgment against its agents is justified. With this, the second coming can occur to reclaim for eternity the remnant.

VERSE 2: “For true and righteous are his judgments: for he hath judged the great whore, which did corrupt the earth with her fornication, and hath avenged the blood of his servants at her hand.”

Verse 2 – “For true and righteous are his judgments:”

This is a vindication statement by the heavenly host. Even after the cross there remained lingering issues in the minds of those beings.

“Yet Satan was not then destroyed. The angels did not even then understand all that was involved in the great controversy. The principles at stake were to be more fully revealed. And for the sake of man, Satan’s existence must be continued. Man as well as angels must see the contrast between the Prince of light and the prince of darkness. He must choose whom he will serve.”⁵

Trumpet plagues have come to the harlot and the blood of martyrs has been avenged. The host sees these judgments as true and righteous. A lingering part of the Old Testament covenant promise stated that God would “avenge the blood of his serv-

³ Aune, David E.; *52A World Biblical Commentary; Revelation 6–16* (World Books; Publisher, Dallas, Texas), 1997, p. 1024.

⁴ Thomas, *Op. cit.*, p. 357.

⁵ White, Ellen G.; *The Desire of Ages*, p. 761.

ants” (Deuteronomy 32:43; II Kings 9:7; Psalm 79:10, 94:1). Justice has occurred. The promises are being fulfilled.

- “True” (*alethina*) implies valid or genuine – “the real one” in distinction to a counterfeit.
- “Righteous” (*dikaia*) means the legal demands for justice have been met.⁶

In these two words we find the vast multitude of angels, the four living creatures and the twenty-four elders now fully see that God’s ways are valid and legally just in dealing with sin and rebellion. God’s character is vindicated (cf. Psalm 19:9; Daniel 3:27-29).

“The same attributes are ascribed to God by the victors of 15:3 and by the voice of the altar in 16:7.”⁷

In a moral universe God is dealing with immoral beings. The final solution to rebellion is destruction. In Christ the demands for justice was met. Apart from Him destruction comes. The imagery in the Trumpet motif portrayed a stepwise loss to the wicked.

“By now all men have made their choice between God and Satan. Universal worship of the beast and universal rejoicing over the deaths of the two witnesses mark the world not only as guilty but also as irreclaimable. The earth-dwellers have hardened their hearts forever to a point that precludes any possibility of repentance (Kiddle). God’s judgment of those with this disposition is the special occasion of praise to God. The cause for praise in 5:12-13 was general, but here it is special as the song continues to show.”⁸

The judgments on Babylon have brought this outburst of song. The imagery makes it appear as though the angels are finally relieved to understand and see rebellion coming to an end.

Verse 2 – “for he hath judged the great whore, which did corrupt the earth with her fornication.”

The harlot – representing Babylon, the mother of harlots – has been corrupting the earth with her false doctrines (17:1-5; 18:3, 7-9) The extent of her guilt is expressed also as corrupting even the kings of the earth (14:8, 17:2; 18:3). Intriguingly, in 11:18 it identifies her as “those who destroy the earth.”

God is seen ethically in the New Testament (I Corinthians 3:17, 15:33; Jude 10) as the destroyer. This parallels the wording of God’s judgment on Babylon in Jeremiah 51:25.

Verse 2 – “and hath avenged the blood of his servants at her hand.”

The idea conveyed here means that “God has avenged the blood shed of His servants which was shed by Babylon’s hand.”⁹ The Old Testament promise of avenging the blood was from the story of Jezebel (II Kings 9:7), a fitting symbol of the harlot. The blood of the saints is noted in 6:10, 16:6, 17:6 and 18:24.

⁶ Brown, Colin; General Editor; New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology, vol. 1, p. 354.

⁷ Mounce, Robert H.; *The Book of Revelation* (Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., Grand Rapids, Michigan, 1977), p. 342.

⁸ Thomas, *Op. cit.*, p. 358.

⁹ Beale, *Op. cit.*, p. 928.

6:10

“How long will you not judge and avenge our blood from those dwelling on the earth”

19:2

“He judged ... and avenged the blood of his servants from her hand”

“The term ... *doulon*, ‘slaves’, includes both saints and prophets of 18:24. This part of the song celebrates the implementation of judicial equity whereby the punishment suits the crime both in kind and in degree (cf. 16:7) (Kiddle).”¹⁰

“Rev 19:1-2 is not the only hymn to indicate that battle is led by God. Vs. 4, with the mention of the elders, the living creatures, and the throne, suggests the same pattern as in e.g. 8:6, the angels directing operations for God, but now not angels (as with the trumpets and bowls) but the Word of God Himself will come to lead the battle.”¹¹

“The last stage of the fall of Babylon will correspond with the return of Jesus. This is why such a scene of rejoicing takes place in heaven.

“Babylon is taken, Bel is shamed, Merodach is broken in pieces; her idols are humiliated, her images are broken in pieces.... My people have been lost sheep. Their shepherds have led them astray; they have turned them away on the mountains.... Move from the midst of Babylon, go out of the land of the Chaldeans; and be like the rams before the flocks.’ (Jeremiah 50:2,6,8)”¹²

That second coming will soon be described in this chapter.

VERSE 3: “And again they said, Alleluia. And her smoke rose up for ever and ever.”

Verse 3 – “And again they said, Alleluia.”

The word “again” (*deuteron*) is best seen as “a second time.” This ties the singers to those that just sang in verses 1 and 2. This second alleluia is like a heavenly encore that heightens the dramatic quality of the scene.¹³

“These ‘Hallelujahs!’ look back to Rev. 17–18 in order to clear the way for a new Woman and a new City, the Bride and the New Jerusalem (19:7; 21:2, 10). Ruiz summed it up well:

“Thus the doxology of 19, 1-8 makes it possible to read the prophetic language of Rev. 17-18 as a reaffirmation of the firmness of God’s purpose and an assurance of God’s victory [(J.P. Ruiz; Ezekiel in the Apocalypse: Formation of Prophetic Language in Revelation 16, 17–19, 10, N.Y.; Peter Lang. European Univ. Studies XXIII, vol. 376, 1989), p. 493].”¹⁴

“The entire vision of Rev. 17–18 should be understood in the light of the coming ‘wedding of the Lamb’ (19:7). This certainly is so absolute that heaven celebrates the future reality of God’s reign over all evil.”¹⁵

¹⁰ Thomas, *Op. cit.*, p. 359.

¹¹ Ford, J. Massingberde; *The Anchor Bible* (Doubleday, New York), 1975, p. 316.

¹² Proulx, Reno, M.D.; LaPlante, Debbie; *The Loud Cry, the Faithful and True Rider & the Marriage of the Lamb* (A Study of Revelation chapters 18 and 19), p. 16.

¹³ Mounce, *Op. cit.*, pp. 342-343.

¹⁴ LaRondelle, Hans, Th.D.; *How to Understand the End-Time Prophecies of the Bible*, (First Impressions, Sarasoto, FL), p. 434.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 433.

With Babylon's fall competition for the heart of mankind ceases. The saints' "I do" is an eternal pledge.

Verse 3 – “And her smoke rose up for ever and ever.”

This can be added as another reason the heavenly beings are singing praises. The city's destruction is final and irreversible.

“The terminology for permanence is somewhat the same as in God's judgments of Sodom and Gomorrah (Gen. 19:38) and Edom (Isa. 34:10). Judgments of these other cities were previews of this judgment. This smoke is an allusion to the fire that will destroy Babylon (17:16; 18:8, 9, 18; cf. 14:11).¹⁶

The imagery is to the never-ending effect of God's judgment. The noted language parallels the judgment of *individuals* who link themselves to Babylon (14:11). They share the same fate.

The destruction of Babylon in Revelation 18:9 and 18 centered on the “smoke of her burning.” That related to the outcome of the devastation by the first Trumpet. This verse reminds us of what happened.

Some scholars see the smoke and torment going on for eternity or at least one thousand years. This creates conflict with the Old Testament allusions noted above and what was already recorded when “the ‘mighty angel’ of Rev. 18:21 repeatedly said after taking ‘up a stone like a great millstone and cast it into the sea saying ... that great city Babylon [shall] be thrown down, and shall be found *no more at all ... no more at all ... no more at all*” (see verses 21, 22, 23).¹⁷ The results of the destruction is eternal.

Ford notes the first alleluia commemorates the victory over the harlot, the second celebrates the eternal nature of that victory.¹⁸

We have now come through the three phases of Babylon's fall. First there is an apostasy. This is when the 144,000 cry to those saints still within its precincts – “Babylon is fallen – come out of her my people” (14:8; 18:2-4). Then the Trumpet judgments bring economic loss and famine. Finally, total destruction comes, depicted in the seventh Vial (Revelation 18:21-23 and here).

“He who presides over His church and the destinies of nations is carrying forward the last work to be accomplished for this world. To His angels He gives the commission to execute His judgments. Let the ministers awake, let them take in the situation. The work of judgment begins at the sanctuary. ‘And, behold, six men came from the way of the higher gate, which lieth toward the north, and every man a slaughter weapon in his hand; and one man among them was clothed with linen, with a writer's inkhorn by his side: and they went in, and stood beside the brazen altar.’ Read Ezekiel 9:2-7. The command is, ‘Slay utterly old and young, both maids, and little children, and women: but come not near any man upon whom is the mark; and begin at My sanctuary. Then they began at the ancient men which were before the house.’ Saith God. ‘I will recompense their way upon their head.’

“The words will soon be spoken, ‘Go your ways, and pour out the vials of the wrath of God upon the earth.’ One of the ministers of vengeance declares. ‘And I heard the angel of the waters say, Thou art righteous, O Lord, which art, and wast, and shalt be, because Thou hast judged thus.’ These heavenly beings, in executing the mandate of God, ask no questions, but do as they are bid. Jehovah of hosts, the Lord God Almighty,

¹⁶ Thomas, *Op. cit.*, p. 359.

¹⁷ Wood, Robert, M.D.; *Revelation 18-19* (Prophecy Research Initiative document – 2003), p. 4.

¹⁸ Ford, *Op. cit.*, p. 315.

the just, the true, and the holy, has given them their work to do. With unswerving fidelity they go forth panoplied in pure white linen, having their breasts girded with golden girdles. And when their task is done, when the last vial of God's wrath is poured out, they return and lay their emptied vials at the feet of the Lord.

"And the next scene is recorded, 'After these things ... I heard as it were the voice of a great multitude, and as the voice of many waters, and as the voice of mighty thunders, saying, Alleluia: for the Lord God Omnipotent reigneth.' They sing the song of Moses and the song of the Lamb."¹⁹

VERSE 4: "And the four and twenty elders and the four beasts fell down and worshipped God that sat on the throne, saying, Amen; Alleluia."

Verse 4 – "And the four and twenty elders and the four beasts fell down and worshipped God"

The elders' and beasts' worship is reminiscent of what they've previously done in 4:9-10 and 5:8 and 14.

That was a celebration at the onset of judgment. This is one at its close. This anticipates the arrival and song of the 144,000. They will sing a "new song" before the throne, twenty-four elders and four beasts in 14:3 as they stand on Mount Zion with the Lamb. That describes the heavenly home victory.

This is the last appearance of these beings in Revelation. They *fall down* and *worship*. This paired description is often used in the Bible and this book to describe utter devotion before God (Psalm 72:11; Daniel 3:5-6, 10-12, 15; Matthew 2:11, 4:9, 18:26; Acts 10:25; I Corinthians 14:25; Revelation 4:10, 5:14, 7:11, 11:16, 19:10, 22:8). This imagery symbolizes total surrender.²⁰

Verse 4 – "that sat on the throne,"

In only one other place is the name of God used with sitting on His throne (7:10). The sitting (*kathemeno*) alludes to His sovereign rule. Thus, in great reverence these heavenly beings worship God, recognizing His elevated position.

With the fall of Babylon, and soon to be described imprisonment of Satan, the end of organized challenges to the rulership of God has come. Thus, the praise and honor is anticipatory of peace.

"Worship celebrates the 'mighty acts of God,' not our pious feelings. The voices in the heavenly sanctuary celebrate (in the perspective of the vision) the past judgment of God on Babylon; they also announce the festive celebration to come: the marriage feast of the Lamb. Like the Hebrew Scriptures (Hos. 2:14-20; Isa. 62:5; Jer. 2:2), the Gospels (Mark 2:19; John 3:29), and the Pauline tradition in which John stands (II Cor. 11:2; Eph. 5:25-32), John pictures God/Christ as the bridegroom and the People of God, Israel/Church, as the bride."²¹

¹⁹ White, Ellen G.; *Testimonies to Ministers*, pp. 431-432

²⁰ Osborne, Grant R.; *Revelation* (Baker Book House; Grand Rapids, MI), p. 666.

²¹ Boring M. Eugene; *Interpretation – A Bible Commentary for Teaching and Preaching* (John Knox Press, Louisville, Kentucky), 1989, p. 193.

Verse 4 – “saying, Amen; Alleluia.”

These words echo the end of the doxology noted in Psalm 106:48. This is not a hymn but are words of affirmation or ratification following the songs of verses 1-3. They, too, are grateful for the destruction of Babylon.

In declaring Amen and Alleluia in this solemn position of worship, they express gratefulness for what God has permitted in His sovereign will.

In this, one can hear the “holy, holy, holy” of the winged creatures before God in the majestic visions of Isaiah 6:1-4.²² Because of the Lamb’s victory, the remnant’s commitment and the destruction of Satan’s earthly agencies, and Satan now bearing the sins of all the saints, the heavenly sanctuary is now cleansed. These songs prepare for the Jubilee celebration that begins with the “last trump” (I Corinthians 15:52).

VERSE 5: “And a voice came out of the throne, saying, Praise our God, all ye his servants, and ye that fear him, both small and great.”

Verse 5 – “And a voice came out of the throne, saying,”

The voice does not come “out of the temple” (*ek tou naou*) (16:1) but “from the throne” (*apo tou thronou*) as in 16:17 and 21:3. Previously, all have been assumed to be God’s voice. Here, however, if it is His, He is asking others to praise Himself. If it is Jesus’ command, He would likely be saying, “My God” (*theon mou*) (John 20:17, cf. Revelation 3:2) and not “Our God” (*theo hemon*).

“Again the source of the voice is unidentified (as in 10:4, 8; 11:12; 12:10; 14:13; 16:1, 17; 18:4). Sometimes the voice comes out of heaven (10:4, 8; 11:12; 14:13; 18:4) or is in heaven (12:10) or emanates from the heavenly temple (16:1, 17). Once the source of the voice seems to be that of God himself (18:4), but usually it seems to be that of an angel speaking on behalf of God. Here in 19:5 the voice comes from ‘the throne,’ and because it invites the slaves of God (‘his slaves’) to worship him, most likely it is an angel who is speaking, perhaps one of the angels of God’s presence who stand before him and wait on him (e.g., see Lk 1:19).²³

We’ve had praise coming from the heavenly host and the twenty-four elders and four living creatures. Most scholars conclude that it is not clear who this voice represents, except that it appears to be authoritative and comes from the throne room.²⁴

Verse 5 – “Praise our God, all ye his servants, and ye that fear him, both small and great.”

The imperative or command to praise goes to *servants*, those *who fear God* and to *small and great*. This would complete the list of *created* beings who honor God, between heaven and earth.

- Angelic host
- 24 elders

²² Brighton, Louis A; *Revelation, Concordance Commentary* (Concordance Publishing House, St. Louis), 1999, p. 489.

²³ *Ibid.*, p. 490.

²⁴ Osborne, *Op. cit.*, p. 666.

- 4 living creatures
- Earthly saints awaiting the wedding

All suitors, all competitors for the attention of the bride have been destroyed. Heaven rejoices. They are God's servants, but, as will soon be disclosed, they are the bride of the Lamb.

Many also view this as echoing Psalms 135:1 and 20 and to the Hallel Psalms, Psalms 112-117. In that context, the events surrounding Babylon's fall bring vindication to God's name. Those "slaves" have participated in honoring His justice and mercy through their unswerving loyalty. It reveals that a point in time has come when all legal issues of the great controversy have been resolved and the saints are told, "It's time to rejoice – the battle is over – the war has been won."

"By the people of God a voice, clear and melodious, is heard, saying, 'Look up,' and lifting their eyes to the heavens, they behold the bow of promise. The black, angry clouds that covered the firmament are parted, and like Stephen they look up steadfastly into heaven and see the glory of God and the Son of man seated upon His throne. In His divine form they discern the marks of His humiliation; and from His lips they hear the request presented before His Father and the holy angels: 'I will that they also, whom Thou hast given Me, be with Me where I am.' John 17:24. Again a voice, musical and triumphant, is heard, saying: 'They come! they come! holy, harmless, and undefiled. They have kept the word of My patience; they shall walk among the angels;' and the pale, quivering lips of those who have held fast their faith utter a shout of victory."²⁵

"Saith the Lord: 'Ye shall have a song, as in the night when a holy solemnity is kept; and gladness of heart, as when a holy solemnity is kept; and gladness of heart, as when one goeth ... to come into the mountain of the Lord, to the Mighty One of Israel. And the Lord shall cause His glorious voice to be heard, and shall show the lighting down of His arm, with the indignation of His anger, and with the flame of a devouring fire, with scattering, and tempest, and hailstones.' Isaiah 30:29, 30.

"The call extends to Christians of all levels of intellectual capacity, social standing, spiritual progress, and whatever other categories men use to group themselves (Swete)... (*Hoi mikroi kai hoi megaloi*, 'Small and great') erases all socio-economic distinctions in extending the privilege of praising God to all the faithful (Johnson). This part of the song alludes to the words of one of the Hallel psalms, Ps. 115:13 (cf. Rev. 11:18) (Kiddle, Johnson)."²⁶

"The reaction of those in heaven and the saints on earth fulfills the command of 18:20 as they all rejoice and sing a series of 'hallelujah' choruses. First, the heavenly multitude celebrates (19:1-2) the victory, power, and justice of the God who has both judged the evil empire and avenged the blood of the saints in response to their prayer in 6:10. They also praise God (19:3) because the eternal punishment of Babylon is in keeping with her 'crimes' (18:5) and exploitative luxuries (18:7, 12-13). Next, the elders and living creatures worship God and affirm the hymnic celebration of the multitudes (19:4). Finally, a voice from the throne calls on the saints on earth to join in praising God (19:5)."²⁷

This verse beautifully parallels 11:18 and 19:

- The time to give reward unto thy servants is come
- Those that fear Thy name, small and great

²⁵ White, Ellen G.; *The Great Controversy*, p. 636.

²⁶ Thomas, *Op. cit.*, p. 362.

²⁷ Osborne, *Op. cit.*, p. 667.

- Temple of God opened in heaven
- Ark seen (typological throne)
- Heard lightning *voices*, thunderings and earthquake and great hail (paralleled with seventh Vial of 16:17-21 when Babylon fell)

This is the time immediately surrounding the *parousia*.

VERSE 6: “And I heard as it were the voice of a great multitude, and as the voice of many waters, and as the voice of mighty thunderings, saying, Alleluia: for the Lord God omnipotent reigneth.”

Verse 6 – “And I heard as it were the voice of a great multitude, and as the voice of many waters, and as the voice of mighty thunderings,”

The hour has come, within an eschatological setting, where evil has been destroyed and the kingdom of God is about to become a visible reality.²⁸

Here the *great multitude* is about to sing a victory song. Babylon has fallen. That *multitude* (*ochlos*), noted to be the heavenly host in 19:1 (though called “people”), sings because Babylon’s destruction defeats Satan’s final bastion of support and gives legal grounds for Jesus to unite forever with the saved of all ages – the marriage of the Lamb.

In heavenly sounds that are hard for John to describe for us, he notes it is like many *waters* and *thunderings*. He had problems in describing Jesus’ voice (1:15) as did Job (Job 40:9), David (Psalms 77:18, 104:7), Isaiah (Isaiah 30:30), Ezekiel (Ezekiel 1:24, 43:2) and Daniel (Daniel 10:6) – “It is like ...”

This is the great choir of that heavenly host first heard in chapter 4 and parallels exactly what occurs at the seventh Trumpet.

“And the seventh angel sounded; and there were great voices in heaven, saying, The kingdoms of this world are become *the kingdoms* of our Lord, and of his Christ; and he shall reign for ever and ever” (Revelation 11:15).

The controversy between good and evil has ended. Babylon is fallen and is destroyed (16:9). Everything is ready for the eternal kingdom to be ushered in.

This anticipates chapter 14 when the 144,000 stand with the Lamb on Mount Zion when John heard the voice (singular) of many waters and the voice (singular) of a great thunder with that of harpers. Then that auditory revelation will be part of the “new song” sung by the 144,000 as they celebrate the victory with Jesus the Lamb.

Verse 6 – “saying, Alleluia: for the Lord God omnipotent reigneth.”

“Aune (1998b: 1022-23) says this is the only hymn in the book that ‘conforms fully to the OT genre,’ having three parts: a summons to praise Yahweh (‘hallelujah’), a thematic sentence stating the reason for the praise (‘our Lord reigns’), and the divine actions that motivate one to praise (19:7-8).

“This is the final ‘hallelujah’ of the series, and it provides an especially apt praise theme. Once more the supreme title of the book, ‘Lord God Almighty,’ appears (cf. 1:8, 4:8; 11:17; 15:3; 16:7, 14; 19:15; 21:22), and as before it centers on his omnipotence

²⁸ Mounce, Robert H.; *The Book of Revelation* (Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., Grand Rapids, Michigan, 1977), p. 346.

and sovereignty. Here almighty God ... (*ebasileusen*, has begun to reign – an ingressive aorist that reproduces the one in 11:17).²⁹

It is a distinct message that God's reign is a direct consequence of his judgment on Babylon. He has disposed the system that arrogated that office to themselves.³⁰ The praise for God's divine rule is to continue on into eternity in the heavenly city (20:11–21:5).³¹

When the word “say” or “saying” (*lego*) is used in the Apocalypse, it is always the voice of heavenly beings which utter intelligible sounds. The resemblance to thunders and many waters may be a subjective reaction of the scribe, but as noted here, the message is specific.³²

In 19:1-3 the heavenly host celebrated God's destructive judgment on the harlot. Here, they celebrate the onset of His kingdom. A transition in history has occurred. God's name has been vindicated through the triumph of the 144,000 – those sealed with the very signatures of heaven.

“The Lord God omnipotent’ refers to the Lord Jesus Christ, our Saviour. Many of the heathen religions of the world teach that God reigns. The Jews firmly hold to the truth that God reigns. But the doctrine of the Bible, the doctrine of the gospel, the doctrine of this text is that the Lord God omnipotent, the triune Godhead, exercises his sovereign dominion and government over all the universe in the person of his Son, Jesus Christ, our Saviour. ‘The Father loveth the Son, and hath given all things into his hand’ (John 3:35). Our Lord Jesus assured his disciples, ‘All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth’ (Matt. 28:8). Jesus Christ has taken unto himself, by divine right and by merit of his obedience as the sinner's substitute, all power, authority and dominion. He has the right to reign as sovereign, absolute Lord over all things because he is God. And as a man he earned the right to reign over all things by his obedience unto death. Christ's universal dominion is the effect and reward of his accomplished redemption.”³³

VERSE 7: “Let us be glad and rejoice, and give honour to him: for the marriage of the Lamb is come, and his wife hath made herself ready.”

Verse 7 – “Let us be glad and rejoice, and give honour to him:”

The song of the heavenly choir continues: “This call also occurs in Matt. 5:12, which tells the persecuted saints, ‘Rejoice and be glad, because great is your reward in heaven.’ Both Matthew and this passage go back to several OT passages calling the people of God to ‘rejoice and be glad’ (Ps. 31:7; 32:11; 70:4; 118:24), but especially relevant here is 1 Chron. 16:31, which says, ‘Let the heavens rejoice, let the earth be glad; let them say among the nations, ‘The Lord reigns!’”³⁴

Verse 7 – “for the marriage of the Lamb is come,”

“This imagery of Israel as the bride of Yahweh and the church as the bride of Christ has a rich background in both OT and NT. It occurs primarily in the Prophets, as Isa.

²⁹ Osborne, *Op. cit.*, pp. 671-672.

³⁰ Beale, *Op. cit.*, p. 931.

³¹ Thomas, *Op. cit.*, p. 365.

³² Beale, *Op. cit.*, p. 933.

³³ Fortner, Don; *Discovering Christ in Revelation* (Evangelical Press USA; Auburn, MA), pp. 330-331.

³⁴ Osborne, *Op. cit.*, p. 672.

54:5 says, 'For your Maker is your husband – the Lord Almighty is his name' (cf. 49:18; 61:10; 62:5; Jer. 31:32). Fekkes (1990: 269-70) argues that Isa. 61:10 is especially close to this passage ('He has clothed me with garments of salvation and arrayed me in a robe of righteousness, as a bridegroom adorns his head like a priest, and as a bride adorns herself with her jewels'). Ezekiel 16:7-14 describes beautifully the process by which God has prepared Israel as his bride and 'spread the corner of my garment over you' (16:8, a symbol for entering into a marriage covenant). The wedding jewelry and clothes of Ezek. 16:10-13 are partially behind the wedding garments of Rev. 19:7-8. Finally, in Hos. 2:16-20 God says that in the day when Israel returns 'you will call me "my husband," and 'I will betroth you to me forever.' In the NT there are parables centering on a wedding (Matt. 22:1-14 par.; 25:1-13), and Jesus speaks of himself as the bridegroom (Mark 2:19-10 par.), as does John the Baptist (John 3:29). Paul speaks of presenting the believers 'to one husband, to Christ,' as 'a pure virgin' (2 Cor. 11:2), and in Eph. 5:25-27 he uses wedding imagery to describe Christ presenting 'her to himself as a radiant church' (= a radiant bride; cf. 5:32)."³⁵

Babylon was the Lamb's competition. It was a relentless suitor. Now it is gone. Those who responded to the call and were faithful to the betrothal are now ready for the wedding. Tying this verse with the previous one, the praise is over two simultaneous events:

- The kingdom of God has come.
- The wedding of Jesus with His people has arrived.

These are concurrent sequels to the end of time and are essentially related to His second coming (19:11-21). How long does it last? God said to Israel, "I will betroth you to me for ever" (Hosea 2:19). There is that continual imagery of the bride with God "tabernacling" with them in the new earth (Revelation 21:1-3, 9). Yet we will see shortly that the wedding feast will be celebrated in verse 9.

Verse 7 – "and his wife hath made herself ready."

This envisions a sudden contrast between the recent imagery presented in chapter 17 where the harlot – wife of an implied husband – and this wife ready for marriage to the Lamb – Jesus Christ (see 21:2, 9).

This phrase has "tension" between "*hath made herself ready*" and the next verse when the bride is "*given wedding garments*" (vs 8). It appears that the latter is justification and righteousness through Christ's obedience (Romans 5:18-19) versus the obedience of Acts 5:32, II Corinthians 7:1, Philippians 2:12, I John 3:3 and Jude 21. This strain of opinion continues the serious misunderstanding equating resisting sin with works. Christ does bring transformation of the heart when man submits and resists sin (James 4:7, Ephesians 5:25-27). The bride prepares herself by remaining faithful (Revelation 2:10, 13; 13:10; 14:12; 17:14) and obeying God's commandments (12:17, 14:12).

"In biblical times a marriage involved two major events, the betrothal and the wedding. These were normally separated by a period of time during which the two individuals were considered husband and wife and as such were under the obligations of faithfulness. The wedding began with a procession to the bride's house, which was followed by a return to the house of the groom for the marriage feast. By analogy, the church, espoused to Christ by faith, now awaits the parousia when the heavenly groom will

³⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 672-673.

come for his bride and return to heaven for the marriage feast that lasts throughout eternity.”³⁶

We are betrothed to Christ (II Corinthians 11:2). Jesus is offering His blood for the dowry – if we let Him.

“From heav’n he came and sought us
To be his holy bride,
With his own blood he bought us,
And for our life he died!

“Our Saviour has gone to prepare a place for us in the Father’s house. It was expedient for us that he go away. But as soon as the appointed time of separation is over, Christ Jesus will come again to receive us unto himself (John 14:1-3; 16:7). During this interval, Christ’s chosen bride must make herself ready. But how do fallen, sinful men and women make themselves ready for marriage to the Son of God? They bathe themselves in the fountain of his blood and put on his robe of righteousness by faith.”³⁷

Song of Songs, chapter 4, verse 7: “Thou art all fair my love, there is no spot in thee.” Chapter 6, verse 10: “Who is she that looketh forth as the morning, fair as the moon, clear as the sun, and awesome as an army with banners?”

VERSE 8: “And to her was granted that she should be arrayed in fine linen, clean and white: for the fine linen is the righteousness of saints.”

Verse 8 – “And to her was granted”

The words “was granted” or “was given” is *endo the*. It is used twenty times in the apocalypse and is always something *permitted by God*. The key to the bottomless pit “was given” to the star that fell whose name was Abaddon or Apollyon (9:1, 11 – king of the bottomless pit). Here, the Lamb’s wife was permitted to be arrayed. This contrasts with the harlot who arrayed herself in purple and scarlet (17:4) and was clothed “in fine linen” “decked with gold and precious stones and pearls” (18:16). In that setting she was arrayed with things of this world versus the Lamb’s wife being clothed with heavenly white linen. This verse begins with “And” (*kai*), showing it is now elaborating on the previous verse, “has prepared herself” (vs 7). This verse continues the anthem of the heavenly host.³⁸ It depicts what is granted to the saints by God’s grace.

Verse 8 – “that she should be arrayed in fine linen, clean and white:”

The importance of this apparel was explained to the Sardis church (3:16). Some in that body had not defiled their garments – their characters. Jesus promised that they would walk with Him in white – purity and righteousness – “for they were worthy.” Then He elaborated that those who overcame would be clothed in white raiment. That would permit their name to be retained in the Book of Life, and their names would be confessed before the Father and angels. That is a *courtroom scene*. Those arrayed in white are special witnesses in heaven. They are vindicating the character of God by being clothed with His nature. The Greek word for “confess” is *exomologes*, which comes from

³⁶ Mounce, *Op. cit.*, p. 347.

³⁷ Fortner, *Op. cit.*, p. 340.

³⁸ Thomas, *Op. cit.*, p. 369.

an ancient word used in the Greek courts of law, *holologeō*. They are legally acknowledged in heaven as representing God's character! Why the angels? Until Satan is bound again to the abyss, his charges remain legally unanswered. Thus, those arrayed in white raiment defy Apollyon, and they satisfy God's beautiful nature and justify Him to the angels.

The saints are not destroyed like those in Babylon. The white raiments, clean and pure, are symbols of their acquittal from divine judgments and adjudication before God.

Verse 8 – “for the fine linen is the righteousness of saints.”

The King James translation is problematic. Righteousness (*dikaionomata*) is not *of the saints*. The implication here is that it has been granted to the saints because they are overcomers. How? They “have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb” (7:14).

Yet the literal translation is “righteous acts of the saints.” Zechariah 3:5-6 is an Old Testament parallel that helps to put the wording into perspective.

“Clean garments and a ‘pure miter’ are given to the high priest in Zech. 3:5-6 LXX to signify that his iniquities have been taken away. ‘Clothe ... with costly garments’ in the MT is rendered by *Targ.* Zech. 3:4 as ‘clothed ... with righteousness’ (*zakot*), which refers not only to removal of guilt but to a new relationship with the Lord (3:5-7). The plural of *zakah* clearly does not refer to the performing of ‘righteous acts’ by the priest but to an acquittal from Satan’s accusations of guilt (3:1-2), since it further explains the preceding ‘I have removed your guilt.’ Instead of being guilty for his actual sin, the priest has received God’s declaration that he is righteous, so that he is looked upon as if he had done righteous deeds.”³⁹

Another Old Testament allusion is:

Isaiah 61:10

I will greatly rejoice in the LORD, my soul shall be joyful in my God; for he hath clothed me with the garments of salvation, he hath covered me with the robe of righteousness, as a bridegroom decketh *himself* with ornaments, and as a bride adorneth *herself* with her jewels.

Revelation 19:7-8

Let us be glad and rejoice, and give honour to him: for the marriage of the Lamb is come, and his wife hath made herself ready. And to her was granted that she should be arrayed in fine linen, clean and white: for the fine linen is the righteousness of saints.

This does not underscore Israel's own deeds to save herself, but that she receives righteousness and salvation from God. This concept is supported further in Revelation 21:2 where the “holy city” was “made ready as a bride adorned for her husband” – another contrast with the great city, Babylon.

“The bride receives her garments from God, but she responds to the gift by her faithfulness to Him [through obedience (Ephesians 2:10)]. In the immediate sense, the moral purity and activity upon which future bliss hinges are the outcome of human effort, but ultimately they are traceable to God and Christ (cf. Matt. 21:43; 22:2, 11-14) (Moffatt). The bride receives the garment as a gift, but she must put it on.”⁴⁰

The “righteous acts” are a counterpoint to the “unrighteous acts” of the harlot (18:5).

³⁹ Beale, *Op. cit.*, p. 937.

⁴⁰ Thomas, *Op. cit.*, p. 370.

After the wedding where will they be seen? “Before the throne of God, and serve him day and night in his temple” (7:15). Symbolically, those robes of righteousness are the divine right of passage – the marriage license – for the wedding. Those garments were “granted” or given to the saints as a divine act of grace.

How important is that apparel? The parable of the wedding garment depicts a guest who didn’t put on that wedding garment. He was cast out (Matthew 22:1-14).

“This ‘fine linen, clean and white,’ represents the righteousness of Christ, given to all believers by God’s sovereign grace (Isa. 61:10; Ezek. 16:6-14; Zech. 3:1-5). Christ’s righteousness is imputed to his people in justification (Rom. 4:3-5, 22-24), and his righteous nature imparted to them in regeneration (Col. 1:27; 2 Peter 1:4; 1 John 3:5-9).”⁴¹

“By the wedding garment in the parable is represented the pure, spotless character which Christ’s true followers will possess. To the church it is given ‘that she should be arrayed in fine linen, clean and white,’ ‘not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing.’ Rev. 19:8; Eph. 5:27. The fine linen, says the Scripture, ‘is the righteousness of saints.’ Rev. 19:8. It is the righteousness of Christ, His own unblemished character, that through faith is imparted to all who receive Him as their personal Saviour.”⁴²

“All who enter will have on the robe of Christ’s righteousness.... There will be no covering up of sins and faults to hide the deformity of character; no robes will be half washed; but all will be pure and spotless.”⁴³

VERSE 9: “And he saith unto me, Write, Blessed are they which are called unto the marriage supper of the Lamb. And he saith unto me, These are the true sayings of God.”

Verse 9 – “And he saith unto me, Write,”

As the Babylonian commentary draws to a close, we suddenly have a “he” being introduced. This being has the authority within the apocalyptic message to ask John to “write.” Jesus was the first being to give that instruction to John (1:11, 19). In the next verse this being states that he is a “fellow servant” of John. Who is this “individual?” Scholars debate and fail to agree on the answer. If we go back to the beginning of this book, it gives the authority (chain of revelation that is to come to John: God – Jesus Christ – his angel – John (1:1). Since “he” is not defined here, “he” is “his angel.”

John is to write another beatitude, one of seven in this book (1:3; 14:13; 16:15; 20:6; 22:7, 14). John is to affirm the blessing that comes in vindicating God, noted in verses 7 and 8.⁴⁴ This wording, “write, blessed,” draws again on a legal framework. John documents the outcome of faithfulness.

Verse 9 – “Blessed are they which are called unto the marriage supper of the Lamb.”

The blessing is in the *calling* to the “marriage supper of the Lamb.” The word “called” in Greek is *keklemeno*i, suggesting “invited.” In this setting the guests are the “invited” guests. This draws from Luke 14:15: “Blessed is the man who will eat the feast in the kingdom of God.”

⁴¹ Fortner, *Op. cit.*, pp. 341-342.

⁴² White, Ellen G.; *Christ’s Object Lessons*, p. 310.

⁴³ White, Ellen G.; *Sons and Daughters of God*, p. 66.

⁴⁴ Beale, *Op. cit.*, p. 945.

“Verse 9 presents a different perspective on the wedding metaphor from vv 7-8. There the bride, the corporate church, was viewed as about to wed the Lamb, but now individual Christians are portrayed as guests at the marriage banquet. Both pictures portray the intimate communion of Christ with believers, but the first focuses on the corporate church and the second on individual members of the church. The same alteration of focus on the community as a whole and the members of the community has been seen in ch. 12 with the woman and her seed (e.g., 12:17). Therefore, 19:7-9 does not speak of two different groups of the redeemed.”⁴⁵

The “church” ties to the New Jerusalem, symbolic of Christ’s kingdom – called the bride of the Lamb (21:9). Here the *individual* is the *guest* to the Lamb’s kingdom celebration.

Not defined is *when* the *wedding* occurs and *where* the *marriage* feast is. Jesus had told the disciples that he would not drink of the fruit of the vine “until that day when I drink it new with you in my Father’s kingdom” (Matthew 26:29, cf. Mark 14:25). This ties together *Jesus* and the *Lamb*; *saints* with *food* in God’s kingdom in heaven (place of “my Father’s house” – John 14:2). Jesus said He would receive His people to go to His Father’s house (John 14:3). At His second coming He takes the saints to heaven. The marriage supper is in the Father’s kingdom.

“And in this mountain [Zion] shall the LORD of hosts make unto all people a feast of fat things, a feast of wines on the lees, of fat things full of marrow, of wines on the lees well refined. And he will destroy in this mountain the face of the covering cast over all people [all reproach], and the veil that is spread over all nations. He will swallow up death in victory; and the Lord GOD will wipe away tears from off all faces; and the rebuke of his people shall he take away from off all the earth: for the LORD hath spoken *it*” (Isaiah 25:6-8).

The theme is the eschatological wedding feast. An ancient Jewish proverb says, “Whoever actively participates in wedding preparations will partake of the banquet” (Lev. Rab. 11:2). Jesus said that only those who persevere will eat and drink at His table in the kingdom (Luke 22:28-30). The invited guests in this verse are those who validated their invitations by showing up with the proper wedding attire (Matthew 22:11-14). “For many are called, but few are chosen” (Matthew 22:14).⁴⁶

The wedding supper of the Lamb contrasts with the destruction of the enemies of God – Babylon.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*

⁴⁶ Aune, *Op. cit.*, p. 1032.

Matthew 8:11-12:

¹¹ I tell you,
many will come

and sit at table with
Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob
in the kingdom of heaven,
¹² while the sons of the kingdom
will be thrown into the outer
darkness; there men will weep
and gnash their teeth.

Luke 13:29, 28:

²⁹ And men
will come from east and west,
and from north and south,
and sit at table

in the kingdom of God.

²⁸ There you will weep
and gnash your teeth,
when you see
Abraham and Isaac and Jacob
and all the prophets
in the kingdom of God
and you yourselves thrust out.

Verse 9 – “And he saith unto me, These are the true sayings of God.”

This lead angel is again noted at the end of the beatitude, affirming that the blessing is part of the truth of God Himself. As this verse opened in a legal setting, so it closes. The “signature” or authority of God is behind this promised blessing.

When is the marriage of the Lamb? Many conclude it is at the *parousia* when He comes to receive His saints.

“Let your loins be girded about, and *your* lights burning; And ye yourselves like unto men that wait for their lord, when he will return from the wedding; that when he cometh and knocketh, they may open unto him immediately. Blessed *are* those servants, whom the lord when he cometh shall find watching: verily I say unto you, that he shall gird himself, and make them to sit down to meat, and will come forth and serve them. And if he shall come in the second watch, or come in the third watch, and find *them* so, blessed are those servants. And this know, that if the goodman of the house had known what hour the thief would come, he would have watched, and not have suffered his house to be broken through. Be ye therefore ready also: for the Son of man cometh at an hour when ye think not” (Luke 12:36-40).

When Jesus comes, He “will return from the wedding.” That implies that those who make up the bride have been determined – she is ready with white linen garments. The marriage of the lamb occurs before the eschaton and is to His kingdom, symbolized by the New Jerusalem, seen as a metaphor for His church. This is described in Daniel 7:13-14: “I saw in the night visions, and, behold, *one* like the Son of man came with the clouds of heaven, and came to the Ancient of days, and they brought him near before him. And there was given him dominion, and glory, and a kingdom, that all people, nations, and languages, should serve him: his dominion *is* an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and his kingdom *that* which shall not be destroyed.”

Jesus, the Son of man, comes to the Father, Ancient of Days, to receive His kingdom and His people. This is an Old Testament prophecy of that marriage. When is that fulfilled? Revelation 19:7-8 makes it clear that it is *after* Babylon falls and *before* He returns. It is right at the very last sliver of time.

“In Christ we have been chosen from eternity. Ephesians 1:4; 2 Timothy 1:9. Throughout the Old Testament dispensation the *wedding* has been announced. When

the Son of God assumed our flesh, the *betrothal* took place. When He sacrificed Himself on Calvary, the *dowry* was paid. Since He ascended, *the bride has been preparing herself and the Bridegroom has been preparing her home* – the New Jerusalem. Soon *He will come and call her* to occupy the place He has prepared.”⁴⁷

What is that marriage? The reception by Christ of His kingdom.

“In the parable, when the bridegroom came, ‘they that were ready went in with him to the marriage.’ The coming of the bridegroom, here brought to view, takes place before the marriage. The marriage represents the reception by Christ of His kingdom. The Holy City, the New Jerusalem, which is the capital and representative of the kingdom, is called ‘the bride, the Lamb’s wife.’ Said the angel to John: ‘Come hither, I will show thee the bride, the Lamb’s wife.’ ‘He carried me away in the spirit,’ says the prophet, ‘and showed me that great city, the holy Jerusalem, descending out of heaven from God.’ Revelation 21:9, 10. Clearly, then, the bride represents the Holy City, and the virgins that go out to meet the bridegroom are a symbol of the church. In the Revelation the people of God are said to be the guests at the marriage supper. Revelation 19:9. If guests, they cannot be represented also as the bride. Christ, as stated by the prophet Daniel, will receive from the Ancient of Days in heaven, ‘dominion, and glory, and a kingdom;’ He will receive the New Jerusalem, the capital of His kingdom, ‘prepared as a bride adorned for her husband.’ Daniel 7:14; Revelation 21:2. Having received the kingdom, He will come in His glory, as King of kings and Lord of lords, for the redemption of His people, who are to ‘sit down with Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob,’ at His table in His kingdom (Matthew 8:11; Luke 22:30), to partake of the marriage supper of the Lamb.”⁴⁸

“Every case had been decided for life or death. While Jesus had been ministering in the sanctuary, the judgment had been going on for the righteous dead, and then for the righteous living. Christ had received His kingdom, having made the atonement for His people and *blotted out their sins*. The subjects of the kingdom were made up. The marriage of the Lamb was consummated. And the kingdom, and the greatness of the kingdom under the whole heaven, was given to Jesus and the heirs of salvation, and Jesus was to reign as King of kings and Lord of lords.”⁴⁹

At the night of “deliverance.”⁵⁰ The “delivering” of the covenant to the saints can be seen as God’s divine wedding document. The saints are His forever! (Revelation 11:16).

VERSE 10: “And I fell at his feet to worship him. And he said unto me, *See thou do it not: I am thy fellowservant, and of thy brethren that have the testimony of Jesus: worship God: for the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy.*”

Verse 10 – “And I fell at his feet to worship him.”

John is overwhelmed by the song of the heavenly host; and when Gabriel, that lead angel who took Lucifer’s place, asked him to write, he responds by falling at the feet of Gabriel to worship him. The imagery doesn’t seem graphic enough to cause the seer to do this. However, such responses are recorded elsewhere (Numbers 22:31 – Balaam;

⁴⁷ Anderson, Roy; *Unfolding the Revelation* (revised), p. 186.

⁴⁸ White, Ellen G.; *The Great Controversy*, pp. 426-427.

⁴⁹ White, Ellen G.; *Early Writings*, p. 280 (emphasis added).

⁵⁰ White, Ellen G.; *The Great Controversy*, p. 640.

John 5:14 – Joshua; Judges 13:20 – Manoah; Daniel 2:46 – Nebuchadnezzar; Acts 10:25 – Cornelius; Acts 16:29 – prison keeper.⁵¹

What John heard in praise subsequent to Babylon's fall caused him to see Gabriel as the hero, the savior of events. This helps us to understand the role of an angel, not as a sacred messenger but as a conveyer of a divine message.

Verse 10 – “And he said unto me, See *thou do it not:*”

This is equivalent to our colloquial, “No, no.” Not even obeisance as mere respect to a superior being is permitted. It shows how simple and easy it is to fall into an idolatrous act.⁵² This command of Gabriel is in the aorist imperative (*proskyneson*) – it is urgent – “Don't, John, stop!”

This contrasts dramatically with the beast who had no compunction about accepting worship (13:4, 8, 12, 15).

Verse 10 – “I am thy fellowservant, and of thy brethren”

The angel is a servant of the same Lord God as Christians (Hebrews 1:14). This is perhaps a lesson for John. This is a prestigious angel. He shuns any honor. John, a prophet and selected representative of Jesus who actually appeared to him is not to be honored or exalted.

“The angel from heaven came to John in majesty, his countenance beaming with the excellent glory of God. He revealed to John scenes of deep and thrilling interest in the history of the church of God and brought before him the perilous conflicts which Christ's followers were to endure. John saw them passing through fiery trials, made white and tried, and, finally, victorious overcomers, gloriously saved in the kingdom of God. The countenance of the angel grew radiant with joy and was exceeding glorious, as he showed John the final triumph of the church of God. As the apostle beheld the final deliverance of the church, he was carried away with the glory of the scene and with deep reverence and awe fell at the feet of the angel to worship him. The heavenly messenger instantly raised him up and gently reproofed him, saying, ‘See thou do it not: I am thy fellow servant, and of thy brethren that have the testimony of Jesus: worship God: for the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy.’ The angel then showed John the heavenly city with all its splendor and dazzling glory, and he, enraptured and overwhelmed, and forgetful of the former reproof of the angel, again fell to worship at his feet. Again the gentle reproof was given, ‘See thou do it not for I am thy fellow servant, and of thy brethren the prophets, and of them which keep the sayings of this book: worship God.’”⁵³

Verse 10 – “that have the testimony of Jesus: worship God:”

In the immediate context, the angel is saying, “John I'm only passing on the revelation of Jesus Christ (Revelation 1:1), just as you will in your writings. I'm really no different than you relative to the message you are seeing and hearing.”

The “testimony of Jesus” (*ten martyrian Iesou*) is the attestation of Jesus. In a legal motif, once again Jesus is testifying as a witness to both the angel and John on God's behalf. Witnesses in the Greek world appeared in a court room trial, testifying of their

⁵¹ Thomas, *Op. cit.*, p. 375.

⁵² Beale, *Op. cit.*, pp. 946-947.

⁵³ White, Ellen G.; *Early Writings*, pp. 230-231.

knowledge against the perpetrator of a crime. This is done under oath in the name of God. Most unique is that Jesus is making statements proleptically as to what the architects of evil will be like.

Twice God has revealed Jesus taking an oath against His testimony – first in Daniel 12:7 when He raised both hands and “sware by him that liveth for ever” just before He gave those three *timed* prophecies – and in Revelation 10 while holding the unsealed book of Daniel, He lifted the other hand to heaven and “sware by him that liveth for ever and ever, who created heaven, and the things that therein are, and the earth, and the things that therein are, and the sea, and the things which are therein.” Again, this latter oath is also regarding a *time* prophecy. Jesus witnesses to those solemn *time* prophecies that *time* has almost run out – fully and totally in the context of Daniel and this book of Revelation!

In chapter 22, verse 6, John was told that “These sayings are faithful and true.” Why? They are the legal testimony of the “faithful and true.” What is the issue? *Time!* – “to show unto his servants the things which must shortly be done.” In the setting given, this apocalyptic book is an urgent message. Time is running out – *the tarrying time* has ended (Habakkuk 2:2-3).

Verse 10 – “for the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy.”

The angel introduces his own legal testimony here. That witness of Jesus *is* the spirit of prophecy. This whole book is called prophecy (*prophetias*) (1:3; 11:6; 22:7, 10, 18-19). Jesus’ witness is the very essence of this whole book. The testimony of Jesus *is* the prophetic book of Revelation.

This is so vital to grasp that John was told, “Blessed is he that keepeth the sayings of the prophecy of this book” (22:7) and cursed is anyone who changes anything in this prophecy (22:18-19).

No wonder E. G. White said: “The book of Revelation opens to the world what has been, what is, and what is to come; it is for our instruction upon whom the ends of the world are come. It should be studied with reverential awe.”⁵⁴

We are reminded that John was given the awesome task to “bare record of the word of God, and of the testimony of Jesus Christ and all things he saw” (1:2). In the motif of this book, in the messages to the seven churches, it is repeatedly stated that “He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches.” Jesus’ testimony is to be a prophetic Spirit speaking to all believers, “Hear what it has to say.” He is the “Word of God” (19:13).

Jesus is God’s designate witness to the prophetic messages in this book. The Spirit opens up these truths to the student. It then becomes “what the Spirit says to the churches.”

“Christ is the great trustee of divine revelation. It is through Him that we have a knowledge of what we are to look for in the closing scenes of this earth’s history. (MS 129, 1905).”⁵⁵

In Revelation 12:17 it states that the seed of the pure woman, or God’s churches called the remnant, would keep the commandments of God and have the “testimony of Jesus.” Scholars have sought to broaden the meaning of this phrase to apply it to a vast array of communiqués from Jesus. Some refer to the whole Bible, others just to His spoken word in the gospels, some to the New testament message in general. They are all

⁵⁴ White, Ellen G.; *The Review and Herald*, August 31, 1897.

⁵⁵ White, Ellen G.; *The Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary*, vol. 7, p. 953.

rich applications. But – the apocalyptic context clearly suggests it primarily refers to the book of Revelation and then its Biblical associations. That is why, even before the heavenly greeting of 1:4-5, God clarified what the reference point of this whole prophetic book was based on – the Revelation (*apokalupsis*) or disclosure of Jesus, “which God gave unto Him” (1:1). John, in turn, said he grasped that in 1:9, stating that he was on the Island of Patmos for the “word of God and for the testimony of Jesus.” Thus, remaining loyal to the contextual setting of this book, a characteristic of the saints will show that they have a deep understanding of Revelation.

Expanding on this thought: “The remnant of the gospel church will have the gifts. War will be waged against them because they keep the commandments of God and have the testimony of Jesus Christ (Rev. 12:17). In Revelation 19:10, the testimony of Jesus is defined to be the spirit of prophecy. Said the angel, ‘I am thy fellow servant, and of thy brethren that have the testimony of Jesus.’ In Revelation 22:9, he repeats the same in substance, as follows: ‘I am thy fellow servant, and of thy brethren the prophets.’ From the comparison we see the force of the expression, ‘the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy.’ But the testimony of Jesus includes all the gifts of that one Spirit. Says Paul: ‘I thank my God always on your behalf, for the grace of God which is given you by Jesus Christ; that in everything ye are enriched by him, in all utterance, and in all knowledge; even as the testimony of Christ was confirmed in you: So that ye come behind in no gift; waiting for the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.’ 1 Cor. 1:4-7. The testimony of Christ was confirmed in the Corinthian church; and what was the result? They came behind in no gift. Are we not justified, then, in the conclusion that when the remnant are fully confirmed in the testimony of Jesus, they will come behind in no gift, waiting for the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ?”⁵⁶

“It was Christ that spoke to His people through the prophets. The apostle Peter, writing to the Christian church, says that the prophets ‘prophesied of the grace that should come unto you: searching what, or what manner of time the Spirit of Christ which was in them did signify, when it testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ and the glory that should follow.’ 1 Peter 1:10, 11. It is the voice of Christ that speaks to us through the Old Testament. ‘The testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy.’ Revelation 19:10.”⁵⁷

“... having in common the same Father, because they have the same Master (Matthew 23:8), and He is not ashamed to call them brethren (Hebrews 2:11). Nowhere in the Word of God are angels called ‘brethren.’

“They have the ‘testimony of Jesus,’ the evidence that He gives to the world concerning Himself: ‘I have glorified Thee on the earth: I have finished the work which Thou gavest Me to do ... I have manifested Thy name unto the men which Thou gavest me out of the world: Thine they were, and Thou gavest them Me; and they have kept Thy word ... For I have given unto them the words which Thou gavest Me: and they have received them, and have known surely that I came out from Thee, and they have believed that Thou didst send Me ... I have declared unto them Thy name, and will declare it: that the love wherewith Thou hast loved Me may be in them, and I in them.’ John 17:4,6,8,26.

“This ‘testimony’ is the ‘spirit of prophecy.’ ‘And it shall come to pass afterward, that I will pour out My Spirit upon all flesh: and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, your old men shall dream dreams, your young men shall see visions: and also upon the servants and upon the handmaids in those days will I pour out My Spirit.’ Joel 2:28-29.

⁵⁶ White, Ellen G.; *Early Writings*, p. 143.

⁵⁷ White, Ellen G.; *Patriarchs and Prophets*, pp. 366-367.

'Surely the Lord God will do nothing, but He revealeth His secret unto His servants the prophets.' Amos 3:7."⁵⁸

VERSE 11: "And I saw heaven opened, and behold a white horse; and he that sat upon him was called Faithful and True, and in righteousness he doth judge and make war."

Christ and His heavenly army are being described, anticipating victory (vv 11-16) and preceding the final prediction that the enemy will be defeated (vv 17-18) and the destruction of the beast and false prophet will come (vv 19-21).

What period do these verses represent? If this is the coming of Christ, what follows in verses 11-21 is the descriptive end of the false trinity. Could this be a more detailed picture of the white horse of 6:12? Or, are we being given a symbolic glimpse of the eschaton?

"And to you who are troubled rest with us, when the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with his mighty angels, In flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ: Who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power" (II Thessalonians 7-9).

The series of scenes that now opens connects to the pouring out of the seventh Bowl (16:17-21) at the time of the second coming of Jesus.

Verse 11 – "And I saw heaven opened."

At Jesus baptism the heavens were opened and the Holy Spirit descended (Mark 1:10). John said that that descent upon Jesus and its remaining with Him was a sign that He was the Son of God (John 1:32-34). Jesus told Nathaniel he would "hereafter" see heaven open and God's angels ascending and descending on the Son of Man (John 1:51). Stephen saw just before his murderous death "the heaven opened, and the Son of Man standing on the right hand of God" (Acts 7:56).

In the Biblical setting of the *heavens opening* a divine-human link is established. It represents a thematic point in time when a transition in the history of redemption is made – "God is about to act on earth in a decisive way."⁵⁹

Since this is the time of the seventh Vial, the events immediately preceding the opening of heaven would be the voice from the throne saying, "It is done" (16:17). Then there is silence in heaven (8:1). The temple of God is open into the Most Holy Place (11:19); no heavenly being or priest is seen. Now King Jesus rides forth.

The last scene on redemption's stage has come. The last act of the drama unfolds, and Revelation 1:7 is fulfilled.

Verse 11 – "and behold a white horse:"

The contrast is drawn from the time He sat on a donkey (Matthew 21:4-7) in a triumphal entry into Jerusalem, with enemies trying to stop the procession to when He comes as a warrior to destroy the enemies to make, unimpeded, the procession of the wedding guests to the heavenly Jerusalem.

⁵⁸ Brooks, Karen, *Revelation 19*, p. 4.

⁵⁹ Osborne, *Op. cit.*, p. 679.

In the sixth chapter the horses represented peoples. Here the symbolism takes on a different meaning. In the context of war the horse is a symbol of power (Job 39:19-25) and speed (Zechariah 10:3). This horse appeared with its Messianic rider when the heavens were opened. Though “white” and “horse” draw parallels to the first Seal, the contextual setting reveals He comes riding a horse – with power and rapidity.

Verse 11 – “and he that sat upon him was called Faithful and True, and in righteousness he doth judge and make war.”

Two themes are addressed with this rider: (1) Vindication of the Christian hope and (2) Messianic judgment upon the wicked.⁶⁰ The former is detailed in 14:15-16 – he that sat on the cloud, harvesting the wheat. Here, He comes to execute judgment (19:11-21).

The rider is introduced as being called “Faithful and True.” The name isn’t new. As these messages were opened to John, Jesus Christ was introduced as the Faithful Witness (1:5). He was to be a legal representative in the courts above. Under the Laodicean message He *introduced* Himself as the “Faithful and True Witness.” What He says and represents is now coming to an end. He is now called the “Faithful and True.” Shortly, Gabriel will make a declaration that the description of the new heavens and the new earth are *true and faithful* (21:5), then *faithful and true* (22:6).

This characteristic of Jesus is a model for His followers (2:10, 13; 13:10; 14:12; 17:14).

The integrity of the throne is set before John in language that bares the scrutiny of the universe. The highest being of the universe is appealed to, described initially as the One which is, and which was and which is to come” (1:4). Jesus’ witness is of Him and Him alone. That is so beautiful and encompassing that He will be introduced shortly as the “Word of God” (v 13).

With that insight, the next phrase can be made: “He is called ‘Faithful and True,’ and with justice he judges and makes war. The righteousness of divine judgment is a prominent theme throughout Revelation. In 16:5-7 the angel in charge of the waters proclaimed, ‘You are just in these judgments,’ and the altar responded, ‘Yes, Lord God Almighty, true and just are your judgments.’ The great multitude in 19:2 praised God, ‘for true and just are his judgments.’ There is no doubt in the Seer’s mind that the righteous retribution about to be enacted upon the beast and his followers is perfectly compatible with truth and justice. Centuries before, the Psalmist had sung of the coming of the Lord when he would judge the world with righteousness and the peoples in his truth (Ps 96:13).”⁶¹

“The judgments of the Lord are true and righteous altogether.” Psalm 19:9 (cf. 119:160; Revelation 16:7, 19:2; Isaiah 11:4). Jesus is called the ‘righteous judge’ at His appearing (II Timothy 4:8).⁶²

“Our God shall come, and shall not keep silent; a fire shall devour before Him, and it shall be very tempestuous all around Him. He shall call to the heavens from above, and to the earth, that He may judge His people: “Gather My saints together to Me, those who have made a covenant with Me by sacrifice.” Let the heavens declare His righteousness, for God Himself is Judge.’ (Psalm 50:3-6)

⁶⁰ Mounce, *Op. cit.*, p. 351.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, p. 352.

⁶² Smart, Lois, M.D.; *Study of Revelation 18–19*, p. 9.

“Give the king Your judgments, O God, and Your righteousness to the king’s Son. He will judge Your people with righteousness, and Your poor with justice. (...) He will save the children of the needy, and will break in pieces the oppressor.’ (Psalm 72:1,2,4)

“There shall come forth a Rod from the stem of Jesse, and a Branch shall grow out of his roots. (...) With righteousness He shall judge the poor, and decide with equity for the meek of the earth. (...) Righteousness shall be the belt of His loins, and faithfulness the belt of His waist.’ (Isaiah 11:1,4,5).”⁶³

“He hath appointed a day, in the which He will judge the world in righteousness by that Man whom He hath ordained” (Acts 17:31).

It is interesting that “tacked” on after the rightness of His judgments is the phrase “and make war.” The dragon (12:7, 17; 16:13) and the beast (11:7; 13:4, 7; 16:14; 17:14; 19:19) made war against God and His people, the time for retribution has come. God makes war.⁶⁴ He fights for us. God’s retribution and war can be seen as “defending righteousness.”

Why is the bridegroom coming as a “warrior?” When Moses and his people saw Pharaoh and his armies drowned in the Red Sea, he said, “The Lord is a man of war” (Exodus 15:3). Before the journey to the promised land was actually consummated, the enemy was destroyed. Before the guests return to the wedding feast, the final vestiges of competition for the bride’s attention is to be wiped out. A legal right to do this has come because of the testimony of the witnesses against sin. The 144,000 reveal that there was no excuse for it as a corporate body. Satan’s agents can come to their end. It is total destruction (vs 15).

“The OT prophets foresaw the Lord coming in the last days as a man of war to dash his enemies in pieces and establish a kingdom over the nations (e.g., Isa. 13:4; 31:4; 42:13; Ezekiel 38-39; Joel 3; Zech. 14:3)....

“This is the personal and direct exercise of His judicial power in crushing the last anti-God forces on earth (Moffatt). It also furnishes meaning to the figure of Christ as the lion of the tribe of Judah, the root of David (Rev. 5:5).”⁶⁵

The war begun in heaven (12:4, 7-9) is completed here on earth because Satan was *cast down*. This led to the warning, “Woe to the inhabitants of the earth and of the sea! for the devil is *come down* to you” (12:12). Jesus is now *coming down* in another contrast to war with him and his agents – the beast and false prophet (19:20).

Some time ago the question was asked: “Who is like unto the beast? Who is able to make war with him?” (13:4). In defiance, the kings of the earth and the beast made “war with the Lamb, and the Lamb shall overcome them: for he is Lord of lords, and King of kings” (17:14). Now He enters history as a king coming to make war. He answers the arrogant challenge of the world, “I am able to make war with apostasy.”

“Soon there appears in the east a small black cloud, about half the size of a man’s hand. It is the cloud which surrounds the Saviour and which seems in the distance to be shrouded in darkness. The people of God know this to be the sign of the Son of man. In solemn silence they gaze upon it as it draws nearer the earth, becoming lighter and more glorious, until it is a great white cloud, its base a glory like consuming fire, and above it the rainbow of the covenant. Jesus rides forth as a mighty conqueror. Not now a ‘Man of Sorrows,’ to drink the bitter cup of shame and woe, He comes, victor in heaven and earth, to judge the living and the dead. ‘Faithful and True,’ ‘in righteousness He doth judge and make war.’ And ‘the armies which were in heaven’ (Revelation 19:11,

⁶³ Proulx and LaPlante, *Op. cit.*, p. 11.

⁶⁴ Osborne, *Op. cit.*, p. 680.

⁶⁵ Thomas, *Op. cit.*, p. 381.

14) follow Him. With anthems of celestial melody the holy angels, a vast, unnumbered throng, attend Him on His way. The firmament seems filled with radiant forms—‘ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousands of thousands.’ No human pen can portray the scene; no mortal mind is adequate to conceive its splendor. ‘His glory covered the heavens, and the earth was full of His praise. And His brightness was as the light.’ Habakkuk 3:3,4. As the living cloud comes still nearer, every eye beholds the Prince of life. No crown of thorns now mars that sacred head; but a diadem of glory rests on His holy brow. His countenance outshines the dazzling brightness of the noonday sun. ‘And He hath on His vesture and on His thigh a name written, King of kings, and Lord of lords.’ Revelation 19:16.”⁶⁶

VERSE 12: “His eyes were as a flame of fire, and on his head were many crowns; and he had a name written, that no man knew, but he himself.”

Verse 12 – “His eyes were as a flame of fire”

When conveying the Thyatirian message, Jesus said of Himself, “These things saith the Son of God, who hath his eyes like unto a flame of fire” (2:18). That imagery was described by John in 1:14, “and his eyes were as a flame of fire.” Daniel was given a similar visual encounter with Jesus, “a certain man” in that great preface to Revelation, Daniel 8–12, “his face as the appearance of lightning, and his eyes as lamps of fire” (Daniel 10:6).

This symbolizes Christ’s role as a divine judge, covering verses 14-21 and from 2:18-23. Those eyes are all-knowing and penetrate every thought and motive. He always knows the spiritual condition of those who claim to be members of the covenant community but are not. This leads to their judgment.

“In Daniel 10 ... the description is associated with an idea of judgment, since the primary purpose of the heavenly ‘son of man’ (Dan. 10:16 Theod.) is to reveal the divine decree that ‘in the latter days’ (Dan. 10:14) Israel’s persecutors will be judged (see Dan. 10:21–12:13), especially the fiendish tyrant who will oppose Israel (11:36-45 – the little horn and king of the north).”⁶⁷

“The flame-of-fire analogy indicates that nothing escapes the notice of his warrior. He is incapable of judgment by deception or fraud. His decisions accord perfectly with reality (Ford).”⁶⁸

The flaming eyes are a metaphor for His omniscience, all-seeing discernment and for the fiery judgments of the great warrior (sovereign judge).

“All things are naked and opened unto the eyes of him with whom we have to do” (Hebrews 4:13). He “is a discerner of the thoughts and interests of the heart” (Hebrews 4:12). Who is being judged? Revelation 11:1 has set our understanding that this book has concerns for those who claim to be His. The temple and its worshipers are being measured.

⁶⁶ White, Ellen G.; *The Great Controversy*, pp. 640-641.

⁶⁷ Beale, *Op. cit.*, pp. 951-952.

⁶⁸ Thomas, *Op. cit.*, p. 385.

Verse 12 – “and on his head were many crowns;”

These were not *stephanos*, a crown of victory, but were *diadema*, the emblem of royalty and kingship. Jesus has received His kingdom. He has “many crowns” appropriate to Him being “King of kings.” This contrasts with the dragon that had a diadem on each head (12:3) and the beast with ten diadems (13:1), one on each horn. Jesus is seen with unlimited sovereignty.⁶⁹ Satan’s reign, through the antichrist, is restricted spatially to this world and to time, forty-two months (Revelation 11–13).⁷⁰ Christ is universal and eternal.

“In Rev. 6:2 the horse and its rider are depicted in the *process* of ‘conquering.’ Here, they have ‘conquered.’”⁷¹

“In the first vision of the second coming of Christ at the harvest at the End (14:14), ‘the Son of Man’ wore a crown ... which represented his victory. By right of his victory (see 5:5-10), he was rewarded with the authority to be the Lord of the harvest. Here in the second vision of his return at the End, the Son of Man now wears ‘many diadems’ (19:12) because he comes as the absolute Ruler and Lord to execute God’s judgment as his mighty warrior. He comes now as the regal Lord who already became the Victor.”⁷²

Again, a modern contrast is made to the head of the Babylonian system – the pope – who is inaugurated, wearing a triple crown, declared to be the “Vicar of Christ” – allegedly the one representing Him here on earth. But, the word “vicar” actually means “in place of.” He is crowned “in place of Christ.”

Verse 12 – “and he had a name written, that no man knew, but he himself.”

This phrase is mysterious since in the next verse He is called the Word of God (19:13).

“There is a close verbal parallel in 2:17, where the victorious Christian is promised a white stone ... ‘with a new name inscribed that no one but the recipient knows,’ and 3:12, where the exalted Christ writes the names of God, the name of the heavenly city, and his own ‘new name’ on the conquering Christian.”⁷³

Wood argues persuasively that a name represents many things from interest to authority, deeds to character. He concludes that it is a summation description of the “experience” that that individual has – something no one else can know. That would beautifully fit the issue of the Pergamos church (2:17) and, likewise, that of the 144,000, who only can learn the “new song” (Revelation 14:2-3, 5) because of the *experience* they went through.⁷⁴

This recalls Jacob’s experience: “And Jacob asked *him*, and said, Tell *me*, I pray thee, thy name. And he said, Wherefore *is* it *that* thou dost ask after my name?” (Genesis 32:29). God wouldn’t satisfy his curiosity. What He represented was more important. Then He blessed Jacob.

Another Old Testament tie is when the “angel of God” (Judges 13:9) came to Manoah to tell her she would have a child. Then “Manoah said unto the angel of the LORD, What *is* thy name, that when thy sayings come to pass we may do thee honour? And

⁶⁹ Mounce, *Op. cit.*, p. 353.

⁷⁰ Osborne, *Op. cit.*, p. 681.

⁷¹ Wood, *Op. cit.*, p. 11.

⁷² Brighton, *Op. cit.*, p. 509.

⁷³ Aune, *Op. cit.*, p. 1055.

⁷⁴ Wood, *Op. cit.*, p. 11.

the angel of the LORD said unto him, Why askest thou thus after my name, seeing it *is* secret?" (Judges 13:17-18).

Could this be what Paul referred to when he wrote in Phillipians: "Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name" (vs 9). What name could be above all names that God Himself gave to Jesus?

There is something either extremely confidential or incomprehensible to the human mind regarding this name. Somewhere on Jesus' personal apparel or crowns is an actual name inscribed in the language of divinity. There is hidden beauty in this, however, because names will be written on the eternally saved, Philadelphia church, including the "new name" of Jesus (3:12), could it be a new family name the bridegroom gives the bride?

"And the Gentiles shall see thy righteousness, and all kings thy glory: and thou shalt be called by a **new name**, which the **mouth of the LORD shall name**. Thou shalt also be a crown of glory in the hand of the LORD, and a royal diadem in the hand of thy God." Isaiah 62:2-3. "the LORD: that *is* my name:" (Isaiah 42:8). He is called *holy* (Isaiah 57:15). At His return some of this imagery will become a reality.

"Soon our eyes were drawn to the east, for a small black cloud had appeared, about half as large as a man's hand, which we all knew was the sign of the Son of man. We all in solemn silence gazed on the cloud as it drew nearer and became lighter, glorious, and still more glorious, till it was a great white cloud. The bottom appeared like fire; a rainbow was over the cloud, while around it were ten thousand angels, singing a most lovely song; and upon it sat the Son of man. His hair was white and curly and lay on His shoulders; and upon His head were many crowns. His feet had the appearance of fire; in His right hand was a sharp sickle; in His left, a silver trumpet. His eyes were as a flame of fire, which searched His children through and through. Then all faces gathered paleness, and those that God had rejected gathered blackness. Then we all cried out, 'Who shall be able to stand? Is my robe spotless?' Then the angels ceased to sing, and there was some time of awful silence, when Jesus spoke: 'Those who have clean hands and pure hearts shall be able to stand; My grace is sufficient for you.' At this our faces lighted up, and joy filled every heart. And the angels struck a note higher and sang again, while the cloud drew still nearer the earth."⁷⁵

"His crown looked brilliant and glorious. It was a crown within a crown, seven in number. The crowns of the saints were of the most pure gold, decked with stars."⁷⁶

VERSE 13: "And he was clothed with a vesture dipped in blood: and his name is called The Word of God."

Verse 13 – "And he was clothed with a vesture dipped in blood:"

This "prophecy calls to mind ... [the oracle] from the book of Isaiah, announcing the glorious coming of the Messiah, the Savior....

"Why is Your *apparel red*, and Your garments like one who treads in the winepress? – I have trodden the winepress alone, and from the peoples no one was with Me. For I have trodden them in My anger, and trampled them in My fury; their *blood is sprinkled upon My garments*, and I have *stained all My robes*. For the day of vengeance is in My heart, and the year of My redeemed has come.' (Isaiah 63:2-4) ... [When He returns He will bring about the destruction of those who have rejected Him.]

⁷⁵ White, Ellen G.; *Early Writings*, pp. 15-16.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 53-54.

“The books of Isaiah and Revelation both compare the punishment of the wicked to a great vintage, in which the red grapes trod in the winepress symbolize those who rejected God’s call to salvation.

“‘Thrust in your sharp sickle and gather the clusters of the vine of the earth, for her grapes are fully ripe.’ So the angel thrust his sickle into the earth and gathered the vine of the earth, and threw it into the great winepress of the wrath of God. And the winepress was trampled outside the city, and blood came out of the winepress, up to the horses’ bridles, for one thousand six hundred furlongs. (Revelation 14:18-20)”⁷⁷

This affirms Christ as the divine warrior coming to achieve *justice* and *vengeance*. But that blood symbol brought *redemption* to His people.⁷⁸ Christ’s blood is life to His followers. Christ’s stained garment contained the blood of death from the wicked.

“Joseph was a type of Christ. His coat was dipped in blood, he became a slave, and then became the saviour for his family (Genesis 37:31). Jesus came to our world in the form of a slave. He *became us* (Hebrews 7:26). He *dipped* His *vesture* in the blood of mankind by partaking of the same nature (Hebrews 2:16), and then shed His blood on the cross, dipping His *vesture* in His blood, cleansing and covering the blood of sinners, thus becoming our Saviour.”⁷⁹

Verse 13 – “and his name is called The Word of God.”

Ever since the start of this book the Testimony of Jesus has been the Word of God. He has already been depicted as Faithful and True to *that* witness. Thus, this declaration that it is another *name* for the Messiah is beautiful and draws upon John 1:1, 14: “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.... And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth.”

Contextually, the Word of God is Revelation. Here, the metaphor expands to include the sum of Holy Scripture.

“He is the complete and perfect and final revelation of God to humankind in his person and work and in his teachings (see Heb 1:1-4). And now, as the exalted Son of Man, ‘the Word of God’ will speak and execute the judgment of God.”⁸⁰

“‘For there are three that bear record in heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost: and these three are in one.’ 1 John 5:7. He is called the ‘Word of God’ because He accepted His Father’s law, worked out its principles in His life, and showed its benevolent power in the heart.

“Christ is the personal wisdom and power in union with God. He is the Minister in the creation and government of the universe. He is the first cause of all the world’s life, both physical and spiritual. In order to gain man’s salvation, He put on human nature, and became his Saviour. His Father’s character shone conspicuously from His words and deeds. Everything God has said, threatened, or promised finds its fulfillment in Christ.”⁸¹

The Word of God, actively a part of God’s people led to persecution and martyrdom (1:9, 6:9, 20:4). This word is never simply a lifeless sound but an active agent (Genesis 1:3, 6, 9; Hebrews 4:12).⁸²

⁷⁷ Proulx and LaPlante, *Op. cit.*, pp. 12-13 (emphasis added).

⁷⁸ Beale, *Op. cit.*, p. 957.

⁷⁹ Brooks, *Op. cit.*, pp. 5-6.

⁸⁰ Brighton, *Op. cit.*, p. 513.

⁸¹ Brooks, *Op. cit.*, p. 6.

⁸² Thomas, *Op. cit.*, p. 387.

In the setting of the Messiah coming to bring vengeance and redemption, a judicial role is exhibited. Christ will judge by means of the Word from God.

“What speech is to thought, so is Christ to the invisible Father. He is the manifestation of the Father, and is called the Word of God. God sent His Son into the world, His divinity clothed with humanity, that man might bear the image of the invisible God. He made known in His words, His character, His power and majesty, the nature and attributes of God. Divinity flashed through humanity in softening, subduing light. He was the embodiment of the law of God, which is the transcript of His character (MS 77, 1899).”⁸³

VERSE 14: “And the armies *which were* in heaven followed him upon white horses, clothed in fine linen, white and clean.”

These armies at first appear to be the heavenly host that follows or attends Christ. Armies or soldiers of heaven are noted to be angels (Psalm 103:21, 148:2; Luke 2:13; Acts 7:42). Elsewhere in the New Testament the coming of Christ is associated with angels (Matthew 13:41, 16:27, 24:30-31; Mark 8:38; Luke 9:26; I Thessalonians 3:13; II Thessalonians 1:7; Jude 14-15).

Yet scholars have questioned their attire as that of the redeemed saints: The “marriage of the Lamb is come, and his wife hath made herself ready. And to her was granted that she should be arrayed in fine linen, clean and white: for the fine linen is the righteousness of saints” (Revelation 19:7-8).

But why is the word “armies” used? Why would the saints be part of a heavenly “army?” Jesus is coming to resurrect those who have died and receive unto Himself the living saints at the second coming. Why would He have a host of saints with Him? At His resurrection some raised saints were to witness for Him (Matthew 27:52). But these could not be considered armies. *Do angels wear pure white linen?* “And the seven angels came out of the temple, having the seven plagues, clothed in pure and white linen, and having their breasts girded with golden girdles” (Revelation 15:6).

“Soon there appears in the east a small black cloud, about half the size of a man’s hand. It is the cloud which surrounds the Saviour and which seems in the distance to be shrouded in darkness. The people of God know this to be the sign of the Son of man. In solemn silence they gaze upon it as it draws nearer the earth, becoming lighter and more glorious, until it is a great white cloud, its base a glory like consuming fire, and above it the rainbow of the covenant. Jesus rides forth as a mighty conqueror. Not now a ‘Man of Sorrows,’ to drink the bitter cup of shame and woe, He comes, victor in heaven and earth, to judge the living and the dead. ‘Faithful and True,’ ‘in righteousness He doth judge and make war.’ And ‘the armies which were in heaven’ (Revelation 19:11, 14) follow Him. With anthems of celestial melody the holy angels, a vast, unnumbered throng, attend Him on His way. The firmament seems filled with radiant forms—‘ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousands of thousands.’ No human pen can portray the scene; no mortal mind is adequate to conceive its splendor. ‘His glory covered the heavens, and the earth was full of His praise. And His brightness was as the light.’ Habakkuk 3:3,4.”⁸⁴

⁸³ White, Ellen G.; *The Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary*, vol. 5, p. 1131.

⁸⁴ White, Ellen G.; *The Great Controversy*, pp. 640-641.

VERSE 15: “And out of his mouth goeth a sharp sword, that with it he should smite the nations: and he shall rule them with a rod of iron: and he treadeth the winepress of the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God.”

Verse 15 – “And out of his mouth goeth a sharp sword, that with it he should smite the nations:”

The symbols of the Messiah’s power are the sword and rod of iron. Allusion to Isaiah 49:2 and 11:4 are depicted:

“The picture of the ‘sharp, two-edged sword proceeding from his mouth’ (see also on 1:15;2:12, 16) is based on Isa. 49:2, where the figurative language refers to ‘servant Israel’s’ (49:3) ability to accomplish his mission of restoring the nation of Israel and saving the nations (49:6) by means of his word (*Targ.* Isa. 49:2 reads: ‘he placed his words in my mouth like a sharp sword’)....

“The depiction is completed by an echo from Isa. 11:4: ‘in order that he should strike the nations.’ The Hebrew text’s ‘the *rod* of his mouth’ is interpreted by the LXX as ‘the *word* of his mouth,’ which supports the idea that ‘the word of God’ (Rev. 19:13) is a name expressing the means by which Christ executes judgment. The LXX rendering was intended to elucidate the following phrase in the Hebrew text: ‘with the breath of his lips he will slay the wicked’ (cf. 2 Thess. 2:8)....

“The reference to Isaiah 11 highlights again the theme of the exoneration of believers by the condemnation of their oppressors. Isa. 11:4a reads ‘*he* will judge in righteousness *for* the poor and for the afflicted of the earth.’ ‘Judge in righteousness’ is also echoed in Rev. 19:11b.”⁸⁵

Under the seventh Vial the false trinity, which makes up Babylon, comes to its end. That is at the time of the Messiah’s second coming. The death of the wicked apostate world collectively between Isaiah, Revelation and the key thought in II Thessalonians 2:8 would be from:

- A sharp sword
- Breath of His mouth
- Brightness of His coming
- Word of God
- Rod of His mouth

Tying this to the imagery of the people of the earth (6:15) who cry to be hid from the “face of him that sitteth on the throne,” it appears that the glory of Jesus, the purity of His presence, the authority of words all bring final defeat to the enemies of righteousness.

“The ‘sword of the Lord,’ which is mentioned so frequently in the OT (Deut 32:41; Isa 34:5-6; Jer 12:12; 47:6; Ezek 21:3-5; 30:24; 32:10; Zech 13:7; Ps 17:13; 1 Chr 21:12), becomes a metaphor for eschatological judgment (Isa 27:1; 66:16; 1 QM 6:3; 12:11-12; 15:3; 19:11).”⁸⁶

Yet, the sword is not in His hand. It is in His mouth. He has been called the Word of God. Hebrews 4:12 says the Word of God is sharper than a two-edged sword, convicting the heart and judging the thoughts. Here, it becomes a tool for opposition to the Word. “And he shall smite the earth with the rod of his mouth, and with the breath of his

⁸⁵ Beale, *Op. cit.*, p. 961.

⁸⁶ Aune, *Op. cit.*, p. 1061.

lips he shall slay the wicked” (Isaiah 11:4). “The word that Christ spoke will judge me at the last day” (John 12:48). “I have hewed them by the prophets; I have slain them by the words of My mouth” (Hosea 6:5).

Verse 15 – “and he shall rule them with a rod of iron:”

The Greek word *autos* (he or himself) highlights Christ’s personal responsibility for the judicial acts when He comes as He is about to be declared “Almighty God.”

There is conflict among scholars as to the meaning of “he shall rule.” Some interpret it as “rule,” concluding that this is when He will set up His kingdom and govern with a rod of iron. Others add interpretative *shepherding* because of the rod with its symbolic protection because of the iron. But the setting is destruction associated with His coming. Thomas defines the phrase: “will destroy them with the rod of iron.”⁸⁷ This preserves the textual continuity. The Messiah’s kingly authority, His scepter, will bring justice. As iron, it is unyielding in “His mission of judgment.”⁸⁸

Intriguing is the notation that the “man child,” Jesus, was prophetically to “rule all nations with a rod of iron” (12:5).

Verse 15 – “and he treadeth the winepress of the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God.”

God’s wrath was described in 14:19-20 as where the “vine of the earth” was cast into the “great winepress of the wrath of God.” “And the winepress was trodden without the city, and blood came out of the winepress.” In 16:19 God didn’t forget Babylon and gave her “the cup of the wine of the fierceness of his wrath.” These symbolize final justice, total destruction.

“In Isa. 63 God ‘trode the winepress’ so that ‘blood spattered *his* garments’ (63:2-3) and ‘poured their blood on the ground’ (63:6). The shedding of their blood will be just payment for their shedding the blood of the saints (6:10; 16:6; 17:6; 18:24:19:2).”⁸⁹

“Any view of God that eliminates judgment and his hatred of sin in the interest of an emasculated doctrine of sentimental affection finds no support in the strong and virile realism of the apocalypse.”⁹⁰

The harlot had a cup of abominations and filthiness of her illicit relationships and was drunk with the blood of saints (17:4, 6). In a contrasting metaphor, Christ’s garments were stained with blood from the winepress of justice, forcing Babylon in the end to drink of His wrath. “The building up of sin throughout history reaches its peak in the last generation of history, and makes the wicked ripe for retributive harvest [cf. Gen 15:16; I Thessalonians 2:16].”⁹¹

The dragon made war on the woman and her seed (12:17). Christ now comes to make war on the dragon and his agents. The foe faces the army of heaven with the woman’s manchild, leading the battle (12:4-5). This continues the amazing contrast between Christ and Satan.

⁸⁷ Thomas, *Op. cit.*, p. 389.

⁸⁸ Mounce, *Op. cit.*, p. 355.

⁸⁹ Osborne, *Op. cit.*, p. 686.

⁹⁰ Mounce, *Op. cit.*, p. 356.

⁹¹ Beale, *Op. cit.*, p. 963.

VERSE 16: “And he hath on *his* vesture and on his thigh a name written, KING OF KINGS, AND LORD OF LORDS.”

Verse 16 – “And he hath on *his* vesture and on his thigh”

This appears to be two locations. Most expositors believe, however, that it is referring to the part of His tunic or robe that covers His thigh – more specifically, the place where a sword would normally rest (Exodus 32:27; Judges 3:16, 21; Psalm 45:3). Since that is in His mouth, the thigh is fully exposed to see that name.⁹²

The garment that was stained with blood (19:13) – His legal authority – now bears His official title. The thigh has another legal connotation. It was a symbolic place under which a hand was placed when swearing an oath (Genesis 24:2, 9; 47:29). All legal issues have been met for Jesus to receive His kingdom, be given the kingly title and wear crowns. Thus, His coronation and kingdom reception occurs *before* this coming.

Verse 16 – “a name written, KING OF KINGS, AND LORD OF LORDS.”

This is the fourth name mentioned in this discourse. There is a distinctive flow of theistic names. These develop a functional progression of Christ’s redemptive mission.

Faithful and True	Jesus was loyal and devoted to His rescue of man. He paid the ransom price. The stained garments were His covenant signature. Now He comes to execute justice and win the last battle.
Unknown Name	Written likely on His crowns. Is it another number of a “man?” We aren’t told. But it is a very personal name referred to <i>between</i> the names of service to man and service to God.
Word of God	Jesus has been the embodiment of God’s thoughts and wishes. He is the Word of God. He is the ambassador designee to this little world.
King of Kings, Lord of Lords	Above all, sovereign ruler

This new title portrays an ultimate ruler over all kings and dominions. Nebuchadnezzar extolled and praised God after he was healed of his seven years of mental illness and declared Him *King of heaven* (Daniel 4:37). He who was called the “Lamb” a short while ago is now proleptically called the “Lord of lords, and King of kings.”

“The doubling of the name ‘King of kings’ was a practice of the Persians and Parthians to emphasize the supremacy of their royalties (Moffatt). John courageously adopts this device in spite of comparable claims of the Roman emperor responsible for his exile. The Messiah alone has a rightful claim to the title ‘King of kings, and Lord of lords [cf. Deuteronomy 10:17; Psalm 136:1-3; I Timothy 6:14-15].”⁹³

Jesus is designated as a triumphant sovereign in His eschatological approach to this earth to receive the guests – His people – for the “marriage supper of the Lamb.” In Daniel 7:13 is depicted the “Son of Man” coming to the “Ancient of days,” where He was given dominion, glory and a kingdom – that all people, nations, and languages should

⁹² Osborne, *Op. cit.*, p. 686.

⁹³ Thomas, *Op. cit.*, p. 391.

serve Him. His dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and his kingdom that which shall not be destroyed (vs 14). This triumphant ride in Revelation 19 is the immediate follow-up to Daniel's prophecy.

"The prophecies of judgment delivered by Amos and Hosea were accompanied by predictions of future glory. To the ten tribes, long rebellious and impenitent, was given no promise of complete restoration to their former power in Palestine. Until the end of time, they were to be 'wanderers among the nations.' But through Hosea was given a prophecy that set before them the privilege of having a part in the final restoration that is to be made to the people of God at the close of earth's history, when Christ shall appear as King of kings and Lord of lords. 'Many days,' the prophet declared, the ten tribes were to abide 'without a king, and without a prince, and without a sacrifice, and without an image, and without an ephod, and without teraphim.' 'Afterward,' the prophet continued, 'shall the children of Israel return, and seek the Lord their God, and David their king; and shall fear the Lord and His goodness in the latter days.' Hosea 3:4, 5."⁹⁴

Paul captured the wonder of this moment, using the beauty of Jesus name: "And being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name: That at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of *things* in heaven, and *things* in earth, and *things* under the earth; And *that* every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ *is* Lord, to the glory of God the Father" (Philippians 2:8-11).

This is in dramatic contrast to the harlot with her name on her forehead; this name was her character, her very nature. This verse depicts that Jesus will ratified the covenant promise of blood, that He comes as a redeemer, crowned with an eternal promise that forever he has victory over sin because on the *covenant thigh* is the name "King of kings, and Lord and lords."

"And who are the kings that He is King and the lords that He is Lord over: 'And they sing the song of Moses the servant of God, and the song of the Lamb, saying, Great and marvellous are Thy works, Lord God Almighty; just and true are Thy ways, *Thou King of saints.*' Revelation 15:3. 'These shall make war with the Lamb, and the Lamb shall overcome them: for He is Lord of lords, and King of kings: and *they that are with Him* are called, and chosen, and faithful.' Revelation 17:14.

"These are His followers who will reign with Him: 'And hath made us kings and priests unto God and His Father...' Revelation 1:6. 'And hast made us [twenty-four elders] unto our God kings and priests: and we shall reign on the earth.' Revelation 5:10."⁹⁵

⁹⁴ White, Ellen G.; *Prophets and Kings*, p. 298.

⁹⁵ Brooks, *Op. cit.*, p. 7.

VERSE 17-18: “And I saw an angel standing in the sun; and he cried with a loud voice, saying to all the fowls that fly in the midst of heaven, Come and gather yourselves together unto the supper of the great God; That ye may eat the flesh of kings, and the flesh of captains, and the flesh of mighty men, and the flesh of horses, and of them that sit on them, and the flesh of all *men, both* free and bond, both small and great.”

Verse 17-18 – “And I saw an angel standing in the sun; and he cried with a loud voice,”

“And I saw” introduces a new vision.

“In 1:16 Christ’s ‘face was like the sun,’ applying the description of Yahweh (Ps. 84:11; Isa. 60:19) to him. Building on this, 10:1 has a mighty angel whose ‘face is like the sun,’ and in 12:1 the woman is ‘clothed with the sun.’”⁹⁶

This “vision insert” describes the outcome of Jesus’ coming, leading the armies of heaven. This is He, standing in the sun, just before He takes the redeemed back to heaven, bringing to a final end the forces of evil. It is done in two stages: (1) Dealing with all the slain wicked (symbolic) and (2) binding Satan to this earth for a millennium (symbolic and literal).

“The divine picture of Christ must be kept before the people. He is that Angel standing in the sun of heaven. He reflects no shadows. Clothed in the attributes of deity, shrouded in the glories of deity, and in the likeness of the infinite God, He is to be lifted up before men.”⁹⁷

Verse 17-18 – “saying to all the fowls that fly in the midst of heaven.”

This phrase “is a free interpretation of Ezekiel’s oracle against Gog, which reads in part, ‘Call out to every kind of bird and all the wild animals: “Assemble ... to the sacrifice I am preparing for you.... You will eat the flesh of mighty men and drink the blood of the princes of the earth’ (Ezek 39:17-20).”⁹⁸

“These birds are ‘flying in midair’ like the eagle in 8:13 and the angel in 14:6. All three are part of a message from God regarding the terrible judgment to come. Then the angel invites the birds to attend ... (*to deipnon to mega tou theou*), the great banquet of God, an obvious parody of the invitation to the saints to attend ‘the wedding supper of the Lamb’ in 19:9 (see Iohse, Schussler Fiorenza, Prigent, Krodel).”⁹⁹ Another amazing contrast.

Though the Greek word for fowls (*orneois*) is simply “birds,” birds of prey are implied. Jesus, in talking of this final battle, referred to *eagles* or *vultures* (Matthew 24:28, Luke 17:37).¹⁰⁰ The call to the birds of prey is rhetorical. It is an intense warning to all sinners, “You will lose the battle.” The end will be utter destruction. “Your final worth will be no higher than carrion scattered on the earth.”

⁹⁶ Osborne, *Op. cit.*, p. 687.

⁹⁷ White, Ellen G.; *Selected Messages*, vol. 3, p. 169.

⁹⁸ Mounce, *Op. cit.*, p. 357.

⁹⁹ Osborne, *Op. cit.*, p. 687.

¹⁰⁰ Thomas, *Op. cit.*, p. 393.

Verse 17-18 – “Come and gather yourselves together unto the supper of the great God;

This is a gruesome picture, “supper of the great God,” when it will be to dine on the carrion of the wicked. It is one of the greatest parodies of the Bible, comparing the “supper of the Lord” with the “supper of the great God.” Each represent *judgment rewards*.

The saints will partake of the great banquet in heaven, and sinners will be the banquet on earth.¹⁰¹

Verse 17-18 – “That ye may eat the flesh of kings, and the flesh of captains, and the flesh of mighty men, and the flesh of horses, and of them that sit on them, and the flesh of all men, both free and bond, both small and great.”

This summons to Armageddon follows the ancient Oriental style of entering into combat, ‘Come here, ... and I’ll give your flesh to the birds of the air and the beasts of the field!’ (1 Sam. 17:44). Moses even warned a faithless Israel, ‘Your carcasses will be food for all the birds of the air and the beasts of the earth, and there will be no one to frighten them away’ (Deut. 28:26). Such a warning applies now to all who take sides with the antichristian powers.¹⁰²

In 16:14 the kings of the whole earth were summoned together for the battle of the great day of God Almighty. In 6:15 the kings of the earth and the rest of the wicked world cry out to be hid from the ‘face of him that sitteth on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb.’ The imagery now depicts the outcome of that divine wrath. The culmination of the kings and the beast making war with the lamb: “and the Lamb overcame them” (17:12, 14).

In the two feasts, the final divisions of mankind are depicted at the time of reaping – the harvest for the “supper of the Lamb, the vintage for the ‘great supper of God’ (Revelation 14:15-20) – the ‘Supper of the Birds’”¹⁰³

“The wicked were dead, and their bodies were lying upon the face of the earth. The inhabitants of earth had suffered the wrath of God in the seven last plagues. They had gnawed their tongues for pain and had cursed God. The false shepherds were signal objects of Jehovah’s wrath. Their eyes had consumed away in their holes, and their tongues in their mouths, while they stood upon their feet. After the saints were delivered by the voice of God, the rage of the wicked multitude was turned upon each other. The earth seemed to be deluged with blood, and dead bodies were from one end of the earth to the other.”¹⁰⁴

¹⁰¹ Osborne, *Op. cit.*, p. 687.

¹⁰² LaRondelle, *Op. cit.*, pp. 443-444.

¹⁰³ Berry, Marian; *Revelation Workbook*, (CHJ Publishing, Middleton, ID), p. 109.

¹⁰⁴ White, Ellen G.; *Spiritual Gifts*, vol. 1, p. 211.

VERSE 19: “And I saw the beast, and the kings of the earth, and their armies, gathered together to make war against him that sat on the horse, and against his army.”

Verse 19 – “And I saw the beast, and the kings of the earth, and their armies,”

This is another distinct insert of unfolding visions regarding Babylon. John sees (personal observation) three things:

- Beast – represents the sea beast (Revelation 13:1) and the harlot’s beast (17:3)
- Kings of earth – these are the ten kings that gave power to the beast (17:12) and lament its fall (18:9)
- Armies – those who had been summoned to battle on the great day of God Almighty (16:14)

Eschatological scenes where hostile forces come against God’s people are noted also in the Old Testament (Isaiah 31:4; 42:13; 59:17-20; 66:18; Ezekiel 38:7-8; Daniel 12:1-3; Joel 1:15; 3:9-16; Micah 4:11-12; Zechariah 12:3, 14:2). Will the battle actually occur?

Verse 19 – “gathered together to make war against him that sat on the horse, and against his army.”

Referring to the kings and beast: “These shall make war with the Lamb, and the Lamb shall overcome them: for he is Lord of lords, and King of kings” (17:14).

This is a different battle than that described in 20:7-8. There, it is post-millennial.

“Why do the heathen rage and the people imagine a vain thing?” “The kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers take counsel together against the Lord, and against his Anointed.” Psalm 2:2-3.

The battle is called Armageddon in 16:16. Yet, there is never a word spoken to describe the battle. This is eschatologic, a single momentous event, with the Antichrist and his forces ushered to their end. The reaction of the wicked was described under the sixth Seal, crying for the rocks and mountains to hide them from the face of the Lamb (6:15-16). Early in this book, it was noted that when Jesus does come, “every eye will see Him” (1:7). That’s all it will take, and the agents of evil will be defeated.

In other symbolism we find that the Messiah brings defeat with the “rod of his mouth” (Isaiah 11:4). All these tie to the present imagery, revealing that leading to the final acts in the great controversy are the words of Christ, which is the Word of God.

“We are nearing the battle of the great day of God Almighty. That which has been held in control is to be let loose. The angel of mercy is folding her wings, preparing to step down from the throne, and leave the world to the control of Satan. The principalities and powers of earth are in bitter revolt against the God of heaven. They are filled with hatred against those who serve him, and soon, very soon, will be fought the last great battle between good and evil. The earth is to be the battlefield—the scene of the final contest and the final victory. Here, where for so long Satan has led men against God, rebellion is to be forever suppressed.”¹⁰⁵

“For six thousand years the great controversy has been in progress; the Son of God and His heavenly messengers have been in conflict with the power of the evil one, to

¹⁰⁵ White, Ellen G.; *The Review and Herald*, May 13, 1902.

warn, enlighten, and save the children of men. Now all have made their decisions; the wicked have fully united with Satan in his warfare against God. The time has come for God to vindicate the authority of His downtrodden law. Now the controversy is not alone with Satan, but with men. 'The Lord hath a controversy with the nations;' 'He will give them that are wicked to the sword.'¹⁰⁶

VERSE 20: "And the beast was taken, and with him the false prophet that wrought miracles before him, with which he deceived them that had received the mark of the beast, and them that worshipped his image. These both were cast alive into a lake of fire burning with brimstone."

Verse 20 – "And the beast was taken, and with him the false prophet"

These represent two of the three elements of Babylon who spued unclean spirits over the earth (16:13). Without a battle, the sword of truth in Christ's mouth (19:15) brings an instant end to the beast (papacy) and false prophet (apostate Protestantism). Partial destruction with "fire" occurred under the first literal four Trumpets (8:7-12) against the followers of apostate Christianity. In highly symbolic language the papal system came to an end when the kings of the earth hated her, made her desolate, naked, ate her flesh and burned her with fire (17:16). The seat or throne of the beast is plagued with darkness (16:10). Babylon's support comes to an end in 16:12 and ceases to be in 16:19.

Thus, there has been imagery of its partial demise or end several times. The symbolism here depicts the final moment of their (the two apostate systems of Christianity) existence. The false prophet comes to an end at the *same time* of the beast. Most of the attention regarding opposition to God's work and people has been on the beast, harlot or Babylon, in general. Now God returns to the two-horned earth beast that gave credibility to the sea beast of Revelation 13:1-16.

Verse 20 – "that wrought miracles before him, with which he deceived them that had received the mark of the beast, and them that worshipped his image."

"The false prophet is again described in terms of his two characteristic functions: he deceives by performing miraculous signs (cf. 13:13-15), and he brands with the mark of the beast all but those who are willing to die for their faith [in not worshiping that beast] (cf. 13:16-17)."¹⁰⁷

This litany of issues provides the legal charges against them who vindicate God's judgment against the false prophet. "The beast made divine claims; the false prophet supported those claims by influencing others to pay heed lest they be persecuted."¹⁰⁸ This verse leaves no room to doubt who the divine wrath is against.

Verse 20 – "These both were cast alive into a lake of fire burning with brimstone."

The two evil forces were seized and thrown alive into "the lake of fire that burns with brimstone" (*ten limnen tou pyros tes kaiomenes en theio*). This is the first time "lake of

¹⁰⁶ White, Ellen G.; *The Great Controversy*, p. 656.

¹⁰⁷ Mounce, *Op. cit.*, pp. 358-359.

¹⁰⁸ Beale, *Op. cit.*, p. 969.

fire” (*tou pyros*) is introduced in the entire Bible. Brimstone or sulfur (*theio*) is a yellow combustible substance in air.

There is no good parallel in the Old Testament.¹⁰⁹ However, it will be repeated again (with variations) in 20:10, 14-15 (3 times) and 21:8. Divine judgment is often associated with fire, per se, especially related to its *eternal outcome* (Isaiah 66:24; Matthew 5:22; 13:42, 50; 18:9; 25:41; Mark 9:43, 48). In this association with brimstone or sulfur, it represents a final, never-to-live-again, end.

“The depiction of a ‘lake of fire’ ... has its background in apocalyptic ideas. First, Dan. 7:9-11 speaks of ‘a river of fire’ flowing from God’s throne, and the ‘beast’ (the ‘little horn’ of Dan. 7:8) is killed and his body ‘thrown into the blazing fire’ (Dan. 7:11).”¹¹⁰

The picture is terrifying in the use of “cast alive.” It is not clear as to why that is inserted. It does reveal that those two *apostate powers* continue to exist in some way to this point, and their end is total and without mercy (cf. Numbers 16:30, Psalm 55:15, Ezekiel 38:22).

The “lake of fire” contrasts with the “sea of glass” of 15:2. One representing eternal death, the other eternal life and rewards.

“The question to be considered concerning the lake of fire is: Does the lake of fire have one or two episodes? I think there are two. The beast and the false prophet are destroyed at the second coming, whereas the dragon or Satan is destroyed in a lake of fire after the thousand years.

“Dan. 7:11 – ‘I beheld even till the beast was slain, and his body destroyed and given to the burning flame.’

“Ps. 50:3 – ‘Our God shall come and shall not keep silence: a fire shall devour before Him and it shall be very tempestuous round about Him.’

“2 Peter 3:10 – ‘But the day of the Lord shall come as a thief in the night; in the which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, and the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up.’

“At the end of the thousand years (Rev. 20:7) ‘Satan shall be loosed out of his prison’ (vs. 10). ‘And the devil that deceived them was cast into the lake of fire and brimstone, where the beast and the false prophet are, and shall be tormented day and night forever and ever.’

“Ch. 20, vs. 14 – ‘And death and hell were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death.’”¹¹¹

VERSE 21: “And the remnant were slain with the sword of him that sat upon the horse, which sword proceeded out of his mouth: and all the fowls were filled with their flesh.”

Verse 21 – “And the remnant were slain with the sword of him that sat upon the horse, which sword proceeded out of his mouth:”

The previous verse described the end (lake of fire) of the two false systems of apostasy – the beast and false prophet. Here, those remaining – the remnant of apostasy – are killed by the sword of truth, the word of His testimony. This description is a scene of devastation and utter destruction without any possibility of redemption. This remnant refers to the armies of apostasy.

¹⁰⁹ Aune, *Op. cit.*, p. 1065.

¹¹⁰ Osborne, *Op. cit.*, p. 690.

¹¹¹ Smart, Lois, M.D.; *Study of Revelation 18–19*, p. 11.

Are the wicked slain literally by the sword? It is symbolic. Paul, perhaps forty years previously, told of the destruction of the man of sin. "And then shall that wicked be revealed, who the Lord shall consume with the spirit of his mouth, and shall destroy with the brightness of his coming" (II Thessalonians 2:8). Yet, in the previous verse that system of worship is destroyed in the "lake of fire and brimstone." The sword represents truth and judgment, righteousness and justice. Also it can be seen, as noted, above the very words of Christ. The thymic end comes because right triumphs over wrong. All that is right and good, in the end, reigns supreme.

Verse 21 – "and all the fowls were filled with their flesh."

"The feast promised to the scavenger birds in 19:17-18 is now here. 'All the birds' who come ... (*echortasthesan*, gorged themselves) on the corpses. This is a graphic verb connoting a gluttonous feast on the 'flesh' of the dead kings and their soldiers. There is another aspect of *lex talionis* here. In 11:7-10 the beast slays the two prophets and then refuses them burial (11:9). The same indignity is now shown the dead army. Aune (1998b: 1067-68) shows how terrible this was, calling it an ancient curse formula that has now been actualized. In several OT texts (Deut. 28:26; 1 Sam. 17:44, 46; 1 Kings 14:11; 16:4; 21:24), being eaten by dogs or birds is the ultimate degradation, and in Jer. 7:33, 16:4, 19:7 and 34:20, this became a prophetic curse. In 1 QM 11.1 those destroyed in the final eschatological battle will remain unburied. This was the ultimate humiliation in the ancient world. Thus, God is returning upon the heads of the unbelievers what they have done to the saints."¹¹²

"And, thou son of man, thus saith the Lord GOD; Speak unto every feathered fowl, and to every beast of the field, Assemble yourselves, and come; gather yourselves on every side to my sacrifice that I do sacrifice for you, *even* a great sacrifice upon the mountains of Israel, that ye may eat flesh, and drink blood." "People that *is* with thee: I will give thee unto the ravenous birds of every sort, and *to* the beasts of the field to be devoured" (Ezekiel 39:17, 4b).

This gruesome scene is symbolic of total annihilation. Not only does death come but nothing of the individual remains. The final destruction comes in stages. This all comes to a final end when Babylon is split into three parts under the seventh Plague (16:19).

"The inhabitants of earth had suffered the wrath of God in the seven last plagues. They had gnawed their tongues for pain and had cursed God. The false *shepherds* were signal objects of Jehovah's wrath. Their eyes had consumed away in their holes, and their tongues in their mouths, while they stood upon their feet. After the saints were delivered by the voice of God, the rage of the wicked multitude was turned upon each other. The earth seemed to be deluged with blood, and dead bodies were from one end of the earth to the other."¹¹³

"The swords which were to slay God's people are now employed to destroy their enemies. Everywhere there is strife and bloodshed..."

"Now the angel of death goes forth, represented in Ezekiel's vision by the men with the slaughtering weapons, ...

"In the mad strife of their own fierce passions, and by the awful outpouring of God's unmingled wrath, fall the wicked inhabitants of the earth – priests, rulers, and people, rich and poor, high and low. 'And the slain of the Lord shall be at that day from one end of the earth even unto the other end of the earth....

¹¹² Osborne, *Op. cit.*, p. 691.

¹¹³ White, Ellen G.; *Spiritual Gifts*, vol. 1, p. 211 (emphasis added).

“At the coming of Christ the wicked are blotted from the face of the whole earth – consumed with the spirit of His mouth and destroyed by the brightness of His glory. Christ takes His people to the City of God, and the earth is emptied of its inhabitants.”¹¹⁴

¹¹⁴ White, Ellen G.; *The Great Controversy*, pp. 654, 656-657.

REVELATION

CHAPTER 20

INTRODUCTION

With this chapter begins the most debated passages in Revelation. Many scholars find them a source of difficulty. One example rests with how the varied eschatological themes relate to the millennium. Though God's kingdom will ultimately be established here on earth, where the thousand years "fit in" is subject to wide interpretation. Thus, pre-millennialism, post-millennialism and a millennialism dogma infiltrate Biblical literature. This commentary will firmly stand on pre-millennialism for reasons that will unfold.

Detailed review of the final end of the beast and the false prophet has been given. The evil that Satan, the dragon, has perpetrated has been described. Now commentary on his punishment and terminus is portrayed. That will bring to an end the story of the "false trinity." With that, the chronicle of the controversy between good and evil will end.

Theological debate over the millennial issues could easily bury the deeper purpose of this chapter. Saints and Savior are working in concert in a throne and judgment setting. Though kingdom imagery is presented, there appears to be an administrative task that binds to a whole millennium. This precedes the final lake of fire, the New Jerusalem and the new earth messages. An unfinished work seems to be under active study.

If Satan is bound to an earth of destruction and desolation, the throne imagery must be celestial. Jesus had intimated that the place He would prepare to receive the saints was associated with His "Father's house" (John 14:2). Then why are there nations on earth and saints to be surrounded? These are vital issues that must be addressed by this and subsequent chapters. Most important is the functional question: What is each player doing, and why? That will help solve the "when" matter.

VERSE 1: "And I saw an angel come down from heaven, having the key of the bottomless pit and a great chain in his hand."

Verse 1 – "And I saw an angel"

As John has done repeatedly throughout this book, he intentionally notes that he was an eyewitness to a described event. He reports seeing an angel on a mission. There is no article or numerical designation before the word "angel." It is unidentified in relation to all others seen (compared to other angels in 8:2, 17:1, 18:21, 19:17 or 21:9).¹

Some translations use the word "then" in place of "and" to begin this verse. To some, either word suggests a sequence from chapter 19. There is an order that will unfold, but it is not addressed by those words. Usually John uses them to simply reveal the *visionary* sequence he receives.²

¹ Brighton, Louis A; *Revelation, Concordance Commentary* (Concordance Publishing House, Saint Louis), 1999, p. 542.

² Beale, G. K.; *The New International Greek Testament Commentary; The Book of Revelation* (William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, Grand Rapids, Michigan, 1999), p. 975.

Verse 1 – “come down from heaven,”

Satan furnished the power and motivation for the apostate work of the beast and false prophet. Now heaven’s attention is drawn to curtailing this arch-deceiver. It is not a recapitulation of an earlier narrative where Satan is cast out of heaven and continues to deceive and persecute (12:9, 13:14, 18:23).³ This account removes him from action – a first since Eve’s deception in the Garden.

This angel descends from heaven (*oranou*) or “out of heaven.” In 8:5 Jesus is the “angel” who throws down the coals. He is the “angel” of 10:1, with one foot on the land and one on the sea. And He is the “angel” of 18:1-4, who lightens the earth with His glory. John sees the angel in the process of “coming down.” Why? Satan’s location is now limited to the earth (12:9, 12). Exegetic evidence suggests that this angel is Jesus.⁴

Verse 1 – “having the key of the bottomless pit and a great chain in his hand.”

In 9:1, at the onset of the fifth Trumpet, Satan – the star that *had* fallen from heaven (12:9) – was given the “key to the bottomless pit.” That granted “permission” to release into the world the full deceptive wrath of Satan and his minions. In that imagery there were limitations, however, given to their work. They could not kill. And for those sealed, full protection against harm was demanded.

Now Jesus *comes* with a “key” to the same “bottomless pit” (*abyssou*) – this time to lock it. When Satan had the key, he was given free access to those who had not accepted God. At the second advent (chapter 19) all the wicked are destroyed. He will then have no one to tempt. The angel descending draws linguistically to the coming of Jesus at the second advent. This fulfills a heavenly anthem which sounds with anticipation as the seventh Trumpet sounds: “The second woe is past; *and*, behold, the third woe cometh quickly. And the seventh angel sounded; and there were great voices in heaven, saying, The kingdoms of this world are become *the kingdoms* of our Lord, and of his Christ; and he shall reign for ever and ever. And the four and twenty elders, which sat before God on their seats, fell upon their faces, and worshipped God, Saying, We give thee thanks, O Lord God Almighty, which art, and wast, and *art to come*; because thou hast taken to thee thy great power, and hast reigned” (Revelation 11:14-17).

It was previously announced that at the sounding of that Trumpet, “the mystery of God” would be finished (Revelation 10:7).

The mere destruction of the dragon’s followers locks him into a state new to his evil career. The abyss has been fully open since Trumpet five.

Jesus told John that He had the “keys of hell and of death” (1:18) and the “key of David” in 3:7. The latter is similar to the “keys of the kingdom of heaven” in Matthew 16:19. That door to heaven is already open (Revelation 3:8, 4:1).

The restriction placed on Satan is intensified by the chain Jesus carries in His hand (or more accurately, draped over His hand).⁵ It is a *halysin megalen* or “great” chain, which assures that there will be no possibility of escape. It intimates an absolute stopping of his activity. The chain is stronger than the one it binds.

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

³ Thomas, Robert L.; *Revelation 8-22 – An Exegetical Commentary*, (Moody Press, Chicago), 1992, p. 404.

⁴ Wade, Ted; *Revelation 20* (Prophecy Research Initiative – 2004), p. 1.

⁵ Thomas, *Op cit.*, p. 406.

This is the great chain of circumstances – the final or third “woe.” This imagery echoes the banishment of the scapegoat to a desolate wilderness on the Day of Atonement.

“As the scapegoat was sent away into a land not inhabited, so Satan will be banished to the desolate earth, an uninhabited and dreary wilderness.

“The revelator foretells the banishment of Satan and the condition of chaos and desolation to which the earth is to be reduced, and he declares that this condition will exist for a thousand years. After presenting the scenes of the Lord’s second coming and the destruction of the wicked, the prophecy continues: ‘I saw an angel come down from heaven, having the key of the bottomless pit and a great chain in his hand.’”⁶

Daniel had prophesied that the end of abominations and transgression would be desolation (Daniel 8:13, 12:11). Jesus urged we study the issues related to that (Matthew 24:15).

“The earth looked like a desolate wilderness. Cities and villages, shaken down by the earthquake, lay in heaps. Mountains had been moved out of their places, leaving large caverns. Ragged rocks, thrown out by the sea, or torn out of the earth itself, were scattered all over its surface. Large trees had been uprooted and were strewn over the land. Here is to be the home of Satan with his evil angels for a thousand years. Here he will be confined, to wander up and down over the broken surface of the earth and see the effects of his rebellion against God’s law.”⁷

VERSE 2: “And he laid hold on the dragon, that old serpent, which is the Devil, and Satan, and bound him a thousand years,”

Verse 2 – “And he laid hold on the dragon,”

The angel of verse 1 seizes (*ekratesen*) the dragon. This depicts a mystery, the seizure of a spirit being. He is powerless to prevent this, just as he couldn’t resist being cast out of heaven (12:7-9).

Jesus (this angel) had the authority to seize Satan. This was graphically demonstrated long ago when He cast out a devil (Matthew 12:22). He could bind “the strong man” (vs 29). The seventy disciples noted, “Lord, even the devils are subject unto us through thy name” (Luke 10:17). Then Jesus gave the same power to them (10:19). Paul said that Jesus “spoiled principalities and powers, ... openly, triumphing over them” (Colossians 2:15). “Forasmuch then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself likewise took part of the same; that through death he might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil” (Hebrews 2:14). Obviously, that could only be exercised after He was resurrected. This gave Jesus the “key” or authority to seize and bind.

Verse 2 – “that old serpent, which is the Devil, and Satan,”

The dragon was first introduced in Revelation 12, where he is mentioned eight times in a narrative that continues into Revelation 13. His names noted in 12:9 are similar to here – old serpent, devil and Satan.

⁶ White, Ellen G.; *The Great Controversy*, p. 658.

⁷ White, Ellen G.; *Early Writings*, p. 290.

Verse 2 – “and bound him”

When was or will Satan be bound? Were the illustrations from Christ’s first advent referenced here? John said that when Jesus was lifted up on the Cross, Satan would be judged and cast out (John 12:31-33, 16:11). Looking at the story of Job, Satan appears in heaven accusing God of placing a “hedge” or fence about him (Job 1:10). Figuratively, Satan was restricted or “bound” but had access to the heavenly courts.

Peter says that God cast the angels that sinned into “hell” and “delivered them into chains of darkness, to be reserved unto judgment” (II Peter 2:4). We noted in Revelation 12:7-8 the casting down of Satan to this earth. Then our analysis suggested that there was another binding of Satan’s work noted in 12:10 (cf. Romans 16:20), where his ability to “accuse the brethren” *before God* (which he had done with Job) was cut off. John 12 and 16, noted above, suggest that that occurred at the Cross.

Expositor E. G. White notes this also to be a second binding: But after Calvary, Satan’s “disguise was torn away. His administration was laid open before the unfallen angels and before the heavenly universe.... *Henceforth his work was restricted....* he could no longer await the angels as they came from the heavenly courts, and before them accuse Christ’s brethren ... The last link of sympathy between Satan and the heavenly world was broken....

“[Nevertheless,] The angels did not even then understand all that was involved in the great controversy. The principles at stake were to be more fully revealed. And for the sake of man, Satan’s existence must be continued. Man as well as angels must see the contrast between the Prince of light and the prince of darkness. He must choose whom he will serve.”⁸

This is partially substantiated by verse 1. Jesus must “come down” to this earth to bind Satan. He is confined to this planet.

Was this *earth* Peter’s description of “hell” and “chains of darkness?” That is the allusion. In Revelation 7:1 we noted that there were four angels assigned to hold back or restrain “four winds” of strife. When they are loosened, Satan would have freedom and be unbound for a time against the earth. In fact, he is given a key to unlock the restraint he and his angels have had, noted in the fifth Trumpet (Revelation 9:1-2).

Jesus’ binding now of Satan, therefore, comes after the fifth Trumpet. We will discover that for a thousand years Satan is “bound” while he and his minions await judgment. This is what Peter refers to – and it is at the very end. This also appears to be the context of Jude 6.

- Cast to earth (after the rebellion in heaven)
- Confined to earth (at the Cross)
- Bound to earth (at the millennium)

According to subsequent verses (Revelation 20:7-9), the binding occurs immediately before Christ’s final coming (after the millennium).⁹

Verse 2 – “a thousand years.”

This introduces a millennial time period – the first in the New Testament (Daniel 8:14 – Old Testament). In the wonderful metaphor of *sevens*, we can discover within the

⁸ White, Ellen G.; *The Desire of Ages*, p. 761.

⁹ Beale, *Op. cit.*, p. 985.

Biblical “clocks” weeks, weeks of months, weeks of years and a week of millenniums.¹⁰ This millennial period comes after the resurrection of the martyrs (discussed below). Satan is not restricted in movement but is completely inactive in his evil work during this time, which follows Christ’s second advent. This will be a change from his frenzied activity – post-Cross (Luke 22:3, II Timothy 2:26, I Peter 5:8).¹¹

The thousand (*chilia*) years was adopted as dogma by early church fathers as when there would be a temporary Messianic reign. They tied this to Old Testament prophecies such as Ezekiel 37–48 when Israel would be restored under the reign of a Davidic Messiah. During the Reformation, the confessional documents (Augsburg Confession, art. 17, Second Helvetic Confessions, II) regarding this *chiliastic* “belief” were repudiated as heresy.¹² The reformers correctly identified with the concept that a temporal kingdom on earth has no Biblical support from the New Testament writers.

There is a school of thought within expository literature that the thousand years is simply symbolic for a ‘long period of time, just as *mikron chronon* (20:3) is for a “very short period of time.” However, if that were the case, why wasn’t 144,000 used (7:1) or 200,000,000 (9:16) or “ten thousand times ten thousands, and thousands of thousands” (5:11)?

Thomas raises a great question: “Nonsymbolic usage of numbers is the rule. It requires multiplication of literal 12,000 by a literal twelve to come up with 144,000 in 7:4-8. The churches, seals, trumpets, and bowls are all literally seven in number. The three unclean spirits of 16:13 are actually three in number. The three angels connected with the three last woes (8:13) add up to a total of three. The seven last plagues amount to exactly seven. The equivalency of 1,260 days and three and a half years necessitate a nonsymbolic understanding of both numbers. The twelve apostles and the twelve tribes of Israel are literally twelve (21:12-14). The seven churches are in seven literal cities. Yet confirmation of a single number in Revelation as symbolic is impossible.”¹³

The millennium information was presented to John unrelated to a symbolic scene. The “ideal” messianic kingdom is not portrayed until after this millennium. It is that kingdom that is spiritualized in the Old Testament messages.

Another valuable consideration is to review what John’s perspective was of the millennium. Since there are only two other areas within Scripture to use as a reference for millennial thought [(1) the crucial “seven” periods noted above and (2) the Daniel 8:14, 2300 evening and morning prophecy], we turn to extra Biblical sources for deeper insight.

I Enoch 91-103 talks of the present age lasting seven weeks with the Messianic kingdom coming at the eighth. Ancient Jewish sources suggest only a temporary Messianic era that is detailed in II Enoch, chapters 25–33, written around 50 A.D. There, a day equals one thousand years with the seventh day being a rest period (one thousand years). At the eighth comes a “time when there is to be no computation and no end, neither years, nor weeks, nor days, or hours.”¹⁴

In the Old Testament and inter-testamental writings, the eternal reign of God begins when evil is overthrown by the Messiah. He comes from outside of history and estab-

¹⁰ Fowler, Franklin S., Jr.; *The Great Week of Time and End-Time Secrets of Daniel 9–10:7* workbook, Lesson 2 (Prophecy Research Initiative – 2006).

¹¹ Mounce, Robert H.; *The Book of Revelation* (Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., Grand Rapids, Michigan, 1977), pp. 361-362.

¹² Roloff, Jurgen; *The Revelation of John – A Continental Commentary*, (Fortress Press, Minneapolis, MN), p. 224.

¹³ Thomas, *Op. cit.*, pp. 480-409.

¹⁴ Ford, J. Massingberde; *The Anchor Bible* (Doubleday, New York), 1975, pp. 352-353.

lishes a new order that replaces the old. This “Day of the Lord” begins as a transitional period, ultimately leading to eternity without evil. The millennium represents that transitional time.¹⁵

“At the coming of Christ the wicked are blotted from the face of the whole earth – consumed with the spirit of His mouth and destroyed by the brightness of His glory. Christ takes His people to the City of God, and the earth is emptied of its inhabitants. ‘Behold, the Lord maketh the earth empty, and maketh it waste, and turneth it upside down, and scattereth abroad the inhabitants thereof.’ ‘The land shall be utterly emptied, and utterly spoiled: for the Lord hath spoken this word.’ ‘Because they have transgressed the laws, changed the ordinance, broken the everlasting covenant. Therefore hath the curse devoured the earth, and they that dwell therein are desolate: therefore the inhabitants of the earth are burned.’ Isaiah 24:1, 3, 5, 6.

“The whole earth appears like a desolate wilderness. The ruins of cities and villages destroyed by the earthquake, uprooted trees, ragged rocks thrown out by the sea or torn out of the earth itself, are scattered over its surface, while vast caverns mark the spot where the mountains have been rent from their foundations.

“Now the event takes place foreshadowed in the last solemn service of the Day of Atonement. When the ministration in the holy of holies had been completed, and the sins of Israel had been removed from the sanctuary by virtue of the blood of the sin offering, then the scapegoat was presented alive before the Lord; and in the presence of the congregation the high priest confessed over him ‘all the iniquities of the children of Israel, and all their transgressions in all their sins, putting them upon the head of the goat.’ Leviticus 16:21. In like manner, when the work of atonement in the heavenly sanctuary has been completed, then in the presence of God and heavenly angels and the hosts of the redeemed the sins of God’s people will be placed upon Satan; he will be declared guilty of all the evil which he has caused them to commit. And as the scapegoat was sent away into a land not inhabited, so Satan will be banished to the desolate earth, an uninhabited and dreary wilderness.

“The revelator foretells the banishment of Satan and the condition of chaos and desolation to which the earth is to be reduced, and he declares that this condition will exist for a thousand years. After presenting the scenes of the Lord’s second coming and the destruction of the wicked, the prophecy continues: ‘I saw an angel come down from heaven, having the key of the bottomless pit and a great chain in his hand. And he laid hold on the dragon, that old serpent, which is the devil, and Satan, and bound him a thousand years, and cast him into the bottomless pit, and shut him up, and set a seal upon him, that he should deceive the nations no more, till the thousand years should be fulfilled: and after that he must be loosed a little season.’ Revelation 20:1-3.”¹⁶

¹⁵ Wall, Robert W.; *New International Biblical Commentary* (Hendrickson Publishers, Peabody, Massachusetts, 1991), p. 235.

¹⁶ White, Ellen G.; *The Great Controversy*, pp. 657-658.

VERSE 3: “And cast him into the bottomless pit, and shut him up, and set a seal upon him, that he should deceive the nations no more, till the thousand years should be fulfilled: and after that he must be loosed a little season.”

Verse 3 – “And cast him into the bottomless pit, and shut him up, and set a seal upon him,”

The angel – Jesus – has:

- Laid hold on the dragon
- Bound him with chains
- Cast him into a pit
- Shut him up
- Put a seal upon him

“Isaiah had the following to say about this experience: ‘And it shall come to pass in that day, *that* the LORD shall punish [visit upon] the host of the high ones *that are* on high, and the kings of the earth upon the earth. And they shall be gathered together, as prisoners are gathered in the pit [dungeon], and shall be shut up in the prison, and after many days shall they be visited [found wanting].’ Isaiah 24:21-22. The ‘host of the high ones that are on high’ is Satan and his angels. They had gathered together these ‘kings of the earth, upon the earth,’ for the battle against the King of kings. They fought with all their might, but they lost. Now they are all ‘shut up’ in this ‘prison.’ The kings are dead and Satan and his angels are now in this ‘pit’ until the day comes when they shall be ‘visited.’”¹⁷

“That the expression ‘bottomless pit’ represents the earth in a state of confusion and darkness is evident from other scriptures. Concerning the condition of the earth ‘in the beginning,’ the Bible record says that it ‘was without form, and void; and darkness was upon the face of the deep.’ Genesis 1:2. Prophecy teaches that it will be brought back, partially at least, to this condition. Looking forward to the great day of God, the prophet Jeremiah declares: ‘I beheld the earth, and, lo, it was without form, and void; and the heavens, and they had no light. I beheld the mountains, and, lo, they trembled, and all the hills moved lightly. I beheld, and, lo, there was no man, and all the birds of the heavens were fled. I beheld, and, lo, the fruitful place was a wilderness, and all the cities thereof were broken down.’ Jeremiah 4:23-26.”¹⁸

The bottomless pit has also been the restricted prison of the demonic horde soon to be released under the fifth Trumpet (9:1), from where the beast (11:7, 17:8) was released with an endowment of power (13:4, 7)¹⁹ and the place of fear from a demoniac legion, which they called “the far country” (Mark 5:11). The abyss is the temporary abode of demons until the end, in contrast to the “lake of fire” (19:20; 20:10, 14, 15; 21:8 – their permanent abode).²⁰ It would be incorrect to view this *literally* as some *spatial area* where Satan operates. It represents a spiritual dimension or sphere (Ephesians 6:10-17).²¹ It is a spiritual metaphor.

¹⁷ Brooks, Karen; *Revelation 20* (Prophecy Research Initiative document – 2004), p. 2.

¹⁸ White, Ellen G.; *The Great Controversy*, pp. 658-659.

¹⁹ Thomas, *Op. cit.*, p. 409.

²⁰ Brighton, *Op. cit.*, p. 550.

²¹ Beale, *Op. cit.*, p. 987.

“Sealing,” in this context, is to assure that no escape could occur (cf. Daniel 6:17, Matthew 27:66) – he is totally powerless. “Bound” and “sealed” indicate that he is conquered.²²

Verse 3 – “that he should deceive the nations no more,”

This phrase implies that the nations exist and could be deceived if he were not shackled. The sequence of imagery from the previous chapter (19:21) suggests, however, that the wicked are all dead. Additionally, a resurrection is anticipated at the end of the millennium by the phrase, “the dead lived not again until” (vs 5). His inability to deceive is purely a functional statement.

The dragon has clearly been busy deceiving the world up to this point. It is a transitional comment. For one thousand years Satan will be dysfunctional. His usual activities will be circumstantially curtailed.

Contextually, the purpose of this confinement is not to punish but to *prevent* his deceptive work. But – for a spiritual being with a great mind who has been tirelessly engaged in tempestuous work and lethal activity, to suddenly have “nothing to do” means *reflection* will inevitably happen. This inescapable outcome was addressed by expositor White: “Here he will be confined, to wander up and down over the broken surface of the earth and see the effects of his rebellion against God’s law. For a thousand years he can enjoy the fruit of the curse which he has caused. Limited alone to the earth, he will not have the privilege of ranging to other planets, to tempt and annoy those who have not fallen. During this time, Satan suffers extremely. Since his fall his evil traits have been in constant exercise. But he is then to be deprived of his power, and left to reflect upon the part which he has acted since his fall, and to look forward with trembling and terror to the dreadful future, when he must suffer for all the evil that he has done and be punished for all the sins that he has caused to be committed.”²³

Verse 3 – “till the thousand years should be fulfilled: and after that he must be loosed a little season.”

The word for “fulfilled” (*telesthe*) is best interpreted as completed or ended (NIV).²⁴

From the brief exposé in this chapter it is difficult to imagine why there has to be another conflict. The Greek words *meta tauta dei* suggest, without explanation, “it was necessary for him to be.”

The saints judge the wicked during this time, affirming God’s judgment recorded in the open scroll (Revelation 5–6). The record will show that a millennium of reflection does not change Satan’s heart. It reveals also that, in face of the New Jerusalem and its glory and the resurrection of the wicked, they collectively still have rebellion and hatred in their hearts. This validates the final judgment decisions.

The duration of “little season” (*mikron chronon*) is unknown. It apparently is a fair period of time for Satan to muster the world into an army to begin their attack on the Holy City. Some have suggested that this is another three and a half years, which is the time allotted for the final work of Satan. That was referred to as *oligon kairon* (12:12), where

²² Aune, David E.; *52c World Biblical Commentary; Revelation 1-5* (World Books; Publisher, Dallas, Texas), 1997, p. 1083.

²³ White, Ellen G.; White, Ellen G.; *Maranatha*, p. 313.

²⁴ Thomas, *Op. cit.*, p. 409.

1260 days are noted (time times half time – 12:14). “Little season” remains a timing mystery.

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

Verse 4 – “And I saw thrones, and they sat upon them,”

There is a clear break in thought between verses 1-3 and this verse. Expositors differ in their attempt to tie them together. The imagery changes from earth to heaven. It is a distinct transition. Since it involves thrones and heaven, we must review key information:

Earth

- Administrative end of Babylon (not spiritual fall) (18:8-19)

Earth

- Heaven rejoices (18:20-24) (Specific reference is made to Babylon having the blood of prophets, and of saints, and of all that were slain upon the earth.)
- “Much people” in heaven rejoice (19:1-5)
- Great multitude of heaven’s host sing that it is now time for the marriage supper of the Lamb (19:6-9)
- Clarifying who God’s servants are (19:10)
- Coming of Jesus out of heaven (19:11-16)

Earth

- Destruction of false prophet and beast (19:17-21)
- Imprisonment of dragon (20:1-3)

Heaven

- Thrones – sitting in judgment (20:4)

This is a revert back to the previous imagery of heaven and the “much people” ready for the marriage supper of the Lamb (19:6-9). Those sitting in judgment had obviously experienced that marriage celebration.

“Because of the prominence of the twenty-four elders in connection with the saints (5:8-9; 7:13 ff.; 11:16 ff.) and their connection with thrones elsewhere (4:4; 5:10; 11:16), some want to identify them as the occupants, particularly as representatives of the church (Smith). The absence of this group from this context and the absence of an indication that the thrones are twenty-four in number are strong objections to this theory (Lee).”²⁵

The throne beings are the redeemed saints. John has already noted elsewhere that the faithful will share in Christ’s future reign (2:26-28; 3:12, 21; 5:10 – cf. Luke 22:30,

²⁵ Thomas, *Op. cit.*, p. 413.

Corinthians 6:2-3). These compose the Lamb's bride (19:7-8) and the armies of the warrior – King Jesus (19:14, 19). The last part of the verse explains further that they are “reigning with Christ.” They are kings, sharing His throne – a promise in Revelation 1:6 and given to overcomers (3:21).

“They sat” (*ekathisan*) refers us to prior discussions. The words “sat,” “did sit” or “sitting,” used in a prophetic setting, denote *judgment time* when a court scene begins or is in session. This was first revealed in Daniel 7:9-10 when the Ancient of Days *sat* on His throne and the books were opened. Here the saints are *sitting* in a judgment type setting.

Verse 4 – “and judgment was given unto them:”

“Do ye not know that the saints shall judge the world?” (I Corinthians 6:2). This is based on a Danielic prophecy: “Judgment was given to the saints of the most High” (Daniel 7:22).

The judgment (*krima*) means a legal or final decision is being made. The saints are given that task. It is usually related to a penal judgment. Why are the saints “given” this unusual privilege? The setting suggests “judicial vindication” of what has already been decided.²⁶

God, the Ancient of Days, has already judged. This was recorded in the scroll of Seven Seals. By now it is open, and the saints are given judicial review powers. Their agreement will vindicate God's character. Forever, they will be witnesses to His perfect justice.

“During the thousand years between the first and the second resurrection the judgment of the wicked takes place.... At this time the righteous reign as kings and priests unto God.... In union with Christ they judge the wicked, comparing their acts with the statute book, the Bible, and deciding every case according to the deeds done in the body. Then the portion which the wicked must suffer is meted out, according to their works; and it is recorded against their names in the book of death.”²⁷

There is a body of expositors who believe in *chiliasm*, the earthly reign of Christ as part of this millennial judgment. Jesus clearly told His disciples that He was going to His “Father's house” to prepare a place for His followers, which was where they would be also (John 14:1-3). Paul said that when Jesus would come again, the resurrected and those living would be “caught up together ... to meet the Lord in the air” (I Thessalonians 4:17). An earthly millennial reign and judgment is inconsistent with eschatological Biblical teaching. In 42 of the 46 occurrences where “throne(s)” is used in this book, they clearly refer to heaven.²⁸

Verse 4 – “and I saw the souls of them that were beheaded for the witness of Jesus, and for the word of God, and which had not worshipped the beast, neither his image, neither had received his mark upon their foreheads, or in their hands;”

The word for “soul” (*psychas*) has a vast meaning within the Scriptures. Its interpretation has been tainted from the ancient classical literature of Socrates and Plato.

²⁶ Beale, *Op. cit.*, p. 997.

²⁷ White, Ellen G.; *The Great Controversy*, pp. 660-661.

²⁸ Beale, *Op. cit.*, p. 999.

Genesis 2:7 clearly states that it represents the whole man – life and physical body. There are allusions, however, when this *figuratively* refers only to *life* or the *breath*.

John sees “the souls” of those who will later be resurrected at His second coming, those who will be part of that vast group of people on thrones in the judgment process. The last part of this verse states that “they lived.” In this aorist tense, it means “they lived again.” This reveals that they are in their “second life.” This is an “obvious meaning.”²⁹ This understanding will be further strengthened in the next verse.

These martyrs had key characteristics, which draws from Revelation 13 and 14:9-10 imagery:

- Did not worship the beast
- Did not worship his image
- Did not receive the mark of the beast

For this loyalty to God, the beast (earth or sea) beheaded these Christians. This was the ancient Roman method for execution. It is used here as a metaphor for being “put to death” – “blessed are the dead who die in the Lord” (14:13).

They were killed for the Word of God and the testimony of Jesus. That is why John the apostle was banished to the Island of Patmos (1:9). The remnant were persecuted (12:17) and martyred (6:9).

- The “Testimony of Jesus” represents the “testimony Jesus bore,” their “faithful witness” to that, especially as revealed in this Book.³⁰
- “Word of God” means specifically the messages given in Revelation (1:1), and in a greater sense, all prophetic messages (19:10).

“Some paid with their life for bearing such witness. But, not all were martyred. The prophet tells us that 144,000 were sealed by ‘the seal of the *living* God’ (Rev. 7:2, italics supplied). They were ‘specially singled out ... because they had to stand with a wonderful truth right before the whole world, and receive their opposition’³¹ It seems clear that that ‘wonderful truth’ was the ‘tidings out of the east’ that troubled the ‘vile person’ who then went ‘fourth with great fury to destroy, and utterly to make away many’ (Dan. 11:44).³²

To the call, “how long ... will you not judge and avenge our blood?” (6:10) comes this answer: The martyred saints will be reigning with Jesus and with Him judging those wicked. This is an expansion of the answer to that initial petition when they are given white robes (6:11).³³ It is also a continuum of the answers unfolded in Daniel 8–12 when Gabriel asked “How long?” (Daniel 8:13) and Daniel asked “How long?” (Daniel 12:6). They are **all** sequentially and tightly woven together in time.

Who was responsible for their martyrdom? The second beast of Revelation 13 – the earth beast – who caused “that as many as would not worship the image of the beast should be killed” (13:15). The earth beast symbolizes the United States coming up as a peaceful nation, then becoming tyrannical. This, in turn, represents apostate Protestant-

²⁹ Thomas, *Op. cit.*, p 416.

³⁰ Osborne, Grant R.; *Revelation* (Baker Book House; Grand Rapids, MI), p. 706.

³¹ White, Ellen G.; *Sermons and Talks*, vol. 1, pp. 72-73.

³² Wood, Robert, M.D.; *Revelation 20* (Prophecy Research Initiative document – 2004), p. 4.

³³ Beale, *Op. cit.*, p. 997.

ism at the end of time, who will adversely influence and control that country (see Revelation 13:11-17).

The great message of hope in this verse is portrayed by the martyred saints, not only as being resurrected, but subsequently taking part in all that Christ does.³⁴

Verse 4 – “and they lived and reigned with Christ a thousand years.”

In verses 1-3 we see Satan confined as a prisoner. Here, in contrast to this dragon is his competitor, Jesus, Who is reigning for an equal time, a thousand years with His saints.

The word “they lived” means “they came to life,” revealing a resurrection experience. Thus, there is a relationship between resurrection, kingship and judging in this verse and eschatological events.³⁵

“The Isaiah Apocalypse reveals that the cosmic Judgment causes the resurrection from the dead of the faithful covenant people of God: “*Your dead will live; their bodies will rise.... The earth will give birth to her dead*” (Isa. 26:19). With the blast of a ‘great trumpet’ God will gather up, ‘one by one,’ the faithful so they can participate in the apocalyptic banquet of yahweh ‘for all peoples’ on the holy mountain (see Isa. 27:12, 13; 25:6-9; 24:23).”³⁶

“In union with Christ they judge the wicked, comparing their acts with the statute book, the Bible, and deciding every case according to the deeds done in the body. Then the portion which the wicked must suffer is meted out, according to their works; and it is recorded against their names in the book of death.

“Satan also and evil angels are judged by Christ and His people. Says Paul: ‘Know ye not that we shall judge angels?’ Verse 3. And Jude declares that ‘the angels which kept not their first estate, but left their own habitation, He hath reserved in everlasting chains under darkness unto the judgment of the great day.’ Jude 6.

“At the close of the thousand years the second resurrection will take place. Then the wicked will be raised from the dead and appear before God for the execution of ‘the judgment written.’ Thus the revelator, after describing the resurrection of the righteous, says: ‘The rest of the dead lived not again until the thousand years were finished.’ Revelation 20:5. And Isaiah declares, concerning the wicked: ‘They shall be gathered together, as prisoners are gathered in the pit, and shall be shut up in the prison, and after many days shall they be visited.’ Isaiah 24:22.”³⁷

VERSE 5: “But the rest of the dead lived not again until the thousand years were finished. This *is* the first resurrection.”

Verse 5 – “But the rest of the dead lived not again”

The comparison is with the martyrs who are resurrected, have their own thrones and are working with Christ. The “rest of the dead” have not been raised. They remain in their graves. There is much controversy as to who these dead are.

³⁴ Fortner, Don; *Discovering Christ in Revelation* (Evangelical Press USA; Auburn, MA), p. 390.

³⁵ Beale, *Op. cit.*, p. 1001.

³⁶ LaRondelle, Hans, Th.D.; *How to Understand the End-Time Prophecies of the Bible*, p. 455.

³⁷ White, Ellen G.; *The Great Controversy*, p. 661.

“The better option is to limit ‘the rest of the dead’ to the wicked who are physically dead (the rest of the righteous dead, besides the martyrs, having been raised earlier to join in reigning with Christ). Previous discussion has already noted the earlier resurrection of the bride of Christ to join in this reign.”³⁸

The Greek word for “lived [again]” (*ezesan*) was used also in verse 4. This refers to a future bodily resurrection. Also, when John uses the word resurrection (*anastasis*), it relates to physical resurrection (as it does frequently elsewhere in the New Testament).³⁹

Verse 5 – “until the thousand years were finished.”

This draws upon the same one thousand years in the previous verses where:

- Satan is “chained” or inactive
- Saints are reigning with Christ with judgment responsibilities

“This means that for unbelievers who die, their next conscious moment will be when they face God at the great white throne judgment [Revelation 20:13] (the one passage that talks of consciousness for the wicked during this time, Luke 16:19-31, is a parable, and the plot line is local color rather than theological statement).”⁴⁰

Both of the first two phrases of this verse are a commentary insert, which is elaborated on in verses 12 and 13. This last thought (5c) ties to the theme conveyed in verse 4.

“The ‘thousand years’ is represented as ‘the time of the dead, that they should be judged’ in Rev. 11:18. It followed soon after ‘the third woe’ (Rev. 11:14) was completed. Then, God’s ‘servants the prophets, and ... the saints, and them that fear [His] name, small and great’ will be enjoying their ‘reward.’ They, except for those who were translated (see 1 Thes. 4:16, 17) will all have had part in ‘the first resurrection.’”⁴¹

“... those who have done good, to the resurrection of life, and those who have done evil, to the resurrection of condemnation’ (John 5:29).

“And many of those who sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, some to shame and everlasting contempt’ (Daniel 12:2).

“Yes, there will be two [general] resurrections. Let’s note that Daniel, Jesus, and John placed them in the same order:

“1. First, that of the righteous;

“2. Then, that of the wicked.”⁴²

Verse 5 – “This is the first resurrection.”

The placement of this phrase is confusing. It appears at first to relate to the wicked who are to be raised. But, it is a timing label of some resurrection. Since the martyrs, and others, have been raised already (vs 4), their’s would be the “first resurrection.” Verse 6 defines those resurrected at the end of the millennium as victims of the second

³⁸ Thomas, *Op. cit.*, pp. 418-419.

³⁹ Osborne, *Op. cit.*, p. 707.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 70.

⁴¹ Wood, *Op. cit.*, p. 5.

⁴² Proulx, Reno, M.D. and Laplante, Debbie; *The Threshold of Eternity: the Millennium, the Last Judgment, and the New Earth (A study of Revelation chapters 20-22)*, p. 4.

death. Thus, the first resurrection relates to the righteous. “First” means that there is at least a “second.” Though John does not refer directly to a “second resurrection,” the term “the rest of the dead did not come to life until” describes it.

This first resurrection is the one that occurs at the return of Jesus (I Thessalonians 4:16-17, I Corinthians 15:51-56), the resurrection of the righteous (Luke 14:14, 20:34-36) to everlasting life (Daniel 12:2; cf. Acts 24:15).

Is there a “death” associated with the second advent? There is a death wish of the wicked: “Therefore are they before the throne of God, and serve him day and night in his temple: and he that sitteth on the throne shall dwell among them. They shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more; neither shall the sun light on them, nor any heat. For the Lamb which is in the midst of the throne shall feed them, and shall lead them unto living fountains of waters: and God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes” (Revelation 6:15-17). Paul told us that the face of the Lord would destroy the wicked: “And then shall that Wicked be revealed, whom the Lord shall consume with the spirit of his mouth, and shall destroy with the brightness of his coming” (II Thessalonians 2:8). “I will utterly consume all *things* from off the land, saith the LORD. I will consume man and beast; I will consume the fowls of the heaven, and the fishes of the sea, and the stumbling blocks with the wicked; and I will cut off man from off the land, saith the LORD” (Zephaniah 1:2-3). “And the slain of the LORD shall be at that day from *one* end of the earth even unto the *other* end of the earth: they shall not be lamented, neither gathered, nor buried; they shall be dung upon the ground” (Jeremiah 25:33). “I beheld the earth, and, lo, *it was* without form, and void; and the heavens, and they *had* no light. I beheld the mountains, and, lo, they trembled, and all the hills moved lightly. I beheld, and, lo, *there was* no man, and all the birds of the heavens were fled” (Jeremiah 4:23-25). “Behold, the day of the LORD cometh, cruel both with wrath and fierce anger, to lay the land desolate: and he shall destroy the sinners thereof out of it” (Isaiah 13:9).

A substantial argument in favor of a pre-millennial physical resurrection is based on the *coming to life* of the “rest of the dead” at the end of the millennium. That is clearly a physical resurrection. If that is so, and most agree, then their coming to “life” (*ezesan*) is the same as the resurrection of the saints in verse 4. Thus, it must be a physical, pre-millennial resurrection also.

“This resurrection has been foretold for centuries: ‘Thy dead *men* shall live, *together with* my dead body shall they arise. Awake and sing, ye that dwell in dust: for thy dew *is* as the dew of herbs, and the earth shall cast out the dead.’ Isaiah 26:19. ‘And thou shalt be blessed; ... for thou shalt be recompensed at the resurrection of the just.’ Luke 14:14. ‘Verily, verily, I say unto you, The hour is coming, and now is, when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God: and they that hear shall live.... And shall come forth; they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of damnation.’ John 5:25, 29.

“When Christ returns to earth, after He has wrested His people from the hands of the wicked during the seven last plagues, He will come with the trump of God and with the voice of the Archangel (1 Thessalonians 4:16). His voice will reverberate through all the dwelling places of the dead, and every saint that has gone to sleep in Jesus will hear this voice, awake, and leave his prison house. A vast army will come forth to everlasting triumph. Until this time every saint that is sleeping in the grave will be guarded as a precious jewel (Malachi 3:17), known by name to God.

“Because they were so closely connected with Christ while they lived, His power dwelt in them and they became ‘partakers of the divine nature’ (2 Peter 1:4). This is what responds to His call and brings them forth from their dusty beds. The victory of these sleeping saints will be resplendent on the great morning of this first resurrection,

for the Life-giver will crown them with immortality, and they will never be captives of death again. Then the uprightness of the character that Christ has given them will unite them with true greatness of the highest order.”⁴³

“The relationship between Christ’s physical resurrection and the new life of the Christian is an important thought throughout the NT. For example, in 1 Pet 1:3 the apostle gives thanks to God, ‘who according to his great mercy has given new birth ... in a living hope through the *resurrection* ... of Jesus Christ.’ In Holy Baptism the Christian has died with Christ in order to be raised with Christ and to live now in ‘newness of life’ (... Rom 6:3-4). And in Jn 11:23-26 Jesus said that because he is ‘the resurrection and the life’ ..., whoever believes in him will never again die (cf. Jn 8:51), and therefore the believer has ‘crossed over’ or ‘been translated from’ ... death into life (Jn 5:24). For that reason John can say here in Rev 20:6 that whoever participates in the first resurrection is blessed, because ‘over these the second death ... does not have authority.’⁴⁴

“During the thousand years between the first and the second resurrection the judgment of the wicked takes place. The apostle Paul points to this judgment as an event that follows the second advent. ‘Judge nothing before the time, until the Lord come, who both will bring to light the hidden things of darkness, and will make manifest the counsels of the hearts.’ 1 Corinthians 4:5. Daniel declares that when the Ancient of Days came, ‘judgment was given to the saints of the Most High.’ Daniel 7:22. At this time the righteous reign as kings and priests unto God. John in the Revelation says: ‘I saw thrones, and they sat upon them, and judgment was given unto them.’ ‘They shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with Him a thousand years.’ Revelation 20:4, 6. It is at this time that, as foretold by Paul, ‘the saints shall judge the world.’ 1 Corinthians 6:2.”⁴⁵

“At the end of one thousand years, Jesus, the king of glory, descends from the holy city, clothed with brightness like the lightning, upon the mount of olives—the same mount from whence he ascended after his resurrection. As his feet touch the mountain, it parts asunder, and becomes a very great plain, and is prepared for the reception of the holy city in which is the paradise of God, the garden of Eden, which was taken up after man’s transgression. Now it descends with the city, more beautiful, and gloriously adorned than when removed from the earth. The city of God comes down and settles upon the mighty plain prepared for it. Then Jesus leaves the city surrounded by the redeemed host, and is escorted on his way by the angelic throng. In fearful majesty he calls forth the wicked dead. They are wakened from their long sleep. What a dreadful waking! They behold the Son of God in his stern majesty and resplendent glory. All, as soon as they behold him, know that he is the crucified one who died to save them, whom they had despised and rejected. They are in number like the sand upon the sea-shore. At the first resurrection all come forth in immortal bloom, but at the second, the marks of the curse are visible upon all. All come up as they went down into their graves. Those who lived before the flood, come forth with their giant-like stature, more than twice as tall as men now living upon the earth, and well proportioned. The generations after the flood were less in stature. There was a continual decrease through successive generations, down to the last that lived upon the earth. The contrast between the first wicked men who lived upon the earth, and those of the last generation, was very great. The first

⁴³ Brooks, *Op. cit.*, p. 3.

⁴⁴ Brighton, *Op. cit.*, p. 565.

⁴⁵ White, Ellen G.; *The Great Controversy*, pp. 660-661.

were of lofty height and well proportioned—the last came up as they went down, a dwarfed, feeble, deformed race.”⁴⁶

“All behold the Son of man; and those very men who despised and mocked Him, who put the crown of thorns upon His sacred brow, and smote Him with the reed, behold Him in all His kingly majesty. Those who spit upon Him in the hour of His trial now turn from His piercing gaze and from the glory of His countenance. Those who drove the nails through His hands and feet now look upon the marks of His crucifixion. Those who thrust the spear into His side behold the marks of their cruelty on His body. And they know that He is the very one whom they crucified and derided in His expiring agony. And then there arises one long protracted wail of agony, as they flee to hide from the presence of the King of kings and Lord of lords.

“All are seeking to hide in the rocks, to shield themselves from the terrible glory of Him whom they once despised. And, overwhelmed and pained with His majesty and exceeding glory, they with one accord raise their voices, and with terrible distinctness exclaim, ‘Blessed is He that cometh in the name of the Lord!’ Then Jesus and the holy angels, accompanied by all the saints, again go to the city, and the bitter lamentations and wailings of the doomed wicked fill the air.”⁴⁷

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

Verse 6 – “Blessed and holy *is* he that hath part in the first resurrection:”

This is Revelation’s fifth beatitude (cf. 1:3, 14:13, 16:15, 19:9; 22:7, 14). The addition of “holy” to “blessed” adds a heightened sense; a high and ultimate state of righteousness has been reached.

Revelation 20:1-10 is a literary unit. It doesn’t describe the second resurrection, but it is implied by the use of the words “come to life” after the millennium. In 20:11-15 another literary unit is given and the second resurrection is described more clearly. It is a physical resurrection of all bodies at the end.⁴⁸

There is scholarly debate as to whether the “first resurrection” is physical or spiritual. Many contend that it is only spiritual since the rest of the New Testament describes only “one” resurrection (Ephesians 5:14 is used as an example of a spiritual resurrection). The Greek word *anastasis* is used here for resurrection. Almost every time it is used it is physical (e.g., Matthew 22:23, John 5:29, Acts 1:22, I Corinthians 15:12, Hebrews 6:2). In the context of a “second death” in a “lake of fire” (20:14), it can only refer to a physical resurrection and then death.

It is true that the New Testament uses generously the metaphor of death, burial and resurrection to describe man’s restoration through Jesus Christ. Contextually here, in this literary unit, a spiritual resurrection cannot apply.

“The Life-giver will call up His purchased possession in the first resurrection, and until that triumphant hour, when the last trump shall sound and the vast army shall come forth to eternal victory, every sleeping saint will be kept in safety and will be guarded as a precious jewel, who is known to God by name. By the power of the Saviour that dwelt

⁴⁶ White, Ellen G.; *Spiritual Gifts*, vol. 3, pp. 83-84 (cf. *The Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary*, vol. I, p. 1090).

⁴⁷ White, Ellen G.; *Early Writings*, pp. 292-293.

⁴⁸ Brighton, *Op. cit.*, p. 561.

in them while living and because they were partakers of the divine nature, they are brought forth from the dead.

“The hour is coming,’ Christ said, ‘in the which all that are in the graves shall hear his voice, and shall come forth.’ That voice is to resound through all the habitations of the dead; and every saint who sleeps in Jesus will awake and leave his prisonhouse. Then the virtue of character we have received from Christ’s righteousness will ally us to true greatness of the highest order.

“The victory of the sleeping saints will be glorious on the morning of the resurrection.... The Life-giver will crown with immortality all who come forth from the grave.

“There stands the risen host. The last thought was of death and its pangs. The last thoughts they had were of the grave and the tomb, but now they proclaim, ‘O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory?’ ... Here they stand and the finishing touch of immortality is put upon them and they go up to meet their Lord in the air.... There are the columns of angels on either side; ... then the angelic choir strike the note of victory and the angels in the two columns take up the song and the redeemed host join as though they had been singing the song on the earth, and they have been. Oh, what music! There is not an inharmonious note. Every voice proclaims, ‘Worthy is the Lamb that was slain.’ He sees the travail of His soul, and is satisfied.”⁴⁹

Verse 6 – “on such the second death hath no power,

The first death is physical death in this life, the second is eternal death in the lake of fire (20:14, 21:8). Believers might experience the first but not the second.⁵⁰

“He that overcometh shall not be hurt of the second death” (2:11).

That “penalty threatened is not merely temporal death, for all must suffer this. It is the second death, the opposite of everlasting life. God cannot save the sinner in his sins; but he declares that the wicked, having suffered the punishment of their guilt, shall be as though they had not been. Says an inspired writer, ‘Thou shalt diligently consider his place, and it shall not be.’ [Ps. 37:10.] In consequence of Adam’s sin, death passed upon all mankind. All alike go down into the grave. But through the provisions of the plan of salvation, all are to be brought forth from their graves. Then those who have not secured the pardon of their sins must receive the penalty of transgression. They suffer punishment varying in duration and intensity according to their works, but finally ending in the second death. Covered with infamy, they sink into hopeless, eternal oblivion.”⁵¹

Verse 6 – “but they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with him a thousand years.”

Revelation 1:5-6 states that those for whom Jesus Christ washed their sins away by His blood will become kings and priests to God, Christ’s Father. In 5:9-10 the 24 elders in an anthem of praise state that the Lamb has made them kings and priests to God. Throughout this millennial Sabbath, God’s people will also be judges from the thrones upon which they reign. This is amazing imagery of the saints’ first role in God’s kingdom.

“But ye *are* a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should show forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light” (I Peter 2:9; cf. Exodus 19:6).

⁴⁹ White, Ellen G.; *Maranatha*, p. 300.

⁵⁰ Osborne, *Op. cit.*, p. 709.

⁵¹ White, Ellen G.; *Spirit of Prophecy*, vol. 4, p. 364.

This privileged state continues into the new earth (22:3-5). Why the millennial break? The thousand years is *in heaven* as Jesus said – in “My Father’s house” (John 14:1-3). When He comes the saints are “caught up together ... in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air” (I Thessalonians 4:17). What does it say occurs after the millennium? The “Holy” Jerusalem *descends* out of heaven from God (20:10); it “cometh down out of heaven from God” (3:12).

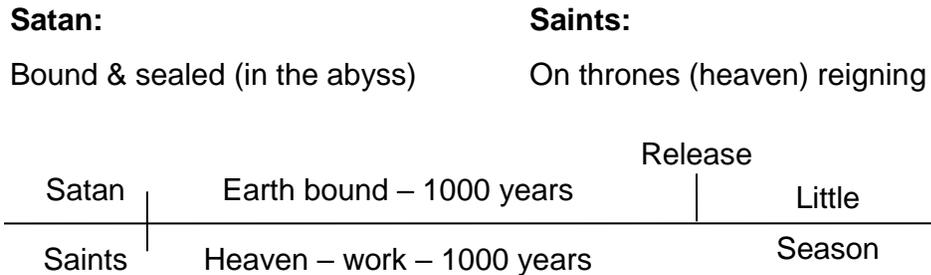
“As the New Jerusalem, in its dazzling splendor, comes down out of heaven, it rests upon the place purified and made ready to receive it, and Christ, with His people and the angels, enters the Holy City.”⁵²

“At the close of the one thousand years, Jesus, with the angels and all the saints, leaves the Holy City, and while He is descending to the earth with them ... It is at the close of the one thousand years that Jesus stands upon the Mount of Olives, and the mount parts asunder and becomes a mighty plain.”⁵³

VERSE 7: “And when the thousand years are expired, Satan shall be loosed out of his prison,”

Verse 7 – “And when the thousand years are expired,

This is a timing statement. “When” (*hotan*) isolates the point when Satan is no longer imprisoned. The millennium that the first six verses address comes to its end. A post-one thousand-year prophecy begins. Verse 3 already said that “after that he must be loosed a little season.” During that period we see this:



The words “are expired” (*etelesthe*) suggest an appointed time has ended.

This is the sixth and last time the thousand years is mentioned. It is the second most frequently mentioned time prophecy in the Bible.

“The most frequently mentioned time prophecy is the 1260 depicted in Dan. 7:25 as (1) ‘a time and times and the dividing of time,’ in Dan. 12:7 as (2) ‘a time, times, and an half,’ Rev. 11:2 as (3) ‘forty and two months,’ Rev. 11:3 as (4) ‘a thousand two hundred and threescore days,’ Rev. 12:6 as (5) ‘a thousand two hundred and threescore days,’ Rev. 12:14 as (6) ‘a time, and times, and half a time,’ and Rev. 13:5 as (7) ‘forty and two months.’ Two additional 1260’s are found in Dan. 9:27 where the final ‘week’ of the ‘seventy’ is divided in half when Jesus was crucified ‘in the *midst* of the week,’ specifying 1260 days for Christ’s public ministry.”⁵⁴

This leads to another 1260 days to complete the 490-year prophecy of Daniel 9:24.

⁵² White, Ellen G.; *The Great Controversy*, p. 662.

⁵³ White, Ellen G.; *Early Writings*, p. 53.

⁵⁴ Wood, *Op. cit.*, p. 6.

“The Lord does not repeat things that are of no great consequence.”⁵⁵ Why is this so important? It is one of the four clocks that God added to His timing schedule for this world after the Exodus.

Creation:	Days (evenings and mornings) – determined by earth’s rotation Weeks – seven days by divine declaration Months – by moon Years – by sun
Post-Exodus:	“Weeks of months” – setting a convocation “year” “Weeks of years” – setting a sabbath year “Seven weeks of years” – Jubilee cycle “Week of millenniums” – redemptive history of world

Verse 7 – “Satan shall be loosed out of his prison.”

The word “prison” (*phylakes*) is used here but clearly refers to the abyss of verses 1 and 3. The immediate reason for the release is not apparent. Verse 3 uses the word “must,” revealing it is a divine imperative. It was part of God’s sovereign plan.⁵⁶ God’s thoughts and ways are not man’s (Isaiah 55:8).

Is Satan pardoned or paroled? His actions suggest he is released to function “as himself” without restriction for only a “little season.” It reveals that Satan’s designs and man’s waywardness don’t change by time or even a resurrection.⁵⁷

Ancient tradition claims that demons are more dangerous when released from their confinement than ever before.⁵⁸

This will be Satan’s last period of life to act or react.

VERSE 8: “And shall go out to deceive the nations which are in the four quarters of the earth, Gog and Magog, to gather them together to battle: the number of whom *is* as the sand of the sea.”

Verse 8 – “And shall go out to deceive the nations which are in the four quarters of the earth, ... the number of whom *is* as the sand of the sea.”

Satan is released, and he immediately goes back to his supreme evil characteristic – deception. When he was cast out of the heavenly ranks to this earth, he came to deceive the “whole world” (Revelation 12:9; cf. 13:4; 19:20; 20:3, 10).

The nations (*ta ethne*) from the “four quarters” means the *people* from the four corners of the earth – the whole world (cf. 7:1, Ezekiel 7:2, Isaiah 11:12). These are the ones who were raised at the second resurrection at the end of the millennium. This fulfills the bodily resurrection when “the rest of the dead *who* did not come to life until” (vs 5) that point in time.

“Now Satan prepares for a last mighty struggle for the supremacy. While deprived of his power and cut off from his work of deception, the prince of evil was miserable and

⁵⁵ White, Ellen G.; *Manuscript Releases*, vol. 9, p. 7.

⁵⁶ Osborne, *Op. cit.*, p. 711.

⁵⁷ Mounce, *Op. cit.*, p. 371.

⁵⁸ Aune, *Op. cit.*, p. 1093, referring to Eitrem, *Demonology*, pp. 16-17.

dejected; but as the wicked dead are raised and he sees the vast multitudes upon his side, his hopes revive, and he determines not to yield the great controversy.”⁵⁹

“Then I saw that Satan again commenced his work. He passed around among his subjects, and made the weak and feeble strong, and told them that he and his angels were powerful. He pointed to the countless millions who had been raised.”⁶⁰

Their number is so vast that they are described as the “sand of the sea.” This hyperbole is often used in the Old Testament, even to describe Solomon’s wisdom (I Kings 4:29). It alludes to the figure of a “cloud to cover the land” in Ezekiel 38:16.

This “innumerable” number of the wicked portrays the overwhelming odds in their favor when they attack God’s people (cf. Joshua 11:4, Judges 7:12, I Samuel 13:5).⁶¹

Verse 8 – “Gog and Magog, to gather them together to battle:”

“Magog first occurs in the Bible at Gen. 10:2, but the allusion here is to Ezek. 38:2 where both names appear. The most that one can discern from these names is that they are emblems for the enemies of Messiah during the end times.... By ‘Gog and Magog’ we should not think of historical nations that have had a continuing existence during the preceding scene of the millennium, nor of nations of our own time ‘predicted’ by biblical prophecy. John is preparing to present before our imaginations a picture of the ultimate destruction of evil and needs for this scene antagonists to God who are larger than life. Evil must be magnified to its fullest before being destroyed forever.”⁶²

Gog with their prince have some merit in reference to the Ezekiel passage (cf. Ezek. 38:15; 39:2; Zechariah 12–14; Zephaniah 3; Jeremiah 1:13-15, 3:18, 4:6, 6:1-22).⁶³

“Ezekiel 38:2, 3, 7, 8 (NIV): ‘Son of man, set your face against Gog, of the land of Magog; ... prophesy against him and say: ... “Get ready; be prepared, you and all the hordes gathered about you, and take command of them. After many days you will be called to arms. In future years you will invade a land that has recovered from war, whose people were gathered from many nations to the mountains of Israel, which had long been desolate. They had been brought out from the nations, and now all of them live in safety.’ ...

“The names ‘Gog and Magog’ refer to this prophecy of the prophet Ezekiel, describing how Satan will lead the nations to besiege the New Jerusalem. Gog symbolizing Satan, Magog his people.”⁶⁴ These names symbolize evil forces opposed to God and godliness.

Satan goes out to deceive *in order* to gather them to battle.⁶⁵ Gog, the “king of the northern lands” has long aspired to this when he first said: “I will exalt my throne above the stars of God: I will sit also upon the mount of the congregation, in the sides of the north: ... I will be like the most High” (Isaiah 14:13-14).

There is much debate among expositors as to whether the battles of 9:13-21, 11:7, 12:17, 16:16 and 19:19 are the same as here. Those references describe pre-millennial battles. There, Satan had only those who remained living on the earth. This verse

⁵⁹ White, Ellen G.; *The Great Controversy*, p. 663.

⁶⁰ White, Ellen G.; *Early Writings*, p. 293.

⁶¹ Beale, *Op. cit.*, p. 1023.

⁶² Boring, M. Eugene; *Interpretation – A Bible Commentary for Teaching and Preaching* (John Knox Press), p. 209.

⁶³ Thomas, *Op. cit.*, pp. 423-424.

⁶⁴ Proulx and LaPlante, *Op. cit.*, pp. 6-7.

⁶⁵ Mounce, *Op. cit.*, p. 372.

describes Satan's last battle after the one thousand years finished,⁶⁶ when all the wicked of the ages are his.⁶⁷ This will be the largest army that ever existed in earth's history.

In this final battle is seen evil magnified to its fullest before it is destroyed forever: "There were mighty warriors and kings who were well skilled in battle and who had conquered kingdoms. And there were mighty giants and valiant men who had never lost a battle. There was the proud, ambitious Napoleon, whose approach had caused kingdoms to tremble. There stood men of lofty stature and dignified bearing, who had fallen in battle while thirsting to conquer. As they come forth from their graves, they resume the current of their thoughts where it ceased in death. They possess the same desire to conquer which ruled when they fell. Satan consults with his angels, and then with those kings and conquerors and mighty men. Then he looks over the vast army, and tells them that the company in the city is small and feeble, and that they can go up and take it, and cast out its inhabitants, and possess its riches and glory themselves.

"Satan succeeds in deceiving them, and all immediately begin to prepare themselves for battle. There are many skillful men in that vast army, and they construct all kinds of implements of war. Then with Satan at their head, the multitude move on. Kings and warriors follow close after Satan, and the multitude follow after in companies. Each company has its leader, and order is observed as they march over the broken surface of the earth to the Holy City. Jesus closes the gates of the city, and this vast army surrounds it and place themselves in battle array, expecting a fierce conflict. Jesus and all the angelic host and all the saints, with the glittering crowns upon their heads, ascend to the top of the wall of the city. Jesus speaks with majesty, saying, 'Behold, ye sinners, the reward of the just! And behold, My redeemed, the reward of the wicked!' The vast multitude behold the glorious company on the walls of the city. And as they witness the splendor of their glittering crowns and see their faces radiant with glory, reflecting the image of Jesus, and then behold the unsurpassed glory and majesty of the King of kings and Lord of lords, their courage fails. A sense of the treasure and glory which they have lost rushes upon them, and they realize that the wages of sin is death. They see the holy, happy company whom they have despised, clothed with glory, honor, immortality, and eternal life, while they are outside the city with every mean and abominable thing."⁶⁸

VERSE 9: "And they went up on the breadth of the earth, and compassed the camp of the saints about, and the beloved city: and fire came down from God out of heaven, and devoured them."

Verse 9 – "And they went up on the breadth of the earth, and compassed the camp of the saints about, and the beloved city:"

This is war imagery. Satan (apparently "Gog") and Ma-Gog (the wicked loyalists) have become a massive military machine (every evil person who has ever lived). From all over the earth (breadth of the earth) they have come and surrounded the:

- Saints and the
- Beloved city – New Jerusalem

⁶⁶ Mounce, *Op. cit.*, p. 373.

⁶⁷ Brooks, *Op. cit.*, p. 5.

⁶⁸ White, Ellen G.; *Early Writings*, pp. 293-294.

The term “to go up” or “they went up” is a Jewish idiom used to refer to travel towards Jerusalem (Ezekiel 1:3, Psalm 122:4, Isaiah 2:3, Jeremiah 31:6, Obadiah 21, Micah 4:2)⁶⁹ Contrasting this, one would “go down” to Capernaum (John 2:12), “go down” to Egypt (Acts 7:15) or “go down” to Troas (Acts 16:8). Though this is the “New” Jerusalem, the expression is retained.

How long will it take for Satan to rally the wicked for their final assault against God and His people? We aren’t told.

The New Jerusalem was in heaven (Revelation 21–22). Here, it is described as being on the earth. The heavenly “bride” picture is pre-millennial. The marriage supper of the Lamb occurs at the beginning of the millennium, shortly after the second advent. The picture here means that the New Jerusalem has come down to this world from its previous location (heaven) – now, post-millennial to the contextual sequences. Is that a Biblical reality?

“And he carried me away in the spirit to a great and high mountain, and showed me that great city, the holy Jerusalem, descending out of heaven from God” (Revelation 21:10). The holy city Jerusalem does descend out of heaven from where God is. Zechariah prophetically conveyed the preparation for that city long before: “And his feet shall stand in that day upon the mount of Olives, which *is* before Jerusalem on the east, and the mount of Olives shall cleave in the midst thereof toward the east and toward the west, *and there shall be* a very great valley; and half of the mountain shall remove toward the north, and half of it toward the south” (Zechariah 14:4.)

“After the Millennium: Ezekiel 38:10,11,15,16: “On that day it shall come to pass that thoughts will arise in your mind, and you will make an evil plan: You will say, ‘I will go up against a land of unwalled villages; I will go to a peaceful people, who dwell safely, all of them dwelling without walls, and having neither bars nor gates.’ ... Then you will come from your place out of the far north, you and many peoples with you, all of them riding on horses, a great company and a mighty army. You will come up against My people Israel like a cloud, to cover the land.”

“Seeing the Heavenly City coming down from heaven, Satan will decide to besiege it, and to do so he will gather all the nations and deceive them.”⁷⁰

The word “camp” (*parembole*) often refers to military barracks (Acts 21:34, 37; 22:24; 23:10, 16, 32) or to an army in line to battle (Acts 11:34).⁷¹ Contextually, the saints are Satan’s foe. He advances on them as if they were to be conquered. Intriguingly, the “beloved city” follows (*parembole*), meaning it defines further the “barracks” of the saints. That is a safe place depicted in an ancient thought: “For the LORD thy God walketh in the midst of thy camp, to deliver thee, and to give up thine enemies before thee; therefore shall thy camp be holy: that he see no unclean thing in thee, and turn away from thee” (Deuteronomy 23:14).

Jerusalem is seen as the “center of the world” in Ezekiel 38:12. Using that metaphorically, Satan is going to battle against the “center” of the world and now, perhaps, the “center” of all. Mt. Zion is in this city where the saints were seen proleptically (14:1-5).

“Giesen (1997: 437) also sees a parallel with the war scroll of Qumran (1QM 3.5; 4.9), which centers on the end-time battle of the sons of light against the sons of darkness. Here in Revelation the task of the saints is not to take the battle into their own hands but to encamp before the Lord and trust him.”⁷²

⁶⁹ Aune, *Op. cit.*, p. 1096.

⁷⁰ Proulx and LaPlante, *Op. cit.*, pp. 7.

⁷¹ Thomas, *Op. cit.*, p 425.

⁷² Osborne, *Op. cit.*, p. 714.

“True to his early cunning, he does not acknowledge himself to be Satan. He claims to be the prince who is the rightful owner of the world and whose inheritance has been unlawfully wrested from him....

“Satan consults with his angels, and then with these kings and conquerors and mighty men. They look upon the strength and numbers on their side, and declare that the army within the city is small in comparison with theirs, and that it can be overcome. They lay their plans to take possession of the riches and glory of the New Jerusalem. All immediately begin to prepare for battle. Skillful artisans construct implements of war. Military leaders, famed for their success, marshal the throngs of warlike men into companies and divisions.”⁷³

“There is no way they can see that the saints and Christ can escape. This was the experience of Christ when He was about to be crucified: ‘Many bulls have compassed me: strong *bulls* of Bashan have beset me round. For dogs have compassed me: the assembly of the wicked have enclosed me: they pierced my hands and my feet.’ Psalm 22:12, 16.”⁷⁴

The “city” of saints is about to inaugurate the new creation. This parallels the inaugurated reality of the heavenly “Jerusalem” in Galatians 4:26 and Hebrews 12:22 when they previously ascended to that celestial home.⁷⁵

“At last the order to advance is given, and the countless host moves on – an army such as was never summoned by earthly conquerors, such as the combined forces of all ages since war began on earth could never equal. Satan, the mightiest of warriors, leads the van, and his angels unite their forces for this final struggle. Kings and warriors are in his train, and the multitudes follow in vast companies, each under its appointed leader. With military precision the serried ranks advance over the earth’s broken and uneven surface to the City of God. By command of Jesus, the gates of the New Jerusalem are closed, and the armies of Satan surround the city and make ready for the onset.”⁷⁶

Expositor White suggests that the gates to the holy city were open until this moment. The wicked up till then, perhaps over a period of many months, could have had the chance to come near and peer inside those gates to that wonderful amazing city of the redeemed!⁷⁷

Verse 9 – “and fire came down from God out of heaven, and devoured them.”

The satanic forces in a final display of hatred and rebellion come to the very gates of the Messianic kingdom when fire destroys them. Fire is a symbol of divine punishment (Genesis 19:24; Leviticus 10:2; Ezekiel 38:22, 39:6; II Kings 1:10, 12; Luke 9:54) and a fitting climax⁷⁸ to the conflict of all ages.

The ending is “devoured them” (*katephagen autous*) – they are consumed, utterly destroyed. Judgment by fire is final, complete; all is as if they never were.

“And it will come to pass at the same time, when Gog comes against the land of Israel,’ says the Lord God, ‘that My fury will show in My face.... I will rain down on him, on his troops, and on the many peoples who are with him, flooding rain, great hailstones, fire, and brimstone. Thus I will magnify Myself and sanctify Myself, and I will be

⁷³ White, Ellen G.; *The Great Controversy*, p. 664.

⁷⁴ Brooks, *Op. cit.*, p. 6.

⁷⁵ Beale, *Op. cit.*, p. 1027.

⁷⁶ White, Ellen G.; *The Great Controversy*, p. 664.

⁷⁷ Wood, *Op. cit.*, p. 8.

⁷⁸ Thomas, *Op. cit.*, p. 426.

known in the eyes of many nations. Then they shall know that I am the Lord” (Ezekiel 38:18, 22-23).

“It shall come to pass in that day that the Lord will punish on high the host of exalted ones, and on the earth the kings of the earth. They will be gathered together, as prisoners are gathered in the pit, and will be shut up in the prison; after many days they will be punished” (Isaiah 24:21-22).

“For behold, the day is coming, burning like an oven, and all the proud, yes, all who do wickedly, will be stubble. And the day which is coming shall burn them up,’ says the Lord of hosts, ‘that will leave them neither root nor branch.... You shall trample the wicked, for they shall be ashes under the soles of your feet” (Malachi 4:1, 3).

That destruction is called the “second death” (vs 6). It is final. Since it “came down from God,” this last act of wrath against sin is His *final solution*.

“Saith the Lord: ‘Because thou hast set thine heart as the heart of God; behold, therefore I will bring strangers upon thee, the terrible of the nations: and they shall draw their swords against the beauty of thy wisdom, and they shall defile thy brightness. They shall bring thee down to the pit.’ ‘I will destroy thee, O covering cherub, from the midst of the stones of fire.... I will cast thee to the ground, I will lay thee before kings, that they may behold thee.... I will bring thee to ashes upon the earth in the sight of all them that behold thee.... Thou shalt be a terror, and never shalt thou be any more.’ Ezekiel 28:6-8, 16-19.

“Every battle of the warrior is with confused noise, and garments rolled in blood; but this shall be with burning and fuel of fire.’ ‘The indignation of the Lord is upon all nations, and His fury upon all their armies: He hath utterly destroyed them, He hath delivered them to the slaughter.’ ‘Upon the wicked He shall rain quick burning coals, fire and brimstone and an horrible tempest: this shall be the portion of their cup.’ Isaiah 9:5; 34:2; Psalm 11:6, margin. Fire comes down from God out of heaven. The earth is broken up. The weapons concealed in its depths are drawn forth. Devouring flames burst from every yawning chasm. The very rocks are on fire. The day has come that shall burn as an oven. The elements melt with fervent heat, the earth also, and the works that are therein are burned up. Malachi 4:1; 2 Peter 3:10. The earth’s surface seems one molten mass – a vast, seething lake of fire. It is the time of the judgment and perdition of ungodly men – ‘the day of the Lord’s vengeance, and the year of recompenses for the controversy of Zion.’ Isaiah 34:8.⁷⁹

VERSE 10: “And the devil that deceived them was cast into the lake of fire and brimstone, where the beast and the false prophet are, and shall be tormented day and night for ever and ever.”

Verse 10 – “And the devil that deceived them was cast into the lake of fire and brimstone.”

This is the ultimate bruising of the head (Genesis 3:15),⁸⁰ fulfilling: “Now is the judgment of this world: now shall the prince of this world be cast out” (John 12:31) and “Then shall he say also unto them on the left hand, Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels” (Matthew 25:41).

The punishment/suffering is in proportion to the guilt of the sin (Luke 12:47-48).

⁷⁹ White, Ellen G.; *The Great Controversy*, pp. 672-673.

⁸⁰ Thomas, *Op. cit.*, p. 426.

“The wicked receive their recompense in the earth. Proverbs 11:31. They ‘shall be stubble: and the day that cometh shall burn them up, saith the Lord of hosts.’ Malachi 4:1. Some are destroyed as in a moment, while others suffer many days. All are punished ‘according to their deeds.’ The sins of the righteous having been transferred to Satan, he is made to suffer not only for his own rebellion, but for all the sins which he has caused God’s people to commit. His punishment is to be far greater than that of those whom he has deceived. After all have perished who fell by his deceptions, he is still to live and suffer on. In the cleansing flames the wicked are at last destroyed, root and branch – Satan the root, his followers the branches. The full penalty of the law has been visited; the demands of justice have been met; and heaven and earth, beholding, declare the righteousness of Jehovah.

“Satan’s work of ruin is forever ended. For six thousand years he has wrought his will, filling the earth with woe and causing grief throughout the universe. The whole creation has groaned and travailed together in pain. Now God’s creatures are forever delivered from his presence and temptations. ‘The whole earth is at rest, and is quiet: they [the righteous] break forth into singing.’ Isaiah 14:7. And a shout of praise and triumph ascends from the whole loyal universe. ‘The voice of a great multitude,’ ‘as the voice of many waters, and as the voice of mighty thunderings,’ is heard, saying: ‘Alleluia: for the Lord God omnipotent reigneth.’ Revelation 19:6.

“While the earth was wrapped in the fire of destruction, the righteous abode safely in the Holy City. Upon those that had part in the first resurrection, the second death has no power. While God is to the wicked a consuming fire, He is to His people both a sun and a shield. Revelation 20:6; Psalm 84:11.”⁸¹

Satan was let loose at the end of the thousand years to spread his deception over the wicked host. Now the Lamb brings the battle to an end when Satan is consigned to death.

Some expositors contend that the “fire” could not be literal since Satan is a spiritual being. In addition, the message of Satan’s destruction comes distinct from that of the beast and false prophet. That would mean that there would be two lakes of fire, one literal for the beast and false prophet and one symbolic for Satan.

We already noticed that Jesus said that there would be an “everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels” (Matthew 25:41). That fire is also to be for the wicked: “Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire” (Matthew 25:16).

To Satan, in the symbol of the king of Tyre, God declared “thou art a man,” “thou shalt die,” “I have spoken it; saith the Lord God,” “thou shalt nevermore have any being,” (ASV) “shall be no more forever,” (NKJV) (cf. Isaiah 27:1, Hebrews 2:14, Romans 16:20). Fire came down from heaven and devoured them, Gog and Magog – Satan and his angels. They cease to be (Ezekiel 28:2, 8-10). “Is this the man?” (Isaiah 14:16). Satan will be destroyed with man, as a man, in the same fire.

God explicitly said: “Them that contended with thee: they that war against thee shall be as nothing, and as a thing of nought” (Isaiah 41:12).

⁸¹ White, Ellen G.; *The Great Controversy*, pp. 673.

Verse 10 – “where the beast and the false prophet are,”

These are the other two members of the false trinity. They were first described as a unit in Revelation 16:13, where they were spewing idolatrous falsehood and deceits out of their mouths. Now, all those who tried to take God’s place or be like Him come to their end.

“And he shall be tormented with fire and brimstone in the presence of the holy angels, and in the presence of the Lamb: ... And the beast was taken, and with him the false prophet that wrought miracles before him, with which he deceived them that had received the mark of the beast, and them that worshipped his image. These both were cast alive into a lake of fire burning with brimstone” (Revelation 14:10b, 19:20).

In this event the sovereignty of God and the futility of Satan stand out. The whole of Scripture has looked forward to this moment.⁸² Satan’s host – two of the dragon’s heads – are destroyed. The beast represents the papacy, and the false prophet, apostate Protestantism. Together with Satan they are called Babylon (Revelation 16:12-19). Their end has come.

Verse 10 – “and shall be tormented day and night for ever and ever.”

The metaphorical expression “day and night” suggests to many scholars that the fiery punishment is eternal – “ever and ever.” They conclude that the picture is too detailed to mean anything else. The exegetical ties noted above under the first phrase of this verse would firmly refute this. Eternal punishment would serve no moral or legal purpose. The controversy between good and evil has ended.

Sodom and Gomorrah are “suffering the vengeance of eternal fire” (Jude 7). Sodom’s punishment does not continue (II Peter 2:6). Malachi 4:1 and 3 notes that the wicked will be burned in the day of the Lord, leaving nothing but ashes. Fire can burn as long as there is fuel. Once it becomes ashes, the fuel is spent.⁸³

The thoroughness of this is further detailed in the 14th verse. Even death and hell are destroyed.

“How repugnant to every emotion of love and mercy, and even to our sense of justice, is the doctrine that the wicked dead are tormented with fire and brimstone in an eternally burning hell; that for the sins of a brief earthly life they are to suffer torture as long as God shall live. Yet this doctrine has been widely taught and is still embodied in many of the creeds of Christendom. Said a learned doctor of divinity: ‘The sight of hell torments will exalt the happiness of the saints forever. When they see others who are of the same nature and born under the same circumstances, plunged in such misery, and they so distinguished, it will make them sensible of how happy they are.’ Another used these words: ‘While the decree of reprobation is eternally executing on the vessels of wrath, the smoke of their torment will be eternally ascending in view of the vessels of mercy, who, instead of taking the part of these miserable objects, will say, Amen, Alleluia! praise ye the Lord!’”⁸⁴

⁸² Osborne, *Op. cit.*, p. 716.

⁸³ Brooks, *Op. cit.*, p. 7.

⁸⁴ White, Ellen G.; *The Great Controversy*, p. 535.

VERSE 11: “And I saw a great white throne, and him that sat on it, from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away; and there was found no place for them.”

This verse is a commentary insert. It alludes to not only God’s sovereign rule over all people but even over the very elements of matter itself.

Verse 11 – “And I saw a great white throne,”

John earlier was given visual and likely spatial contact with God’s throne. In that vision he said, “Behold, a throne was set in heaven, and one sat on the throne” (Revelation 4:2, cf. 5:7). Here, the imagery is embellished. It is a “great” and “white” throne. When the word sat (*kathemenon*) (“him that sat”) is used, especially on a throne, a judgment scene is represented. Daniel saw similar imagery: “I beheld till the thrones were cast down, and the Ancient of days did sit, ... the judgment was set, and the books were opened” (Daniel 7:9-10).

It is a great (*megan*) throne because God’s final act of judgment is about to occur.⁸⁵ It is white because purity, holiness and righteousness are its standards. “Righteousness and judgment are the habitation of his throne” (Psalm 97:2).

This scene is the consummate judgment to which all previous judgments pointed.⁸⁶

Verse 11 – “and him that sat on it, from whose face”

Who is the “him” sitting in judgment on the throne? Scholars vary in their viewpoints. There are three clues that God introduces to suggest that it is Jesus. He is on a throne, it is white and, finally, His face causes fleeing. Christ’s face (*prosopou*) previously caused the wicked to cry for the mountains and rocks to fall on them (6:16). At His coming, the “brightness of His coming” destroys them (II Thessalonians 2:8; cf. Matthew 25:31). That face appears to be Jesus’.

Earlier, He self-declared that He was “set down” on His Father’s throne (Revelation 3:21). Then He was seated upon a “white cloud” (14:14). Then upon a “white horse” (6:2, 19:11). This “white throne” appears to be His final place of seating.

Jesus said, “the Father judgeth no man, but hath committed all judgment unto the Son” (John 5:22; cf. II Corinthians 5:10, II Timothy 4:1). “For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ” (II Corinthians 5:10). John doesn’t label who this Being is. Since John earlier notes the saints “reigned with Christ” a thousand years (Revelation 20:2), a Christocentric theme is being followed.

- Christ (angel) imprisons Satan (vs 1)
- Christ reigns (vs 4 and 6)
- Christ judges (vss 11-12)
- God sends fire (vs 9) (Christ)
- God judges (vs 12) (Christ)

“In the presence of the assembled inhabitants of earth and heaven the final coronation of the Son of God takes place. And now, invested with supreme majesty and power, the King of kings pronounces sentence upon the rebels against His government and ex-

⁸⁵ Thomas, *Op. cit.*, p. 428.

⁸⁶ Beale, *Op. cit.*, p. 1031.

ecutes justice upon those who have transgressed His law and oppressed His people. Says the prophet of God: 'I saw a great white throne, and Him that sat on it, from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away; and there was found no place for them. And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God; and the books were opened: and another book was opened, which is the book of life: and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works.' Revelation 20:11, 12."⁸⁷

Verse 11 – “the earth and the heaven fled away; and there was found no place for them.”

This picture is one of total annihilation of heaven and earth. It is not a foreign Scriptural metaphor:

- “the heavens will vanish like smoke” (Isaiah 51:6)
- “the heavens will disappear with a roar” (II Peter 3:7, 10)
- “And all the host of heaven shall be dissolved” (Isaiah 34:4)
- “And the world passeth away, and the lust thereof” (I John 2:17)

This predicts the departure of the old creation.⁸⁸ This aligns with the Biblical view that matter itself is only temporary (Psalms 97:5, 102:25-26; Isaiah 51:6; Matthew 24:35; Mark 13:31; Luke 16:17, 21:33; Hebrews 1:10-12; II Peter 3:10). It disappears and is nowhere to be found.

This cosmic destruction will be replaced with a new heaven and earth for the “first heaven and first earth” (Revelation 21:1) have fled away. “Was found no place for them” echoes Daniel 2:35 when the wicked kingdoms are destroyed at the end – a complete destruction of the entire world occurs. With this vision the chapter on sin closes – forever.⁸⁹

In Biblical judgment scenes the functions are divided into: reviewing the evidence, then sentencing of the guilty and, finally, executing the judgment. All three are distinct events. They help define end-time issues. This verse is the execution of the wicked, the final act of judgment, previously described in verses 9 and 10.

VERSE 12: “And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God; and the books were opened: and another book was opened, which is *the book of life*: and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works.”

“And I saw” (*kaididon*) represents another transition in John’s visual communiqués. He just saw God on His throne; now, a judgment scene at that throne. A review of events that led to the final act of judgment begins. This begins a series of miniature interludes to embellish key details of the story just told.

⁸⁷ White, Ellen G.; *The Great Controversy*, p. 666.

⁸⁸ Thomas, *Op. cit.*, p. 429.

⁸⁹ Mounce, *Op. cit.*, p. 374.

Verse 12 – “And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God;”

It is implied that the dead who are standing before God’s throne are either those who had been dead and are now raised or those whose cases have come before God, or both. In 5:6 the Lamb standing before the throne conveys that His resurrection has occurred. The same thought is conveyed here.⁹⁰ Earlier, John mentioned that the “rest of the dead” are not resurrected until the thousand years are completed (vs 5). These are now those “dead.” Since the next verse suggests that they are physically before the throne, the weight of evidence would suggest that the second resurrection (20:5) has occurred.⁹¹ Thus far in this chapter we have seen this sequenced imagery:



How do we know? It ends once again with the lake of fire (vs 14). The imagery of the next verse suggests that they are physically before the throne; the weight of evidence would suggest that the second resurrection (20:5) has occurred.⁹² These represent the unrighteous dead from all ages. They are the wicked dead that are judged during the thousand years by the saints and Jesus.

“After the saints are changed to immortality and caught up together with Jesus, after they receive their harps, their robes, and their crowns, and enter the city, Jesus and the saints sit in judgment. The books are opened – the book of life and the book of death. The book of life contains the good deeds of the saints; and the book of death contains the evil deeds of the wicked. These books are compared with the statute book, the Bible, and according to that men are judged. The saints, in unison with Jesus, pass their judgment upon the wicked dead. ‘Behold ye,’ said the angel, ‘the saints, in unison with Jesus, sit in judgment, and mete out to the wicked according to the deeds done in the body, and that which they must receive at the execution of the judgment is set off against their names.’ This, I saw, was the work of the saints with Jesus through the one thousand years in the Holy City before it descends to the earth.”⁹³

The wicked now face, literally, their charges before the throne.

The phrase “great and small” refers to the totality of the people being judged (11:18, II Chronicles 15:13, Psalm 115:13, Jeremiah 16:6).

⁹⁰ Beale, *Op. cit.*, p. 1032.

⁹¹ Thomas, *Op. cit.*, p. 430.

⁹² *Ibid.*

⁹³ White, Ellen G.; *Early Writings*, pp. 52-53.

Verse 12 – “and the books were opened: and another book was opened, which is the book of life:”

There has already been a judgmental review. This is additional commentary to show how that was done. Jesus and the saints (the jury) pronounced the sentence from these records. Soon Jesus (the Judge) will execute that judgment by fire.

The Scriptures make frequent reference to a register of human deeds (Deuteronomy 32:34, Psalm 56:8, Isaiah 65:6, Daniel 7:10, Malachi 3:16, Matthew 12:37).

The observation that the books were opened, then another book was opened (the Book of Life), suggests that something was first accomplished by reviewing the scrolls. The scrolls (plural) apparently support what is or is not recorded in the Book of Life. The portrayal draws on Daniel 7:10, where it says “the books were opened.” There, the focus was on the evil deeds of the end-time persecutor of God’s people. Is Revelation 20 the same timed imagery? The parallels are strong. Daniel said, accompanying that review, “A river of fire was flowing, coming out from before him” (Daniel 7:10 – NIV).

The Book of Life is God’s divine register of all those who remained faithful to Him (Isaiah 4:3, Psalm 69:28, Daniel 12:1, Luke 10:20).

“It originally contained the names of all for whom Christ died, i.e., the whole world, but at the judgment of the Great White Throne many blank spaces will signal the removal of many names who never believed in Christ for salvation (Walvoord).”⁹⁴

Here it is mentioned as “another book” to draw attention to those who are excluded from it (cf. 13:8, 17:8). Moses understood the concept of exclusion when he pleaded with God to forgive Israel’s sins at Sinai. Then he said that if God would not, “blot me, I pray thee, out of thy book which thou hast written” (Exodus 32:32). Then in a great clarification point for all ages God said, “Whosoever hath sinned against me, him will I blot out of my book” (Exodus 32:33). Christians who are victorious will not be erased from the Book of Life (3:5). Verse 15 says that if anyone’s name was not found written in the Book of Life, he was thrown into the lake of fire. This means that the judgment is not arbitrary but based on evidence.⁹⁵

“And if ye call on the Father, who without respect of persons judgeth according to every man’s work, pass the time of your sojourning *here* in fear” (I Peter 1:17).

The church – the saved – is composed of those who are “registered” in heaven (Hebrews 12:23).

The time has “arrived for the last and final judgment of the human race.”⁹⁶

Verse 12 – “and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works.”

“The theme of judgment by works has been used in Revelation for both the saved (2:23; 1:18b; 14:13; 22:12) and the unsaved (11:18a; 18:6; 20:13), and it is a major teaching throughout Scripture and Jewish writings (see on 14:13). This is the basic juridical principle (*lex talionis*, the law of retribution) of the OT, the Roman world, and of this book: what we do to others, God will do to us. For believers the theme is simple: we are saved by grace but will be judged by works. There are many other NT passages on the

⁹⁴ Thomas, *Op. cit.*, p. 432.

⁹⁵ Mounce, *Op. cit.*, p. 376.

⁹⁶ Brighton, *Op. cit.*, p. 581.

judgment of believers ‘according to their works’ (Matt. 16:27; Rom. 14:12; I Cor. 3:12-15; 2 Cor. 5:10; 1 Pet. 1:17). [Matt. 25:41; John 5:29; Jer. 17:10; Rom. 2:6; Heb. 4:12-13].⁹⁷

Since the wicked are judged by their deeds, the “books” must contain the record of a person’s behavior.⁹⁸

VERSE 13: “And the sea gave up the dead which were in it; and death and hell delivered up the dead which were in them: and they were judged every man according to their works.”

The implied second resurrection from the previous verse is now described further.

Verse 13 – “And the sea gave up the dead which were in it; and death and hell delivered up the dead which were in them:”

The phrase “gave up” (*edoken*) and “delivered up” (*edokan*) is “another way of depicting bodily resurrection.” Repetition of “the dead” (*tous nekrow*) and “the dead” (*tous nekrous*) never relates to those arising to eternal life. They are destined for judgment and the second and final death.⁹⁹

They arose from death, hell and the sea. The meaning of “sea” here is not clear. Most agree that it has an evil connotation because it was where the “dead” had been. It contextually parallels “death” and “hell.” The wicked had been dead and confined to the sea, hell and death. Now they have been resurrected.

Some expositors argue for literal watery “sea” and earthly “death” (graves). They then note that Daniel 12:2 describes a resurrection of all who “sleep in the dust of the earth will awake,” which proves this distinction. This reasoning, however, is accepted by only a few Bible students. The weight of evidence portrays a resurrection from death no matter where that individual was.

Verse 13 – “and they were judged every man according to their works.”

This repeats the message already given in 12b. An interesting chiasm develops, but the emphasis moves from group imagery to individual accountability.

Dead stand before the throne
 Dead judged by their works
 Sea gave up the dead
 Each person judged by their works
 Each person was judged

God’s judgments are always based upon works. This does not make a case for salvation by works but reveals that works are what final condemnation is based on. What kind of works? That is not addressed here, but ties elsewhere would argue for obedience to the commandments of God (Revelation 12:17, 14:12).

“This court scene, in which the Creator is the Judge, goes beyond all other descriptions of the final judgment in either the Old or New Testaments. The redeemed, who have been resurrected in the first resurrection at the beginning of the millennium (20:6),

⁹⁷ Osborne, *Op. cit.*, p. 720.

⁹⁸ Aune, *Op. cit.*, p. 1102.

⁹⁹ Thomas, *Op. cit.*, p. 432.

are exempt from this final judgment of the world. The passage applies to the fullest extent what the Gospel of John teaches:

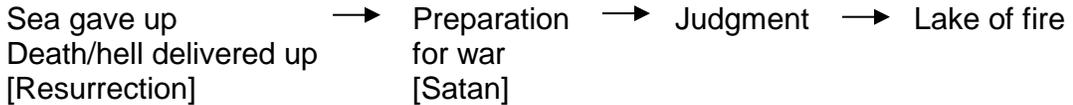
“Whoever believes in him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe stands condemned already because he has not believed in the name of God’s one and only Son’ (John 3:18). ‘Do not be amazed at this, for a time is coming when all who are in their graves will hear his voice and come out ... those who have done evil will rise to be condemned’ (John 5:28, 29).”¹⁰⁰

VERSE 14: “And death and hell were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death.”

In this narrative we have seen several sequential end-time messages:

1. First: Fall of Babylon — heavenly praise — marriage supper of the Lamb — second coming — false prophet, beast and remaining wicked are cast into lake of fire (first death) (Revelation 18:8–19:21)
2. Next: Satan bound one thousand years — Satan loosed — he and followers attack saints and New Jerusalem — Satan and his host are cast into lake of fire (Revelation 20:1-10)
3. Commentary insert: God’s Throne — wicked resurrected/stand before it — judgment — death and hell are cast into the lake of fire (second death – focus of 20:14) (Revelation 20:11-15)

This commentary insert (number 3 above) shows that Satan’s followers (number 2 above) had been resurrected (predicted in 20:5, implied in 20:12). Though Satan successfully rallies his supporters, there comes a final judgment. This *immediately* precedes the “lake of fire.”



Thus, an event-driven story reveals the sequence of rebellion’s final stand against divine justice.

Verse 14 – “And death and hell were cast into the lake of fire.”

Fire

In verse 10 the wicked were cast into the lake of fire. Here, the record states that death and hell are cast into the lake of fire. Scholars dance all around this verse because so many believe that the wicked suffer for eternity. Much of that *opinion* comes from apocryphal emphasis (extra Biblical books) that is not part of the sacred canon.

The lake of fire is the same as the second death (cf. 21:8). Previous to this, the first end-time fire judgment comes with the burning coals from the altar, which purified the saints and destroyed some of the wicked in a pre-advent act (8:5). At the advent

¹⁰⁰ LaRondelle, *Op. cit.*, p. 463.

(I Thessalonians 2:8, Hebrews 12:29), the fiery brightness of His coming destroys. Finally, a fire of judgment consumes or destroys in a final expression of divine justice – first for the wicked, then death and hell. This is important to be contextually consistent with the heaven and earth being “passed away” (21:1) so a new heaven and new earth could be made.

“Fire comes down from God out of heaven. The earth is broken up. The weapons concealed in its depths are drawn forth. Devouring flames burst from every yawning chasm. The very rocks are on fire. The day has come that shall burn as an oven. The elements melt with fervent heat, the earth also, and the works that are therein are burned up. Malachi 4:1; 2 Peter 3:10. The earth’s surface seems one molten mass – a vast, seething lake of fire. It is the time of the judgment and perdition of ungodly men ... The fire that consumes the wicked purifies the earth. Every trace of the curse is swept away.”¹⁰¹

Fire / Coals → Fire / Brightness of Jesus’ Coming → Fire / Final Destruction

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

“But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night; in the which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up” (II Peter 3:10).

In the Old Testament “Gog and Magog” represented nations hostile to God’s people. At the end, hail, fire and brimstone from heaven destroy those hostile people (Ezekiel 38:22). Many scholars conclude that Ezekiel’s prophecy describes what is unveiled here in Revelation 20.¹⁰²

“In the cleansing flames the wicked are at last destroyed, root and branch – Satan the root, his followers the branches. The full penalty of the law has been visited; the demands of justice have been met; and heaven and earth, beholding, declare the righteousness of Jehovah.

“Satan’s work of ruin is forever ended. For six thousand years he has wrought his will, filling the earth with woe and causing grief throughout the universe. The whole creation has groaned and travailed together in pain. Now God’s creatures are forever delivered from his presence and temptations.”¹⁰³

“This millennial view ‘places the emphasis not upon an earthly reign of glory for the redeemed, but upon the vindication of God, the clearing and honoring of His name in all the dealings with the sin issue’ (J. Badina, in *Symposium on Rev.*, II: 242). The millennium of Rev. 20 then offers the ultimate theodicy of the Creator. Through the gift of His Son and by the self-sacrifice of Christ, God’s love and justice stand forever as an unassailable union before the created cosmos. All Satan’s charges against God’s character and government are forever laid to rest.”¹⁰⁴

Death and Hell

Death is personified and is the “last enemy” (I Corinthians 15:26) to be destroyed. Paul describes a song of victory over death in I Corinthians 15:54: “So when this cor-

¹⁰¹ White, Ellen G.; *The Great Controversy*, pp. 672-674.

¹⁰² Aune, *Op. cit.*, p. 1104.

¹⁰³ White, Ellen G.; *The Great Controversy*, p. 673.

¹⁰⁴ LaRondelle, *Op. cit.*, p. 464.

ruptible shall have put on incorruption, and this mortal shall have put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, Death is swallowed up in victory.” – quoting Hosea 13:14: “I will ransom them from the power of the grave; I will redeem them from death: O death, I will be thy plagues; O grave, I will be thy destruction: repentance shall be hid from mine eyes.” Hell is also personified and comes to its end with death. The imagery of utter destruction is conveyed and reinforced with “there shall be no more death ... For the former things are passed away” (Revelation 21:4). The very power of death itself is now destroyed.¹⁰⁵

In the fourth Seal of Revelation 6:8 the rider of the pale horse was named “Death.” “Hell” followed in his wake. Satan was that rider, and the grave (eternal loss) followed. Here in Revelation 20, death (the ultimate fiendish goal of Satan for his followers) and the grave are destroyed.

With the annihilation of “death,” what remains in the universe is immortality.¹⁰⁶ Death is swallowed up forever. All tears are now wiped away. “He will swallow up death in victory; and the Lord GOD will wipe away tears from off all faces; and the rebuke of his people shall he take away from off all the earth: for the LORD hath spoken *it*” (Isaiah 25:8).

Long ago a warning and a promise were given regarding this time: “What do ye conspire against the Lord? He will make an utter end of it. Affliction will not rise up a second time” (Nahum 1:9 – NKJV).

“The Lord is proving and testing His people. Angels of God are watching the development of character and weighing moral worth. Probation is almost ended, and you are unready. Oh, that the word of warning might burn into your souls! Get ready! get ready! Work while the day lasts, for the night cometh when no man can work. The mandate will go forth: He that is holy, let him be holy still; and he that is filthy, let him be filthy still. The destiny of all will be decided. A few, yes, only a few, of the vast number who people the earth will be saved unto life eternal, while the masses who have not perfected their souls in obeying the truth will be appointed to the second death. O Saviour, save the purchase of Thy blood! is the cry of my anguished heart.”¹⁰⁷

VERSE 15: “And whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire.”

This summary note emphasizes a judicial end to the wicked. It implies that all who are listed in the Book of Life are spared the fiery judgment that 3:5 and 21:27 make explicit. They will be given eternal life.

“This implication is warranted by the positive form of the statement in Dan. 12:1 LXX: ‘all the people will be saved, *whoever is found written in the book.*’

“What is it about the ‘book of life’ that spares them? The fuller title for the book is ‘the book of life *of the Lamb who was slain*’ (13:8; 21:27: ‘the book of life of the Lamb’). ‘Of the Lamb’ is genitive of either possession or source. The ‘life’ granted the saints in association with the book comes from their identification with the Lamb’s righteous deeds, and especially his death, which means likewise that they are identified with his resurrection life (cf. 5:5-13). They do not suffer judgment for their evil deeds because he has already suffered it for them: he was slain on their behalf (so esp. 1:5 and 5:9; see further

¹⁰⁵ Roloff, *Op. cit.*, p. 232.

¹⁰⁶ Brighton, *Op. cit.*, p. 586.

¹⁰⁷ White, Ellen G.; *Testimonies*, vol. 2, pp. 401-402.

on 13:8). The Lamb acknowledges before God all who are written in the book (3:5) and are identified with his righteousness and his death.”¹⁰⁸

The wicked join the devil, the beast and the false prophet in the fire. They have lost eternal life. Who are these individuals? Those who worshiped the beast and “received his mark on their foreheads” (14:9, 19:20). That mark was received instead of the seal of God. Thus, removal of their names from the “book of life.”¹⁰⁹ Ezekiel 13:9 notes that false prophets and teachers won’t be recorded in the census of Israel but will be excommunicated from the covenant community by Jesus Himself.¹¹⁰

Retention of one’s name within that book also relates to the identity to truth and mysteries of the Book of Revelation.

“This revelation was given for the guidance and comfort of the church throughout the Christian dispensation. Yet religious teachers have declared that it is a sealed book and its secrets cannot be explained. Therefore many have turned from the prophetic record, refusing to devote time and study to its mysteries. But God does not wish His people to regard the book thus. It is ‘the revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave unto Him, to show unto His servants things which must shortly come to pass.’ ‘Blessed is he that readeth,’ the Lord declares, ‘and they that hear the words of this prophecy, and keep those things which are written therein: for the time is at hand.’ Verses 1, 3. ‘I testify unto every man that heareth the words of the prophecy of this book, If any man shall add unto these things, God shall add unto him the plagues that are written in this book: and if any man shall take away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part out of the book of life, and out of the Holy City, and from the things which are written in this book. He which testifieth these things saith, Surely I come quickly.’ Revelation 22:18-20....

“Its truths are addressed to those living in the last days of this earth’s history, as well as to those living in the days of John. Some of the scenes depicted in this prophecy are in the past, some are now taking place; some bring to view the close of the great conflict between the powers of darkness and the Prince of heaven, and some reveal the triumphs and joys of the redeemed in the earth made new.”¹¹¹

¹⁰⁸ Beale, *Op. cit.*, p. 1037.

¹⁰⁹ Osborne, *Op. cit.*, p. 724.

¹¹⁰ Block, Daniel I.; *The Book of Ezekiel – Chapters 1-24*, pp 403-408.

¹¹¹ White, Ellen G.; *Acts of the Apostles*, pp. 583-584.

REVELATION

CHAPTER 21

INTRODUCTION

Juxtaposed to the fate of the wicked and judgment of the Great White Throne comes now a message of bliss for the saints (21:1-7). Language of assurance and anticipatory hope comes with the message of a new creation. Once more, before the description is complete, John will be inspired to look back at all those who perished in the “lake of fire” (Revelation 21:8). He lists their most grievous sins and declares their only reward is death. Chapter 21 is a thoughtful and refreshing way for this apocalyptic book to summarize the final end to the “great controversy” story.

To the student of Scripture, two destinies are presented. The glorious reality of starting over again with everything brand new is one God wants us to crave. This is dramatized by John’s wonderful description of his vision and audition in this chapter.

“Not just the Book of Revelation but the whole Bible has pointed to this moment. Since Adam and Eve lost their place in Paradise and sin reigned on earth (Rom. 5:12–21), the divine plan has prepared for the moment when sin would finally be eradicated and the original purpose of God when he created humankind could come to pass.”¹

Many of the promises given to the “overcomers” of the seven churches are fulfilled with the “new heaven and new earth” (2:7, 11, 17, 26-28; 3:5, 12, 21). This is a new reality for the redeemed human race. They have passed into a “clean atmosphere of ... eternal morning.”²

“A fear of making the future inheritance seem too material has led many to spiritualize away the very truths which lead us to look upon it as our home. Christ assured His disciples that He went to prepare mansions for them in the Father’s house. Those who accept the teachings of God’s word will not be wholly ignorant concerning the heavenly abode. And yet, ‘eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love Him.’ 1 Corinthians 2:9. Human language is inadequate to describe the reward of the righteous. It will be known only to those who behold it. No finite mind can comprehend the glory of the Paradise of God.”³

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

“And I saw” (*kaiedon*) introduces another thematic transition. Another will occur in the next verse.

Verse 1 – “And I saw a new heaven and a new earth:”

This continues a chronological sequence which started in chapter 18:

¹ Osborne, Grant R.; *Revelation* (Baker Book House; Grand Rapids, MI), p. 726.

² Moffatt, J. B.; *Revelation, Expositors Greek Testament*, vol. 5, p. 477.

³ White, Ellen G.; *The Great Controversy*, pp. 674-675.

Fall of Babylon
 Result of first Trumpet plagues
 Call to the Marriage Supper of the Lamb
 Second Coming
 Millennium – Satan bound
 End of Millennium – Satan loosed
 Lake of Fire
 New Heavens / New Earth

The promise of a new heaven and a new earth was introduced in the Old Testament: “For, behold, I create new heavens and a new earth: and the former shall not be remembered, nor come into mind” (Isaiah 65:17; cf., Isaiah 66:2, Psalm 102:25-26).

Peter talked about it before John’s work was written: “Nevertheless we, according to his promise, look for new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness” (II Peter 3:13).

Genesis 1:1 says, “God created the heavens and the earth.” There is a divine joy expressed in Isaiah but not in Genesis. This is interesting, seemingly suggesting that God is glad it is all over! A deep sense of satisfaction is expressed.

Verse 1 – “for the first heaven and the first earth were passed away;”

This appears to justify why the new creation can occur. Nothing remains or can be a barrier to beginning everything again. The earlier creation was spoiled because of sin and death. It became enemy occupied territory. That is now changed. Sin and sinners have been burned up. The earth has “melted with fervent heat” (II Peter 3:10). The old heaven and earth are passed away.

This destruction of the earth was predicted in the Old Testament to be by fire (Zephaniah 1:18-22, 3:8).

“When the flood of waters was at its height upon the earth, it had the appearance of a boundless lake of water. When God finally purifies the earth, it will appear like a boundless lake of fire. As God preserved the ark amid the commotions of the flood, because it contained eight righteous persons, he will preserve the New Jerusalem, containing the faithful of all ages, from righteous Abel down to the last saint which lived. Although the whole earth, with the exception of that portion where the city rests, will be wrapped in a sea of liquid fire, yet the city is preserved as was the ark, by a miracle of Almighty power. It stands unharmed amid the devouring elements.”⁴

Verse 1 – “and there was no more sea.”

This phrase provides comprehensiveness to John’s message. Heaven and earth are gone; the sea is also. Many commentators conclude that it symbolizes evil with this summary statement that it is gone.⁵ Contextually, one would have to make a switch from *earth–heaven* reality to *sea* figuratively. It is doubtful that John had that in mind.

An alluring thought comes with this new vision. Paul had noted that “if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new” (II Corinthians 5:17); “in Christ Jesus ... availeth ... a new creation” (Galatians

⁴ White, Ellen G.; *Spiritual Gifts*, vol. 3, pp. 87-88.

⁵ Beale, G. K.; *The New International Greek Testament Commentary; The Book of Revelation* (William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, Grand Rapids, Michigan, 1999), p. 1042.

6:15). Long before the new heavens and earth, before the millennium and even the Advent, is a fulfillment of human restoration. John picks up on this in 21:2–22:5 by figurative portrayal of a redeemed community.

This captivating comparison is developed further by Paul’s words: “Behold, I show you a mystery; We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump” (I Corinthians 15:51-52). Thus, we see unfolding:

God Dwells with Man (21:3)

	<u>Individual</u>	<u>Corporate Body – City</u>	<u>Heavens and Earth</u>
Galatians 6:15	New creation	New Jerusalem	New heavens / earth
II Corinthians 5:17	God in man (Heb. 8:10, 10:8) (spiritual)	(spiritual & literal) (Rev. 21:9-25)	(Rev. 21:1)
I Corinthians 15:51-52	Changed creation (physical)		Former things passed away (Rev. 21:4)

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

Verse 2 – “And I John saw”

Many expositors place this as chronologically after the new creations of the previous verses. The imagery of a “city” descending from heaven is felt to be part of the new heaven and new earth vision.

But structurally throughout the book, each time John uses the words “and I looked [saw]” (*kai eidon*), “after this” (*metatouto*) or “behold” (*idou*), a special break or transition is occurring.

Unique to this book is this verse. Between the two words *kai* and *eidon* is a phrase, “the Holy City, the new Jerusalem” descending. In spite of this linguistic emphasis, the structural transitional words, *kai ... eidon*, remain intact.

Where then is the timing of the verses in this chapter? Revelation 20:14-15 just described the lake of fire. This is when the heavens and earth are burned up and melted with fervent heat (II Peter 3:10). What follows? A new heaven and a new earth (Revelation 21:1).

It would seem logical that the arrival of the New Jerusalem would follow. The earth is now ready to receive it. But that is not what is occurring. This is a commentary insert. Note in the previous chapter this sequence:

- Satan is released from prison (20:7)
- He goes out to deceive the nations (20:8)
- To the four corners of the earth (worldwide) (20:8)
- World gathered together for battle (20:8) – Who will fight?
- Surround the camp of God’s people (20:9)

- “The city He loves” (20:9)
- Then fire comes down and devours them (20:9)

The city – New Jerusalem – comes down here in 21:2. That means that what is being described occurs before Satan begins his military campaign.

Some see this as a fulfillment of Zechariah’s vision at the end of the millennium.

“Christ descends upon the Mount of Olives, whence, after His resurrection, He ascended, and where angels repeated the promise of His return. Says the prophet: ‘The Lord my God shall come, and all the saints with thee.’ ‘And his feet shall stand in that day upon the mount of Olives, which is before Jerusalem on the east, and the mount of Olives shall cleave in the midst thereof, ... and there shall be a very great valley.’ ‘And the Lord shall be king over all the earth: in that day shall there be one Lord, and his name one.’ Zechariah 14:5, 4, 9. As the New Jerusalem, in its dazzling splendor, comes down out of heaven, it rests upon the place purified and made ready to receive it, and Christ, with His people and the angels, enters the Holy City.”⁶

Again: “Then at the close of the one thousand years, Jesus, with the angels and all the saints, leaves the Holy City, and while He is descending to the earth with them, the wicked dead are raised, and then the very men that ‘pierced Him,’ being raised, will see Him afar off in all His glory, the angels and saints with Him, and will wail because of Him. They will see the prints of the nails in His hands and in His feet, and where they thrust the spear into His side. The prints of the nails and the spear will then be His glory. It is at the close of the one thousand years that Jesus stands upon the Mount of Olives, and the mount parts asunder and becomes a mighty plain. Those who flee at that time are the wicked, who have just been raised. Then the Holy City comes down and settles on the plain. Satan then imbues the wicked with his spirit. He flatters them that the army in the city is small, and that his army is large, and that they can overcome the saints and take the city.”⁷ (Revelation 20:9)

Using personal identity (verse 2), “I John saw,” makes it almost seem as though he were in outer space, being an eyewitness to the city moving through space. He is so awed It’s as though he is saying, “I, John – yes me – really saw that city coming down!”

Verse 2 – “holy city, new Jerusalem,”

This city is identified as “the holy city,” which echoes an Old Jerusalem (by now destroyed by Titus and his armies) theme that was identified as “holy” (Isaiah 52:1; Matthew 4:5, 27:53). It rebelled and fell. This city is depicted now as the “new Jerusalem.” This stresses that something has taken the place of the old. This was prophesied of by Isaiah: “For Jerusalem’s sake I will not rest, until the righteousness thereof go forth as brightness, and the salvation thereof as a lamp *that* burneth. And the Gentiles shall see thy righteousness, and all kings thy glory: and thou shalt be called by a new name, which the mouth of the LORD shall name” (Isaiah 62:1-2). Already we know this is of superior and supreme importance because the Philadelphian overcomers were promised that that name, “new Jerusalem,” would be written on their foreheads.

What does that name mean? “The Lord is there.”⁸ With it being on the forehead, citizenry of that city is revealed. It also is a visible statement that “God is there.” He dwells

⁶ White, Ellen G.; *Maranatha*, p. 336.

⁷ White, Ellen G.; *Early Writings*, p. 52.

⁸ Beale, *Op. cit.*, p. 294.

in that redeemed being, an outward sign that the everlasting covenant has been completed. This reveals the intimate, latter-day presence of God and Christ with His people, expressed in 14:1-4 and later in 22:3-4,⁹ Peter captured this hope: “But in keeping with his promise we are looking forward to a new heaven and a new earth, the home of righteousness” (II Peter 3:13 – NIV).

Verse 2 – “coming down from God out of heaven,”

From John’s vantage point, he witnesses the New Jerusalem “coming down.” In graphic language he portrays explicitly that it came from God (its originator, architect and builder – Hebrews 11:10) right out of heaven itself (place of origin).¹⁰

“This is the city that represented where Satan wanted to sit ‘in the sides of the north’ (Isaiah 14:13). It is ‘the mountain of His holiness. Beautiful for situation, the joy of the whole earth,’ ... ‘Mount Zion, on the sides of the north, the city of the great King.’ Psalm 48:1-2.”¹¹

This continues the imagery begun in the previous verse where the temporary is being replaced by the permanent.

Verse 2 – “prepared as a bride adorned for her husband.”

In the Old Testament, “Jerusalem, the holy city” is used as a symbol for God’s people (Isaiah 52:1-10). Then in beautiful language of a wedding, Isaiah portrays the ultimate relationship His people will have with God: “as a bridegroom rejoices over his bride, so will God rejoice over you” (Isaiah 62:5 – NIV; cf. Isaiah 54:4-8, 60:15-16, 21).

God portrayed an amazing concept: “For thy Maker *is* thine husband; the LORD of hosts *is* his name; and thy Redeemer the Holy One of Israel; The God of the whole earth shall he be called” (Isaiah 54:5). This intimate description delineates the ultimate extreme of a loving God – He makes, He marries. This embellishes the imagery begun earlier: “Let us be glad and rejoice, and give honour to him: for the marriage of the Lamb is come, and his wife hath made herself ready. And to her was granted that she should be arrayed in fine linen, clean and white: for the fine linen is the righteousness of saints. And he saith unto me, Write, Blessed *are* they which are called unto the marriage supper of the Lamb. And he saith unto me, These are the true sayings of God” (Revelation 19:7-9).

The wife “made herself ready” (self-preparation is emphasized),¹² referring to God’s people – the “saints.” How does she make herself ready? By having on “fine linen, clean and white.”

The preparation and adornment here in chapter 21 conveys a similar idea. Yet Paul said, “That he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word, that he might present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish” (Ephesians 5:26-27).

What is man’s part? What is God’s part? The word “adorned” is *kekosemenen* or “cosmetics,” intimating here something that God supplies and man uses. This is beautifully depicted in these thoughts: “We should consider the great sacrifice that was made

⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 1044.

¹⁰ Thomas, Robert L.; *Revelation 8-22 – An Exegetical Commentary*, (Moody Press, Chicago), 1992, p. 442.

¹¹ Brooks, Karen; *Revelation 21* (Prophecy Research Initiative document – 2004), p. 1.

¹² Thomas, *Op. cit.*, p. 442.

in our behalf, to purchase for us the robe of righteousness, woven in the loom of heaven. He has invited us to the wedding feast, and has provided for every one of us the wedding garment. The robe of righteousness has been purchased at infinite cost; and how daring is the insult to Heaven when one presents himself as a candidate for entrance at the wedding feast, when wearing his own citizen's dress of self-righteousness! How greatly he dishonors God, openly showing contempt for the sacrifice made on Calvary! Of such a one it is written, 'And when the king came in to see the guests, he saw there a man which had not on a wedding garment: and he saith unto him, Friend, how camest thou in hither not having a wedding garment? And he was speechless. Then said the king to the servants, Bind him hand and foot, and take him away, and cast him into outer darkness; there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth. For many are called, but few are chosen.' No one will taste of the marriage supper of the Lamb who has not on a wedding garment. But John writes, 'Thou hast a few names even in Sardis which have not defiled their garments; and they shall walk with me in white: for they are worthy. He that overcometh, the same shall be clothed in white raiment; and I will not blot out his name out of the book of life, but I will confess his name before my Father, and before his angels.' Then before it is eternally too late, let each one go to the heavenly Merchantman for the white raiment, the eyesalve, the gold tried in the fire, and the oil of heavenly grace. Let no one put off the day of preparation, lest the call be made, 'Go forth to meet the bridegroom,' and you be found as were the foolish virgins, with no oil in your vessels with your lamps."¹³

VERSE 3: “And I heard a great voice out of heaven saying, Behold, the tabernacle of God *is* with men, and he will dwell with them, and they shall be his people, and God himself shall be with them, *and be their God.*”

Verse 3 – “And I heard a great voice out of heaven saying.”

This is the twentieth time John hears a “loud voice.” Each time it emphasizes that the message is of great importance or a significant transition in “time” is occurring. This voice is from the throne (not “heaven” as translated in the KJV). It doesn't say who is speaking, but it appears to be different from the One “seated on the throne” in verse 5, referring to Christ. It is likely God the Father announcing another incredible step in the development of Christ's kingdom.

“But, could this not be God the Father who ‘hath committed all judgment unto the Son’ (John 5:22) and who had remained in ‘the temple *that* was filled with smoke from the glory of God’ (Rev. 15:8) during the final plagues just prior to the commencement of the millennium? At the same time ‘The Son of man’ had just taken His place on ‘a white cloud’ (Rev. 14:14), which was ‘entirely separate ... from the sanctuary.’ (SpMg 2).”¹⁴ The words of John, “I heard,” shift from one topic or scene to another. There is a distinct change of thought from verses 2 to verse 3.

Verse 3 – “Behold, the tabernacle of God *is* with men, and he will dwell with them, and they shall be his people, and God himself shall be with them, *and be their God.*”

¹³ White, Ellen G.; *The Youth's Instructor*, January 30, 1896.

¹⁴ Wood, Robert, M.D.; *Revelation 21* (Prophecy Research Initiative document – 2004), p. 2.

This reminds us of God tabernacling with Israel in the wilderness. This represents a marriage relationship where two are now abiding with each other. That was highlighted in 19:7-8 where the marriage between the Lamb and His bride was presented. The first step came when the Word became flesh and tabernacled with man (John 1:14). The Shekinah became incarnate.¹⁵

Ezekiel 40-48 references a temple to come in the future. Then specifically: “And he said unto me, Son of man, the place of my throne, and the place of the soles of my feet, where I will dwell in the midst of the children of Israel for ever, and my holy name, shall the house of Israel no more defile, [neither] they, nor their kings, by their whoredom, nor by the carcasses of their kings in their high places” (Ezekiel 43:7).

Many expositors interpret this area of Ezekiel to mean another temple will be built in Jerusalem on the Temple Mount. Contextually, that temple/tabernacle prophecy is fulfilled here in Revelation when God dwells with His people forever. There are even more specific allusions to this in the Old Testament in such verses as: “My tabernacle also shall be with them: yea, I will be their God, and they shall be my people” (Ezekiel 37:27) and “And I will set my tabernacle among you: and my soul shall not abhor you. And I will walk among you, and will be your God, and ye shall be my people” (Leviticus 26:11-12).¹⁶

This all draws on the great multitude imagery we’ve already seen from Revelation 7: “Therefore are they before the throne of God, and serve him day and night in his temple: and he that sitteth on the throne shall dwell among them. They shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more; neither shall the sun light on them, nor any heat. For the Lamb which is in the midst of the throne shall feed them, and shall lead them unto living fountains of waters: and God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes” (Revelation 7:15-17; cf. II Corinthians 6:16).

All these prophecies, dating over several hundred years, will see their final fulfillment in Revelation 21:3. The fulfillment goes beyond Israel and includes “every tribe, tongue, people and nation” (Revelation 5:9, 7:9; cf. Zechariah 2:10-11). God’s intimate “tabernacle” experience was confined to the priests in ancient Israel. Now all the saints are priests (Revelation 20:6, 22:3-4), serving before His presence¹⁷

It is interesting that the word for “people” in this verse is plural. When Abraham was called, God promised that he would be a blessing to all people of the earth (Galatians 3:8, 16, 26-29). Many nations would participate in that redemptive experience (John 10:16). This draws on a rich array of such promises (Jeremiah 7:23, 30:22; Hosea 2:23; Romans 9:25; Revelation 5:9, 7:9, 10:11, 11:9, 13:7, 14:6, 17:15).

The tabernacle has appeared twice in John’s visions as “in heaven” (13:6, 15:5). Now the tabernacling is on the earth. This marks a return to the original state before sin when God and man fellowshiped together (Genesis 3:8). It is the ultimate fulfillment of God’s promises (Jeremiah 24:7).

“The essence of v. 3 is the focal point of John’s whole description of the new Jerusalem: God’s immediate presence with men. The prominence of the theme is evident in v. 3 itself by virtue of a fivefold repetition of the same essential truth in that one verse. It is the principal focus again in 21:7 where the promise to the overcomer is that God would be his God and He would be God’s son. The glory of God in the city in 21:11 is another indication of God’s immediate presence, a presence that is also the direct emphasis of

¹⁵ Osborne, *Op. cit.*, p. 734.

¹⁶ Thomas, *Op. cit.*, p. 443.

¹⁷ Beale, *Op. cit.*, p. 1048.

22:3-4 which speaks of the presence of the throne of God and the Lamb in the city and immediate access to Him for His slaves, enabling them to see His face.”¹⁸

“God himself will be with them” intensifies the divine fellowship being restored. The final words “their God” fulfills the ultimate salvic promise (Exodus 29:45; Leviticus 26:12; Jeremiah 30:22, 31:33, Ezekiel 11:20; 37:27).

This is all a fulfillment of the covenant promise of an intimate relationship. Paul envisions us as the temple with God living in us (II Corinthians 6:16; cf. Hebrews 8:10, 10:16; Jeremiah 31:33).

This is beautifully described by expositor White: “The presence of the Lord, that of old sanctified the mount, has now made sacred the temple reared in His honor.

“In the cleansing of the temple, Jesus was announcing His mission as the Messiah, and entering upon His work. That temple, erected for the abode of the divine Presence, was designed to be an object lesson for Israel and for the world. From eternal ages it was God’s purpose that every created being, from the bright and holy seraph to man, should be a temple for the indwelling of the Creator. Because of sin, humanity ceased to be a temple for God. Darkened and defiled by evil, the heart of man no longer revealed the glory of the Divine One. But by the incarnation of the Son of God, the purpose of Heaven is fulfilled. God dwells in humanity, and through saving grace the heart of man becomes again His temple. God designed that the temple at Jerusalem should be a continual witness to the high destiny open to every soul. But the Jews had not understood the significance of the building they regarded with so much pride. They did not yield themselves as holy temples for the Divine Spirit. The courts of the temple at Jerusalem, filled with the tumult of unholy traffic, represented all too truly the temple of the heart, defiled by the presence of sensual passion and unholy thoughts. In cleansing the temple from the world’s buyers and sellers, Jesus announced His mission to cleanse the heart from the defilement of sin,—from the earthly desires, the selfish lusts, the evil habits, that corrupt the soul. ‘The Lord, whom ye seek, shall suddenly come to His temple, even the Messenger of the covenant, whom ye delight in: behold, He shall come, saith the Lord of hosts. But who may abide the day of His coming? and who shall stand when He appeareth? for He is like a refiner’s fire, and like fullers’ soap: and He shall sit as a refiner and purifier of silver: and He shall purify the sons of Levi, and purge them as gold and silver.’ Mal. 3:1-3.

“Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you? If any man defile the temple of God, him shall God destroy; for the temple of God is holy, which temple ye are.’ 1 Cor. 3:16, 17. No man can of himself cast out the evil throng that have taken possession of the heart. Only Christ can cleanse the soul temple. But He will not force an entrance. He comes not into the heart as to the temple of old; but He says, ‘Behold, I stand at the door, and knock: if any man hear My voice, and open the door, I will come in to him.’ Rev. 3:20. He will come, not for one day merely; for He says, ‘I will dwell in them, and walk in them; ... and they shall be My people.’ ‘He will subdue our iniquities; and Thou wilt cast all their sins into the depths of the sea.’ 2 Cor. 6:16; Micah 7:19. His presence will cleanse and sanctify the soul, so that it may be a holy temple unto the Lord, and ‘an habitation of God through the Spirit.’ Eph. 2:21, 22.”¹⁹

“Israel had chosen their own ways. They had not builded according to the pattern; but Christ, the true temple for God’s indwelling, molded every detail of His earthly life in harmony with God’s ideal. He said, ‘I delight to do Thy will, O My God: yea, Thy law is within My heart.’ Ps. 40:8. So our characters are to be builded ‘for an habitation of God

¹⁸ Thomas, *Op. cit.*, p. 443.

¹⁹ White, Ellen G.; *The Desire of Ages*, pp. 161-162.

through the Spirit.’ Eph. 2:22. And we are to ‘make all things according to the pattern,’ even Him who ‘suffered for us, leaving us an example, that ye should follow His steps.’ Heb. 8:5; 1 Peter 2:21.

“The words of Christ teach that we should regard ourselves as inseparably bound to our Father in heaven. Whatever our position, we are dependent upon God, who holds all destinies in His hands. He has appointed us our work, and has endowed us with faculties and means for that work. So long as we surrender the will to God, and trust in His strength and wisdom, we shall be guided in safe paths, to fulfill our appointed part in His great plan. But the one who depends upon his own wisdom and power is separating himself from God. Instead of working in unison with Christ, he is fulfilling the purpose of the enemy of God and man.”²⁰

This imagery invites solemn awe. The declaration of this loud voice is that God’s dwelling place is with His people. This is a redemptive reality which divine love instituted! Not only did a restoration plan assure eternal life to the loyal, it brings hope that our precious Savior will be part of us – our family – throughout that eternity. God with us – Emmanuel (Matthew 1:23) – would become God in us (John 15:15) – forever.

The eschatological anticipation of God’s presence is no longer a metaphor, it is now a reality.²¹ The name of that great city is “the Lord is there” (Ezekiel 48:35).

An amazing contrast is drawn here. After Adam and Eve sinned, Jesus came into the Garden of Eden and called out, “Where art thou?” (Genesis 2:17, 3:9). Now God and the redeemed are one, and metaphorically God is calling out, “I am here with you, forever.”

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

Verse 4 – “And God shall wipe away all tears”

It is difficult for finite humans to wrap their thinking around a milieu that is perfect and so embellished. Even associations between individuals are rare that are flawless and consistently magnetic. The human condition is tainted with guilt, blame, the need to be more powerful and with suppressed hostility. God inspired John to use negative imagery to express the positive. This unique technique explains more vividly the aura of the new earth and Jerusalem in emotional terms.

This “mystery” which John had earlier alluded to (1 John 3:2) is now opened through ideas that are “human” – tears, crying, sorrow, pain and death.

By first focusing on “tears” – “all” or “every” tear – God’s interest even in minutiae is revealed. This change had previously been noted by the great multitude (7:17; cf. Isaiah 30:19, 35:10, 51:11, 58:8, 65:19). They are tears of grief related to the “old creation” (Isaiah 22:12, 61:3-10; Joel 2:12; Mark 14:72).²² This fulfills Isaiah 25:8: “The Lord God has taken away every tear from every face.” It reveals what David anticipated: “Those who sow in tear[s] will reap with a song of joy, and he who now goes about weeping ... will return with a song of joy” (Psalm 126:5-6).

²⁰ White, Ellen G.; *The Desire of Ages*, p. 209.

²¹ Aune, David E.; *52c World Biblical Commentary; Revelation 1-5* (World Books; Publisher, Dallas, Texas), 1997, p. 1124.

²² Thomas, *Op. cit.*, p. 445.

In this message there is a great contrast with the wicked. They have been cast into “darkness” where there was “weeping and gnashing of teeth” (Matthew 13:42). That is a “fate.” A joyous saint has tearless rewards.

Verse 4 – “and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain:”

This list of promises follows the assurance that tears would be wiped away. The first mention is death. This was revealed long ago: “I will ransom them from the power of the grave; I will redeem them from death” (Hosea 13:14; cf. Psalm 49:14, Isaiah 25:8). This draws our attention to Jesus when the apostle Paul cried: “Death has been swallowed up into victory. Where, O death, is your victory? Where, O death, is your sting?” (I Corinthians 15:54-55 – NIV). His death “swallowed up” our death. The glimpse of what restoration means is opened up here in emotional beauty.

Paul further reiterated the obvious that “we groan inwardly as we wait our adoption as God’s children, the redemption of our bodies” (Romans 8:22-23). “Gladness and joy will overtake them, and sorrow and sighing will flee away” (Isaiah 51:11, 65:19).

Verse 4 – “for the former things are passed away.”

After John “saw” the new heaven and earth (vs 1), he noted that “the first earth was passed away.” Here, after reviewing the emotions of heartache with the ultimate curse of sin (death), he once again says, “the former things are passed away.”

Both of these statements are of finality. In chapters 21, 35, 51 and 65 of Isaiah, that prophet often states “no longer will there be.” An irrevocable transition is to come into the universe, now tainted with sin and rebellion, to one of purity, filled with joy and with the negative issue of sin gone forever.

“Satan’s work of ruin is forever ended. For six thousand years he has wrought his will, filling the earth with woe and causing grief throughout the universe. The whole creation has groaned and travailed together in pain. Now God’s creatures are forever delivered from his presence and temptations. ‘The whole earth is at rest, and is quiet: they [the righteous] break forth into singing.’ Isaiah 14:7. And a shout of praise and triumph ascends from the whole loyal universe. ‘The voice of a great multitude,’ ‘as the voice of many waters, and as the voice of mighty thunderings,’ is heard, saying: ‘Alleluia: for the Lord God omnipotent reigneth.’ Revelation 19:6.”

“The great controversy is ended. Sin and sinners are no more. The entire universe is clean. One pulse of harmony and gladness beats through the vast creation. From Him who created all, flow life and light and gladness, throughout the realms of illimitable space. From the minutest atom to the greatest world, all things, animate and inanimate, in their unshadowed beauty and perfect joy, declare that God is love.”²³

This declaration that all is passed away could only come if everything related to sin – physically – were destroyed. In God’s redemptive plan, when all issues have been legally resolved, when His “law of Being” and administration is vindicated, can that happen. Then, it raises no questions. No queries of “what if” will remain. Then all things can be remade “new.” Justification for another creation can then be argued with a universe in full support. God’s character, His love, His leadership and sovereignty can supervene unabated. He will be seen as “just” as the universe reveres His mercy and love.

²³ White, Ellen G.; *The Great Controversy*, pp. 673, 678.

All this sums up the many wonderful promises given to the overcomers in the seven letters (2:7b, 11b, 17b, 26-28; 3:5, 12, 21).

Intriguingly, this begins what is called “eternity.” This is the basis of faith as we look forward to the “city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God” (Hebrews 11:10).

This verse eliminates the myths of purgatory, degrees of reward, mourning in heaven over the lost and weeping over past sins. John warned his readers that “the world is passing away, and the lust of it; but he who does the will of God abides forever” (1 John 2:17). Even the memory of evil is removed.

“Interestingly, the words ‘wipe away’ are from ‘*exaleipho*’ meaning ‘to obliterate, erase, blot out.’ It is the same word for ‘blotting out’ or ‘blot out’ in Acts 3:19, Col. 2:14 and Rev. 3:5. That God will somehow erase the memory of those depressing circumstances is implied in these references: ‘The *memory* of the just is blessed: but the name of the wicked shall rot’ (Prov. 10:7). ‘The dead know not any thing ... for the *memory* of them is forgotten’ (Eccl. 9:5). ‘They are dead, they shall not live, they are deceased, they shall not rise: therefore hast thou visited and destroyed them, and made all their *memory* to perish’ (Isa. 26:14).”²⁴

“We are homeward bound. He who loved us so much as to die for us hath builded for us a city. The New Jerusalem is our place of rest. There will be no sadness in the city of God. No wail of sorrow, no dirge of crushed hopes and buried affections, will evermore be heard. Soon the garments of heaviness will be changed for the wedding garment. Soon we shall witness the coronation of our King. Those whose lives have been hidden with Christ, those who on this earth have fought the good fight of faith, will shine forth with the Redeemer’s glory in the kingdom of God.”²⁵

VERSE 5: “**And he that sat upon the throne said, Behold, I make all things new. And he said unto me, Write: for these words are true and faithful.**”

Verse 5 – “And he that sat upon the throne said,”

In verse 3 John hears a “great voice” from heaven announcing a new order of existence where God and redeemed man would coexist. That divine voice has been heard often in this apocalyptic book. Several times (10:4; 14:13; 16:1, 17; 18:4) it came from heaven. This time it is from “he that sat upon the throne.”

The way it is expressed, without identifying the noun attached to the pronoun, it is assumed that we should know which divine Being it is. In the previous chapter, saints on thrones were reigning and judging with Christ (20:4). In a recapitulation series of thoughts, John sees a “great white throne” (20:11) within the context of a judgment scene. Now, the one sitting on the throne is about to speak. It can be none other than Yahweh – Jesus Christ.

The content of His speech is ratification of what is in the first four verses. There are several distinct points or issues He unfolds in only a few words.

²⁴ Wood, *Op. cit.*, p. 3.

²⁵ White, Ellen G.; *Testimonies*, vol. 9, p. 287.

Verse 5 – “Behold, I make all things new.”

“Behold” (*idou*) is Jesus’ way of drawing our undivided attention to what He is about to say.

Drawing upon a prior declaration: “I make things new” (Isaiah 43:18-19) [LXX]. He says, Now “I make **all** things new.” This is the centerpiece of these few verses. In verses 1-3a John recorded the message in the aorist tense. Verses 3b and 4 were in the future tense. Jesus’ remarks are now in the present tense.²⁶ This is fascinating. It is a divine promise guaranteed in the “present” that all things will be made new! It is a “prophetic present.”²⁷

The old was destroyed (20:11, 21:1). This is God’s affirmation that it is to be *replaced* with a new order: “See, I am doing a new thing” (Isaiah 43:19a). “Behold, I will create new heavens and a new earth” (Isaiah 65:17).

- Christ had said, “My kingdom is not of this world” (John 18:36).
- Yet He said, “the kingdom of God is within you” (Luke 17:21).
- But a future kingdom was anticipated in the model prayer: “thy kingdom come” (Matthew 6:10).

Man can be part of the kingdom of grace now²⁸ (II Corinthians 3:18, 4:16-18, 5:16-17; Galatians 6:15; Colossians 3:1-4). That identity assures the inheritance and citizenship of the physical kingdom Jesus is here alluding to. If we are “in Christ,” we are a “new creation.” That absolves any tension from the old with the anticipated “all things” being new.

There is an intriguing echo from the creation week story in this passage. There, each time it notes “and God said,” there follows an element of creation that comes *de novo* into existence. Here, when “he ... says,” a new heaven and a new earth appear,²⁹ all things that God had originally created in association with that creation week will be remade.

“The earth begins again, having a fresh, new start. Christ speaks, and the earth is returned to its primordial beauty. Once again majestic trees lift their branches to the sky, flowers that will never fade carpet the green landscape. The fruit trees and the vines, loaded with their delicious fruit, pour forth their fragrance. Birds fly joyfully in the heavens, singing their songs of praise to their Creator. The creatures on land and in the sea, all living together in harmony, show the love and peace that dwells in their Maker’s heart.”³⁰

Verse 5 – “And he said unto me, Write:”

Several times throughout this book, John is instructed to “write.”

“Write’ is a verb which appears some fifteen times in Revelation. Of those fifteen times, twice the Lord said ‘I will write’ in Rev. 3:12. In Rev. 10:4 John, shown the ‘seven thunders,’ said he ‘was about to write’ but was instructed ‘write them not.’

²⁶ Osborne, *Op. cit.*, p. 736.

²⁷ Beale, *Op. cit.*, p. 1053.

²⁸ Thomas, *Op. cit.*, p. 446.

²⁹ Brighton, Louis A; *Revelation, Concordance Commentary* (Concordance Publishing House, Saint Louis), 1999, p. 600.

³⁰ Brooks, *Op. cit.*, p. 3.

“Nine times, he was instructed to ‘write in a book’ ‘the things which thou hast seen’ ‘and send it’ to the churches of ‘Ephesus ... Smyrna ... Pergamos ... Thyratira ... Sardis ... Philadelphia’ and ‘Laodicea’ (see Rev. 1:11, 19; 2, 1, 8, 12, 18; 3:1, 7, 12, 14). Finally, the Lord said ‘Write, blessed are the dead with die in the Lord’ and ‘Blessed are they which are called unto the marriage supper of the Lamb’ adding these: ‘These are the true sayings of God’ and ‘these words are true and faithful’ (Rev. 14:13; 19:9; 21:5).”³¹

Why would the command be given so many times? Either these are timing breaks between the visions and John is now resuming his task (“It’s now time, John, to write again”) or John was so enamored and caught up with the prophetic theme, he had stopped his writing task and needed to be reminded again.

Verse 5 – “for these words are true and faithful.”

A similar statement was made in 19:9, “these are the true words of God.” The words of verse 5 will be repeated in 22:6. Here is the only time God Himself speaks these words. The “words” come from God the Father (1:1). This declaration by Jesus is amazing. He is emphasizing (in the middle of a message) the unerring importance of what is being said. To the lethargic mind of man, it is a “verbal shaking.” “What we’re telling you is really going to happen! They are faithful and true.” Previously, these words were used in key areas:

“Faithfulness” of Christ (1:5, 3:14, 19:11)

“Faithfulness” of believers (2:10, 13; 17:14)

“True” – describing Christ (3:7, 14; 19:11)

“True” – describing God (6:10, 15:3, 16:7, 19:2)³²

A key tie to Isaiah declared that the “God of truth” will create the new heaven and the new earth (Isaiah 65:16-17). There, the Hebrew word for “truth” is “Amen.” Some Greek translations of this are “faithful.” With Isaiah in mind, Christ makes a beautiful tie to the Laodicean church message: “write; These things saith the Amen, the faithful and true witness, the beginning of the creation of God” (3:14). From the affirmation of Christ as a legal arbiter of creation to the new creation, the same assurance is given.

God was not satisfied to portray a simplistic message of redemption. He not only portrayed in a thousand metaphors, symbols and types how the restoration theme would unfold, He set its plan within the framework of the **highest** legal standards. He is the witness who is faithful and true. Therefore, He could say the words are “true and faithful.” The new creation vision (Revelation 21:1-22:6) is going to be exactly as described: “Write it out, John.” This is an allusion from Daniel as to “what must come to pass.” The vision is true and the interpretation is faithful” (Daniel 2:45).

The strength of this message is once again found in Isaiah. These new heavens and earth will last *forever*, as will God’s people (Isaiah 66:22).

³¹ Wood, *Op. cit.*, p. 4.

³² Osborne, *Op. cit.*, p. 737.

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

Verse 6 – “And he said unto me, It is done.”

This carries us back to the seventh Vial or Bowl (Revelation 16:17) where a voice from the throne cried with a similar message (*gegonan*), “It is done.” Now God again says, “It is done.” This stresses another terminal point has been reached. Sin is forever gone. There is a new heaven and a new earth.

The imagery suggests that the “future ages” can now begin. This means that all the prophetic issues that were ordained and contained in this book – the whole book – have now been completed. Here are the key “termination” points:

- “It is finished” (John 19:30; cf. Revelation 5:9-10) – God’s redemptive plan, because of Jesus’ sacrificial death, is assured.
- “It is done” (Revelation 16:17) – the events of the eschaton, judging evil, are over (cf. 10:6; 11:15, 18; 12:10; 15:1).
- “It is done” (Revelation 21:6) – all events of world history, including the destruction of all wicked beings, is at an end. The new heaven and earth have been created.³³

There is nothing to be added. The Lord has already come (19:11-21), the resurrection and final judgment have taken place (20:11-15) and the heaven and earth have been recreated.

Verse 6 – “I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end.”

Jesus now identifies Himself (just as He did in 1:8, 17 and 18) as the beginning and the end of all things – the Alpha and Omega. Christ will once again self-declare these divine titles (22:13). These titles echo Isaiah 41:4, 44:6 (LX) and 48:12. Yahweh began history and brings it to an end. God is in charge. Man can have assurance that all He has promised will be fulfilled (II Corinthians 3:18, 4:16-18, 5:16-17). God is the first cause (*arche*) and the finality (*telos*) of all (cf. Romans 11:36, Ephesus 4:6).³⁴

“These divine titles are figures of speech (*merisms*) in which the figurative point is to mention the opposite poles of something in order to emphasize the totality of all that lies between. The use of the first and last letters of the alphabet was typical of the ancients in expressing merisms. So Jews could say that the law should be kept ‘from *aleph* to *tau*.’ That God is the beginning and end of history means that he rules over all events in between....

“That this title appears at the beginning and end of the book is fitting and cannot be coincidence. The placement heightens further the figurative point of the divine title, which mentions two polar opposites (first and last) to underscore that everything between the opposites is included: all the events narrated and portrayed between 1:8 and 21:6 lie under God’s absolute sovereignty, as has all history prior to the writing of Revelation.”³⁵

³³ Osborne, *Op. cit.*, p. 738.

³⁴ Thomas, *Op. cit.*, p. 448.

³⁵ Beale, *Op. cit.*, p. 1055.

Verse 6 – “I will give unto him that is athirst of the fountain of the water of life freely.”

This now begins a pastoral insert which adds richness to the context of a sovereign God. Within the setting of God being over all – through all time – comes this promise to His faithful followers. To the one who thirsts (*to dipsonti*), the blessing comes. Those who have turned to Christ and not the world (John 7:37; cf. 4:10-15, 6:35) become thirsty for more and more of what He has to offer.

Comes now the promise from the God who will make heaven and earth anew, “I will give them” of the fountain of the water of life, “living water” (John 4:10, 14; 6:32-33).

Once again, this theme is drawn from Isaiah: “Come all you who are thirsty, come to the waters” (cf. Isaiah 12:3, 35:7, 41:17, 44:3, 49:10; Psalm 23:2, 36:8; Jeremiah 2:13; Ezekiel 34:10-16; Joel 3:18). This beautiful theme will once again be used as the prophetic messages come to a close (22:17).

The living waters represent eternal life. Those who express an earnest sense of spiritual need will receive the power, the truth and the satisfaction Jesus offers. “Here God gives the water freely. In 22:17 the thirsty one receives it freely.”³⁶

“This promise is only to those that thirst. None but those who feel their need of the water of life and seek it at the loss of all things else, will be supplied.”³⁷

It is most interesting that Jesus states, “I” will give. He personally intercedes as our Advocate and Savior (John 7:37-38). Before John unveils the wonders of the Holy City, he confronts us with choice. In response to the promise, man has a responsibility to “come” and “drink.” This passage is not a picture of universal salvation. It is a universal invitation.³⁸

VERSE 7: “He that overcometh shall inherit all things; and I will be his God, and he shall be my son.”

Verse 7 – “He that overcometh”

This conditional statement echoes the same expression (*ho nikon*) that was found in the summary of each of the seven churches. They all unfold eschatological rewards to the victorious saint – the obedient, trusting believer.

To those of the seven churches were these promises:

- “To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the tree of life, which is in the midst of the paradise of God” (Revelation 2:7).
- “He that overcometh shall not be hurt of the second death” (Revelation 2:11).
- “To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the hidden manna, and will give him a white stone, and in the stone a new name written, which no man knoweth saving he that receiveth *it*” (Revelation 2:17).
- “And he that overcometh, and keepeth my works unto the end, to him will I give power over the nations: And he shall rule them with a rod of iron; as the vessels

³⁶ Thomas, *Op. cit.*, p. 449.

³⁷ White, Ellen G.; *The Great Controversy*, p. 540.

³⁸ Gaebelien, Frank E.; *The Expositor’s Bible Commentary*, vol. 12 (Zondervan Publishing House, Grand Rapids, MI), 1984, pp. 594-595.

of a potter shall they be broken to shivers: even as I received of my Father” (Revelation 2:26-27).

- “He that overcometh, the same shall be clothed in white raiment; and I will not blot out his name out of the book of life, but I will confess his name before my Father, and before his angels” (Revelation 3:5).
- “Him that overcometh will I make a pillar in the temple of my God, and he shall go no more out: and I will write upon him the name of my God, and the name of the city of my God, *which is new Jerusalem, which cometh down out of heaven from my God: and I will write upon him my new name*” (Revelation 3:12).
- “To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me in my throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father in his throne” (Revelation 3:21).

This will be possible because of the victory of the Lamb (1:5-6, 5:5, 7:14-17). Because of His victory, the saints can overcome.

“And they overcame him by the blood of the Lamb, and by the word of their testimony; and they loved not their lives unto the death” (Revelation 12:11).

Years before John had recognized the power over all when he penned: “For whatsoever is born of God overcometh the world: and this is the victory that overcometh the world, *even our faith*. Who is he that overcometh the world, but he that believeth that Jesus is the Son of God?” (John 5:4-5).

To the conqueror here at the end of time:

- “He ... shall inherit all things”
- “I will be His God”
- “He shall be my son”

Who are the overcomers? This has been disclosed in small segments or packets of truth. They have trials (1:9, 7:14). Their creedal identity rests strongly on keeping the commandments and holding firmly the prophetic testimony of Jesus (12:17, 14:12, 19:10). In the previous verse it is clearly one who thirsts for the *water of life*. They can’t get enough truth. They risk everything to obtain the prize (2:26-29).

“I will give unto him that is athirst of the fountain of the water of life freely.’ Revelation 21:6. This promise is only to those that thirst. None but those who feel their need of the water of life, and seek it at the loss of all things else, will be supplied.”³⁹ This verse is the only record using the term “inherit” in Revelation.

The heirship theme is a common allusion of the saints’ reward elsewhere (Matthew 5:5, 19:29, 25:34; Romans 4:13; I Corinthians 6:9). In the context of this chapter, that refers to the new heavens and earth – the new creation.

That implies more than what is expressed here. Inspiration noted that God appointed His Son to be heir of all things (Hebrews 1:2) because God decreed Jesus Christ to be “my Son” (Psalm 2:7-8). In turn, the redemptive plan permits Jesus to share that inheritance with the overcomers. The contextual bond between Christ and His people extends to the sharing of His eternal throne with them (5:12-13, 11:15 with 3:21, 22:5). Some ancient text does not say “he will inherit” but “I will give to him.”⁴⁰ That actually fits better the thoughts elsewhere and gives a greater picture of the loving identity Jesus has with His people. “Father, I will that they also, whom thou hast given me, be with me where I am” (John 17:24).

³⁹ White, Ellen G.; *The Great Controversy*, p. 540.

⁴⁰ Beale, *Op. cit.*, p. 1058.

Verse 7 completes a series of beatitudes beginning with the seven churches that address the reward of the *individual*. Everywhere else the theme is corporate.

“In the pathway of all who seek the crown, is the cross. If we would become partakers with Christ of his glory, we must be willing to share with him in his sufferings. If we would reflect his glorious image, we must be submissive to the divine molding; we must follow in the footsteps of the Man of Calvary. God has claims upon every one of us. He created us, he redeemed us with an infinite sacrifice. He has promised the overcomer the great rewards of eternity. Why do we cling to anything that is offensive to him? Why not separate from every sin, and perfect holiness before him? The only reward for sin is unutterable woe and death; but the righteous shall be at his right hand in fullness of joy, in his presence, where are pleasures forevermore.”⁴¹

The overcomer is bathed with the divine declaration that “where God is, there will be the victory” (21:3, 7; 22:3-4). This is enriched by this endearing familial promise: “I will be His God and he shall be my son.” This was graphically portrayed by Jesus renaming the saints with the family names of heaven: “I will write upon him the name of my God, and the name of the city of my God, ... and I will write upon him my new name” (3:12, 22:4).

This sums up the final outcome of the completion of the everlasting Abrahamic covenant: “to be your God and the God of your descendants” (Genesis 17:7-8; cf. Exodus 6:7, 20:2, 29:45; Leviticus 26:12; Numbers 15:41; Deuteronomy 29:13; Jeremiah 7:23, 11:4; Ezekiel 11:10; Zechariah 8:8). This echoes the intimate proleptic Davidic covenant, “I will be to him a father and he himself will be to me a son” (II Samuel 7:14; cf. Psalm 89:26-29, Jeremiah 3:19).

This draws on the adoption language (Romans 4:13, 8:14-17; Galatians 3:26-29; Titus 3:5-7). We wait eagerly for our adoption as sons” (Romans 8:23 – NIV).

This verse continues the thought of 21:3 that “they themselves will be his people.” But here in verse 7 the people are individualized. The hope has become personal (Galatians 4:7).

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

Verse 8 – “But the fearful, and unbelieving, and the abominable, and murderers, and whoremongers, and sorcerers, and idolaters, and all liars.”

Though the wicked have already been cast into the lake of fire (20:13-15), this commentary insert serves as a warning to those presumptively assuming that they will enjoy the new heavens and earth without being an overcomer.

This list of eight categories of sin recalls 9:20-21, 22:15 and I Corinthians 6:9-10, where wickedness is enumerated in varying sequences and ways (cf. Romans 1:29-31; Ephesians 4:25-32, 5:3-5; Colossians 3:5-8; I Timothy 1:9-10; Jeremiah 3:14-16; I Peter 2:1, 4:3, 15). All who commit these will not inherit the kingdom of God.

“The grapes from the vine of the earth referred to in Revelation 14:18, as being fully ripe, will now be identified. Those not discussed now will be in Revelation 22:15.”⁴² No excuse will be viable for sin. The list of abominable acts is all-inclusive and descriptive.

⁴¹ White, Ellen G.; *The Review and Herald*, September 16, 1890.

⁴² Brooks, *Op. cit.*, p. 4.

There are several interesting expressions in this list. The word “fearful” (*deilois*) refers to those who repudiate their faith in Christ when faced with persecution and opposition⁴³ (cf. Matthew 8:26, Mark 4:20). It is also translated as cowardly. They are ones who never made an unreserved commitment to Jesus. He had taught that: “For whosoever will save his life shall lose it; but whosoever shall lose his life for my sake and the gospel’s, the same shall save it” (Mark 8:35).

“Those outside of the city are among the most confident, boastful, and apparently zealous ones who live in word, but not in deed and in truth. Their hearts are not right with God. His fear is not before them. The fearful and unbelieving, who are punished with the second death, are of that class who are ashamed of Christ in this world. They are afraid to do right and follow Christ, lest they should meet with pecuniary loss. They neglect their duty, to avoid reproach and trials, and to escape dangers. Those who dare not do right because they will thus expose themselves to trials, persecution, loss, and suffering are cowards, and, with idolaters, liars, and all sinners, they are ripening for the second death.”⁴⁴

“It seems certain, that the Smyrnan church as well as that of Philadelphia, both of whom were afflicted by ‘the synagogue of Satan,’ are represented by the ‘two candlesticks’ of Rev. 11:4. Therefore the Smyrnan and Philadelphian format is what will characterize the experience of God’s final generation who will ‘stand’ through the last hours of probationary time after the ‘fifth seal’ of Rev. 6:9-11 is opened. Although a natural ‘fear’ is certainly understandable, they will not allow it to frighten them into the camp of Wormwood nor Abaddon who will doom his followers to the ‘second death.’”⁴⁵

Cowards begin His concern, liars end the list. The latter reveals a basic failure of an individual to personally exonerate truth. This list of sins is not exhaustive. It draws together a summation of the sins mentioned in this book. It sums up the depravity of those who will be lost.

Unbelief: Untrustworthy – 2:13-16; 14:6-7; 16:8, 10-11 (contrasted with Christ “the faithful one” – 1:5; cf. 2:10, 13; 3:14; 17:14; 19:11)

Abominable: 17:4-5, 21:27 (from *bdelysso*) – “I pollute” (they’ve been defiled through false worship)

Murderers: 6:9; 9:21; 11:9; 13:7, 10, 15; 17:6; 18:24; 20:4 (by choosing the false worship of the beast they have a part in the martyrdom of the saints)

Whoremongers: 2:14, 20; 9:21; 14:8; 17:2, 4; 18:3, 9; 19:2 (this includes illicit relationships with falsehood and the blasphemous harlot – 17:5)

Sorcery: 9:21; 13:13, 14; 18:23; 22:15 (cf. Acts 8:9-24; 13:8-11; 19:17-20) (religion that worships other gods)

Idolatry: 2:14, 20; 9:20; 22:15; 13:4, 8, 12, 14-15; 19:20 (cf. Galatians 5:20) (a key issue in Revelation) (cf. I John 5:21, I Corinthians 5:10-11, Ephesians 5:5)

Liars: 2:2, 3:9, 14:5, 16:13, 19:20, 20:10, 21:27, 22:15 (antithesis of God and Christ who are characterized by truth – 3:7, 14; 15:3; 16:7; 19:2, 11). These liars profess to know God but deny Him by their actions (Titus 1:16).⁴⁶

⁴³ Thomas, *Op. cit.*, p. 450.

⁴⁴ White, Ellen G.; *Testimonies*, vol. 2, p. 630.

⁴⁵ Wood, *Op. cit.*, p. 5.

⁴⁶ Osborne, *Op. cit.*, p. 741.

The last six items could represent the secular heart as well as the professed Christian's. But the first two, *fearful* and *unbelieving*, trailblaze the intent of Christ's warning. He is addressing those who know but don't follow. In so much of the apocalyptic prophecy this is the issue. "You know better, but you act like you don't care." This is a fascinating dynamic within end-time prophecy. Within this imagery comes the repeated reminder that one's name must be found in the Lamb's Book of Life (Daniel 12:2; Revelation 20:12, 21:27). That is a record of "those who knew and followed."

This list is one of God's final communiqués in Holy Writ to stigmatize rebellion and sin. It's the onset of His final plea to the careless. It characterizes what will be absent in the new earth, not the limitations of its citizens!⁴⁷

This verse is an important insert within the final sequence of restoration themes. There are those who believe that they are eternally secure if they once accepted Jesus Christ. This is countered in Hebrews 6:4-6, 10:26-31, James 5:19-20, II Peter 2:20-21 and I John 5:16.

The individual as well as the corporate body (chapters 2 and 3) is being challenged to be "overcomers." This list shows that the coming new earth will be of a high moral order. Its purity is assured by the next phrases.

Verse 8 – "shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone: which is the second death."

Many scholars see this as occurring outside of the geography of the new heavens and earth. Why? Because it is assumed that they have already been created. This reflects diverse understanding of the structure of Revelation. The creative work was described in verses 1-6. But in the middle of that latter verse is God's reflective thoughts of who will enjoy those new wonders and those who will not. It is a sudden jolt into reality for John and his readers: "Oh, by the way, this is something everyone must be aware of."

The repeated portrayal (20:10, 14) of the fiery destruction of the wicked is a fearful portrayal of death. Not only do they die at Christ's second coming (II Thessalonians 2:8) but they are raised again after the millennium of judgment (20:5) to face this second death (20:14, 21:8). Why this sequence? After the wicked are raised, they face their Maker, and the judgment to be met out is presented in such a way that they will all understand that they brought doom upon themselves.

"At the close of the thousand years, Christ again returns to the earth. He is accompanied by the host of the redeemed, and attended by a retinue of angels. As He descends in terrific majesty, He bids the wicked dead arise to receive their doom. They come forth, a mighty host, numberless as the sands of the sea. What a contrast to those who were raised at the first resurrection! The righteous were clothed with immortal youth and beauty. The wicked bear the traces of disease and death."⁴⁸

"Now Christ again appears to the view of his enemies. Far above the city, upon a foundation of burnished gold, is a throne, high and lifted up. Upon this throne sits the Son of God, and around him are the subjects of his kingdom. The power and majesty of Christ no language can describe, no pen portray. The glory of the Eternal Father is en-

⁴⁷ Boring, M. Eugene; *Interpretation – A Bible Commentary for Teaching and Preaching* (John Knox Press), p. 218.

⁴⁸ White, Ellen G.; *The Faith I Live By*, p. 355.

shrouding his Son. The brightness of his presence fills the city of God, and flows out beyond the gates, flooding the whole earth with its radiance.”⁴⁹

“In the presence of the assembled inhabitants of earth and heaven the final coronation of the Son of God takes place. And now, invested with supreme majesty and power, the King of kings pronounces sentence upon the rebels against His government and executes justice upon those who have transgressed His law and oppressed His people. Says the prophet of God: ‘I saw a great white throne, and Him that sat on it, from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away; and there was found no place for them. And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God; and the books were opened: and another book was opened, which is the book of life: and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works.’ Revelation 20:11, 12.

“As soon as the books of record are opened, and the eye of Jesus looks upon the wicked, they are conscious of every sin which they have ever committed. They see just where their feet diverged from the path of purity and holiness, just how far pride and rebellion have carried them in the violation of the law of God. The seductive temptations which they encouraged by indulgence in sin, the blessings perverted, the messengers of God despised, the warnings rejected, the waves of mercy beaten back by the stubborn, unrepentant heart – all appear as if written in letters of fire.”⁵⁰

“The whole wicked world stands arraigned at the bar of God, on the charge of high treason against the government of heaven. They have none to plead their cause; they are without excuse; and the sentence of eternal death is pronounced against them.”⁵¹

As the Alpha, God created the “first heaven and the first earth” (21:1). As the Omega, He will create the “new heavens and the new earth” (21:1). In verses 1-8 we are given a wonderful view of the inaugural story of Christ and the newness of His kingdom. But before that can occur, the old must pass away – be destroyed (Mark 13:31, I Corinthians 7:31). “But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night; in the which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up. *Seeing then that* all these things shall be dissolved, what manner *of persons* ought ye to be in *all* holy conversation and godliness, Looking for and hasting unto the coming of the day of God, wherein the heavens being on fire shall be dissolved, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat? Nevertheless we, according to his promise, look for new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness” (II Peter 3:10-13).

Another amazing theme is presented. In verse 2 the wedding imagery is given. Heaven has been waiting – Jesus has been waiting for His bride. “Let us be glad and rejoice, and give honour to him: for the marriage of the Lamb is come, and his wife hath made herself ready. And to her was granted that she should be arrayed in fine linen, clean and white: for the fine linen is the righteousness of saints. And he saith unto me, Write, Blessed *are* they which are called unto the marriage supper of the Lamb. And he saith unto me, These are the true sayings of God” (Revelation 19:7-9).

Finally, we see the family being restored. God “dwells” with His people (21:3). The separation is over!⁵²

In Christ’s great inaugural address found in these verses is this warning (vs 8): The future is not being addressed. The reality of “now” is presented. There will be those who never become part of that family. It is those noted in the divine list of what God views as

⁴⁹ White, Ellen G.; *The Great Controversy*, p. 665.

⁵⁰ White, Ellen G.; *The Great Controversy*, p. 666.

⁵¹ White, Ellen G.; *The Great Controversy*, p. 656.

⁵² Osborne, *Op. cit.*, p. 743.

ultimate barriers to eternity. But – over and over throughout these apocalyptic visions, motivating messages have been given to be overcomers.

It is not Biblically uncommon when a list of sins is made that a penalty clause is attached (Romans 1:32a, I Corinthians 6:10, Galatians 5:21b, Ephesians 5:5, Colossians 3:6, I Peter 4:5, Revelation 22:15a). Some scholars relate this list to the core principles of the Ten Commandments.⁵³

The destruction of heaven and earth is part of the synoptic imagery (Matthew 5:18, Luke 16:17, Mark 13:31, Matthew 24:35, Luke 21:33) and appears in II Peter 3:10-13.

A replacement new heaven and new earth with Eden-like conditions was introduced in Isaiah 65:17-25.

The lake of fire is the ultimate expression of God's judicial acts (Isaiah 34:10, 66:24, Daniel 7:10). Jesus isn't finished speaking. The next time, He will once again be in the "now." "Behold, I come quickly."

VERSE 9: "And there came unto me one of the seven angels which had the seven vials full of the seven last plagues, and talked with me, saying, Come hither, I will show thee the bride, the Lamb's wife."

Verse 9 – "And there came unto me one of the seven angels which had the seven vials full of the seven last plagues."

This is the second time a Vial angel comes to John. The first was to describe the harlot – Babylon (Revelation 17). Now one comes to introduce the Lamb's wife – New Jerusalem. One city falls, one goes on throughout eternity. Babylon is a mother of harlots; the New Jerusalem, a wife of the Lamb, Jesus. One has many husbands, the other only one. The false church is compared to the true church.

We aren't told which Vial angel this was, but it was one of those beings who participated in the final punishing acts against the wicked. Amazing contrasts are presented.

Verse 9 – "Come hither, I will show thee the bride, the Lamb's wife."

He is invited with the exact same words as in 17:1: "Come hither, I will show thee." This introduces an unmistakable parallel to chapter 21.

⁵³ Aune, *Op. cit.*, p. 1131.

Brief ComparisonRevelation 17

And there came one of the seven angels

Which had the seven vials and talked with me, saying unto me

Come hither; I will show unto thee

The great whore that sitteth upon many waters

So he carried me away in the spirit into the wilderness

And I saw a woman

Outward adornment (vs 4)

Revelation 21

And there came unto me one of the seven angels

Which had the seven vials and talked with me, saying

Come hither; I will show thee

The bride, the Lamb's wife

And he carried me away in the spirit to a great and high mountain

And showed me that great city

Adornment part of the city (vss 11-21)

There is a logic which states that since chapters 17 and 21 are interrelated, the New Jerusalem is only symbolic because the harlot and the beast were symbolic. This denies the reality of eternal rewards. Its logical ends could remove and allegorize the "throne of God and of the Lamb" (22:1). Prophecy is often structured with minor fulfillments but with teachings, symbols and metaphorical lessons of a final literal reality encompassing the highest spiritual themes and literal events.

The "husband" of verse 2 is now identified as "the Lamb." This draws upon another time John *heard* and then *saw*. One of the 24 elders announced to John that a "lion" was found from the tribe of Judah worthy enough to open the seven-sealed scroll. Then he saw a Lamb. This imagery expands further from 19:7, "The marriage of the Lamb has come, and his bride has made herself ready." The word for "bride" in chapter 19 is actually "wife." The betrothal has already occurred. The use of the word "Lamb" will become increasingly prominent to the end of the book.

In 21:2 the New Jerusalem was "as a bride." Here the angel says, "I will show you *the Bride*." This is a fascinating linguistic switch from a simile to a metaphor. John has described this imagery change before ("as a sea ... sea" – 15:2), ("as a jasper ... jasper" – 21:11, 18).⁵⁴

Christ was said to be the husband to a chaste virgin, God's people (II Corinthians 11:2; cf. Ephesians 5:25-27).

VERSE 10: "And he carried me away in the spirit to a great and high mountain, and showed me that great city, the holy Jerusalem, descending out of heaven from God,"

Verse 10 – "And he carried me away in the spirit to a great and high mountain,"

In chapter 17 John was "carried away in spirit" to a wilderness. Here, he is taken to a vantage point to observe the *holy* Jerusalem. This city descended in similar imagery as

⁵⁴ Osborne, *Op. cit.*, p 747.

in Ezekiel 40:2. John was promised to see the bride in verse 9. That is being fulfilled here.

If this is the bride, then the wedding has occurred. The saints have received their new name. The pure woman detailed in 12:1 is the pure church. She has received the name of her husband – “my new name” (3:12). Christ and His church are together (Ephesians 5:25-27).

Carrying John away in spirit conveys him to another dimension. It underscores his prophetic commission and authority (1:10, 4:2, 17:3) similar to Ezekiel’s (Ezekiel 2:2; 3:12, 14, 24; 11:1; 43:5).⁵⁵

The mountain is not identified. In Ezekiel’s vision (40:1-2) the establishment of a temple *on a mountain* is described. There, God will dwell forever. Jewish understanding places the eschatological city on a mountain (Isaiah 2:2-3, 4:1-5, 25:6–26:2; Micah 4:1-2; Psalm 48:2; Job 4:26). Some think that this is tied to 14:1 where Jesus is standing with the 144,000 on Mount Zion.⁵⁶ Whatever it is, John descriptively notes that it was a *great* and *high* mountain. “Get yourself up on a high mountain, O Zion ... O Jerusalem” (Isaiah 40:9).

Verse 10 – “and showed me that great city,”

John sees the arrival of the New Jerusalem, and then details of its appearance follow. In 17:1 to 19:10 the steps of Babylon’s *demise* were shown. There is an intertwined theme of the destructive mission of the Vial angels and the denial of eternal joys noted in 21:8 and 27 and 22:15. In numerous ways the amazing comparison is made between Satan and his limited future to Jesus and His eternity associated with His forever bride.

In the second angel’s message, Babylon was called a *great* city. There, the declaration is given that it had fallen. Later, part of the final urgent gospel appeal was a call to come out of that harlot church (17:5, 18:4). There, the appeal is personal – “Come out *my people*.” God then said why. It had become the habitation of devils. In this stunning comparative imagery, John describes a scene of wonder – a bride beautifully adorned for her husband. It is a city whose habitation is God.

Verse 10 – “the holy Jerusalem, descending out of heaven from God,”

The story reverts back to verse 2 when John saw the holy city, New Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven, prepared as a bride.

The *descent* is the tie between verses 2 and 10. The message picks up at the point when verse 2 ends. The purpose is to describe key issues about the New Jerusalem. There is a deep message that ties this imagery to the Philadelphia church. To the overcomer of this church, the name of “God,” the name “New Jerusalem” “which cometh down out of heaven from my God” will be given with “my new name.” God’s family name, the church’s name and the new name for Christ are written on the saved.

Jerusalem has been in heaven. It descends to the earth. The new earth will be its home. Jerusalem is a preexisting reality which God showed to Adam, Abraham and Moses. In Abraham’s commendable faith, he “looked for a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God” (Hebrews 11:10; cf. 11:14-16, 12:22, 13:14).

When Jesus comes, He *descends* from heaven and the saints *ascend* (are “caught up”) to meet the Lord in the air. Jesus had said that He was going to His Father’s house

⁵⁵ Beale, *Op. cit.*, p. 1065.

⁵⁶ Osborne, *Op. cit.*, p. 749.

to prepare mansions for us (John 14:1-3). The saints are with Jesus in His Father's "house" for that millennial period. Then the New Jerusalem comes down – *descends*. That is when the wicked surround the "beloved city." It is then that they are destroyed by fire (20:9). In that picture the New Jerusalem would have had to come to this earth **before** the world was destroyed by fire. That *decent* is what John is seeing.

"After the saints are changed to immortality and *caught up* together with Jesus, after they receive their harps, their robes, and their crowns, and enter the city, Jesus and the saints sit in judgment. The books are opened – the book of life and the book of death. The book of life contains the good deeds of the saints; and the book of death contains the evil deeds of the wicked. These books are compared with the statute book, the Bible, and according to that men are judged. The saints, in unison with Jesus, pass their judgment upon the wicked dead. 'Behold ye,' said the angel, 'the saints, in unison with Jesus, sit in judgment, and mete out to the wicked according to the deeds done in the body, and that which they must receive at the execution of the judgment is set off against their names.' This, I saw, was the work of the saints with Jesus through the one thousand years in the Holy City before it *descends* to the earth. Then at the close of the one thousand years, Jesus, with the angels and all the saints, leaves the Holy City, and while *He is descending* to the earth with them, the wicked dead are raised, and then the very men that 'pierced Him,' being raised, will see Him afar off in all His glory, the angels and saints with Him, and will wail because of Him. They will see the prints of the nails in His hands and in His feet, and where they thrust the spear into His side. The prints of the nails and the spear will then be His glory. It is at the close of the one thousand years that Jesus stands upon the Mount of Olives, and the mount parts asunder and becomes a mighty plain. Those who flee at that time are the wicked, who have just been raised. Then the Holy City comes down and settles on the plain. Satan then imbues the wicked with his spirit. He flatters them that the army in the city is small, and that his army is large, and that they can overcome the saints and take the city.

"Then the wicked saw what they had lost; and fire was breathed from God upon them and consumed them. This was the execution of the judgment. The wicked then received according as the saints, in unison with Jesus, had meted out to them during the one thousand years. The same fire from God that consumed the wicked purified the whole earth. The broken, ragged mountains melted with fervent heat, the atmosphere also, and all the stubble was consumed. Then our inheritance opened before us, glorious and beautiful, and we inherited the whole earth made new. We all shouted with a loud voice, 'Glory; Alleluia!'"⁵⁷

VERSE 11: "Having the glory of God: and her light was like unto a stone most precious, even like a jasper stone, clear as crystal;"

Verse 11 – "Having the glory of God:"

The dazzling radiance of light, "glory," which is man's visual picture of God's presence, is perceived by John as coming from the city. One can imagine the crystal foundations, walls, gates and city glowing with brilliant light. Prophets and seers attempted elsewhere to describe this illumination (Exodus 40:34, Numbers 9:15-23, I Kings 8:11, II Chronicles 5:14, Isaiah 24:23, Ezekiel 43:2-5, John 12:41, Acts 26:13).

⁵⁷ White, Ellen G.; *Early Writings*, pp. 52-54 (emphasis added).

“This is not just a divinely *caused* splendor. It is the splendor of the presence of God Himself, the Shekinah.”⁵⁸ This glory is the personification of God’s character.⁵⁹ The Greek word for “glory” is *doxan*. The LXX changed the secular meaning of this word to represent the luminous manifestation of God. In New Testament times it expanded to symbolize His exalted being (Luke 24:26, John 17:5, Romans 8:17, Philippians 3:21, II Thessalonians 2:4, I Timothy 3:16). God’s glory is the visible manifestation of His character⁶⁰ It took on an eschatological inference, symbolizing the end-time divine reality.⁶¹ That opens the concept that a new creation, a new reality is before the saints without the effects of sin (Romans 8:18, 21; I Corinthians 15:43; II Corinthians 3:18, 4:17; Philippians 3:21; Colossians 3:4; I Peter 5:1). The rest of this book builds on that new transformation of all things as the culmination of trusting Jesus and His commands. The eschatological completion is newness – a beginning again – a complete deliverance.

In 15:8 the temple was filled with smoke from God’s glory. Here, the glory is that of the Shekinah presence. It was the adornment of the bride noted in 21:2 (cf. 19:7-8), where the bride’s linen was *bright and pure*. In 19:8 linen describes righteous acts that reflect their characters.

This glory echoes the Old Testament: “Then shall thy light break forth as the morning, and thine health shall spring forth speedily: and thy righteousness shall go before thee; the glory of the LORD shall be thy reward.... Arise, shine; for thy light is come, and the glory of the LORD is risen upon thee. For, behold, the darkness shall cover the earth, and gross darkness the people: but the LORD shall arise upon thee, and his glory shall be seen upon thee.... The sun shall be no more thy light by day; neither for brightness shall the moon give light unto thee: but the LORD shall be unto thee an everlasting light, and thy God thy glory” (Isaiah 58:8; 60:1-2, 19).

There, God’s glory is prophetically portrayed as residing in Jerusalem.

“The light of the sun will be superseded by a radiance which is not painfully dazzling, yet which immeasurably surpasses the brightness of our noontide. The glory of God and the Lamb floods the Holy City with unfading light. The redeemed walk in the sunless glory of perpetual day.”⁶²

“His glorious face will shine brighter than the sun, and light up the beautiful city and reflect glory all around.”⁶³

Verse 11 – “and her light was like unto a stone most precious, even like a jasper stone, clear as crystal;”

Her light – brilliance – is from the Greek word *phoster*. It suggests the city as a “light bearer.” Whether divine or reflective of the divine is a prior allusion to the saints (Philippians 2:15).

John uses, once again, a simile to help us picture what he is seeing. In Revelation 4:3 John tried to describe God on His throne: “he that sat was to look upon like a jasper and a sardius stone.” Here again the most precious and elevated visual description is a jasper stone without a flaw. It was transparent like a crystal. Shortly, we will see that the material that makes up the walls of the New Jerusalem is jasper (21:18). It is the first

⁵⁸ Thomas, *Op. cit.*, p. 460.

⁵⁹ Osborne, *Op. cit.*, p. 749.

⁶⁰ White, Ellen G.; *Acts of the Apostles*, p. 576.

⁶¹ Brown, Colin, editor, *New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology* (Zondervan, Grand Rapids, MI), 1986, vol. 2, p. 47.

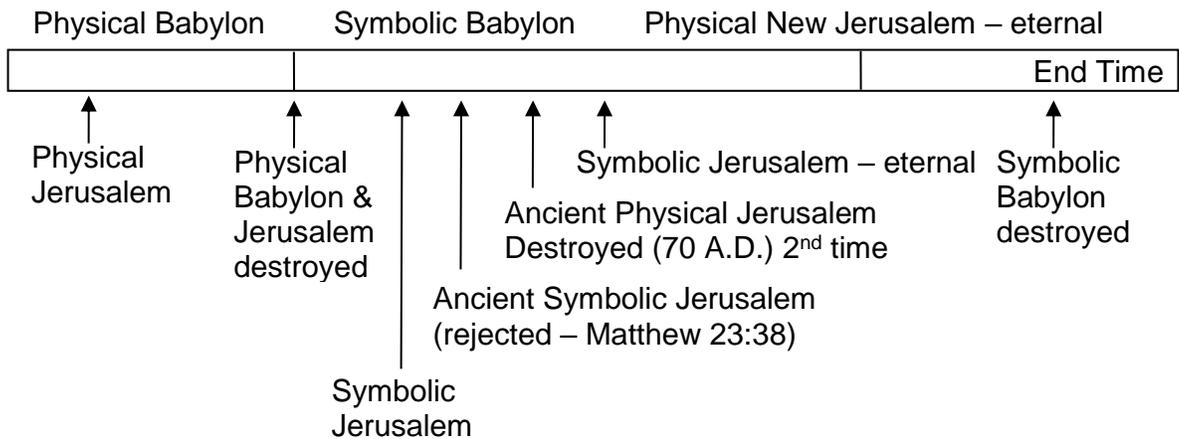
⁶² White, Ellen G.; *The Great Controversy*, p. 676.

⁶³ White, Ellen G.; *My Life Today*, p. 357.

jewel mentioned in the foundation (21:19-20). Amazing as it may seem, jasper was one of Lucifer's original coverings.

This continues to fulfill the angel's promise that John would be shown the "bride." That cannot be limited to the physical city but also refers to its inhabitants and its glory. The illuminating mission of the saints is portrayed elsewhere: "And they that be wise shall shine as the brightness of the firmament; and they that turn many to righteousness as the stars for ever and ever" (Daniel 12:3). "That ye may be blameless and harmless, the sons of God, without rebuke, in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation, among whom ye shine as lights in the world" (Philippians 2:15; cf. Matthew 5:14, II Corinthians 4:6).

As the ancient city of Babylon had a physical presence with an end-time symbolic meaning, so the New Jerusalem has a spiritual meaning with a final physical presence.



Since the second resurrection doesn't occur until after the city has settled on the earth, only the saints will witness what John was prophetically shown.⁶⁴

VERSES 12-14: "And had a wall great and high, *and* had twelve gates, and at the gates twelve angels, and names written thereon, which are *the names* of the twelve tribes of the children of Israel: On the east three gates; on the north three gates; on the south three gates; and on the west three gates. And the wall of the city had twelve foundations, and in them the names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb."

The city is now described in detail. The question comes, Why are these descriptive issues given as part of a divine revelation? They represent how the bride is adorned. This unfolds what the harlot in Revelation 17 tried to copy. More importantly, the elements noted have meaning to God's people. They will be eternal reminders of God's earthly churches and His enduring patience and wooing, which finally led to "this bride."

⁶⁴ Wood, *Op. cit.*, p. 6.

Verse 12 – “And had a wall great and high,”

This is noted first to portray the structure that will permit the following description of the gates and the foundation. The actual wall details won't be given until verses 17-18.

Though walls were made for protection in ancient cities, that is not needed here. It is made of jasper, suggesting its purpose is to radiate divine glory (vss 11-18).⁶⁵

“For I, saith the LORD, will be unto her a wall of fire round about, and will be the glory in the midst of her.” (Zechariah 2:5). This adds a symbolic description of security in the context of: “In that day shall this song be sung ...; We have a strong city; salvation will God appoint for walls” (Isaiah 26:1; cf. Zechariah 2:4-5).

Yet a “wall” was a symbolic spiritual divide that Christ referred to: “He let all know that there was one fold and one Shepherd (John 10:16). The sheepfold was surrounded by a wall and He was the only Door, the only entrance into that enclosure (John 10:9).⁶⁶

Verses 12-13 – “and had twelve gates, and at the gates twelve angels, and names written thereon, which are the names of the twelve tribes of the children of Israel: On the east three gates; on the north three gates; on the south three gates; and on the west three gates.”

This echoes the “new temple” description of Ezekiel 48:30-35. It had three gates on either side. This reflects the accessibility of the city from all sides. The directional order in Revelation is different from that in Ezekiel. Some have tried to speculate on its significance. No obvious reason is revealed in the text.

Since the gates are named, directional identity is made as it relates to how ancient Israel arranged the twelve tribes around the sanctuary (Numbers 2). There is no pattern that can be established with that in Ezekiel 42–48, and here in Revelation. It appears, then, that the number of the gates and their names, which encompass the city, are the issues. It was expedient to also have gates on all sides, which symbolize universal access to the city, as Jesus predicted: “They will come from the east and the west, from the north and south, and sit down in the kingdom of God” (Luke 13:29).

The word for gate here is *pylon*, which actually suggests “gate-towers.”⁶⁷ This means that they are large and act like huge gateways into the city.

The angels posted at each gate suggest the need to still guard the city's entrances. But why? To some expositors this parallels “I have set watchmen upon thy walls, O Jerusalem” (Isaiah 63:6; cf. II Chronicles 8:14). There, they are described as ever vigilant. Those were all segments that God replayed to enhance points already made.

Where does it come to? The earth that is yet to be destroyed. The second resurrection will bring to life, on that earth, all of the evil inhabitants from its entire history! “And when the thousand years are expired, Satan shall be loosed out of his prison, And shall go out to deceive the nations which are in the four quarters of the earth, Gog and Magog, to gather them together to battle: the number of whom *is* as the sand of the sea. And they went up on the breadth of the earth, and compassed the camp of the saints about, and the beloved city: and fire came down from God out of heaven, and devoured them” (Revelation 20:7-9). The city needs, at least symbolically, those guardian angels.

Expositor White described this scene: “At last the order to advance is given, and the countless host moves on – an army such as was never summoned by earthly conquer-

⁶⁵ Osborne, *Op. cit.*, p. 750.

⁶⁶ Brooks, *Op. cit.*, p. 6.

⁶⁷ Thomas, *Op. cit.*, p. 462.

ors, such as the combined forces of all ages since war began on earth could never equal. Satan, the mightiest of warriors, leads the van, and his angels unite their forces for this final struggle. Kings and warriors are in his train, and the multitudes follow in vast companies, each under its appointed leader. With military precision the serried ranks advance over the earth's broken and uneven surface to the City of God. By command of Jesus, the gates of the New Jerusalem are closed, and the armies of Satan surround the city and make ready for the onset."⁶⁸

VERSES 12-13 – “and names written thereon, which are *the names of the twelve tribes of the children of Israel: On the east three gates; on the north three gates; on the south three gates; and on the west three gates.*”

The expression “children of Israel” or “sons of Israel” are the same as used earlier (7:4). There, the names depict the twelve divisions of the saints that make up the 144,000. Though ancient Israel, as a church, was finally rejected corporately as God's chosen (Matthew 21:43; 23:37-38), yet the symbolic names from each tribe remain an eternal representation.

Not only did the personalities of Jacob's sons vary, the diversity in their temperaments reveal the eternal hope for all. Only Dan and Ephraim were not listed. They became symbolic of apostasy and paralleled the second and fourth Seals and the two beasts of Revelation 13 – all who will be lost.

Ancient Jewish eschatology realized the restoration of the twelve tribes (Isaiah 49:5-6, 56:1-8, 60:3-7, 66:18-24; Jeremiah 31:10; Ezekiel 34, 37; Zephaniah 3:20; Zechariah 8:7-8). In the “war scroll” (1Q 2:7-8) there is an end-time battle between the children of light and those of darkness. Those of light are from the twelve tribes.

Verse 14 – “And the wall of the city had twelve foundations, and in them the names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb.”

The Christian church was built upon the twelve apostles of Jesus [less Judas, assuming either Matthias (Acts 1:26) or Paul (Romans 1:1) replacing him]. Each foundation is made of a precious stone. They will be described shortly (vss 19-20). This draws on the pure woman of 12:1 who had a crown with twelve stars. There, the church triumphant was crowned by the selfless work of the apostles. Here, the foundation of the church triumphant is represented by the same leaders. This beautifully unveils the words of Paul: “Now therefore ye are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellowcitizens with the saints, and of the household of God; And are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner *stone*; In whom all the building fitly framed together groweth unto an holy temple in the Lord: In whom ye also are builded together for an habitation of God through the Spirit” (Ephesians 2:19-22).

Here, Paul adds prophets with Christ as the cornerstone. Comparable to this is another of Paul's representations: “For he looked for a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker *is* God.... But ye are come unto mount Sion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to an innumerable company of angels, To the

⁶⁸ White, Ellen G.; *Maranatha*, p. 338.

general assembly and church of the firstborn, which are written in heaven, and to God the Judge of all, and to the spirits of just men made perfect” (Hebrews 11:10, 12:22-23).

It is interesting that the apostles are designated those of “the Lamb.” They were called “twelve” even when there weren’t twelve (John 20:24; Romans 15:20; I Corinthians 3:10, 15:5), indicating that these men were a symbol of the church’s foundation. No one apostle is singled out – not even Peter. John, the seer, does not even identify himself to single out any one above another.

They were all equally of “the Lamb.” That phrase helps date Revelation since Jesus began His earthly ministry with John the Baptist’s announcement, “Behold the Lamb of God” (John 1:29, 36). It is John the apostle in this book who frequently referred to Jesus in this way (Revelation 5:6, 9, 12; 7:14; 12:11; 13:8). Then, in wonderful prose, he notes that the 144,000 follow the Lamb where He goes (14:4). This simple symbol draws on His life, death, resurrection and exaltation.⁶⁹ The Lamb remains an eternal symbol of divine love.

It is important to note that in these few verses we are introduced to twelve gates, twelve foundations and twelve angels. Twelve is God’s kingdom number. The imagery conveys completeness – perfection. The number 144,000 of those special saints who will receive the seal of God and be translated is divisible by twelve. The prophecy describes them as 12,000 from each of the tribes of Israel (7:4-8). (The number 1000 is a multiplier when a significant emphasis is made. Redemption is based upon a seven-thousand year timing, which comes from that multiplier of the seven days of the creation week).⁷⁰

Within the symbolic number twelve is a forever message that “this is how it happened.” The great beginning of preparing a people started with ancient Israel. They would forever represent the way into the center of the camp – where the Shekinah presence is. Those twelve gates would lead into the city where resides the throne of God. Those twelve apostles will ever be seen as the nucleus of the Christian Church and its dispensation. Their work was the foundation for the Christian believers, which now helps fill that city with saints! Then there will be Jesus – the light and glory of the city with those scarred hands – that reminder of infinite love. All things will be new; yet, there will always be a time to remember the sacrificial Lamb.

VERSES 15-17: “And he that talked with me had a golden reed to measure the city, and the gates thereof, and the wall thereof. And the city lieth foursquare, and the length is as large as the breadth: and he measured the city with the reed, twelve thousand furlongs. The length and the breadth and the height of it are equal. And he measured the wall thereof, an hundred *and* forty *and* four cubits, *according to* the measure of a man, that is, of the angel.”

Verse 15 – “And he that talked with me”

This is one of the seven-Bowl angels (21:9). This angel is not only verbally conversant with John, it is he that carried him to the top of a high mountain (21:10) to observe the descent of the Holy City. Now he will watch this angel measure that city. One presumes it has “landed on the earth” and he descends the mountain to discover its size.

⁶⁹ Aune, *Op. cit.*, p. 1157.

⁷⁰ Fowler, Franklin S., Jr., M.D.; *The Great Week of Time* (Christian Heritage Foundation, CS; Banning, CA)].

Some have concluded that this angel is God or Jesus, but the descriptive glory as in Daniel 10 and Revelation 1 is lacking. In Ezekiel 40:1-4 the measuring angel was like bronze. But when he finished the measurement, God's glory came into the temple (Ezekiel 43:1-5). This angel acts more like an angel of God's created host, working on His behalf.⁷¹

Verse 15 – “had a golden reed to measure the city, and the gates thereof, and the wall thereof.”

In 11:1-2 John was told to measure the “temple of God,” its altar and those who worship within its precincts. That was an act of judgment. Do they measure up to a standard? It followed John's eating and understanding the unsealed portion of Daniel (the little open book).

“There are several other Bible texts that refer to this measuring: ‘And he brought me thither, and, behold, there was **a Man**, whose appearance was like the appearance of brass, with a line of flax in His hand; and a measuring reed; and He stood in the gate.’ Ezekiel 40:3. ‘Thus he shewed me: and, behold, **the Lord** stood upon a wall made by a plumbline, with a plumbline in His hand.’ Amos 7:7. ‘I lifted up mine eyes again, and looked, and, behold, **a Man** with a measuring line in His hand. Then said I, Whither goest Thou? And He said unto me, **To measure Jerusalem**, to see what is the breadth thereof, and what is the length thereof.’ Zechariah 2:1-2.”⁷²

The angel here uses a “golden rod” to measure the city. That rod is another “standard.” This time the purpose of the measurement is to present the reality of the city and what it fully represents.⁷³ The city is pure gold (21:18), the most precious of all metals. To measure it, one would have to use something equally precious – a “golden rod.” Gold represents many things in the Bible: Babylon, in Nebuchadnezzar's image was made of gold. It was on top – the head, the most powerful and extensive of the succeeding empires. Jesus instructed John that the Laodicean church needed to purchase gold tried in fire. Expositor White said that that represented “faith that works by love”⁷⁴ In its representation of the New Jerusalem and the rod, it advances the beautiful concept of purity. Many expositors portray it as a perfect character.

Drawing on all of these symbols, the golden standard of love and purity is used to define the city. One might see also, since it exudes divine glory, that God's character is being objectively revealed.

It is interesting that throughout Ezekiel 40–48 an angel measures various features of the temple complex numerous times. That temple represented this New Jerusalem. It seems as though there is a divine “statement” that forever perfection is what remains in the universe. Everything is to be cleansed. The fire that consumes even hell leaves only purity behind. The city – bride – where God will abide now measures up to the highest standard.

“The measurements taken by the angel convey the holiness, perfection, absolute conformity to the ideal pattern of creation, and divine presence in the city in terms of numerical and geometrical symbols (Kiddle).”⁷⁵

⁷¹ Brighton, *Op. cit.*, p. 613.

⁷² Brooks, *Op. cit.*, p. 7.

⁷³ Bredenkamp, Martin, Ph.D.; (Prophecy Research Initiative document, Sect 8), p. 10.

⁷⁴ White, Ellen G.; *Christ's Object Lessons*, p. 158.

⁷⁵ Thomas, *Op. cit.*, p. 466.

Though the city, gates and wall were measured, the measurements of the gates were never recorded. Their appearance, however, is described in verse 21. Angels have played many roles in conveying apocalyptic messages. Some explained visions or auditions (Daniel 7–9, 11). Others were part of the action in fulfilling a prophecy (Revelation 16). Here, the visual imagery of a city is enhanced by its angelic measurements.

It is fascinating that over 200 years before John received this vision there were Qumran documents that described an apocalypse with measurements of a heavenly Jerusalem.⁷⁶

VERSE 16 – “And the city lieth foursquare, and the length is as large as the breadth: and he measured the city with the reed, twelve thousand furlongs. The length and the breadth and the height of it are equal.”

The word “foursquare” (*tetragonos*) means it is four-cornered. With the sides being equal, it is square. With the height equaling the length and breadth, it is a perfect cube. A square or a cube also represents, therefore, perfection.

“The fact that city is ‘foursquare’ points back to the sanctuary in the wilderness, every part of which represented Christ. The way the camp was set up, three tribes on each of the four sides left the center foursquare. In the center of this square the tabernacle was located, being equidistant from the first tribe on all sides.

“In the tabernacle itself, the altars and the breastplate of the high priest were ‘four-square’ (Exodus 27:1; 28:16, etc.). The court being measured in Ezekiel’s presence was foursquare (Ezekiel 40:47), and the oblation that was to be offered was also the same (Ezekiel 48:20).”⁷⁷

In all of these representations of His earthly church/people, everything is equal. The groups of people had equal access to the tabernacle and God’s glory. The altars that represented intercession presented the same opportunity from all sides. The only furniture that was rectangular was the table of shewbread (bread of His presence) and, in the Most Holy Place, the mercy seat – both symbolizing God’s throne. It was designed for more than one! Divinity itself was enshrined in its symbology with God’s character, mercy and, in the Most Holy, protecting cherubs – the essence of Creation’s restoration.

The length and breadth are 12,000 stadia or furlong. The length of a stadion is felt to be 202.5 yards. It is, therefore, likely that the city would be 1381⁷⁸ miles on each side. The area covered would equal approximately one third of the United States.

The Holy of Holies of Solomon’s temple was a perfect cube (I Kings 6:19-20, II Chronicles 3:8-9; cf. Ezekiel 41:3-4, 45:1-2). A fourth spiritual dimension is added by Paul in his letter to Ephesians: “For this cause I bow my knees unto the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, Of whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named, That he would grant you, according to the riches of his glory, to be strengthened with might by his Spirit in the inner man; That Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith; that ye, being rooted and grounded in love, May be able to comprehend with all saints what *is* the breadth, and length, and depth, and height; And to know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge, that ye might be filled with all the fullness of God” (Ephesians 3:14-19). That “cube” represents the equality of God’s love.

⁷⁶ Aune, *Op. cit.*, p. 1159.

⁷⁷ Brooks, Karen, *Revelation 21*, p. 7.

⁷⁸ Tenny, Merrill C.; *Pictorial Encyclopedia of the Bible* (Zondervan; Grand Rapids, MI – 1975), vol. 5, p. 915.

Though not expressed in the Scriptures, the Holy of Holies of the ancient tabernacle was ten cubits on each side, making it a perfect cube.⁷⁹ The New Jerusalem with God's glory at its center will be the eternal "Holy of Holies" to God's people.

In Ezekiel the *tetragonos* was a square with a height being measured. His vision was of a temple of approximately 850 feet per side. John's vision is of a city which has no need for a temple (21:22). The New Jerusalem is large enough to hold all the saints throughout all ages. (5:9, 7:9; cf. 21:24, 26).⁸⁰

"The Sibylline Oracles (5:250-52) say that the new Jerusalem, 'the city of God in the middle of the earth,' would reach up to 'the dark clouds' and its wall would extend 'as far as Joppa.' The Talmud, *Baba Bathra*, 75b, states that the new Jerusalem would reach a height equivalent to three parasangs, that is, about twelve miles. Shir Rabbah 7.5.3 says, 'Jerusalem will one day expand on all sides until it reaches the gates of Damascus,' and Jerusalem is destined to expand and ascend until it reaches the Throne of Glory." [*Midrash Rabbah: Song of Songs*, trans. M. Simon (London: Soncino, 1939) 287; cf. R. H. Charles, *Revelation*, 2:164)]. With the possible exception of that last statement in Shir Rabbah 7.5.3, the measured dimensions of the new Jerusalem John sees are far greater than those of these pseudepigraphal and rabbinic sources."⁸¹

Anciently, a square represented completeness. The kingdom number is emphasized by twelve tribes of Israel, twelve apostles, twelve gates and twelve foundations. Everything is perfect, complete and ready to receive God's kingdom subjects, His perfect bride. The priest's breastpiece was square with twelve precious stones. Aristotle's *Art of Rhetoric* noted a "good man" was "four-square."⁸²

"When the third angel's message closes, mercy no longer pleads for the guilty inhabitants of the earth. The people of God have accomplished their work. They have received 'the latter rain,' 'the refreshing from the presence of the Lord,' and they are prepared for the trying hour before them. Angels are hastening to and fro in heaven. An angel returning from the earth announces that his work is done; the final test has been brought upon the world, and all who have proved themselves loyal to the divine precepts have received 'the seal of the living God.' Then Jesus ceases His intercession in the sanctuary above. He lifts His hands and with a loud voice says, 'It is done;' and all the angelic host lay off their crowns as He makes the solemn announcement: 'He that is unjust, let him be unjust still: and he which is filthy, let him be filthy still: and he that is righteous, let him be righteous still: and he that is holy, let him be holy still.' Revelation 22:11. Every case has been decided for life or death. Christ has made the atonement for His people and blotted out their sins. The number of His subjects is made up; 'the kingdom and dominion, and the greatness of the kingdom under the whole heaven,' is about to be given to the heirs of salvation, and Jesus is to reign as King of kings and Lord of lords."⁸³

It is interesting to look at the "city" comparisons in Revelation:

⁷⁹ Thomas, *Op. cit.*, p. 467, referring to Philo, Josephus and tradition.

⁸⁰ Osborne, *Op. cit.*, p. 753.

⁸¹ *Midrash Rabbah: Song of Songs*, trans. M. Simon (London: Soncino, 1939) 287; cf. R. H. Charles, *Revelation*, 2:164.

⁸² Beale, *Op. cit.*, p. 107.

⁸³ White, Ellen G.; *The Great Controversy*, p. 613.

Babylon

River flowing through it (Euphrates)
 Reaches high to heaven
 (pyramid ziggurat “reached to heaven”)
 Came to its end
 Glory of man
 Harlot – adulterer
 Beauty covering

New Jerusalem

River flowing throughout it (River of Life)
 Came down to earth
 Everlasting
 Glory of God
 Bride – married
 Beauty from within and without

Verse 17 – “And he measured the wall thereof, an hundred *and* forty *and* four cubits, according to the measure of a man, that is, of the angel.”

Since the city is a cube, this 144 cubits or 216 feet must be the width of the walls. If it is the height, it would still be minuscule compared to the city of 7,000,000 feet high.⁸⁴ But he concludes that likely this represents its width. That conclusion seems most reasonable. Yet, there is no defensive need for high walls. The glory of the city is in its structure. Its gates and foundation are symbolic. It appears that their great thematic representation needn't cover or block the city's view!

In descriptions of ancient cities, the width of the wall seemed important (Nehemiah 3:8, 12:38; Jeremiah 51:58).⁸⁵

Interesting is the cubit number 144. This seems to be a play on the 144,000 in 7:4-9. One hundred and forty four is twelve twelves, once again a kingdom number in its total embodiment and expression.

Another fascinating observation was made by expositor White relative to the walls of this city: “Satan succeeds in deceiving them, and all immediately begin to prepare themselves for battle. There are many skillful men in that vast army, and they construct all kinds of implements of war. Then with Satan at their head, the multitude move on. Kings and warriors follow close after Satan, and the multitude follow after in companies. Each company has its leader, and order is observed as they march over the broken surface of the earth to the Holy City. Jesus closes the gates of the city, and this vast army surround it, and place themselves in battle array, expecting a fierce conflict. Jesus and all the angelic host and all the saints, with the glittering crowns upon their heads, ascend to **the top of the wall of the city**. Jesus speaks with majesty, saying, ‘Behold, ye sinners, the reward of the just! And behold, My redeemed, the reward of the wicked!’ The **vast multitude behold the glorious company on the walls** of the city. And as they witness the splendor of their glittering crowns and see their faces radiant with glory, reflecting the image of Jesus, and then behold the unsurpassed glory and majesty of the King of kings and Lord of lords, their courage fails. A sense of the treasure and glory which they have lost rushes upon them, and they realize that the wages of sin is death. They see the holy, happy company whom they have despised, clothed with glory, honor, immortality, and eternal life, while they are outside the city with every mean and abominable thing.”⁸⁶

In that setting the walls cannot be too high. They are low enough to observe the saints' crowns and their faces clearly enough to emotionally and cognitively conclude the military siege is impossible. It is conceivable that the walls are even low enough to permit much visualization of the glory of the city. The term we previously noted, “a great

⁸⁴ Thomas, *Op. cit.*, p. 458.

⁸⁵ Aune, *Op. cit.*, p. 1162.

⁸⁶ White, Ellen G.; *Early Writings*, p. 293.

high wall” (21:12) appears to have been a reactionary statement to John’s first visual impression. If it was coming down from heaven, he was looking up at the foundations and surrounding 1500-mile side walls.

Osborne concludes that the walls were only meant for demarcation and beauty⁸⁷ Another unknown is how far that demarcation was from the city structure itself.

The last phrases of this verse are a bit unusual: “according to the measure of a man, that is, of the angel.” This seems to simply mean that the angel did the measuring against a human standard – here, a cubit.

VERSES 18-20: “And the building of the wall of it was of jasper: and the city was pure gold, like unto clear glass. And the foundations of the wall of the city were garnished with all manner of precious stones. The first foundation was jasper; the second, sapphire; the third, a chalcedony; the fourth, an emerald; The fifth, sardonyx; the sixth, sardius; the seventh, chrysolite; the eighth, beryl; the ninth, a topaz; the tenth, a chrysoprasus; the eleventh, a jacinth; the twelfth, an amethyst.”

We are now honored to know what choice materials God chose to make the city walls from. There is a deeper and more beautiful meaning to this. Isaiah talked of the restoration and transformation of His people (“the daughter of Zion” – Isaiah 52:2, 62:11). He then describes how he will do it.⁸⁸ “O thou afflicted, tossed with tempest, and not comforted, behold, I will lay thy stones with fair colours, and lay thy foundations with sapphires. And I will make thy windows of agates, and thy gates with carbuncles, and all thy borders of pleasant stones” (Isaiah 54:11).

This echoes the majesty of God’s throne room which John saw (Revelation 4:3-6). Since language fails to describe glory, precious metals and jewels are descriptive ways to convey what is seen. Yet, it appears here that there is no *simile* in describing this city-bride. The actual elements and substances of the city are presented.

Verse 18 – “And the building of the wall of it was of jasper:”

It is natural to begin with the wall since it was the first structure measured (21:17). John’s initial reaction as it descended to earth was to its appearance being like precious stone. Then he said, it was “like jasper” and, finally and undoubtedly with awe, it “shines like crystal” (21:11). This is intriguing because when he was describing the throne room, John was either not permitted to fully see God or unable to put His appearance into words. He simply said: “And he that sat was to look upon like a jasper and a sardius stone” (4:3).

The wall itself is made of jasper. Today’s jasper is opaque and semi-precious at the most. It is an anhydrate quartz of silica, alumina and iron. There are jasper stones of nearly every color. It can be polished. Its use is limited. In Bible times an opaque variety was used for pillars of buildings. They were extremely hard and easily weathered unscathed the elements of time.

In ancient times the Hebrew *yaahpneh* was a form of jasper. It was one of the twelve stones on the high priest’s breastplate (Exodus 28:18, 39:11), representing the tribe of Benjamin. It is felt that the stone was still a form of quartz, but apparently in a transpar-

⁸⁷ Osborne, *Op. cit.*, p. 754.

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*

ent crystalline form. It was of several hues, but the rare and most valued was green tinted⁸⁹ That wall was transparent like the city (21:11), “clear as crystal.” An ancient religious writing by Lucian (1448–1509 A.D.), *Verae Historiae* 2:11, describes a city of gold surrounded by an emerald colored wall. This description is of the ancient green-hued translucent crystal. Since that also describes the One on the throne, the walls glow with the emission of God’s glory (21:11).

Verse 18 – “and the city was pure gold, like unto clear glass.”

The city, like the streets (vs 21) are of pure gold, “like clear glass.” This is an unknown form of gold here on earth, though in the laboratory crystalline gold has been artificially formed.⁹⁰ It is clear as glass. This suggests a crystalline form of amazing purity. Gold is an inert metal, highly resistant to corrosion or reaction to the environment. That is why it is used on the contact surfaces of many electrical parts.

The articles of the ancient tabernacle was overlaid with “pure gold” (Exodus 25:11, 24-25, 31-32). This represents holiness and purity within the sacred precincts of that edifice. This solemnly heightens the sacred, holy and pure imagery of God’s glory, causing the city to emanate light and perhaps glow. The transparency shows that glory is unimpeded as it radiates from the throne. This portrays the refined character of the sanctified believer (Job 23:10, Zechariah 13:9, Malachi 3:3, I Peter 1:7, Revelation 3:18).

Verse 19-20 – “And the foundations of the wall of the city were garnished with all manner of precious stones. The first foundation was jasper; the second, sapphire; the third, a chalcedony; the fourth, an emerald; The fifth, sardonyx; the sixth, sardius; the seventh, chrysolite; the eighth, beryl; the ninth, a topaz; the tenth, a chrysoprasus; the eleventh, a jacinth; the twelfth, an amethyst.”

These precious stones or jewels of the twelve foundations echo the twelve precious jewels of the High Priest’s breastpiece (Exodus 28:17-20, 39:8-14). Eight of the original twelve are noted in Revelation. Some scholars suggest that they are semantic equivalents.⁹¹

Written on those stones were the names of each of the twelve tribes (Exodus 28:21, 39:14). Those stones symbolized all of Israel continually before the Lord. That imagery will be enlarged with regard to the gates. Here, the layered foundation of the New Jerusalem represented the twelve apostles (21:14). Since they were the foundation of the wall which encompassed the city, they equate *spiritual Israel* as foundationally complete for the New Testament Church. It represents “the whole of God’s people residing in the security of God’s presence.”⁹² The twelve apostles began the great work of the Christian church; here, supporting the jasper walls of God’s glory.

“Over the ephod was the breastplate, the most sacred of the priestly vestments. This was of the same material as the ephod. It was in the form of a square, measuring a span, and was suspended from the shoulders by a cord of blue from golden rings. The border was formed of a variety of precious stones, the same that form the twelve foun-

⁸⁹ <http://rockhoundingar.com/miscellaneous/bible.html>

⁹⁰ <http://domino.watson.ibm.com/comm/pr.nsf/pages/rsc.sub-a.html>

⁹¹ Caird, George B.; *The Revelation of St. John the Divine* (Harper Collins, Canada), 1982.

⁹² Beale, *Op. cit.*, p. 1086.

dations of the City of God. Within the border were twelve stones set in gold, arranged in rows of four, and, like those in the shoulder pieces, engraved with the names of the tribes. The Lord's direction was, 'Aaron shall bear the names of the children of Israel in the breastplate of judgment upon his heart, when he goeth in unto the holy place, for a memorial before the Lord continually.' Exodus 28:29. So Christ, the great High Priest, pleading His blood before the Father in the sinner's behalf, bears upon His heart the name of every repentant, believing soul. Says the psalmist, 'I am poor and needy; yet the Lord thinketh upon me.' Psalm 40:17."⁹³

Those twelve tribes were to be the foundation of God's kingdom, but it had to be taken from them and given to another (Matthew 21:43). This echoes Paul's note to the Ephesians that the body of Christ is built on the "foundation of the apostles and prophets" (Ephesians 2:20). Twelve is a kingdom number. It means it is complete – it is fully made up.

This imagery parallels some amazing thoughts in Isaiah that we've previously alluded to. God's people are referred to as stones of "fair colours." He will lay their foundations with sapphires, windows with agates and gates of carbuncles. Then He says all "thy borders will be pleasant stones" (Isaiah 54:11-12). In that chapter Israel is called "a wife," "thy Maker is thine husband" (vss 5-6). In Revelation the city is the bride.

It is fascinating that Jewish tradition notes that the end-time Jerusalem and temple will be made of "holy stones" who are "sons of Zion" recorded in Lamentations 4:1-2.⁹⁴ The king of Tyre (representing Lucifer, then Satan) had a covering of precious stones (Ezekiel 28:12-16), being perfect in beauty. They symbolized "perfect righteousness." This is all contrasted with the harlot (city of Babylon), decked with precious stones and pearls (Revelation 17:4, 16; 18:16). No uncleanness enters the New Jerusalem, which prophecy declares (Isaiah 52:1, 60:20-21; Ezekiel 44:9; Zechariah 14:21).

John notes that the foundation was garnished (*kekosmemeno*) with these precious stones. In verse 2 he said that the New Jerusalem was like a bride adorned (*kekosemeno*) for her husband. This suggests that these were part of the "wedding garment" that surrounded the city – in this case, a garment of purity, beauty and righteousness that would never be removed. Some have suggested that the words "garnished" or "adorned" simply mean the foundation is merely decorated with precious stones. There is a beautiful tie to Isaiah 54 where the foundations **are** precious stones (vss 11-12), the city is like a wife (vss 5-6) and is built for permanence (vss 10-14). Then "the gates" (vs 12b) refers to the heads of the tribes of Israel according to Qumran Peshar on Isaiah 54.⁹⁵ This would tie to Revelation 21 where the twelve gates are the tribes of Israel.

Likely colors of the foundation: twelve stones with five main colors. They represent probably white (jasper – perhaps green tinged), blue (sapphire, jacinth, amethyst), green (chalcedony, emerald, beryl, topaz, chrysoprane), red (sardonyx, sardius), and yellow (chrysolite). However, the picture is one of crystalline transparency. Thus, these are likely color tinges or tints as we see in a variety of glass today.

⁹³ White, Ellen G.; *Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 351.

⁹⁴ Beale, *Op. cit.*, p. 1087.

⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 1005.

Lists of the Twelve Jewels Compared

<u>Exodus 28, 39</u>	<u>Revelation 21</u>	<u>Zodiac</u>
ruby	jasper	amethyst
topaz	sapphire	jacinth
beryl	<i>chalcedony</i>	chrysopase
turquoise	emerald	topaz
sapphire	<i>sardonyx</i>	<i>beryl</i>
emerald	carnelian	chrysolite
jacinth	chrysolite	carnelian
agate	beryl	sardonyx
amethyst	topaz	emerald
chrysolite	<i>chrysoprase</i>	chalcedony
onyx	jacinth	sapphire
jasper	<i>amethyst</i>	jasper ⁹⁶

The Zodiac jewel tie is only a hypothesis. It was published by Athanasius Kircher in 1653, allegedly coming from ancient Egyptian and Arabic lists.⁹⁷ Yet no one has ever found those original ancient lists. But there are other ancient references to them.

One comes from a Jewish tradition (noted by Philo and Josephus) that the twelve stones follow the twelve signs of the zodiac. Each tribe had a standard (Numbers 2) which paralleled the animals of the Zodiac, each tied also to a precious stone. There is one key difference. The order of the stones in Revelation is exactly opposite of the zodiac sequence. Some expositors feel that God gave the sequence differently to John to disengage any relationship to pagan cults.⁹⁸ The historical references are intriguing, and other references may yet be discovered.

Isaiah has a beautiful simile related to God's people when they are restored to the promised land: "I will greatly rejoice in the LORD, my soul shall be joyful in my God; for he hath clothed me with the garments of salvation, he hath covered me with the robe of righteousness, as a bridegroom decketh *himself* with ornaments, and as a bride adorneth *herself* with her jewels" (Isaiah 61:10).

VERSE 21: "And the twelve gates were twelve pearls: every several gate was of one pearl: and the street of the city was pure gold, as it were transparent glass."

Verse 21 – "And the twelve gates were twelve pearls: every several gate was of one pearl:"

Representing the twelve tribes (Revelation 21:12-13; cf. Isaiah 54:12b), these gates are of solid pearls. Stunning clarity not seen in today's world is noted – "transparent glass." Are they as high as the walls? We aren't told. Many scholars assume that they are massive. The word "pearls" is not mentioned in the Old Testament, but God did promise that the gates of the restored Jerusalem would be "precious jewels" (Isaiah 54:12). Here, they are of pearl or gold studded with inlaid pearl.⁹⁹

⁹⁶ Osborne, *Op. cit.*, p. 757.

⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 756.

⁹⁸ Gaebalein, *Op. cit.*, p. 597.

⁹⁹ White, Ellen G.; *The Signs of the Times*, January 31, 1878.

Pearls follow the precious jewels listed as luxury items in 18:12. In the ancient world, pearls were considered the most luxurious of all jewels.¹⁰⁰ Jesus even told a parable in Matthew 13:45-46 (cf. I Timothy 2:9) of a man who sold all he had to obtain one. Their beauty was 100% natural and couldn't be improved upon by man. It was a treasured ornament of the wealthy in New Testament times (Matthew 7:6, I Timothy 2:9) and throughout the Roman Empire.¹⁰¹

On each gate was inscribed a different name. What names were there? Apparently not the original twelve sons of Jacob. Those new names are listed in 7:5-8. Ephraim and Dan are missing. The standards of those tribes were the flying eagle and the calf (bull), depicted by two of the living creatures (4:7) and the red and pale horses (6:2-4, 7-8). They apostatized and are not included in the final "tribes," representing the twelve divisions of spiritual Israel noted as the 144,000.

Verse 21 – “and the street of the city was pure gold, as it were transparent glass.”

Just as the city was pure transparent gold (vs 18), so are its streets. This enhances the city's ability to reflect the glory of God.

“The street of the city” was noted in 11:8 as being where the two witnesses lay mortally wounded for the wicked world to gaze upon. Here is a contrast where the saints who had been God's witnesses in this world now have the glorious golden streets of the city for their eternal use.

An orthogonal street system in the eschatological Jerusalem is described in a “New Jerusalem Scroll, 86” in a Dead Sea document [5 Q15-5QN0]. This would favor having many streets in this city. Yet, in 22:2 one street is singled out as “the street” in which the “river of water of life” flows down its center. Because of this second verse, many conclude that it must be a single street that is like a central square.¹⁰²

“We read that the streets of the city are paved with pure gold, and that the gates of the city are of gold set with pearls.”¹⁰³

The word “street” (*plateia*) can be singular or imply many streets. The geographic imagery is unclear. The greater issue is what the street(s) are made of. Not a low grade of gold but pure (*katharon*) gold. So pure, in fact, that it resembles “transparent glass” (*hyalos diauges*). This picture conveys brightness “shining through.” Into this remarkable “glowing imagery” comes the next verse, which describes God's glory in terms of light. This suggests a city of “glass” which is bathed with glory that has no barrier because everything transmits light.

With the gates containing the names of the tribes of Israel and the foundation gems inscribed with the “twelve apostles of the Lamb” (21:14) comes a unique message: “The prophetic Israel of God includes all the followers of Christ.”¹⁰⁴

¹⁰⁰ Osborne, *Op. cit.*, p. 758.

¹⁰¹ Thomas, *Op. cit.*, p. 473.

¹⁰² Aune, *Op. cit.*, p. 1166.

¹⁰³ White, Ellen G.; *The Signs of the Times*, January 31, 1878.

¹⁰⁴ LaRondelle, Hans, Th.D.; *How to Understand the End-Time Prophecies of the Bible*, p. 485.

VERSE 22: “And I saw no temple therein: for the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are the temple of it.”

The remainder of this chapter introduces important issues about the city. Several facts are introduced from a negative viewpoint and then immediately explained by contrasting it with divine glory or purpose.

Verse 22 – “And I saw no temple therein:”

Jewish eschatologic thought emphasizes the presence of a temple (Isaiah 44:28, 60:13; Ezekiel 40–48). Usually this is in the center of a city. In the prophecy of Ezekiel 40–48 the temple is the entire focus. John, a Jew, observes the absence of a temple. His expression, *kai naon ouk eidon*, “And I did not see a temple,” suggests that he expected to see one.¹⁰⁵

The temple served as the place where God resided and where He met His people. In Ezekiel the exposé on the temple and its details finally terminates on the eschatological city, which he calls “the Lord is there” (48:35). John has already noted that God now dwells with His people as “the tabernacle.” The Holy of Holies was a characteristic of the entire physical cube of the New Jerusalem (21:16). Thus, the city functions as a Holy of Holies. There is no need for a temple.

Jeremiah noted: “At that time they will call Jerusalem the throne of the Lord” and “all nations will gather in Jerusalem to honor the name of the Lord” (Jeremiah 3:17). The imagery serves to declare that God has brought back man into a personal relationship with Himself. This ties to a thought Christ conveyed that His resurrection would be the “rebuilding of the temple” (John 2:19-22; Mark 14:58, 15:29). That contrasts with his prediction that the earthly temple would be destroyed and replaced by the eschatological temple (Mark 13:2, Matthew 24:2, Luke 21:6, Matthew 26:61, Mark 15:29, Matthew 27:40, Acts 6:14).

If there is no temple, why did God say He would make the overcoming Philadelphian believers “a pillar in the temple of my God” (3:12)? The word “pillar” (*stulos*) is used metaphorically. God’s people, represented by this special group, would be identified as having a special place of honor in support of Him. Thus, it is better expressed “a pillar in the temple *that is my God.*”¹⁰⁶

Verse 22 – “for the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are the temple of it.”

This is the contrasting explanation as to why there is no need for a temple: “The other reason there is no temple is that ‘The Lord God Almighty and the Lamb [last for emphasis] are its temple.’ Throughout the OT, the glory of God filled the temple. The Book of Exodus ends on this note. As the tabernacle is set up, it says, ‘Then the cloud [symbolizing the Shekinah presence of Yahweh] covered the Tent of Meeting, and the glory of the Lord filled the tabernacle’ (Exod. 40:34). When the temple was built and the ark was brought into the temple, ‘The cloud filled the temple of the Lord,’ and ‘the glory of the Lord filled his temple’ (1 Kings 8:10-11). Finally, as Ezekiel was brought to the final eschatological temple, the glory of the Lord came from the east, entered the temple through the east gate, and ‘filled the temple’ (Ezek. 43:1-5). Now in the final temple city

¹⁰⁵ Osborne, *Op. cit.*, p. 759.

¹⁰⁶ Beale, *Op. cit.*, p. 1091.

of the New Jerusalem, that glory so permeates the city that Yahweh *becomes* the temple. With God and the Lamb physically present, there is no need for a temple.”¹⁰⁷

The saints in their holy, perfected state are “without fault before the throne of God.” They can look directly into the face of God. He no longer has to hide His glory from their view. Since the city itself represents the people of God (His bride), they are the symbolic Holy of Holies where God dwells! He is a complete expression within them. That is why God could say through Paul that the Christian community was “the temple of God” (I Corinthians 3:16; II Corinthians 5:1-2, 6:16).

God and the Lamb are the temple. One needs to escape from the geographical imagery this suggests. They – their presence – are the tabernacle, the temple, of the city. This is expressed in one of the Qumran documents: “God himself *is* an eternal sanctuary so that there will be purity among the chosen ones. 4Q511=4QShir 35:3.”¹⁰⁸

This non-literal temple represented as God’s and the Lamb’s presence is a break with Jewish tradition. They consistently affirm a hope of a final material temple of great dimensions.¹⁰⁹ A similar unfortunate expectation is harbored by the evangelical dispensationalist world of today.

“The temple on earth was a place to worship God. In heaven we will in essence not go to a building to worship the Trinity but go to the Trinity Themselves, Who in all likelihood will be in a throne room for worship. Where God is, is a place of worship. He therefore is the temple Himself.”¹¹⁰ Expanding this more, entering the city, one comes into the precincts of that Trinity.

There is a fascinating addition to this Biblical understanding. John says he saw no temple “therein” (*en aute*). This specifically relates to within the city. Was there a temple outside the city? Was Mt. Zion outside of the city? Writing of a vision by expositor White comes this note, referring to the new earth: “We all cried out, ‘The city, the great city, it’s coming, it’s coming down from God out of heaven,’ and it came and settled on the place where we stood. Then we began to look at the glorious things outside of the city. There I saw most glorious houses, that had the appearance of silver, supported by four pillars set with pearls most glorious to behold. These were to be inhabited by the saints. In each was a golden shelf. I saw many of the saints go into the houses, take off their glittering crowns and lay them on the shelf, then go out into the field by the houses to do something with the earth; not as we have to do with the earth here; no, no. A glorious light shone all about their heads, and they were continually shouting and offering praises to God.

“I saw another field full of all kinds of flowers, and as I plucked them, I cried out, ‘They will never fade.’ Next I saw a field of tall grass, most glorious to behold; it was living green and had a reflection of silver and gold, as it waved proudly to the glory of King Jesus. Then we entered a field full of all kinds of beasts – the lion, the lamb, the leopard, and the wolf, all together in perfect union. We passed through the midst of them, and they followed on peaceably after. Then we entered a wood, not like the dark woods we have here; no, no; but light, and all over glorious; the branches of the trees moved to and fro, and we all cried out, ‘We will dwell safely in the wilderness and sleep in the woods.’ We passed through the woods, for we were on our way to Mount Zion.

“As we were traveling along, we met a company who also were gazing at the glories of the place. I noticed red as a border on their garments; their crowns were brilliant; their

¹⁰⁷ Osborne, *Op. cit.*, p. 760.

¹⁰⁸ Aune, *Op. cit.*, p. 1168.

¹⁰⁹ Beale, *Op. cit.*, p. 1091.

¹¹⁰ Bredenkamp, *Op. cit.*, p. 12.

robes were pure white. As we greeted them, I asked Jesus who they were. He said they were martyrs that had been slain for Him. With them was an innumerable company of little ones; they also had a hem of red on their garments. Mount Zion was just before us, and on the mount was a glorious temple, and about it were seven other mountains, on which grew roses and lilies. And I saw the little ones climb, or, if they chose, use their little wings and fly, to the top of the mountains and pluck the never-fading flowers. There were all kinds of trees around the temple to beautify the place: the box, the pine, the fir, the oil, the myrtle, the pomegranate, and the fig tree bowed down with the weight of its timely figs – these made the place all over glorious. And as we were about to enter the holy temple, Jesus raised His lovely voice and said, ‘Only the 144,000 enter this place,’ and we shouted, ‘Alleluia.’

“This temple was supported by seven pillars, all of transparent gold, set with pearls most glorious. The wonderful things I there saw I cannot describe. Oh, that I could talk in the language of Canaan, then could I tell a little of the glory of the better world. I saw there tables of stone in which the names of the 144,000 were engraved in letters of gold. After we beheld the glory of the temple, we went out, and Jesus left us and went to the city.”¹¹¹

For what purpose is this temple restricted to the use of the 144,000? We are not told. Since it is on Mount Zion and the Bible notes the Lamb and the 144,000 standing together there (Revelation 14:1-2), it must represent a special place of meeting for Jesus and those specially redeemed saints. Revelation 6 and 7 single them out also as a special group of translated end-time beings who serve God day and night “in His temple” (7:15-16; cf. 3:12).

Is this Mount Zion temple where the Holy and Most Holy imagery of Revelation originates? Unlikely. The picture of God’s throne with the candlesticks (“seven lamps of fire” – 4:5) suggests the sanctuary activity relates to God’s throne and Christ’s mediation work before Him. That throne is in the city.¹¹² That suggests that the pre-advent sanctuary imagery unfolds God’s final advocacy and restoration work and is within the city. When the new earth comes with the city, the functional activity of pleading Christ’s blood will have ceased, and physical arrangements appear to have changed.

The Lord of hosts “will become a sanctuary” (Isaiah 8:14).

VERSE 23: “And the city had no need of the sun, neither of the moon, to shine in it: for the glory of God did lighten it, and the Lamb *is* the light thereof.”

Verse 23 – “And the city had no need of the sun, neither of the moon, to shine in it:”

The reader’s attention has been on the “city” (vss 10-21) and God’s glorious presence (vss 11, 22); now, a deeper meaning of that glory: As John did in the previous verse, he introduces truth by starting with a negative. This conveys a powerful message. “It is not like the earth – that world we are used to – with the sun and moon and their light.” The city has no need of such heavenly bodies. Immediately, the “has no need of” (*ou chreian echei*) opens the imagination. “What then does it have?”

The city did not need a temple. It *was* a temple, housing the very throne of God. The insinuation then comes: Perhaps God also takes the place of the sun and moon *in the*

¹¹¹ White, Ellen G.; *Early Writings*, pp. 17-19.

¹¹² White, Ellen G.; *The Review and Herald*, July 21, 1851.

city. In the next chapter this is embellished: “And there shall be no night there; and they need no candle, neither light of the sun; for the Lord God giveth them light” (Revelation 22:5).

The expressions in this verse at first suggest that the sun and moon do not exist in the new earth nor in the New Jerusalem. There is another implication. The light of the sun and moon is not needed because of God’s glory. We are told in the Old Testament that “from one new moon to another shall all flesh come to worship before me, saith the Lord” (Isaiah 66:23). The 144,000 will serve God “day and night in his temple” (Revelation 7:15). The “new moon” suggests an orbiting celestial object just as we see now. Evidence suggests that the earth made new will have sun, moon and stars, not unlike what we have now.

“There is the New Jerusalem, the metropolis of the glorified new earth, ‘a crown of glory in the hand of the Lord, and a royal diadem in the hand of thy God.’ Isa. 62:3. ‘Her light was like unto a stone most precious, even like a jasper stone, clear as crystal.’ Rev. 21:11.

“The streets of the city are paved with pure gold, and ... the gates of the city are of gold set with pearls. The riches obtained here may be consumed.... There no thief shall approach; no moth or rust shall corrupt.... You will have an imperishable treasure which you can be in no danger of losing.

“In the city of God ‘there shall be no night.’ None will need or desire repose. There will be no weariness in doing the will of God and offering praise to His name. We shall ever feel the freshness of the morning, and shall ever be far from its close. ‘And they need no candle, neither light of the sun; for the Lord giveth them light.’ Rev. 22:5. The light of the sun will be superseded by a radiance which is not painfully dazzling, yet which immeasurably surpasses the brightness of our noontide. The glory of God and the Lamb floods the Holy City with unfading light. The redeemed walk in the sunless glory of perpetual day.”¹¹³

“Moreover the light of the moon shall be as the light of the sun, and the light of the sun shall be sevenfold, as the light of seven days, in the day that the LORD bindeth up the breach of his people, and healeth the stroke of their wound” (Isaiah 30:26).

Verse 23 – “for the glory of God did lighten it, and the Lamb is the light thereof.”

The Shekinah (“that which dwells”)¹¹⁴ glory illuminated the Holy of Holies. The city represents the center of Holiness, Holy of Holies for the universe, where God is its constant light. “In him there is no darkness at all” (I Timothy 6:16).

The imagery suddenly changes when John is told to write “the Lamb is the light.” Though the most resplendent area of the universe is being described, the student is reminded that this glory is from a Being related to us, an earth being who was humbled to the submissive level of an animal – the lamb. It is incomprehensible to understand this glory. It causes the wicked to cry for the rocks and mountains to fall on them (6:16) and then destroys them (II Thessalonians 2:8). It is as though God is saying, “I know you can’t cognitively nor emotionally immerse even your imagination into this grandeur, this solemn radiance, so just think of the Lamb.” He was the beauty of the Father’s glory (Hebrews 1:3). In human terms He said, “I am the light of the world” (John 8:12). But here the glory, the light of the universe, is being described. Yet, we are pulled back to

¹¹³ White, Ellen G.; *The Faith I Live By*, p. 363.

¹¹⁴ Tenney, Merrill C.; *Pictorial Encyclopedia of the Bible*, vol. 5, p. 388.

things we can imagine and understand. Why an animal? Jesus will always be the sacrificial Lamb so we can bathe in His glory.

“The divine beauty of the character of Christ, of whom the noblest and most gentle among men are but a faint reflection; ... Jesus, the express image of the Father’s person, the effulgence of His glory; the self-denying Redeemer, throughout His pilgrimage of love on earth was a living representative of the character of the law of God. In His life it is made manifest that heaven-born love, Christlike principles, underlie the laws of eternal rectitude.”¹¹⁵

“Then the moon shall be confounded, and the sun ashamed, when the Lord of hosts shall reign in Mount Zion, and in Jerusalem” (Isaiah 24:23). That is an echo of when Isaiah wrote later: “The sun shall be no more thy light by day; neither for brightness shall the moon give light unto thee: but the LORD shall be unto thee an everlasting light, and thy God thy glory” (Isaiah 60:19).

God and the Lamb are the temple. God’s glory fills the city, the Lamb being the lamp. Both God and the Son – the Lamb – are presented as One. We are not given permission to separate that oneness except with certain expressions, the “Lamb” being one.

“In heaven we will see the final realization of the exhortation in 2 Cor. 4:6, ‘For God who said, “Let light shine out of darkness,” made his light shine in our hearts to give us the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Christ’ (cf. Eph. 5:8; 1 John 1:7).”¹¹⁶ “Arise, shine; for thy light is come, and the glory of the LORD is risen upon thee” (Isaiah 60:1). No wonder Jesus is called the “sun of righteousness” (Malachi 4:2).

“All, all who keep the commandments of God, will enter in through the gates into the city and have right to the tree of life and ever be in the presence of the lovely Jesus, whose countenance shines brighter than the sun at noonday.”¹¹⁷

VERSE 24: “And the nations of them which are saved shall walk in the light of it: and the kings of the earth do bring their glory and honour into it.”

This verse describes the impact of the glory of God and, more specifically, the lamp (*lychnos*) of the Lamb. Moving from the divine aura within the city now comes the meaning of the light to groups of people – not individuals. These corporate metaphors portray a global fervor for God and His glory. In the previous verse when John said “the glory of God did lighten [*ephotisen*] it,” he wrote in an aorist tense. It seems like it had already begun but really was in the future. We are now given a glimpse of what will happen when the glory fills the city.

Verse 24 – “And the nations of them which are saved shall walk in the light of it:”

Earlier “nations” (*ethne*) were rebellious and trampled on the Holy City (11:2, 18) and were drunk with the wine of Babylon (18:3, 23). Then their destruction came at the second advent of Christ (19:15, 17-21). Following this, their eternal punishment was judged as fair before the Great White Throne (20:12-13).¹¹⁸ But a new group of “nations” are alluded to in this verse.

¹¹⁵ White, Ellen G.; *Amazing Grace*, p. 102.

¹¹⁶ Osborne, *Op. cit.*, p. 762.

¹¹⁷ White, Ellen G.; *Early Writings*, p. 51.

¹¹⁸ Thomas, *Op. cit.*, p. 476.

“Nations” (*ethne*) relates to a group which are held together by a common belief or custom. Its use varies throughout Scripture, but the context defines what the writer is conveying.¹¹⁹ The nations here “are saved” (implied only from the context) because they walk by or pass through the light from the Lamb. This phrase is a direct allusion to Isaiah 60:3, 11 and 20, where Gentiles and kings will come to the glory and light of the Lord.

Who are these peoples? They are the ones who follow the Lamb and resist the beast (5:9, 7:9, 12:5, 15:3, 19:16) and overcome by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony, who loved not their lives unto death (12:11, 21:7). There are other distinguishing characteristics. They are a remnant of the Christian church (woman – 2:1) who “keep the commandments of God and have the testimony of Jesus Christ” (12:17, 14:12; I John 2:3). They have become family members (3:12, 22:4) because of the Lamb.

“Still another scene opens to his view – the earth freed from the curse, lovelier than the fair Land of Promise so lately spread out before him. There is no sin, and death cannot enter. There the nations of the saved find their eternal home. With joy unutterable Moses looks upon the scene – the fulfillment of a more glorious deliverance than his brightest hopes have ever pictured. Their earthly wanderings forever past, the Israel of God have at last entered the goodly land.”¹²⁰

Does the word “nations” describe an ethnic division within heaven? The allusion is that it represents all those saved from every nation, kindred, tongue and people. It appears as an all-inclusive statement. The invitation is to all.

Verse 24 – “and the kings of the earth do bring their glory and honour into it.”

The identity of who the “kings” are has provoked much speculation in the literature. God already conveyed that answer early in the apocalyptic messages. Jesus Christ, the Prince of the kings of the earth, because of His blood, “hath made us kings and priests unto God and his Father; to him *be* glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen” (Revelation 1:6-7). As kings and priests, glory and honor are brought to the Father – joined with His glory in the city. How could that be? The Lamb – His blood – working in the hearts of man has brought forth a remnant. They bring glory to God by vindicating His name. In the Old Testament (Isaiah 60–61) the nations and kings bring “power” and “wealth” to God’s people and, in turn, to Him. Then the glory of the nations will be “like an overflowing stream” before God, and He will “extend peace to her [Jerusalem] like a river” (Isaiah 66:12).¹²¹

The word “bring” (*pherousin*) is in the present tense. It is part of them. It is living out their very natures. This glory (*doxan*) is seen also as praise. Their “wealth” is redemption and inheritance. Their “power and glory” is noted elsewhere (4:9, 11; 5:12-13) and refers specifically to praise of God; thus, applying here.

It is noteworthy that one of the end-time invitations to the world was to “fear God and give him glory” (14:6-7). There were those who responded: “them that had gotten the victory” (15:2) “who shall not fear thee, O Lord, and glorify thy name? for thou art holy: for all nations shall come and worship before thee” (15:4).

“Before entering the City of God, the Saviour bestows upon His followers the emblems of victory and invests them with the insignia of their royal state. The glittering

¹¹⁹ Brown, *Op. cit.*, p. 790.

¹²⁰ White, Ellen G.; *Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 477.

¹²¹ Beale, *Op. cit.*, pp. 1094-1095.

ranks are drawn up in the form of a hollow square about their King, whose form rises in majesty high above saint and angel, whose countenance beams upon them full of benignant love. Throughout the unnumbered host of the redeemed every glance is fixed upon Him, every eye beholds His glory whose 'visage was so marred more than any man, and His form more than the sons of men.' Upon the heads of the overcomers, Jesus with His own right hand places the crown of glory. For each there is a crown, bearing his own 'new name' (Revelation 2:17), and the inscription, 'Holiness to the Lord.' In every hand are placed the victor's palm and the shining harp. Then, as the commanding angels strike the note, every hand sweeps the harp strings with skillful touch, awakening sweet music in rich, melodious strains. Rapture unutterable thrills every heart, and each voice is raised in grateful praise: 'Unto Him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in His own blood, and hath made us kings and priests unto God and His Father; to Him be glory and dominion for ever and ever.' Revelation 1:5, 6.

"Before the ransomed throng is the Holy City. Jesus opens wide the pearly gates, and the nations that have kept the truth enter in. There they behold the Paradise of God, the home of Adam in his innocence. Then that voice, richer than any music that ever fell on mortal ear, is heard, saying: 'Your conflict is ended.' 'Come, ye blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world.'"¹²²

VERSE 25: "And the gates of it shall not be shut at all by day: for there shall be no night there."

In a Laodicean lament, Jesus said, "I stand at the door [gate] and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door [gate], I will come in" (3:20). The door to the hearts of the "believers," represented by Laodicea, is shut. Jesus is on the outside.

Here is a divine characterization of the bride. Representing the redeemed, the city's portals are personified as being forever open to its heart, where God's throne resides. "Your gates will always stand open; they will never be shut, day or night" (Isaiah 60:11).

Gates were usually closed at night. At the hour of darkness protection came from a closed gate. In the Laodicean metaphor "light" was knocking on its door, craving to enter in. The Lord wanted its parishioners to respond like David: "For thou art my lamp, O Lord: and the Lord will lighten my darkness" (II Samuel 22:29).

Here, there is the antithesis to that message. The gates will never be shut. In a metaphorical dissimilarity, the glory of the city (vs 23) drives away night, providing eternal day. The gates forever remain open. In this fascinating play on words and ideas, emphasis on God's glory is implied. Its purity, presence and joy are pervasive, making an open-gate welcomeness.

In the Gospel of John, "night" symbolized sin (3:2, 9:4, 12:35, 11:10, 13:30, 19:39; I Thessalonians 5:5). "No night" suggests evil is gone forever.¹²³ "There will no longer be any night" there (22:5). Without evil, God's salvic presence enjoys its full expression. "This then is the message ... that God is light and in him is no darkness at all" (I John 1:5). "It shall be one day which shall be known to the Lord, not day, nor night: but it shall come to pass, that at evening time it shall be light" (Zechariah 14:7).

"In the City of God 'there shall be no night.' None will need or desire repose. There will be no weariness in doing the will of God and offering praise to His name. We shall ever feel the freshness of the morning and shall ever be far from its close. 'And they need no candle, neither light of the sun; for the Lord God giveth them light.' Revelation

¹²² White, Ellen G.; *The Great Controversy*, pp. 645-646.

¹²³ Osborne, *Op. cit.*, p. 764.

22:5. The light of the sun will be superseded by a radiance which is not painfully dazzling, yet which immeasurably surpasses the brightness of our noontide. The glory of God and the Lamb floods the Holy City with unfading light. The redeemed walk in the sunless glory of perpetual day.”¹²⁴

The open gates metaphorically state that there is full access to the city – to the divine center of all.

VERSE 26: “And they shall bring the glory and honour of the nations into it.”

“They” refers back to the “saved” and “kings” (vs 24) who made up or led out in “glory and honour,” an ancient word couplet representing fame and reputation (Psalms 8:5, 28:1 LXX; Job 37:22 LXX; Romans 2:7, 10; Hebrews 2:7). How are these saved kings bringing the honor of earthly nations to a heavenly city?

This puzzling expression apparently alludes to individuals who received earthly honor and now metaphorically, because of their heavenly allegiance, forward their honor to God. “The ‘glory and honor’ that was theirs on earth is now to be handed over to God in heaven, as indeed Christ will ‘hand over the kingdom to God the Father after he has destroyed all dominion, authority, and power’ at the eschaton (1 Cor. 15:24). They will ‘glorify and honor’ God for all eternity.”¹²⁵

“Kings of the earth” refers to wicked rulers in 17:2 and 18. Here is an allusion to some who are saved. This ties to those who were “bought ... from every tribe and tongue and people and nation” (5:9), who God in turn made “kings and priests” (5:10).¹²⁶

Isaiah 60

“the sun shall no longer be your light by day, nor for brightness shall the moon give light to you; but the Lord will be to you ... light” (vs 19)

“the nations shall come to your light” (vs 3)

“kings shall minister to you (vs 10) the glory of Lebanon shall come to you” (vs 13)

Your gates shall be open continually ... not shut day nor night” (vs 11)

“the wealth of the Gentiles shall come to you” (vs 5) of the nations into it” (vs 26)

“also your people shall be all righteous” (vs 21)

Revelation 21

“the city had no need of the sun or of the moon to shine on it, for the glory of God has illumined it” (vs 23)

“the nations of those who are saved walk in its light” (vs 24)

“the kings of the earth bring their glory and honor into it” (vs 24)

“Its gates shall not be shut at all by day (there shall be no night there)” (vs 25)

“they shall bring the glory and the honor

“there shall by no means enter it anything that defiles” (vs 27)

“And the Gentiles shall come to thy light, and kings to the brightness of thy rising. Lift up thine eyes round about, and see: all they gather themselves together, they come to thee: thy sons shall come from far, and thy daughters shall be nursed at *thy* side. Then

¹²⁴ White, Ellen G.; *The Great Controversy*, p. 676.

¹²⁵ Osborne, *Op. cit.*, p. 764.

¹²⁶ Beale, *Op. cit.*, p. 1097.

thou shalt see, and flow together, and thine heart shall fear, and be enlarged; because the abundance of the sea shall be converted unto thee, the forces of the Gentiles shall come unto thee” (Isaiah 60:3-5).

VERSE 27: “**And there shall in no wise enter into it any thing that defileth, neither *whatsoever* worketh abomination, or *maketh* a lie: but they which are written in the Lamb’s book of life.”**

Verse 27 – “And there shall in no wise enter into it any thing that defileth, neither *whatsoever* worketh abomination, or *maketh* a lie:”

The theme has been one of open gates (vs 25). The saved out of nations and kings have entered to bathe in the divine glory and light of the city (vs 24). Its physical appearance has been sparkling from precious stones. It is a place of joy (vs 4) and can be compared to a bride in loveliness (vs 2). But God makes a dramatic thematic switch within the context of this wonder and awe.

A divine warning sounds. As the apocalyptic message draws to a close, in a final appeal, God’s last sermon to humanity contains ominous issues that portend eternal ruin and loss. The “loss” or “missed all” theme is given clearly at the beginning, and now at its end:

- List of those who will burn in lake of fire called second death (vs 8)
- Description of holy Jerusalem (vs 9-26)
- List of those who will be shut out of the city (vs 27)

The “entrance” theme into “paradise” is also addressed at the beginning of the book and at its end:

“If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will enter in” (3:20).

“Blessed are they that do his commandments, that they may have right to the tree of life, and may enter in through the gates into the city” (22:14).

In Jesus’ discourses, entrance into His kingdom was by means of “righteousness” (Matthew 5:20), doing “the will of my Father” (Matthew 7:21), “becoming as little children” (Matthew 18:3) and being “born of water and of the Spirit” (John 3:5).¹²⁷ He portrayed the rites of passage in the context of kingdom relationships, at times even in familial terms (cf. Deuteronomy 23:2-9, Acts 14:22).

But here in a terminal message in the last book that would be included in the Canon, specific sins are addressed. In descriptive words, he notes behavior that will be barred from the city – things that *defile*, that are *abominations* and that are *deceptive*. This is a trilogy of things God hates.

Things that **defile** (*koinon*) come from the concept of being “unclean” or “common.”

- “Unclean” satanic spirits come out of the mouths of the representatives of the false trinity. This symbolizes the epitome of misrepresentation of God and His truth (16:13-14; Mark 1:23-24; 3:11, 30; 5:2, 8, 13).

¹²⁷ Osborne, *Op. cit.*, pp. 764-765.

- The filthiness of the harlot's fornication (17:4) depicts an apostate church which shares illicit or defiling doctrines with others.

These are contrasted with the purity of God's people (Leviticus 11:44-45; Deuteronomy 7:25-26, 14:3). There is therefore the allusion that nothing "unclean," "secular" or "common" will enter the end-time Jerusalem (see also in the Old Testament – Isaiah 35:8, 52:1; Ezekiel 44:9).

Things which are an **abomination** (Greek: *bdelygma*) refer to things that God hates (Ezekiel 5:9, 11; 6:9). It is descriptive of God's attitude towards something He despises. The most frequent allusion is to an abominable custom or idol.¹²⁸ In Christ's discourse regarding the end of time, He referred to Daniel the prophet and his exposé on the "abomination." Daniel used the word *shiqqus*, which is always used in connection with an idolatrous practice. It relates to something man worships that is detestable to God (Hosea 9:10; cf. Ezekiel 5:11, 7:20; Jeremiah 16:18; II Chronicles 15:8).¹²⁹

In Revelation the harlot of 17:4-5 has a gold cup in her hand filled with "abominations." She had on her forehead written "MOTHER OF HARLOTS AND ABOMINATIONS OF THE EARTH." That was a summation word for all the deceptive teachings the harlot held. She shared the cup with the world (17:2, 18; 18:3, 7). What detestable thing is here alluded to? From 10:6, 13:16-18 and 14:6-8 the allusion relates to desecration of the seventh-day Sabbath or fourth Commandment. Man's number replaces God's number – seven.

Things that relate to falsehood or **lies** (*pseudos*) refer to premeditated deception. The "false prophet" (synonymous with the earth beast of Revelation 13) is characterized by deceitful lies (16:13, 19:20, 20:10). This contrasts with the saints who have "no guile" in their mouths (14:5). The focus is on those who have made a profession of faith but contradict this outward commitment by a life at variance with God's wishes.¹³⁰ They are false believers. These individuals share a characteristic of Satan (John 8:44; II Thessalonians 2:9, 11). Further details of those excluded will be presented in 22:15.

"Nothing that makes a lie, representing the father of it (John 8:44), will be in that city. This includes: (1) men of *high* degree (Psalm 62:9), (2) proud people that forge lies against God's people (Psalm 119:69), (3) false witnesses (Proverbs 14:5), (4) those who prophesy lies in God's name (Jeremiah 27:15), (5) those who say they have fellowship with God, yet walk in darkness (1 John 1:6), and (6) those who say they are Jews and are not (Revelation 2:9; 3:9)."¹³¹

"God would have us learn also how deep is His hatred and contempt for all hypocrisy and deception. In pretending that they had given all, Ananias and Sapphira lied to the Holy Spirit, and, as a result, they lost this life and the life that is to come. The same God who punished them, today condemns all falsehood. Lying lips are an abomination to Him. He declares that into the Holy City 'there shall in no wise enter ... anything that defileth, neither whatsoever worketh abomination, or maketh a lie.' Revelation 21:27. Let truth telling be held with no loose hand or uncertain grasp. Let it become a part of the life. Playing fast and loose with truth, and dissembling to suit ones own selfish plans, means shipwreck of faith. 'Stand therefore, having your loins girt about with truth.' Ephesians 6:14. He who utters untruths sells his soul in a cheap market. His falsehoods may seem to serve in emergencies; he may thus seem to make business advancement

¹²⁸ Kittle, Gerhard; *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, vol. I, pp. 598-600.

¹²⁹ Harris, R. Laird; *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament*, vol II, p. 955.

¹³⁰ Beale, *Op. cit.*, p. 1101.

¹³¹ Brooks, *Op. cit.*, p. 10.

that he could not gain by fair dealing; but he finally reaches the place where he can trust no one. Himself a falsifier, he has no confidence in the word of others.”¹³²

“The longest journey is performed by taking one step at a time. A succession of steps brings us to the end of the road. The longest chain is composed of separate links. If one of these links is faulty, the chain is worthless. Thus it is with character. A well-balanced character is formed by single acts well performed. One defect, cultivated instead of being overcome, makes the man imperfect, and closes against him the gate of the Holy City. *He who enters heaven must have a character that is without spot or wrinkle or any such thing.* Naught that defileth can ever enter there. In all the redeemed host not one defect will be seen.”¹³³

Verse 27 – “but they which are written in the Lamb’s book of life.”

In a review before Israel, Moses recalled God’s angry response to their rebellion at Mount Horeb: “I have seen this people, and, behold, it is a stiffnecked people: Let me alone, that I may destroy them, and blot out their name from under heaven” (Deuteronomy 9:13-14; cf. 29:20-21). The implication is a *record* of those who identify with God. The wicked have their names permanently missing in that book (Psalm 9:53). Allusion to such records are noted elsewhere (Psalm 87:6, Isaiah 4:3).

There is a more specific commentary on God’s record. God through Gabriel informed Daniel that “thy people” had seventy weeks of years probation left (Daniel 9:24). This has created confusion to the literalist and varying viewpoints with historicists. If the focus was the Jewish people, especially of the Tribe of Judah, the prophecy would have little contemporary relevance. But in an area of burgeoning understanding, we note that Gabriel said: “And at that time [Jacob’s Trouble – great tribulation] *thy people* shall be delivered, every one that shall be found written in the book” (Daniel 12:1; cf. Exodus 32:32; Luke 10:20; Revelation 3:5, 21:27). John talks of those not written in it (13:8, 17:8, 20:15) and of its being opened for review at the final judgment (20:12). The names of all those in that Lamb’s Book of Life appear to have been entered at the foundation of the world (17:8)!

“And it shall come to pass, *that he that is left in Zion, and he that remaineth in Jerusalem, shall be called holy, even every one that is written among the living in Jerusalem*” (Isaiah 4:3).

Yet, we are told: “When we become children of God, our names are written in the Lamb’s book of life, and they remain there until the time of the investigative judgment. Then the name of every individual will be called, and his record examined.... If in that day it shall appear that all our wicked deeds have not been fully repented of, our names will be blotted from the book of life, and our sins will stand against us.”¹³⁴

“The books of record in heaven, in which the names and the deeds of men are registered, are to determine the decisions of the judgment. Says the prophet Daniel: ‘The judgment was set, and the books were opened [Daniel 7:10].’ The revelator, describing the same scene, adds: ‘Another book was opened, which is the book of life: and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works.’ Revelation 20:12.

At the end, “The book of life contains the names of all who have ever entered the service of God. Jesus bade His disciples: ‘Rejoice, because your names are written in

¹³² White, Ellen G.; *Acts of the Apostles*, pp. 75-76.

¹³³ White, Ellen G.; *Messages to Young People*, p. 144 (emphasis added).

¹³⁴ White, Ellen G.; *In heavenly places*, p. 360.

heaven.’ Luke 10:20. Paul speaks of his faithful fellow workers, ‘whose names are in the book of life.’ Philippians 4:3. Daniel, looking down to ‘a time of trouble, such as never was,’ declares that God’s people shall be delivered, ‘everyone that shall be found written in the book.’ And the revelator says that those only shall enter the city of God whose names ‘are written in the Lamb’s book of life.’ Daniel 12:1; Revelation 21:27.

“A book of remembrance’ is written before God, in which are recorded the good deeds of ‘them that feared the Lord, and that thought upon His name.’ Malachi 3:16. Their words of faith, their acts of love, are registered in heaven. Nehemiah refers to this when he says: ‘Remember me, O my God, ... and wipe not out my good deeds that I have done for the house of my God.’ Nehemiah 13:14. In the book of God’s remembrance every deed of righteousness is immortalized. There every temptation resisted, every evil overcome, every word of tender pity expressed, is faithfully chronicled. And every act of sacrifice, every suffering and sorrow endured for Christ’s sake, is recorded. Says the psalmist: ‘Thou tellest my wanderings: put Thou my tears into Thy bottle: are they not in Thy book?’ Psalm 56:8.”¹³⁵

¹³⁵ White, Ellen G.; *The Great Controversy*, pp. 480-481.

REVELATION

CHAPTER 22

INTRODUCTION

Redemptive history, based on six millenniums and then a sacred seventh, is a forward-moving Biblical time saga. Its periods are filled with memoirs, contemporary theater and future events. To discern the timing of a Scriptural passage is vital to its application; to be led by the Spirit to its understanding bears eternal interests. Israel's desolation came because they knew "not the time of thy visitation" (Luke 19:44). An exact reapplication to the "Israel" of end-time is Biblically predicted.

The end of all divine plans is restoration. This is always preceded by destruction and desolation of something related to sin. The Garden of Eden (Genesis 2 and 3) was given to our first parents as a place of joy. Every activity was oriented to their happiness and association with God. Knowledge was ever to elevate that joy. The Tree of Knowledge of good and evil would add a destructive element to man's mind. Self and sin would intervene between man's relationship with God and with others.

That is why, in the new covenant promises, that knowledge is eradicated – "their sins and their iniquities will I remember no more" (Hebrews 8:12). For a perfect restoration, the memory of each individual's sins must be eliminated so that the original Garden experience can come. This new and final chapter introduces that time. Luke 23:43 tells of a restoration of Paradise and II Corinthians 12:2 and 4 describes a vision of it: "I knew a man in Christ above fourteen years ago, (whether in the body, I cannot tell; or whether out of the body, I cannot tell: God knoweth;) such an one caught up to the third heaven.... How that he was caught up into paradise, and heard unspeakable words, which it is not lawful for a man to utter" (II Corinthians 12:2, 4).

As this chapter begins, details of the new heaven and earth are reminiscent of the Garden of Eden. The "river of life" (22:1) and the "tree of life" (22:2) are allusions to that "primeval paradise."¹

Who is John's attending angel? It appears to be the one who began the end-time visions from 17:1 to 22:5. If that is the case, and it appears to be so, it is one of the seven censer angels (21:9; cf. 17:1). The censer angels also appear to allude to the seven angels of the seven churches (15:1, 6-7; 16:1-21). Stars, noted in the first chapter and described as angels of the churches, represent God's messengers or leaders. They can be men who are called angels (Genesis 37:9; Job 38:7; Revelation 1:16, 20; 12:4, 7-9).

VERSE 1: "And he showed me a pure river of water of life, clear as crystal, proceeding out of the throne of God and of the Lamb."

Verse 1 – "And he showed me a pure river of water of life, clear as crystal,"

In 21:9-10 the angel showed John the "bride" or "new Jerusalem." Now he is given a scene of the River of Life. This is part of its Paradise-like qualities.² In the land of Eden a

¹ Brighton, Louis A; *Revelation, Concordance Commentary* (Concordance Publishing House, Saint Louis), 1999, p. 623.

² Thomas, Robert L.; *Revelation 8-22 – An Exegetical Commentary*, (Moody Press, Chicago), 1992, p. 481.

river flowed into the garden to water it (Genesis 2:9-10, 3:22-24). “Life” was restricted to the special Tree of Life. Here, the river has undefined life-giving properties.

Previously, we saw one of the 24 elders promising the victorious saints the “stream of living waters” (Revelation 7:17). We saw God giving the saints the “spring of the water of life freely (21:6; cf. 22:17). This life-giving water was alluded to in the Old Testament (Psalm 36:9; Proverbs 10:11, 14:27, 16:22; Isaiah 12:3, 35:6-9; Jeremiah 2:13; Joel 3:18). It was unfolded more deeply by John describing Jesus as being the “living water” (John 4:10-14) and the Holy Spirit as a stream “of living water” (7:37-39).³

In Eden the river left the Garden and divided into four named branches (Genesis 2:10-14). Zechariah notes that the “living waters” will leave Jerusalem and divide into two (Zechariah 14:8). In prophecy two rivers become great metaphors. The Euphrates represents apostate people supporting Babylon; the Tigris or Heddikel represent God’s people to the east in preparation for Christ’s coming.

The words “bright” or “clear” (*lampros*) are used together with crystal (*krystallos*) for the first time. “Bright” was used alone in 15:6, 19:8 and shortly again in 22:16. Crystal was used previously to describe the “sea of glass” (4:6), which is outside of the city. This river is sparkling clear.

“We all entered the cloud together, and were seven days ascending to the sea of glass, when Jesus brought along the crowns and with his own right hand placed them on our heads. [2 ESDRAS 2:43.] He gave us harps of gold and palms of victory. [Rev. 15:2. REV. 7:9.] Here on the sea of glass the 144,000 stood in a perfect square. Some of them had very bright crowns, others not so bright. Some crowns appeared heavy with stars, while others had but few. All were perfectly satisfied with their crowns. And they were all clothed with a glorious white mantle from their shoulders to their feet. [Rev. 7:9.] Angels were all about us as we marched over the sea of glass to the gate of the City. Jesus raised his mighty glorious arm, laid hold of the gate and swung it back on its golden hinges, and said to us, You have washed your robes in my blood, stood stiffly for my truth, enter in. [Isa. 26:2.] We all marched in and felt we had a perfect right in the City. Here we saw the tree of life, and the throne of God. Out of the throne came a pure river of water, and on either side of the river was the tree of life. [Rev. 22; 1,2.] On one side of the river was a trunk of a tree and a trunk on the other side of the river, both of pure transparent gold.”⁴

The crystal clear imagery suggests utmost purity, a transcendent gift.

Verse 1 – “proceeding out of the throne of God and of the Lamb.”

Jesus told the Laodicean church that if they overcame (as He had described), they would share the Father’s throne, even as He goes (3:21; cf. Hebrews 1:3). The Father is portrayed on His throne in many places in this book (5:6, 13; 6:16; 7:10, 17). Now the sovereign throne unity message is once again portrayed. Within its imagery is silently couched the Laodicean promise: God’s people will share that throne! This too was one of the promises early on (1:6). We can become priests now (I Peter 2:9-10), then kings, reigning for at least one thousand years (10:6).

The water of life proceeding from this throne appears related to one of Ezekiel’s visions where a river flows south from the altar in the new temple and makes everything it touches flourish. In Zechariah 14:8 the “living water will flow out from Jerusalem” at the

³ Osborne, Grant R.; *Revelation* (Baker Book House; Grand Rapids, MI), p. 768.

⁴ White, Ellen G.; *Word to the Little Flock*, p. 16.

“day of Yahweh.”⁵ Isaiah notes that water will gush forth and become a highway called “the way of holiness” (Isaiah 35:8). Joel 3:18 mentions “the fountain from the house of the Lord.”

Since the river comes from God’s throne, it comes from Him. He/They are the source of “life.” Many scholars have tried to attach a symbolic meaning to this river. It has created conflict. We will reside near the throne of the universe, its water being one of God’s wonderful resources of eternal life. “[There is] a river, the streams whereof shall make glad the city of God, the holy *place* of the tabernacles of the most High” (Psalm 46:4).

“The Saviour made use of this symbolic service to direct the minds of the people to the blessings that He had come to bring them. ‘In the last day, that great day of the feast,’ His voice was heard in tones that rang through the temple courts, ‘If any man thirst, let him come unto Me, and drink. He that believeth on Me, as the Scripture hath said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water.’ ‘This,’ said John, ‘spake He of the Spirit, which they that believe on Him should receive.’ John 7:37-39. The refreshing water, welling up in a parched and barren land, causing the desert place to blossom, and flowing out to give life to the perishing, is an emblem of the divine grace which Christ alone can bestow, and which is as the living water, purifying, refreshing, and invigorating the soul. He in whom Christ is abiding has within him a never-failing fountain of grace and strength. Jesus cheers the life and brightens the path of all who truly seek Him. His love, received into the heart, will spring up in good works unto eternal life. And not only does it bless the soul in which it springs, but the living stream will flow out in words and deeds of righteousness, to refresh the thirsting around him.

“The same figure Christ had employed in His conversation with the woman of Samaria at Jacob’s well: ‘Whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst; but the water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life.’ John 4:14. Christ combines the two types. He is the rock, He is the living water.

“The same beautiful and expressive figures are carried throughout the Bible. Centuries before the advent of Christ, Moses pointed to Him as the rock of Israel’s salvation (Deuteronomy 32:15); the psalmist sang of Him as ‘my Redeemer,’ ‘the rock of my strength,’ ‘the rock that is higher than I,’ ‘a rock of habitation,’ ‘rock of my heart,’ ‘rock of my refuge.’ In David’s song His grace is pictured also as the cool, ‘still waters,’ amid green pastures, beside which the heavenly Shepherd leads His flock. Again, ‘Thou shalt make them,’ he says, ‘drink of the river of Thy pleasures. For with Thee is the fountain of life.’ Psalms 19:14; 62:7; 61:2; 71:3 (margin); 73:26 (margin); 94:22; 23:2; 36:8, 9. And the wise man declares, ‘The wellspring of wisdom *is* as a flowing brook.’ Proverbs 18:4. To Jeremiah, Christ is ‘the fountain of living waters;’ to Zechariah, ‘a fountain opened ... for sin and for uncleanness.’ Jeremiah 2:13; Zechariah 13:1.

“Isaiah describes Him as the ‘rock of ages,’ and ‘the shadow of a great rock in a weary land.’ Isaiah 26:4 (margin); 32:2. And he records the precious promise, bringing vividly to mind the living stream that flowed for Israel: ‘When the poor and needy seek water, and there is none, and their tongue faileth for thirst, I the Lord will hear them, I the God of Israel will not forsake them.’ ‘I will pour water upon him that is thirsty, and floods upon the dry ground;’ ‘in the wilderness shall waters break out, and streams in the desert.’ The invitation is given, ‘Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters.’ Isaiah 41:17; 44:3; 35:6; 55:1. And in the closing pages of the Sacred Word this invitation is echoed. The river of the water of life, ‘clear as crystal,’ proceeds from the throne of God

⁵ Osborne, *Op. cit.*, p. 768.

and the Lamb; and the gracious call is ringing down through the ages, 'Whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely.' Revelation 22:17."⁶

VERSE 2: "In the midst of the street of it, and on either side of the river, *was there the tree of life, which bare twelve manner of fruits, and yielded her fruit every month: and the leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations.*"

The glory of that verdure comes from an allusion given in Isaiah 35:6-9: "The wilderness and the solitary place shall be glad for them; and the desert shall rejoice, and blossom as the rose. It shall blossom abundantly, and rejoice even with joy and singing: the glory of Lebanon shall be given unto it, the excellency of Carmel and Sharon, they shall see the glory of the LORD, *and* the excellency of our God.... And the parched ground shall become a pool, and the thirsty land springs of water: in the habitation of dragons, where each lay, [shall be] grass with reeds and rushes.... I will open rivers in high places, and fountains in the midst of the valleys: I will make the wilderness a pool of water, and the dry land springs of water. I will plant in the wilderness the cedar, the shittah tree, and the myrtle, and the oil tree; I will set in the desert the fir tree, [and] the pine, and the box tree together: That they may see, and know, and consider, and understand together, that the hand of the LORD hath done this, and the Holy One of Israel hath created it.... Remember ye not the former things, neither consider the things of old. Behold, I will do a new thing; now it shall spring forth; shall ye not know it? I will even make a way in the wilderness, *and* rivers in the desert. The beast of the field shall honour me, the dragons and the owls: because I give waters in the wilderness, *and* rivers in the desert, to give drink to my people, my chosen" (Isaiah 35:1-2, 7; 41:18-20; 43:18-20).

Verse 2 – "In the midst of the street of it, and on either side of the river, *was there the tree of life,*"

Scholars debate the meaning of this phrase. Most conclude that the street refers to "the street of the city" of pure gold noted in 21:21. Does the river flow down the middle of that street? The expression lends itself to that understanding (NASB, NIV, NRSV, NJB, REB, NLT). This is an apparent description noted in Ezekiel 47:7: "Now when I had returned, behold, at the bank of the river *were* very many trees on the one side and on the other."

"On the banks of the river were beautiful trees bearing fruit which was good for food. Language is altogether too feeble to attempt a description of heaven. As the scene rises before me I am lost in amazement; and carried away with the surpassing splendor and the excellent glory, I lay down the pen, and exclaim, O what love! What wondrous love! The most exalted language cannot describe the glory of heaven, nor the matchless depths of a Saviour's love."⁷

Expositor White adds additional insight: "Here we saw the tree of life and the throne of God. Out of the throne came a pure river of water, and on either side of the river was the tree of life. On one side of the river was a trunk of a tree, and a trunk on the other side of the river, both of pure, transparent gold. At first I thought I saw two trees. I looked again, and saw that they were united at the top in one tree. So it was the tree of life on either side of the river of life. Its branches bowed to the place where we stood, and the

⁶ White, Ellen G.; *Patriarchs and Prophets*, pp. 412-413.

⁷ White, Ellen G.; *Spiritual Gifts*, vol. 1, p. 210.

fruit was glorious; it looked like gold mixed with silver.”⁸ This helps one grasp the expression, “either side of the river.”

If this river flows down the center of the great golden street (and it appears that it does), that street is vastly wide and different from what we ordinarily envision. With the city being so vast, it is possible that the street is many miles wide with lush vegetation covering its vast banks and land on either side of the river – all still in the center of the street.

The Greek word for “tree” is *xylon*. It is singular, just as Genesis 2:9-10 implies. Yet it is noted by John to be on either side of the river. White’s observations resolve the imagination dilemma. She also saw many varieties of trees along its banks, which Ezekiel depicted (Ezekiel 47:7-12).

Verse 2 – “which bare twelve manner of fruits, and yielded her fruit every month:”

It is the “tree of life” to the redeemed saints. The intimation is that life comes through the monthly variety of fruit it produces. Jesus said He was the “I am” source of “life” (John 11:25), He has the keys, He was dead and now is alive with the keys of death (Revelation 1:18). Thus, in a mysterious yet wonderful manner, that divine gift is expressed through the fruit of this tree. Adam and Eve were driven from the Garden for fear they would partake of that “life” and “live forever” as sinners (Genesis 3:22). It had supernatural virtue.⁹

Restoration from sin would first have to come through Christ. “Christ ... was the tree of life to all who would pluck and eat.”¹⁰ The legal issue of a death penalty would need resolution. The recreation of a heart that became “as one of us” would need to be consummated. Then sin and iniquity were to be remembered no more (Hebrews 8:12, 10:17; Jeremiah 31:34). Only when the original state is healed and man is rejuvenated can he once again eat of that tree. That fruit was life-giving but assigned only to those without knowledge of sin. “Its fruit appeared like apples of gold and silver, and had the power to perpetuate life.”¹¹ In fact, its properties were so powerful that “the lives of the antediluvians were protracted because of the lifegiving power of this tree, which was transmitted to them from Adam and Eve.”¹² “Its fruit was the antidote of death”¹³ Today we come in contact with that Tree of Life through the study of His Word;¹⁴ that is, eating its fruit.¹⁵ As our thoughts are exercised on truth within its covers, the Holy Spirit comes and imparts spiritual life.¹⁶

In the letter to Ephesus, John summated this in an eschatologic context: “To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the **tree of life**, which is in the midst of the paradise of God” (1:7). To the overcomer, that life-giving fruit will be a privilege. Paradise (*paradeisos*), a word that came from ancient Persia, refers to an enclosed garden or a park.¹⁷ The Edenic “garden” (Genesis 2:9-10), *gan* in Hebrew, refers to an area of vege-

⁸ White, Ellen G.; *A Word to the Little Flock*, p. 16 (1847).

⁹ White, Ellen G.; *My Life Today*, p. 355.

¹⁰ White, Ellen G.; *Manuscript 95* (1898).

¹¹ White, Ellen G.; *Patriarchs and Prophets*, pp. 46-47.

¹² White, Ellen G.; *The Review and Herald*, January 26, 1897.

¹³ White, Ellen G.; *The Signs of the Times*, March 31, 1909.

¹⁴ White, Ellen G.; *Letter 3* (1898).

¹⁵ White, Ellen G.; *Manuscript 112* (1898).

¹⁶ White, Ellen G.; *The Review and Herald*, January 26, 1897.

¹⁷ Brown, Colin, editor, *New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology* (Zondervan, Grand Rapids, MI), 1986, vol. 2, p. 760.

tation surrounded by a wall (cf. Isaiah 58:11; Song of Solomon 5:1, 6:2, 5:2, 8:13; II Kings 25:4). Destruction of such a garden was a metaphor for desolation (Amos 4:9).

As time progressed, *gan* came to be known as the “Garden of the Lord,” symbolizing a place of lush vegetation (Genesis 13:10, Isaiah 51:3, Ezekiel 36:35, Joel 2:3).¹⁸ Here, John is given a little insight into that garden in heaven with the central piece of vegetation, the Tree of Life. Then in Christ’s promise to the Ephesians, He clarified that that tree was in the *midst* of the Paradise of God. Thus, the verdure and lush vegetation around it must be surpassing. This book ends with a warning regarding this tree: If the words of this book of prophecy are deleted, whoever is guilty will not have access to the “tree of life” (Revelation 22:19 – NIV).

The notion of “months” (*men*) reflects God’s eternal plan to have celestial clocks, just like in the original Edenic paradise (cf. Isaiah 66:23, Ezekiel 47:12, Revelation 21:25).

Verse 2 – “and the leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations.”

Was it the eating of the leaves (like many herbs), the odor of the leaves (like the myrtlewood tree leaf) or even their appearance (like a beautiful scene of nature like a maple or giant oak tree) that brought healing? We aren’t told. But the word “healing” suggests a complete absence of any physical or spiritual want.¹⁹ Life was sustained and given by its fruit. Its leaves gave immortality.²⁰

Do the nations still need healing? No. The implication appears to be that all people from all nations of the past who now have their names in the Lamb’s book of Life (Revelation 20:12; 21:27) are one, unified, at peace together.

Today, when we receive into our hearts the words of Christ from His Word, that knowledge is life giving and heart changing. Truth *is* the life of Jesus. Truth cleanses us from impurity and prepares the soul for Christ’s presence.²¹

“The Word of God is our sanctification and righteousness, because it is spiritual food. To study it is to eat the leaves of the tree of life. Nothing is more uplifting to God’s servants than to teach the Scriptures just as Christ taught them. The Word of God contains divine nourishment, which satisfies the appetite for spiritual food.—Letter 17, 1902.”²² “God’s word is a leaf from the tree of life.”²³

VERSE 3: “And there shall be no more curse: but the throne of God and of the Lamb shall be in it; and his servants shall serve him:”

Verse 3 – “And there shall be no more curse: but the throne of God and of the Lamb shall be in it;”

The leaves of the Tree of Life are for healing, and now no curse is there. Why? The highest of all reasons, because the ruling center of God and the Lamb is there. This reveals once again (cf. 21:22-23) the joint occupancy of that throne. The throne of Satan, centered in the Pergamos church (2:13), is now abolished.

¹⁸ Harris, R. Laird; *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament*, vol II, pp. 168-169.

¹⁹ Mounce, Robert H.; *The Book of Revelation* (Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., Grand Rapids, Michigan, 1977), p. 387.

²⁰ White, Ellen G.; *Medical Ministry*, pp. 233-234.

²¹ White, Ellen G.; *Manuscript 103* (1902).

²² White, Ellen G.; *Letter 17* (1902).

²³ White, Ellen G.; *Manuscript 14* (1903).

What curse (*katathema*) is no longer there? In the Genesis 3 account when Adam and Eve were barred from that Tree, man, woman and serpent were to be plagued with sadness and change. Even the symbolic church would suffer. But in the end, Satan would be defeated (3:15). Verse 3 here is a declaration that that time has now come and all results of evil are passed. Two other curses were formally pronounced on the earth. One on the ground, wherein Cain slew Abel, and finally at the flood.²⁴

Katathema occurs only here in the New Testament. It is a cognant of *anathema* (a curse) (Romans 9:3; I Corinthians 12:3, 16:22; Galatians 1:8-9) where it is an object of a final sentence – total destruction. In Acts 23:14 it refers to the sentence.²⁵ That bane that blighted all creation for millenniums is now gone. Nothing will be harmed or destroyed. All will forever remain new. That includes no death.

The curse is gone because of the blood sacrifice of the Lamb (cf. 1:5b, 5:9, 12:11). The Lamb imagery is maintained as causative. He paid the ultimate “curse” to eliminate all of mankind’s curse. Today, we can anticipate this hope through the Lamb (John 1:14, 18). That imagery is carried through this amazing prophecy. The meek, lowly Lamb, in stunning language, showing sovereign God’s partnership, rules on the throne of the universe. Each is as approachable as easily as a little Lamb. They are also powerful enough to be sovereign over all.²⁶

Verse 3 – “and his servants shall serve him:”

This fulfills an Old Testament prophecy: “And *men* shall dwell in it, and there shall be no more utter destruction; but Jerusalem shall be safely inhabited” (Zechariah 14:11). This is the first time the inhabitants of the city are mentioned.²⁷

The word for servants (*douloi*) is actually slave. This has been used before:

- Entire book written to God’s slaves (1:1)
- His slaves are sealed (7:3)
- God avenges their blood (19:2)
- God has “save[d] the prophets” (22:6)
- They will be rewarded at the eschaton (11:18)

The servants are before the throne in imagery as priests (7:15) in service and worship. The saints were previously declared as “priests” unto God (1:6, 5:10, 20:6). Thus, the slaves’ service denotes that high cultic role. “For as the days of the Tree of Life will the days of my people be ... they will not bear children to be cursed” (Isaiah 65:22-23).

The word structure here is predictive: “They will keep on serving Him.” “Him” (*auto*) is a singular pronoun, yet refers to both the Father and the Lamb. It capitalizes on their unity.

“To dwell forever in this home of the blest, to bear in soul, body, and spirit, not the dark traces of sin and the curse, but the perfect likeness of our Creator, and through ceaseless ages to advance in wisdom, in knowledge, and in holiness, ever exploring new fields of thought, ever finding new wonders and new glories, ever increasing in capacity to know and to enjoy and to love, and knowing that there is still beyond us joy and

²⁴ Wood, Robert, M.D.; *Revelation 22* (Prophecy Research Initiative document – 2004), p. 2 (quoted 41SG121) (cf. Isaiah 24:6, Nahum 1:9).

²⁵ Thomas, *Op. cit.*, p. 486.

²⁶ Fortner, Don; *Discovering Christ in Revelation* (Evangelical Press USA; Auburn, MA), p. 445.

²⁷ Aune, David E.; *52c World Biblical Commentary; Revelation 1-5* (World Books; Publisher, Dallas, Texas), 1997, p. 1179.

love and wisdom infinite – such is the object to which the Christian’s hope is pointing, for which Christian education is preparing. To secure this education, and to aid others to secure it, should be the object of the Christian’s life.”²⁸

“Before the ransomed throng is the Holy City. Jesus opens wide the pearly gates, and the nations that have kept the truth enter in. There they behold the Paradise of God, the home of Adam in his innocency. Then that voice, richer than any music that ever fell on mortal ear, is heard, saying: ‘Your conflict is ended.’ ‘Come, ye blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world.’

“Now is fulfilled the Saviour’s prayer for His disciples: ‘I will that they also, whom Thou hast given Me, be with Me where I am.’ ‘Faultless before the presence of His glory with exceeding joy’ (Jude 24), Christ presents to the Father the purchase of His blood, declaring: ‘Here am I, and the children whom Thou hast given Me.’ ‘Those that Thou gavest Me I have kept.’ Oh, the wonders of redeeming love! the rapture of that hour when the infinite Father, looking upon the ransomed, shall behold His image, sin’s discord banished, its blight removed, and the human once more in harmony with the divine!”²⁹

VERSE 4: “And they shall see his face; and his name *shall be* in their foreheads.”

Verse 4 – “And they shall see his face;”

At first it seems redundant to make this declaration. God’s servants are before the throne; to see His face would be obvious. The meaning is deeper. Because the previous reference to God in verse 3 was to the Father and the Lamb, “his” face here means both Beings of the Godhead.

We will see God Himself. It is a beautiful declaration. The ultimate redemptive object has been realized. The saints are in His presence and look into His face! After Adam and Eve sinned, they tried to hide from God (Genesis 3:8). Moses was not permitted to see His face (Exodus 33:20, 23).

John records that “no one has ever seen the face of God” (John 1:18; cf. I John 4:12, I Timothy 6:15-16). Yet, in a greater spiritual sense, man saw the glory, as of the only begotten of the Father in Jesus, the Word (John 1:14). He alone had seen God. Now the saints join Him and see Jesus the Lamb and God the Father – both as kings over all on Their thrones. Jesus did not see His Father’s face (though He heard His voice on several occasions) until after the declared resurrection. “Touch me not, for I am not yet ascended to my Father” (John 20:17). He was the “firstfruits” of humanity to see the face of God! (I Corinthians 15:23). The wicked will cry for the rocks and mountains to hide them from that face (Revelation 6:16).

Only those who are righteous and holy can view God directly (Psalms 11:7, 17:15; Hebrews 12:14; I Corinthians 13:12).³⁰ Job longed for this day (Job 19:25-27).

“Seeing God” became an ancient religious cliché associated with understanding Him and being in right relationship to Him (John 33:26; Psalms 17:15, 42:2; III John 11). This was often seen as a special eschatological blessing (Numbers 6:25, Psalm 84:7, Matthew 5:8, Hebrews 12:14, I Corinthians 13:12).³¹ Thus, it is the culmination of many

²⁸ White, Ellen G.; *Counsels to Parents, Teachers and Students*, p. 55 (1913).

²⁹ White, Ellen G.; *The Great Controversy*, p. 646.

³⁰ Thomas, *Op. cit.*, p. 487.

³¹ Osborne, *Op. cit.*, p. 774.

end-time hopes. In beautiful prose: “We shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is” (1 John 3:2).

To see God’s face is the ultimate awareness of God!³² All mystical issues are gone. There is no longer any view of Him through a dark glass. He is there, right in front of the redeemed. They are looking into His face.

It is fascinating that the seraphim hide their faces from God (Isaiah 6:2). This is presumed to be an act of reverence since angels can see God (Matthew 18:10).

“The central theme of the Bible, the theme about which every other in the whole book clusters, is the redemption plan, the restoration in the human soul of the image of God. From the first intimation of hope in the sentence pronounced in Eden to that last glorious promise of the Revelation, ‘They shall see His face; and His name shall be in their foreheads’ (Revelation 22:4), the burden of every book and every passage of the Bible is the unfolding of this wondrous theme, – man’s uplifting, – the power of God, ‘which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.’ 1 Corinthians 15:57.”³³

Verse 4 – “and his name *shall be* in their foreheads.”

This was alluded to three times previously. Revelation 7:3 notes that a pre-advent (still on earth) activity is the sealing of the saints in their foreheads. Revelation 14:1 talks of the 144,000 (in heaven) as having the Father’s name written on their foreheads. That is presumably the ultimate meaning of the sealing. The Father is the head of all, thus His name would mean we have been adopted into His family. We are His and part of Him. It expands the divine–human marriage theme.

The saints constantly face a threat from the beast and his mark being placed on their foreheads or hands (Revelation 13:16-17). God’s servants resist that, even in face of persecution. To say that God’s name is on their foreheads is to say that they reflect His character. They think like Him. The Philadelphia church was given that promise that if they overcame, God would (Revelation 3:12):

1. Write upon him the name of my God (Jesus is speaking)
2. The name of the city of my God (symbolizing the family of saints – Christ’s bride)
3. My (Christ’s) new name (His people are then wedded to Him)

The saints will be “a people belonging to God” (1 Peter 2:9; cf. Exodus 19:5, Titus 2:14). The seal consummates that eternal reality.

“The assertion that ‘his name *will be* on their foreheads’ intensifies the notion of intimate fellowship with God. It is beyond coincidence that God’s name was written on the high priest’s forehead in the Old Testament. This expresses further the priestly nature of God’s new people. It is also no accident that a ‘new name’ in Isaiah 62 and 65 is repeatedly associated with latter-day Zion and that the various new names attributed to the end-time city there all have ‘God’ included in them. This OT background suggests that the divine name written on believers here is a figurative way of speaking of God’s presence with his people, which protects them. This is confirmed by the same conclusion reached earlier with regard to the ‘new name’ (see on 2:17; 3:12) and the seal (7:2-

³² Aune, *Op. cit.*, p. 1179.

³³ White, Ellen G.; *Education*, pp. 125-126.

3), which is clarified further by 14:1 (which shows that both the name of Christ and the name of the Father are in mind 22:4).³⁴

On Aaron's turban was written "holy to the Lord," informing Israel that they are forever accepted before the Lord" (Exodus 28:36-38). The high priest represented the people before God. Once each year on Atonement he could enter into God's glory (Leviticus 16, 23) at a time of cleansing to bring complete reconciliation with him. But even the High Priest had to offer sacrifices for his sins (Hebrews 9:7). He was symbolic of all the saints who are now priests eternally before the throne.

First, the saints' names are recorded in the "Book of Life" (Daniel 12:1; Revelation 3:5, 20:15, 21:27, 22:19). Then the names of these heavenly Beings are written on them.

VERSE 5: "And there shall be no night there; and they need no candle, neither light of the sun; for the Lord God giveth them light: and they shall reign for ever and ever."

Verse 5 – "And there shall be no night there; and they need no candle, neither light of the sun;"

This is a reiteration of a similar expression in Revelation 21:23. It follows the wonderful expression, "They shall see his face." It is like a massive expression of wonderment. That face is so marvelous, it won't even be necessary to have celestial light. This phrase closes the description of the heavenly Paradise, just as it was at its opening.

Looking at "no night there" (21:25) and, here, "no night there" (22:5), we hear an echo from an ancient Old Testament prophecy: "On that day there will be no light, no cold or frost. It will be a unique day, without daytime or nighttime – a day known to the LORD. When evening comes, there will be light." (Zechariah 14:6-7 – NIV).

This sums up the absence of the night, shut gates, impurity, shame and deceits of 21:23-27. There is no such darkness. All is light.³⁵

The sun shall be no more thy light by day; neither for brightness shall the moon give light unto thee: but the LORD shall be unto thee an everlasting light, and thy God thy glory (Isaiah 60:19).

"In the City of God 'there shall be no night.' None will need or desire repose. There will be no weariness in doing the will of God and offering praise to His name. We shall ever feel the freshness of the morning and shall ever be far from its close. 'And they need no candle, neither light of the sun; for the Lord God giveth them light.' Revelation 22:5. The light of the sun will be superseded by a radiance which is not painfully dazzling, yet which immeasurably surpasses the brightness of our noontide. The glory of God and the Lamb floods the Holy City with unfading light. The redeemed walk in the sunless glory of perpetual day."³⁶

³⁴ Beale, G. K.; *The New International Greek Testament Commentary; The Book of Revelation* (William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, Grand Rapids, Michigan, 1999), p. 1114.

³⁵ Osborne, *Op. cit.*, p. 775.

³⁶ White, Ellen G.; *The Great Controversy*, p. 676.

Verse 5 – “for the Lord God giveth them light:”**21:23**

And the city had no need of the sun,
neither the moon, to shine in it.

For the glory of God did lighten it,
and the Lamb is the light thereof.

22:5

And there shall be no night there; and they
need no candle, neither light of the sun.

For the Lord God giveth them light.

Chapter 21:23 focuses on the description and uniqueness of the city. Now its reiteration is in the context of delight³⁷ as it relates to Jesus' face.

“When Jesus first appeared to John ‘his countenance was as the sun shineth in his strength’ (Rev. 1:16). Soon after when He appeared as a ‘mighty angel ... his face was as it were the sun’ (Rev. 10:1).”³⁸

Two other translations take this phrase to mean “the Lord God will shine upon them” (NKJV and NIV). This is the great benediction of hope presented to Israel by Aaron.

“And the LORD spake unto Moses, saying, Speak unto Aaron and unto his sons, saying, On this wise ye shall bless the children of Israel, saying unto them, The LORD bless thee, and keep thee: The LORD make his face shine upon thee, and be gracious unto thee: The LORD lift up his countenance upon thee, and give thee peace” (Numbers 6:22-27; cf. Psalms 4:6; 31:16; 67:1; 80:3, 7, 19; 119:135).

All those with God's name have the assurance that the light from His face will bathe them with peace.

In this world God's children bore the light to those in spiritual darkness (Isaiah 42:6, Matthew 5:14-16, Philippians 2:15-16). In that city Jesus sheds His light on them. In this world He was the “Sun of righteousness” (Malachi 4:2; cf. Psalms 84:11, 18:22). Now the saints exist within that glory.

Verse 5 – “and they shall reign for ever and ever.”

This continues the one thousand years of promised reign in 20:4, 6. This, intriguingly, coincides with the eternal reign of Christ (1:6; 3:21; 11:15, 17; 12:10; Luke 1:33).³⁹ The overcomers in the Thyatira church – the church of apostasy – are promised to have “authority over the nations,” and in 3:21 (Laodicea) and 20:4 Christ promised His people that they would sit with Him on His throne. This fulfills another ancient prophecy: “The saints of the Most High will receive the kingdom and will possess it forever” (Daniel 7:18, 27; cf. Luke 22:30, I Corinthians 6:2, II Timothy 2:12).⁴⁰

“The only extended description of ‘heaven’ in the Bible is Rev. 21:1–22:5. In the OT, heaven, apart from being the sky God created, is also the ‘higher heaven’ (‘heaven of heavens,’ 1 Kings 8:27) where God dwells (Exod. 24:9–12; 1 Kings 8:30), where his throne is (1 Kings 22:19; Ps. 80:1; 103:19), and from which he both judges (1 Kings 8:32) and acts on behalf of his people (Ps. 102:19-21). Yet those OT passages that speak of the afterlife (Job 19:25-27; Ps. 49:15; Isa. 25:8; 26:19; 53:10; Dan. 12:1-3, 13) do not mention dwelling in heaven. In intertestamental literature however, such a belief becomes explicit, often associated with ‘paradise’ (cf. Revelation 2:7), which was

³⁷ Thomas, *Op. cit.*, p. 488.

³⁸ Wood, *Op. cit.*, p. 2.

³⁹ Thomas, *Op. cit.*, p. 488.

⁴⁰ Osborne, *Op. cit.*, p. 775.

thought to be the Garden of Eden caught up to heaven and awaiting the saints, who will then be allowed to eat of the ‘tree of life’ (T. Levi 18.4, 10-11; 2 Bar. 4.3-7; cf. Rev. 2:7; 22:2). In some places this afterlife constitutes an eternity in heaven (1 Enoch 60.8; 61.12) but in others an eternity on a transformed or renewed earth (1 Enoch 5.7-10; 25.3-7; 32.3-6; 2 Bar. 73-74; 2 Esdr. [4 Ezra] 7:119-24). In Jesus’ teaching, ‘heaven’ is the place where the faithful will be rewarded (Matt. 5:12; 6:20; 13:43) and have their home (John 14:2-3). There will be eternal life there (Mark 10:30; John 3:16). According to Paul, heaven is the place where our ‘lowly bodies’ are ‘transformed’ to be ‘like his glorious body’ (Phil. 3:20-21, cf. 1 Cor. 15:42-44, 50-54) and in which we have ‘an eternal house not built by human hands’ (2 Cor. 5:1). In Hebrews heaven is the place in which Jesus is ‘at the right hand of God’ (1:3, 13; 8:1; 10:12-13; 12:2) and exalted (7:26), the place where the ‘greater and more perfect tabernacle’ (9:11) and the ‘city with foundations whose architect and builder is God’ (11:10; cf. 11:16, ‘a better country—a heavenly one’) awaits God’s people. Thus, it is the ‘kingdom that cannot be shaken’ (12:28) that has ‘better and lasting possessions’ (10:34). In 2 Peter the old heavens and earth must perish in fire (3:7, 10) so that the ‘new heaven and earth’ can provide ‘the home of righteousness’ (3:13).⁴¹

With this verse John’s visionary messages end.

VERSE 6: “And he said unto me, These sayings *are* faithful and true: and the Lord God of the holy prophets sent his angel to show unto his servants the things which must shortly be done.”

Verse 6 – “And he said unto me.”

References to “he” flow back through the descriptions of heaven and the New Jerusalem:

- “he shewed me a pure river’ (22:1)
- “he measured the wall” (21:17)
- “he that talked with me” (21:15)
- “he carried me away in spirit (21:10)

Who is that “he?” “And there came unto me one of the seven angels which had seven vials.” The messages of this book – originating from God Himself – have come to him by an angel with interspersed revelations from Jesus (i.e., 1:11-3:22; 22:7, 10, 12-13, 16, 18a, 20).

What now begins is an epilogue to Revelation that parallels the prologue of chapter 1. It demonstrates the cohesiveness of the book and amplifies the divine purpose of why this book was given. It elevates its literary style. It confirms that the messages between its covers are God’s *final statements* on the redemptive plan and Satan’s obstructive behavior. It unveils the unswerving hope that God ultimately triumphs.

(1:1)	The prophecy comes from God Himself	(22:6)
(1:1)	And through Jesus	(22:6)
(1:1)	His message must take place soon	(22:6)
(1:1)	They are communicated by an angel	(22:6, 8, 16)
(1:1, 4, 9)	John is the book’s author	(22:8)

⁴¹ Osborne, *Op. cit.*, p. 742.

(1:3)	It is genuine prophecy	(22:6-7, 9-10, 18-19)
(1:1, 9-11)	Delivered through a commissioned prophet	(22:8-10)
(1:1)	The addressees are servants	(22:6)
(1:3, 11)	Who will hear it read in the churches	(22:16, 18)
(1:3)	Promised blessing for those who obey its word	(22:7, 12, 14)
(1:7)	Retribution to the unfaithful	(22:11-12, 18-19)
(1:2, 5, 7, 9)	It is Christocentric	(22:12-13, 16, 18, 20)
(1:17)	Christ called Alpha and Omega, first and last	(22:13)
(1:3, 7)	He is coming soon	(22:7, 10, 12, 20) ⁴²

The book began with a blessing on all who obeyed the revelation. It ends with a curse on all who disobey (22:18-19). The parting words of this book appeal to obedience to receive eternal rewards with judgment and loss to the unholy living (7, 9, 11-12, 14-15, 18-19).⁴³

Verse 6 – “These sayings are faithful and true:”

What are “these sayings?” It is not the restricted message of 21:9–22:5 from the Vial angel. The above ties to the prologue reveal that it is the whole book. There, what Christ conveys to the angel is called the ‘testimony of Jesus Christ’ (1:2) who is “the faithful witness” (1:4), “he that is holy, he that is true” (3:7), “the faithful and true witness” (3:14). In that dramatic chapter of the marriage of the Lamb, the angel noted: “These are the true sayings of God” (19:9) and later, “these words are faithful and true,” as the description of heaven ensues (21:5). That echoes the angel’s message to Daniel: “the vision of the evening and the morning which was told is true” (Daniel 8:26) and “the dream is certain [true] and the interpretation thereof sure [faithful]” (Daniel 2:45).

“These statements that God is righteous and true declare that there is an absolute truth, a truth that is righteous and so never changes, a truth that is faithful in its intent. God is the source of this truth and the Lord Christ is the faithful witness to it. And Christ is also the ‘Amen’ of this truth, that is, the confirmation that there is no truth except that which originates from God the Father and comes through Christ and his words. And the words that God speaks and which are witnessed to by his Christ are true and certain, as the angel declares to John in 19:9.”⁴⁴

This phrase is a beautiful way to begin the conclusion of the book. It safeguards its content. It reveals that its composition cannot be tampered with. It acts as a divine seal, elevating it as sacred. The authenticity of the prophecy will be reinforced in this epilogue (vss 8, 16, 18-19).

This description parallels the character of Christ who is “faithful” (1:5, 3:14) and “true” (3:7, 14; 19:11). The echo to Daniel 2:45 is reinforced more deeply in the next phrase.

⁴² Thomas, *Op. cit.*, p. 494.

⁴³ Beale, *Op. cit.*, p. 1122.

⁴⁴ Brighton, *Op. cit.*, p. 640.

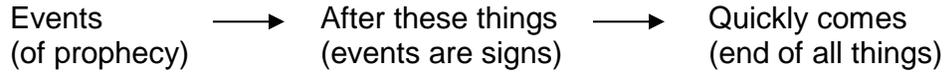
Verse 6 – “and the Lord God of the holy prophets sent his angel to show unto his servants the things which must shortly be done.”

Daniel 2:45 (Theodocian)

The great God made known to the king what must come to pass after these things.

Revelation 22:6 (cf. 1:1; 3:11; 22:7, 12)

The Lord God ... sent ... to show unto his servants the things which must come to pass quickly.



Contextually, both prophecies appeal to the end of all things, when God’s kingdom is established. The parallels between the beginning and ending of this book with Daniel suggest that its primary application is end of time – eschatologic and afterward. The transition from Daniel’s “after these things” to “quickly” or “shortly” hints that the context of Revelation’s message is not merely imminence but inauguration.⁴⁵

Scholars struggle with the meaning of “holy prophets.” The words *ton pneumaton ton propheton* actually say, “the spirits of the prophets.” This apparently implies in the genitive “the spirits” that belong to the prophets.⁴⁶ This, in turn, suggests to many that the meaning is “the prophets who are quickened by the Holy Spirit.” Yet, the word for “spirits” is plural. This echoes Numbers 27:12-21. This is a difficult passage. Being plural, it suggests “all the elevated faculties of the prophetic mind” (cf. I Corinthians 14:32). There is another, perhaps more appealing, analysis of this. God is the “Father of spirits” (plural) (Hebrews 12:9). In two places in Revelation the Holy Spirit is plural (1:4 and 5:6). In that light, one could say: The prophets were quickened by the Spirits (“seven spirits”). Since a revelatory chain is presented in 1:1, John is considered by heaven to be a prophet (confirmed in 1:19, 4:1). All Christians do belong to a special prophetic class (11:3). This is reinforced in 22:9, which refers to “your brothers the prophets” and to “those who keep the words of the prophecy of this book” (1:3; cf. Luke 1:70, Acts 3:21, II Peter 3:2, Ephesians 3:5). Thus, “of the Spirits that influenced the prophets.”

The method of bringing this book to John is once again reviewed. “Lord God ... sent his angel to show unto his servants.” In Revelation John occasionally notes that he was “shown” (1:1, 4:1, 17:1, 21:9-10, 22:1). This unveiling of the future denotes that he is receiving divine predictive revelation wrapped in a cloak of “revealed certainty.”⁴⁷

The angel was sent to reveal events, “things,” which will occur soon to His servants. The words “fellow servant” in its broadest meaning suggests that it refers to those who “keep the words of ... that book” (1:3, 22:9; cf. 2:20; 7:3; 19:2, 5; 22:3). John is a servant (slave) (1:1). The prophets of God to whom the mystery of God is given are called servants (10:7).

Perhaps most significant is the riveting timing announcement that has been a silver thread through this book. What has been revealed “must shortly come to pass.” This will be repeated in verses 7, 12 and 20. It was part of the prologue of Revelation in the very first verse. When these timing phrases are linked, a fertile area for study is opened:

⁴⁵ Beale, *Op. cit.*, p. 1124.

⁴⁶ Osborne, *Op. cit.*, p. 780.

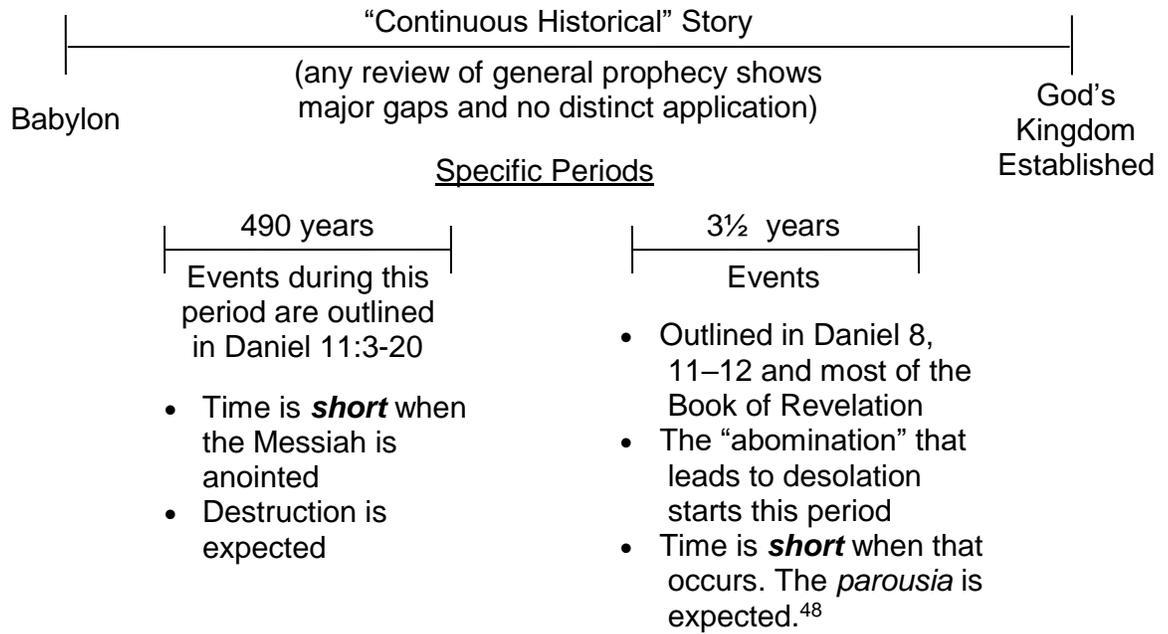
⁴⁷ Wall, Robert W.; *New International Biblical Commentary* (Hendrickson Publishers, Peabody, Massachusetts, 1991), p. 262.

Shortly come to pass (1:1)
 The time is at hand (1:3)
 Behold He cometh (1:7)
 Behold I come quickly (3:11)
 Shortly come to pass (22:6-7, 12, 20)

The thematic context of the **whole book** is future – eschatologic – end-time! The expressions are not related to “John’s time” but to the time period **directly related** to the inspired content, its era of fulfillment!

Did the apostles believe the end was near? Paul perceived an imminent end (Romans 13:11; I Corinthians 7:29-31; I Thessalonians 4:15, 5:23; Hebrews 10:25). His writings were more “end-time” and could apply to Jerusalem’s fall in 70 A.D. or to the eschaton. James and Peter were more second-coming specific (James 5:8 and I Peter 4:7). The delay or tarrying time was a New Testament era challenge, which Peter addressed (II Peter 3:8-9). Christ portrays two distinct end times in Matthew 24, Mark 13 and Luke 21. For the apostles, the end to the Jewish people as God’s chosen, when mercy folded her wings, was 70 A.D. – and it would have been contemporary and relevant. But the *parousia* anticipation is implied in the above apocalyptic references. If, as Christ had counseled (Matthew 24:15), the disciples had incorporated the Danielic timing message, the millennial “wait” would have melded into their discourse. It didn’t. Thus, there is a “wait for Christ’s soon return” concept.

II Peter 3:8-9 is a frequent escape for prophetic application. The implication suggests that prophecy is so vague that we really won’t know if it is going to be a thousand years or a day. There are general prophecies that meet a vague timing sweep of history: Daniel 2 with Nebuchadnezzar’s image and Daniel 7 with the four beasts, ten horns and little horn in a “continuous historical” picture. Most “end-time” prophecies are specifically noted within a timing *period*: one generation, an appointed time or a specific time block such as 1260 days. In the context of these apocalyptic short periods, it can be seen that they relate to specific *blocks of time* when certain events occur. That means when Satan gives power to a sea beast along with its associate, the earth beast, it is the series of events that ultimately define how “soon,” “quickly” or “shortly” is understood. This is a vital prophetic hermeneutic issue!



It is easy to speculate on what “soon” (*entachei*) means:

1. God is more interested in redemptive fulfillment than any viewpoint on timing.
2. Christ’s coming is “soon” at death – the resurrection will come as in a moment.
3. The imminence is a moral (“Christ in us”) and not a literal timing issue.
4. The events are signs that the eschaton is imminent.

“The Bible was designed to be a guide to all who wish to become acquainted with the will of their Maker. God gave to men the sure word of prophecy; angels and even Christ Himself came to make known to Daniel and John the things that must shortly come to pass. Those important matters that concern our salvation were not left involved in mystery. They were not revealed in such a way as to perplex and mislead the honest seeker after truth. Said the Lord by the prophet Habakkuk: ‘Write the vision, and make it plain, ... that he may run that readeth it.’ Habakkuk 2:2. The word of God is plain to all who study it with a prayerful heart. Every truly honest soul will come to the light of truth. ‘Light is sown for the righteous.’ Psalm 97:11. And no church can advance in holiness unless its members are earnestly seeking for truth as for hid treasure.”⁴⁹

Since one of Christ’s names is “faithful and true” (19:9), the words of this book are as sacred as He. This echoes John’s elevated introduction: “The Word was God” (John 1:1).

⁴⁸ Thomas, *Op. cit.*, p. 497.

⁴⁹ White, Ellen G.; *The Great Controversy*, pp. 521-522.

VERSE 7: “Behold, I come quickly: blessed *is* he that keepeth the sayings of the prophecy of this book.”

Verse 7 – “Behold, I come quickly:”

This reinforces the phrase in verse 6: “which must shortly be done” (cf. 16:15). This helps to establish the end-time application of this book:

Its apocalyptic events	“which must shortly be done” (16)
– prepare for the –	
Coming of Jesus Christ	“Behold, I come quickly” (17)

This eschatologic association was introduced in chapter 1:

“Shew things ... which must shortly come to pass” (1:1)	Apocalyptic events
“The time is at hand” (1:3)	What time?
– there is a break for a commentary insert (1:4-6)	Then the answer
“He cometh”	Coming of Jesus Christ

In reviewing this association contextually in both chapters 1 and 22, it is clear that the Testimony of Jesus regarding God’s word in this book relates to the second coming. It argues against a historical and a future division. Though minor applications can be made to prior eras, the *whole* book is end-time. God reveals the event-driven prophecies, which announce the imminent (“quickly”) coming of Jesus.

The announcement (*erchomai tachy*), “I am coming soon” (“quickly” – KJV) is prophetic present (the same in 2:16; 3:11; 22:12, 20) except for 2:16. All of these, plus others in the New Testament, refer to Christ’s second coming at the end of history.⁵⁰ Some refer to this as being fulfilled (dominion theology) in 70 A.D.⁵¹ That is out of context and begs away the end-time events that tie so closely to the book of Daniel. The linguistics show that it is still in the future.

These are the words of Christ (cf. 11:3, 22:12), though conceivably presented by the angel. Prophets can repeat divine words without saying, “thus saith the Lord” [e.g., Isaiah 16:10 (end), 61:8, Revelation 1:8]. Here, and interspersed throughout the book, John is quoting Jesus the Lord.

Some scholars state His coming is in “every generation” of the church.⁵² There is no evidence for that application. The coming is *event*-associated. That is the great thematic position of the book. In that light there is a forward-looking direction to the contained prophecies that relate directly to the *parousia*.

It is noteworthy to observe that this declaration, “I am coming soon,” is after the prophecy of this book is completed (4:1-22:5). It serves as an urgent reminder to heed the book’s warnings and signs plus obey its dictums because such opportunity will soon end.⁵³ The churches of Ephesus and Pergamos were warned that if they didn’t repent, He would come quickly with judgments. Refreshingly, the Philadelphian brethren were told to hold fast to what they had because He was coming quickly (Revelation 2:5, 16;

⁵⁰ Osborne, *Op. cit.*, p. 782.

⁵¹ Thomas, *Op. cit.*, p. 497.

⁵² Beale, *Op. cit.*, p. 1127.

⁵³ Brighton, *Op. cit.*, p. 643.

3:11).⁵⁴ John's collective appeal is to both sides. The culminating event of history is presently anticipated: warning to those unprepared, hope to those ready and waiting.

Another key timing issue relates to an analysis of the people whom John addresses throughout the apocalypse. Though not part of this verse, those "beings" are associated with events at earth's end. A *historical* view of its messages disarms their intent. A *final* orientation arms a cohesive purpose.

Verse 7 – “blessed is he that keepeth the sayings of the prophecy of this book.”

This is the sixth of seven beatitudes in Revelation (1:3; 14:13; 16:15; 19:9; 20:6; 22:7, 14). It is similar to the first (1:3), where special blessings come to those who “keep” (obey) the words in the book. Blessings to those who:

“Keep what is written” (1:3)

“Obey my word” (3:3)

“Obey” God's commandments (12:17, 14:12)

Every passage that relates to the second coming of Jesus in the New Testament ends with these demands. There is an association between willful allegiance and eternal life (Matthew 24:32–25:30, I Corinthians 15:58, II Corinthians 5:9, I Thessalonians 5:8).⁵⁵ The eschaton will save those with an elevated spiritual commitment to God's way and character. That is the ultimate implied meaning of John's beatitudes.

The ending of this verse, “this book,” suggests that the writing project is nearly complete. He calls the document (*bibliou*) the “book.” The scroll is a record of divine orders given John to “write the things” (1:11, 19). It appears that he wrote these things as the visions transpired (cf. 10:4). He will shortly add the word “prophecy” to the description of the book (vss 10, 18-19).

VERSE 8: “And I John saw these things, and heard *them*. And when I had heard and seen, I fell down to worship before the feet of the angel which showed me these things.”

Verse 8 – “And I John saw these things, and heard *them*.”

John reaffirms that he was a witness to the divine messages in this book. They came as visions and auditions (cf. I John 1:1-3, 4:14). This echoes earlier disclosures: “I saw” (5:1-2, 11; 6:1-2, 5, 8, et al.) and “I heard” (4:1; 5:11, 13; 6:1, 3, 5, et al.). This declaration, within the concluding context of the book, acts as a legal statement. It brings special credibility to the words of this whole book because God proclaimed John to be His chosen prophetic channel as it all began (1:1).⁵⁶ He will make explicit that identification later in verse 18a. The concept of seeing and hearing is the basis for a legal witness (I John 1:1-2; cf. Jeremiah 23:18).

The formula given at the end of each message of the seven churches, “he that hath an ear, let him hear,” is an invitation to become part of the testimony of this book. Here, John resumes the speaker's role for the first time since chapter 1 (1:1, 4, 9). Daniel used similar authentication words (Daniel 8:15, 12:5). It is an “autobiographical assertion” (cf.

⁵⁴ Wood, *Op. cit.*, p. 2.

⁵⁵ Osborne, *Op. cit.*, p. 783.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*

Romans 16:22, I Corinthians 16:21, Galatians 6:11, Colossians 4:18, II Thessalonians 3:17, Philemon 19). It is the apostle John's endorsement of this manuscript.⁵⁷

The use of seeing and hearing together was not part of Greek or Latin literature, but it followed early tradition in Judaism and throughout the Old Testament to affirm "sensor perception" (Proverbs 20:12; II Kings 7:18; Isaiah 18:3, 21:3, 32:3; Jeremiah 4:21).⁵⁸

Verse 8 – “And when I had heard and seen, I fell down to worship before the feet of the angel which showed me these things.”

The vast scope of his visionary experience is overwhelming. In addition, the angel who comes is in no modified earthly form.

“The angel from heaven came to John in majesty, his countenance beaming with the excellent glory of God.”⁵⁹

“The words of the angel, ‘I am Gabriel, that stand in the presence of God,’ show that he holds a position of high honor in the heavenly courts. When he came with a message to Daniel, he said, ‘There is none that holdeth with me in these things, but Michael [Christ] your Prince.’ Dan. 10:21. Of Gabriel the Saviour speaks in the Revelation, saying that ‘He sent and signified it by His angel unto His servant John.’ Rev. 1:1.”⁶⁰

Does this mean that Gabriel is one of the seven Vial angels? (21:9). It isn't totally clear. That is a strong contextual possibility. Perhaps the brief communiqué from Christ in verse 7 added to the mystique and drama.⁶¹ This is the second time John attempts to worship an angelic being (19:10). This could represent idolatry, as some scholars insist. John is overwhelmed at the divine being, the stunning visions and auditions, and he falls down with the intent to worship. Before that occurs, there is a gentle rebuke, and Gabriel prohibits it from happening. He appears to be emotionally reacting to the *whole* visionary experience (1:9–22:9).⁶²

VERSE 9: “Then saith he unto me, See *thou do it not*: for I am thy fellowservant, and of thy brethren the prophets, and of them which keep the sayings of this book: worship God.”

Verse 9 – “Then saith he unto me,”

The angel assumes the speaker's role in response to John's obeisance. This is apparently the same one who gave John corrective action previously (19:10). In such a setting there is a human response to honor or even reverence a messenger beyond what is due (cf. I Corinthians 3:5, Acts 14:7-18).

Verse 9 – “See *thou do it not*: for I am thy fellowservant, and of thy brethren the prophets.”

The order to not worship him is gentle, brief – but firm. Immediately, he graciously describes *why*, in terms of a friend and brother. They share the same loyalties to God as

⁵⁷ Thomas, *Op. cit.*, p. 499.

⁵⁸ Aune, *Op. cit.*, p. 185.

⁵⁹ White, Ellen G.; *Early Writings*, p. 231.

⁶⁰ White, Ellen G.; *The Desire of Ages*, p. 99.

⁶¹ Thomas, *Op. cit.*, p. 500.

⁶² Aune, *Op. cit.*, p. 1186.

created beings. John is a *syndoulos sou*, a “fellow servant of you.” This ties to the concept of angels as “ministering spirits” (Hebrews 1:14) serving God (7:15, 22:3).⁶³

John is then elevated through this angelic association by the expression *kai ton adelphon sou ton propheton*. Gabriel said that he was personally part of a group of John’s fellow prophets. In 19:10, that inner circle of beings held also the “testimony of Jesus.” “To believe and obey the words of John’s prophecy is equivalent to holding the testimony of Jesus.”⁶⁴

Verse 9 – “and of them which keep the sayings of this book: worship God.”

The angel amplifies his “brotherhood” imagery by disclosing that he was subject to obey the same principle as presented in John’s book. The material within Revelation containing commands to obey is limited to chapters 1–3 and 22:6-21. However, divine ideals are portrayed by descriptions of the saints and fearful prophetic stories of apostasy and evil. A few scattered commands are, however, placed within the text (13:9-10, 14:12, 16:15, 18:4, 21:7-8).⁶⁵

Having completed the reasons that John should not give him worship honor, the angel commands: “Worship God.” John knew this already (John 4:21-24). The glory and power of the moment impeded reason and rationality. The corrective measure by the angel reestablished his place. He was neither terse nor judgmental. The response was evaluative and bonding.

“As the apostle beheld the final deliverance of the church, he was carried away with the glory of the scene and with deep reverence and awe fell at the feet of the angel to worship him. The heavenly messenger instantly raised him up and gently reproofed him, saying, ‘See thou do it not: I am thy fellow servant, and of thy brethren that have the testimony of Jesus: worship God: for the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy.’ The angel then showed John the heavenly city with all its splendor and dazzling glory, and he, enraptured and overwhelmed, and forgetful of the former reproof of the angel, again fell to worship at his feet. Again the gentle reproof was given, ‘See thou do it not for I am thy fellow servant, and of thy brethren the prophets, and of them which keep the sayings of this book: worship God.’”⁶⁶

“Wonderful thought – that the angel who stands next in honor to the Son of God is the one chosen to open the purposes of God to sinful men.”⁶⁷

VERSE 10: “And he saith unto me, Seal not the sayings of the prophecy of this book: for the time is at hand.”

Verse 10 – “And he saith unto me,”

This phrase indicates the “fellow servant” angel didn’t complete all of his discourse. New instruction is to be given.

Verse 10 – “Seal not the sayings of the prophecy of this book:”

⁶³ Osborne, *Op. cit.*, p. 784.

⁶⁴ Beale, *Op. cit.*, pp. 1128-1129.

⁶⁵ Aune, *Op. cit.*, p. 1187.

⁶⁶ White, Ellen G.; *Early Writings*, pp. 230-231.

⁶⁷ White, Ellen G.; *The Desire of Ages*, p. 99.

Daniel was told to seal the book (Daniel 8:26; 12:4, 9-10) (related to the *hahazone* visions). John was told to seal up a very specific audition – what the Seven Thunders uttered (Revelation 10:4). There is no counsel to keep mysterious, hidden or sealed any other part of the apocalypse. Its fulfillment was imminent.

“Daniel prophesied about a final tribulation for God’s people, the consummate defeat of wicked kingdoms and the eternal establishment of God’s kingdom. But Daniel neither understood precisely how these events would transpire nor when in history the final end would occur and the prophecies would at least be fulfilled (Dan. 8:27; 12:8-9), though he was assured that the end had not yet come (Dan. 12:13). Therefore, the sealing of Daniel’s book meant that its prophecies would be neither fully understood nor fulfilled until the end.

“What Daniel prophesied can now be understood because the prophecies have begun to be fulfilled and the latter days have begun. That ‘the words of the prophecy’ are not sealed means that now, at last, the OT end-time prophecies, especially Daniel’s, have begun to be fulfilled and, in the light of that fulfillment, can now be understood better. It thus indicates not only the beginning of fulfillment, but also the revelation of greater insight into the prophecies, which was kept from OT saints (so likewise Eph. 3:4-5).”⁶⁸

“In the Revelation all the books of the Bible meet and end. Here is the complement of the book of Daniel. One is a prophecy; the other a revelation. The book that was sealed is not the Revelation, but that portion of the prophecy of Daniel relating to the last days. The angel commanded, ‘But thou, O Daniel, shut up the words, and seal the book, even to the time of the end.’ Daniel 12:4.”⁶⁹

The essence of Gabriel’s instruction suggests that apocalyptic material should not be hindered in its understanding. The material was to be sent to the seven churches. They were to have the freedom to study its mysteries (13:18, 17:3). John was commanded to write (1:10-11, 19; 2:1; 19:9; 21:5; cf. 22:6, 22:10) and now to provide openness for its study. Its message was for the period of history to which it was apropos.

“The Lord Himself revealed to His servant John the mysteries of the book of Revelation, and He designs that they shall be open to the study of all.”⁷⁰

“The book of Revelation must be opened to the people. Many have been taught that it is a sealed book; but it is sealed only to those who reject light and truth. The truth it contains must be proclaimed, that people may have an opportunity to prepare for the events which are so soon to transpire. The third angel’s message must be presented as the only hope for the salvation of a perishing world.—Letter 87, 1896.”⁷¹

“The book of Daniel is now unsealed, and the revelation made by Christ to John is to come to all the inhabitants of the earth. By the increase of knowledge a people is to be prepared to stand in the latter days.”⁷²

Verse 10 – “for the time is at hand.”

This repeats the words of 1:3 (cf. Daniel 2:28-29, 45; 12:9). Does this mean it was imminent in John’s era? Hardly. Daniel’s prophecies were to unfold at the “time of the end” (*es qes*). What period was that? The time of great tribulation, deliverance of God’s people and the special resurrection (Daniel 12:1-2)! These events would bring those

⁶⁸ Beale, *Op. cit.*, pp. 1129-1130.

⁶⁹ White, Ellen G.; *Acts of the Apostles*, p. 585.

⁷⁰ White, Ellen G.; *The Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary*, vol. 7, p. 954.

⁷¹ White, Ellen G.; *Evangelism*, p. 195.

⁷² White, Ellen G.; *Selected Messages*, bk 2, p. 105.

prophecies to an end. God made very specific what would define the “wonders” (*pele*) of “the end” (Daniel 12:6). John’s prophecies are written proleptically. They represent the time when Daniel’s prophecies are fulfilled.

The “time is at hand” when you see the events of this book unfold. What time? The next two verses rapidly enter that urgent schemata – a final testing will be pronounced, associated with Christ’s coming (22:11-12).

Though there are stunning messages for all time within Revelation, though there have been periods where parts of its predictive history apply, the great application is eschatologic. There is no longer any need to keep anything back, for this is the time of full disclosure. The eschaton is about to arrive.⁷³ Deeper is the golden thread that binds the apocalyptic messages together – the characteristics of those who remain as witnesses, saints pleasing God. They obey and testify (12:17).

Rev 1:1-3

¹to show his servants
what must soon happen....
³blessed ... those who hear
the prophetic words
and obey the things
written in it,

for the time is near.

Rev 22:6–10, 18

⁶to show his servants
what must soon happen....
⁷blessed *is* the one who obeys
the prophetic words
of this book....
⁹the words
of this book....
the words of this
prophetic book
the prophetic words
of this book....

¹⁰for the time is near.⁷⁴

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

There is no conjunctive or connecting word beginning this verse. It suddenly comes, heightening its urgent tone. This verse ties to the previous verse:

- Events reviewed will shortly come to pass (vs 6)
- Then Jesus will come – quickly now (vs 7)
- Worship God – an urgent appeal (vs 9)
- Everything is open to know why (vs 10)
- Because everyone’s future will soon be decided. Their eternal destiny will be fixed forever (vs 11).

⁷³ Osborne, *Op. cit.*, p. 785.

⁷⁴ Aune, *Op. cit.*, pp. 1205-1206.

This is another way to express the hopelessness of the last state of the wicked.⁷⁵ “Repent” is the final cry of Revelation, “while there is time.”

This echoes the final state of humanity foretold by Daniel: “Many shall be purified, and made white, and tried; but the wicked shall do wickedly: and none of the wicked shall understand; but the wise shall understand” (Daniel 12:10; cf. Hosea 14:9, John 8:47).

Verse 11 harbors no command. It is a statement of finality and draws its reader to “choose.” You have permission *now* to *choose*.

“It is a frightening prospect that at a given point, a considerable part of humanity will be left alone to reap the consequences of choosing the wrong lifestyle and consequently reaping divine contempt. The verse does not teach some kind of religious determinism that makes repentance and conversion impossible for some people (Beasley-Murray). The invitation of 22:17 makes clear that an opportunity for the right choice remains. The teaching is simply that once a person makes that choice, he has sealed his eternal destiny for better or for worse.”⁷⁶

This means that a time in history will come when earth’s inhabitants will collectively make a final choice. That moral imperative will draw from each person a decision which God will see as unchanging. Without that opportunity, *mercy* would forever be misunderstood. God’s character would be tentative. The final events prophesied by Daniel and unfolded in Revelation describe that period. Christ alluded to this time when He said the end would finally be defined when the gospel goes to all the world (Matthew 24:14). The intimation goes far beyond a simple conveyance of gospel news to all. It demands that the final spiritual appeal will be so powerful, so defining and riveting, the world will come to “the hour of decision” and every inhabitant will respond.

The dynamics require that those who are part of that final appeal are to present no compromised message. This is reflected in God’s command to Isaiah to prophesy to an apostate nation even though they would not receive the message (Isaiah 6:9-10; cf. Mark 4:10-12, Acts 28:26-27). In that context, the gospel message becomes a judgment oracle!⁷⁷ “He that heareth, let him hear; and he that forbearth, let him forebear: for they are a rebellious house” (Ezekiel 3:27).

There is still time in these verses to come (22:14, 17), to “wash” our robes, “hear” and “come” to the “water of life.” But final decision time is almost gone.

Saved

Righteous (*dikaïos*) –
right acts and deeds

Holy (*hagios*) – like God’s nature

Unsaved

Unjust (*adikon*) – wicked disregard
for God’s law/regulations

Filthy (*rhyparos*) – morally impure

Dikaïos usually refers to the “righteous acts” of God and/or Christ (3:7, 4:8, 6:10). But the saints reach a state “like God,” implied elsewhere in this book (5:8; 8:3-4; 11:18; 13:7, 10; 14:12; 16:6; 17:6; 18:20, 24; 19:8; 20:9) in the terms *hoi hagioi*.⁷⁸ Their righteous acts are like Christ’s.

“Upon those who keep the commandments of God the benediction is pronounced: ‘Blessed are they that do His commandments, that they may have right to the tree of life,

⁷⁵ Thomas, *Op. cit.*, p. 501.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 503.

⁷⁷ Osborne, *Op. cit.*, p. 786.

⁷⁸ Osborne, *Op. cit.*, p. 787.

and may enter in through the gates into the city.’ They are ‘a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people;’ that they should show forth the praises of Him who hath called us out of darkness into His marvelous light. The obedient are called the just; they are drawn to the holy magnet, Jesus Christ; the holy attracts the holy. He that is unjust will be unjust still. Character cannot then be made or transformed. The oil of grace cannot be lent by one to another, neither have the foolish virgins time to buy oil for themselves. The righteous are those who keep the commandments of God, and they will be forever separated from the disobedient and unrighteous who trampled underfoot the law of God. The pure ore and the dross will no longer commingle.”⁷⁹

“The gospel that is to be preached to all nations, kindreds, tongues, and peoples presents the truth in clear lines, showing that obedience is the condition of gaining eternal life. Christ imparts His righteousness to those who consent to let Him take away their sins. We are indebted to Christ for the grace which makes us complete in Him (MS 40, 1900).”⁸⁰

Many consider this verse to be determinant or striking at predestination. It is simply God’s notice of a final judgment He makes on those who act on their final choices as noted in verses 14 and 17. “You have made your choices. Since they are final, the end can now come.” Instead of it being commands or exhortations, it declares their moral decisions as legally accepted. This is an expression of fulfillment of the Daniel 12:10 prophecy.

It is theologically true that the final decree is based on whether or not a name has been written in the Lamb’s Book of Life (3:5; 13:8; 17:8; 20:12, 15; 21:27). That list of subjects relates to the individual’s behavior (20:13, 21:27, 3:5).

“All who would have their names retained in the book of life, should now, in the few remaining days of their probation, afflict their souls before God by sorrow for sin, and true repentance. There must be deep, faithful searching of heart. The light, frivolous spirit indulged in by so many professed Christians must be put away. There is earnest warfare before all who would subdue the evil tendencies that strive for the mastery. The work of preparation is an individual work. We are not saved in groups. The purity and devotion of one will not offset the want of these qualities in another.... Every one must be tested, and found without spot or wrinkle or any such thing.

“Solemn are the scenes connected with the closing work of the atonement. Momentous are the interests involved therein. The judgment is now passing in the sanctuary above.... In the awful presence of God our lives are to come up in review....

“When the work of the investigative judgment closes, the destiny of all will have been decided for life or death. Probation is ended a short time before the appearing of the Lord in the clouds of heaven.... Perilous is the condition of those who, growing weary of their watch, turn to the attractions of the world. While the man of business is absorbed in the pursuit of gain, while the pleasure-lover is seeking indulgence, while the daughter of fashion is arranging her adornments,—it may be in that hour the Judge of all the earth will pronounce the sentence, ‘Thou art weighed in the balance, and art found wanting.’

“Silently, unnoticed as the midnight thief, will come the decisive hour which marks the fixing of every man’s destiny, the final withdrawal of mercy’s offer to guilty men. ‘Watch ye therefore ... lest coming suddenly he find you sleeping.’”⁸¹

“So, this verse presents, in graphic terms, the concept of the ‘close of probation.’ That concept has already been referred to several times in Revelation:

⁷⁹ White, Ellen G.; *Testimony to Ministers*, pp. 235-236.

⁸⁰ White, Ellen G.; *The Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary*, vol. 7, pp. 971-972.

⁸¹ White, Ellen G.; *Sons and Daughters of God*, p. 355.

“Rev. 1:7 when ‘all kindreds of the earth shall wail because of him’
 Rev. 2:5 ‘I will come ... and remove thy candlestick’
 Rev. 2:11 ‘the second death’
 Rev. 2:23 ‘I will kill her children with death’
 Rev. 3:16 ‘I will spue thee out of my mouth’
 Rev. 8:5 ‘filled it with fire ... and cast it into the earth’
 Rev. 11:7 when ‘they shall have finished their testimony’
 Rev. 14:14 when we see the ‘son of man’ seated on a ‘white cloud’ and not
 in the temple
 Rev. 15: 8 when ‘not man was able to enter into the temple’
 Rev. 18:5 when ‘her sins have reached unto heaven’
 Rev. 18:21, 22, 23 ‘no more at all’ found five times”⁸²

Revelation 22:11 is a proleptic statement of how God will announce the end. When it arrives, it “forecloses any possibility of alteration.”⁸³

VERSE 12: “And, behold, I come quickly; and my reward *is* with me, to give every man according as his work shall be.”

Verse 12 – “And, behold, I come quickly;”

The angel has depicted time as short. Jesus, in an anthem of refrain, has announced His imminent return.

<u>Angel</u>	<u>Christ</u>
Shew ... things which must shortly be done (vs 6)	Behold, I come quickly (vs 7)
The time is at hand (vs 10)	And, behold, I come quickly (vs 12)

Between these messages, John worships (adoration – vss 8-9) and God warns (vs 11).

The word “quickly” (*tachy*) suggests imminence of coming. This issue was addressed in verse 7. Some say that this means “suddenness” whenever He does appear. That lifts the moral compass away from this Book’s preparation theme. He is coming like a thief (16:15) but, contextually, only to those who don’t stay awake. Paul addressed this in I Thessalonians 5:1-11. To the children of day (light) that won’t occur. “Let us not sleep as others do” (I Thessalonians 5:6).

Since He will come unexpectedly to most, that coming is always “near,” but not yet. Or, an “end” *is* expected (Matthew 24:36–25:13; cf. Acts 1:7, I Thessalonians 1:9-10, II Timothy 4:8, Titus 2:13) by those fully aware of the apocalyptic prophecies. In the apostles’ discourses, the “end” was the fall of Jerusalem, defined in many ways. For the *parousia* “end,” Daniel and Revelation create the event-driven setting within time periods, which announce *imminency*.

The nearness of the *parousia* is the basis for a moral and spiritual commitment. If a person is unprepared, a line will be crossed where there can be no turning back (vs 11), illustrated in the parable of the ten virgins (Matthew 25:1-13). A “second-chance doc-

⁸² Wood, *Op. cit.*, p. 3.

⁸³ Mounce, *Op. cit.*, p. 406.

trine” is emphasized by many Christians but is devoid of Biblical support. When He comes, He has the eternal reward of damnation for those who are not ready.

Verse 12 – “and my reward *is* with me, to give every man according as his work shall be.”

Isaiah addressed that: “See, the sovereign Lord comes with power ... his reward is with him” (Isaiah 40:10). John in vision saw this illustrated immediately after the “two witnesses” message. The 24 elders spoke/sang. The time had come for the dead to be judged (wicked slain at His second coming) and the saints (servants/slaves) to receive their reward (eternity with Him).

The first reward and vindication theme relates to the martyrs (6:9-11). Their eternal honor relates to what they sacrificed for Him. “Behold, the savior has come to you, bearing his reward” (Isaiah 62:11 LXX).⁸⁴

The eternal outcome described in verse 11 is based on man’s actions, his “works” (*ergon*). That Greek noun means that the individual is engaged in something. It relates first to what God *does* for us. For example, at Creation those miracles came from the “works” of His hands (Genesis 2:2; cf. Psalms 8:4, 7; 90:16; 138:8; Job 14:15; Isaiah 29:23). The apostle John builds on this in his gospel. In Paul’s writings, “works” are unrelated to righteousness but is what judgment is based upon (Romans 2:6; cf. I Peter 1:17). James rescues man’s *responsibility* in the salvation process. They both address two complementary issues. Paul elevates grace and shuns “deeds,” which man always choreographs to *appear* righteous. That is being an adherent to the gospel of regulation. James sees the definitive verification of man’s response to Christ as behavior that represents that decision. Paul did tiptoe towards that concept in his pastoral epistles (I Timothy 5:10, 25; 6:18). It is seen in Titus 1:16; 2:7, 14; 3:8, 14 and I Peter 2:12 also. “Yet not altogether with the fornicators of this world, or with the covetous, or extortioners, or with idolaters; for then must ye needs go out of the world” (I Corinthians 5:10).⁸⁵ James elevates “works” and limits his exposé on grace.

But what is the apocalyptic message in verse 12? It is framed within the moral context of verse 11. The “unjust” and “filthy” natures will be eternally rejected. The “holy” and “righteous” individuals will be received into His eternal presence.

This then suggests that He comes with a “reward” for good and one for evil. It is “My” reward. It is predicated on what He alone has done and earned. How man responds to **His** grace and **His** blood determines **His** response to man (cf. II Timothy 4:8, Hebrews 11:6). He makes the “payment” according to their response to **His** work.

Giving a reward to “every man,” promotes the doctrine of individual responsibility.⁸⁶ Christ noted this in His dire pronouncement to the Thyatira church: “I will give unto every one of you according to your works” (2:23c; cf. Matthew 16:27). *Ergon* captures the sense of “payment for work done.” This applies to believers (2:23, 11:18, 14:13, 20:12, 22:12) and unbelievers (11:18, 18:6, 20:13). “The idea of ethical responsibility and its eschatological consequences is too often ignored in modern preaching and needs to be given more attention.”⁸⁷ This is riveted in the beatitude, “Blessed is the one who keeps the words of the prophecy of this book” (22:7).

⁸⁴ Osborne, *Op. cit.*, p. 788.

⁸⁵ Brown, *Op. cit.*, vol. 3, pp. 1147-1152.

⁸⁶ Thomas, *Op. cit.*, p. 505.

⁸⁷ Osborne, *Op. cit.*, p. 788.

“Behold, I come quickly,’ Christ declares; ‘and My reward is with Me, to give every man according as his work shall be.’ Revelation 22: 12. The Lord at His coming will scrutinize every talent; He will demand interest on the capital He has entrusted. By His own humiliation and agony, by His life of toil and His death of shame, Christ has paid for the service of all who have taken His name and profess to be His servants. All are under deepest obligation to improve every capability for the work of winning souls to Him. ‘Ye are not your own,’ He says; ‘for ye are bought with a price;’ therefore glorify God by a life of service that will win men and women from sin to righteousness. 1 Corinthians 6:19, 20. We are bought with the price of Christ’s own life, bought that we may return to God His own in faithful service.”⁸⁸ Man is to capitalize on God’s grace.

“The One who has stood as our intercessor; who hears all penitential prayers and confessions; who is represented with a rainbow, the symbol of grace and love, encircling his head, is soon to cease his work in the heavenly sanctuary. Grace and mercy will then descend from the throne, and justice will take their place. He for whom his people have looked will assume his right,—the office of Supreme Judge.”⁸⁹

This raises an interesting question. If man is rewarded according to his works, when does that occur? At His coming (this verse). The decision of what reward will be given occurs when the books are opened (Daniel 7:10, Revelation 20:12), when the temple is measured (Revelation 11:1) – judgment is come (14:7). “Hour” means contextually that at a precise moment it occurs. This relates then to what a man sows, that is what he will reap (Galatians 6:7).

“The reward given to the stewards that were entrusted with the talents, was given, not because they had done such a great work, but because of their faithfulness over a few things (Matthew 25:15-22). God does not measure according to the results gained, but He measures according to what the motives are. Thus, no matter how large or small the mission given to the person, if they faithfully carry out that mission, their reward is sure.”⁹⁰

VERSE 13: “I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end, the first and the last.”

This is the last time in the apocalypse where such titles are used. They are self-declared attributes which define a beginning (Alpha) and an ending (Omega). Some allude to this as relating to eternity past and into eternity future. God, as a timeless Being of eternity, cannot be encircled with nor authenticated by points in time as noted with “beginning” and “end,” “first” and “last” and “Alpha” and “Omega.” Neither can God be distinguished with such terms *unless* it is within a framework of man’s time, redemptive time.

In the context of sin’s origin and man’s final restoration, Jesus is intimately tied to sins beginning through promise and ending through re-creation. This assures moral redress with Satan’s demise, physical renewal at earth’s new creation and spiritual birthing when all traces of sin have been eradicated.

⁸⁸ White, Ellen G.; *Testimonies*, vol. 9, p. 104.

⁸⁹ White, Ellen G.; *The Review and Herald*, January 1, 1889.

⁹⁰ Brooks, Karen; *Revelation 22* (Prophecy Research Initiative document – 2004), p. 5.

<u>Name</u>	<u>Defined</u>	<u>Re-defined</u>	
Alpha and Omega	beginning and ending first and last	which is, was, is to come	(1:8) (1:17)
Alpha and Omega	beginning and end		(2:8) (21:6)
Alpha and Omega	beginning and end	first and last	(21:13)

These descriptions are redemptive adulations with ties to Hebrews 12:2: "Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of *our* faith."

Who for the joy that was set before Him [Alpha experience]	endured the cross [Center of redemption]	set down at the right hand of the throne of God [Omega experience]
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What Jesus Christ starts, He finishes (Philippians 1:6).

"When the students of prophecy shall set hearts to know the truths of Revelation, they will realize what an importance is attached to this search. Christ Jesus is the Alpha and the Omega, the Genesis of the Old Testament, and the Revelation of the New. Both meet together in Christ."⁹¹

"All the great truths of the Scriptures center in Christ; rightly understood, all lead to Him. Let Christ be presented as the alpha and omega, the beginning and the end, of the great plan of redemption."⁹²

"In the plan of redemption Christ is the Alpha and the Omega – the First and the Last."⁹³

Thus, these terms are best viewed in redemption's context. There, they introduce hope that a concrete end of the era of sin will come.

VERSE 14: "Blessed are they that do his commandments, that they may have right to the tree of life, and may enter in through the gates into the city."

Verse 14 – "Blessed are they that do his commandments."

This is the seventh and last beatitude given in this book. This is the sequence of what attends those special divine promises:

⁹¹ White, Ellen G.; *Manuscript 33*, p. 33 (1897).

⁹² White, Ellen G.; *Evangelism*, p. 485.

⁹³ White, Ellen G.; *Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 367.

<u>Beatitude</u>	<u>Reason/Result</u>
1. He that readeth; they that hear the words of this prophecy, and they they that keep those things which are written therein (1:3)	time is at hand
2. The dead which die in the Lord	they may rest from their labors henceforth that (14:13)
3. He that watcheth, and keepeth his garments, lest he walk naked (16:15)	they see his shame
4. They which are called unto the marriage supper of the Lamb (19:9)	arrayed in fine linen (19:8) (won't be naked)
5. He that hath part in the first resurrection: on such the second death hath no power (20:5)	be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with him
6. He that keepeth the sayings of the prophecy of this book (22:7)	must shortly be done (they will be ready)
7. They that do his commandments (22:14)	right to the tree of life enter in through gates into the city

The Alexandrian, Aleph and Vulgate translations replace “do His commandments” with “wash their robes.” However, the spotless robes of the saints (of the true bride) are “the righteous acts of the saints” (19:8). Obedience remains the intent and concern of this verse!⁹⁴

Verse 14 – “that they may have right to the tree of life, and may enter in through the gates into the city.”

The tree of life, which bore a different fruit each month, was in the city (22:2). The Holy City had twelve gates (21:21, 25). Who will have the privilege of going through the gates and then having access to those fruits? The allusion is to the unnumbered multitude of 7:14 (cf. Isaiah 62:10 LXX and 62:2)⁹⁵ They have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb (3:4-5, 18). This intimates the ultimate in spiritual revival. They are complete in Him (Colossians 2:10). They are ones who have been called to the marriage supper and have been arrayed in fine linen (19:9). Most often “white garments” represent the purity of saints (6:11; 7:9, 13-14; 16:15; 22:14). Here, the “bride has made herself ready” (19:7-9).

There is an ancient Jewish tradition that cites Psalm 118:20 as “This is the gate of the Lord, [the righteous will enter into it],” referring to the “door” to the Garden of Eden. This is described:

1. A Messianic figure “will open the gates of Paradise.”
2. He will give to the saints from the Tree of Life.

⁹⁴ Gregg, Steve; *Revelation – Four Views – A Parallel Commentary* (Thomas Nelson Publishers, Nashville, TN), 1997, p. 502.

⁹⁵ Beale, *Op. cit.*, pp. 1139-1140.

3. He will give power to His children.
4. All the saints will clothe themselves.

Later, the Jewish people generally identified the gates noted in the Psalm as the entrance into future salvation.⁹⁶

John's record of the blessing draws upon accurate appreciation and insight into that Davidic Psalm and Genesis 3.

The phrase "enter in" is frequently alluded to as a "rite of passage" expression. In 21:27 it is expressed in the negative when those who defile, worketh abomination or maketh a lie will "in no wise enter into" [the city through its gates (21:25)]. In the teachings of Jesus, He used this as a "spatial metaphor," representing entrance into the kingdom of God (Matthew 5:20, 7:21, 18:3, 19:23-24, 23:13; Mark 9:47; John 3:5; Acts 14:22).⁹⁷

The "right" is *exousia ... epi* – authority over. This presupposes the "authority" to eat of the fruit. This was a promise to the overcomers of the Ephesus church (2:7). "Authority," or at times the phrase is translated "power," is used in Revelation:

Authority Over

- Saints – power over the nations (2:26)
- Demonic beings over earth dwellers (9:3, 10, 19)
- Two witnesses over their enemies (11:6)
- Beast over the nations and the saints (13:2, 4-5, 7; 17:12-13)
- Angels over fire from the altar (16:19)

Right of Access

- Here, it is not authority "over" but unrestricted access to.⁹⁸

Adam and Eve had access to the Tree of Life. That is why they were expelled from the Garden. The imagery is one of the privilege of Eden restored. Note the power or authority is "given to." God remains in sovereign control. When it is in His timing, the privilege is given. As will unfold in the next verse, God is the ultimate "gatekeeper."

"There is no election but one's own by which any may perish. God has set forth in His word the conditions upon which every soul will be elected to eternal life – obedience to His commandments, through faith in Christ. God has elected a character in harmony with His law, and anyone who shall reach the standard of His requirement will have an entrance into the kingdom of glory. Christ Himself said, 'He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life: and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life.' John 3:36. 'Not everyone that saith unto Me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of My Father which is in heaven.' Matthew 7:21. And in the Revelation He declares, 'Blessed are they that do His commandments, that they may have right to the tree of life, and may enter in through the gates into the city.' Revelation 22:14. As regards man's final salvation, this is the only election brought to view in the word of God."⁹⁹

⁹⁶ Beale, *Op. cit.*, p. 1140.

⁹⁷ Aune, *Op. cit.*, p. 1222.

⁹⁸ Osborne, *Op. cit.*, p. 790.

⁹⁹ White, Ellen G.; *Patriarchs and Prophets*, pp. 207-208.

“Mercy invites us to enter through the gates into the city of God, and justice is satisfied to accord to every obedient soul full privileges as a member of the royal family, a child of the heavenly King. If we were defective in character, we could not pass the gates that mercy has opened to the obedient; for justice stands at the entrance, and demands holiness in all who would see God. Were justice extinct, and were it possible for divine mercy to open the gates to the whole race, irrespective of character, there would be a worse condition of disaffection and rebellion in heaven than before Satan was expelled. The peace, happiness, and harmony of heaven would be broken. The change from earth to heaven will not change men’s character; the happiness of the redeemed in heaven results from the character formed in this life after the image of Christ. The saints in heaven will first have been saints on earth.”¹⁰⁰

“The city of God will open its golden gates to receive him who learned while on earth to lean on God for guidance and wisdom, for comfort and hope amid loss and affliction. The songs of angels will welcome him there, and for him the tree of life will yield its fruits.”¹⁰¹

VERSE 15: “For without *are* dogs, and sorcerers, and whoremongers, and murderers, and idolaters, and whosoever loveth and maketh a lie.”

Verse 15 – “For without *are* dogs, and sorcerers, and whoremongers, and murderers, and idolaters.”

The blessings and bliss of the loyal saints have been presented. In terse contrast is this list of behavior and characteristics of those who are not saved. They are “without” (*exo*) the walls of the city noted in verse 14. This is an echo of Adam and Eve being driven “outside” the garden because of apostasy (Genesis 3:23-24).

This group is tied to the evildoers noted in 21:8. It is a summation contrast. These are the actions and life patterns of those who will be cast into the lake of fire (20:15, 21:8). By inference, they do not “do his commandments” (cf. Malachi 3:1-5, I Corinthians 6:9-10, Galatians 5:19-21).

<u>22:15</u>	<u>21:8</u>
Dogs	Abominable
Sorcerers	Sorcerers
Whoremongers	Whoremongers
Murderers	Murderers
Idolaters	Idolaters
Deceitful (liars)	Liars
	Fearful
	Unbelieving

Verse 14 has a future frame of reference as does this verse. It is not related to the present or historical church but to the new heavens and earth.¹⁰²

The “dogs” (*hoi kynes*) is a symbol for the rebelliously impure. It covers diverse issues: male prostitutes (Deuteronomy 23:18), fools (Proverbs 26:11), greedy rulers

¹⁰⁰ White, Ellen G.; *The Review and Herald*, December 13, 1892.

¹⁰¹ White, Ellen G.; *Testimonies*, vol. 4, 328.

¹⁰² Thomas, *Op. cit.*, p. 507.

(Isaiah 56:10-11), apostates (II Peter 2:22), Gentiles (Matthew 15:16), Judaizers (Philemon 3:2-3) and miscellaneous (II Kings 8:13; Psalm 22:16, 20; Isaiah 56:10; Matthew 7:6; Mark 7:27).¹⁰³ The dogs replace the abominable in 21:8. This echoes the Hebrew word *pasha* in the Old Testament where there is rebellion against God's authority, covenant and law. It is of focused interest in Daniel 8–12 and the first corrective measure given to "Daniel's people" in the 70-week prophecy.

These individuals are depicted as being outside the city in a lake of fire. Jesus called that area "outer darkness" (Matthew 8:12, 22:13, 25:30). The blasphemer was cut off from God's people, the covenant community (Leviticus 24:14, 23; Numbers 15:36) and banned to the outside. Ironically, trash was burned outside the walls of Jerusalem (Isaiah 66:24, Mark 9:48).¹⁰⁴

Verse 15 – "and whosoever loveth and maketh a lie."

This last phrase is fascinating! When Jesus responded to the disciples' questions about the destruction of the temple, He commenced with a warning: "Take heed that no man deceive you" (Matthew 24:4). The deceitfulness of man was an ardent end-time concern of Christ. It would characterize the "false prophets" or religious leaders in the last days of the temple and of the world. Falsehood would corrode truth and preserve rebellion. Elements alluding to lying and deceit have been previously noted in Revelation through such symbols as a "tail" (scorpions – 9:10; snakes – 9:19). They were in the "back" of the creature, making it hard to see when confronting the "animal" or individual.

Here, the person not only "doeth" or "maketh" a lie but "loveth" it. Chicanery, deviousness, concealment, artifice and contrivance are a few descriptors that cover the "loveth" and "doeth." They reflect the nature of Satan (Revelation 12:9; 13:14; 20:3, 8, 10). That celestial city will be no place for dishonesty (21:27). In beautiful contrast is the thought that the 144,000 do not lie (14:5).

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

Verse 16 – "I Jesus have sent mine angel to testify unto you these things in the churches."

This echoes the beginning of Revelation when it noted "The Revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave unto him, ... and he sent and signified *it* by his angel unto his servant John: Who bare record of the word of God, and of the testimony of Jesus Christ" (1:1-2). The word testify/testimony means Jesus is a "witness to," He "attests to." That emphasizes that He has intimate knowledge of what was unfolded in the Book of Revelation. The *verbal signature*, "I Jesus," is personal and is the only expression like it in the New Testament. It sets an authoritative mark on the book. As noted in 19:10, this *whole* apocalyptic work *is* the "testimony of Jesus." In addition, He defines it further as the "spirit of prophecy." Verse 16 reaffirms what John recorded as:

¹⁰³ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁴ Osborne, *Op. cit.*, p. 790.

- | | |
|-------------------------------|--|
| 1. Divinely inspired | “spirit of” (19:10) |
| 2. Prophetic | “prophecy” (19:10) |
| 3. Personal revelation | “I Jesus”
“testimony” “testify” (1:1, 19:10, 22:16)
“revelation” |
| 4. Church-specific | (1:4, 20, 22:1) |
| 5. With individual directions | “he that readeth” (1:3, 22:12)
“they that hear” |

Jesus “sent mine angel” is similar to “Lord God of the holy prophets sent his angel” in 22:6. “Sent” (*empempsa*) carries the idea of being sent on a special mission (cf. John 20:21).¹⁰⁵ “I” echoes Malachi 3:1, affirming the divinity of Christ.¹⁰⁶ This is called “his angel” in 1:1. Thus, the personal epithets acknowledge an intimate team effort on man’s behalf. It is unique and bonds God’s throne with men’s hearts. The links are Christ and the church.

God’s Throne — Jesus Christ — Mine Angel — Churches

“Rev. 22:6 and 16 provide wonderful parallel background information:

<u>Rev 22:6</u>	<u>Rev 22:16</u>
And the Lord, the God of the spirits of the prophets	I, Jesus,
sent his angel	sent my angel
to reveal	to attest
to his servants	this message to you
what must soon happen.”	for the benefit of the churches.

“[Notice the differences:] 22:6 is theocentric (just as 17:1 – 19:10 concludes in 19:9 that ‘these are the true words of God,’) while 22:16 is Christocentric, and 22:6 is in the third person, while 22:16 is in the first person. The common features, however, are many: (1) Both passages emphasize the divine sender of revelation. (2) In both passages the divine revealer is the subject of a verb meaning ‘to send.’ (3) In both passages the means whereby the revelation was communicated is described as ‘my messenger.’ (4) In both passages the content of the revelatory message is mentioned, i.e., ‘what must soon happen’ (22:6) ... (5) Finally, the recipients of revelation are specified in both passages by the ... expression ‘my servants’ in 22:6 and by the more complex phrases ‘to you’ and ‘for the churches’ in 22:16. More broadly, when the two passages are compared, *both* have similarities with 1:1–2, where the two ultimate sources of revelation are reconciled by including *both* God and Jesus Christ in the revelatory chain.”¹⁰⁷

This “testimony” will continue in verses 18 and 20. The emphasis at the beginning of the book and reemphasis at its end rivets the significance that the courts above place in

¹⁰⁵ Thomas, *Op. cit.*, p. 509.

¹⁰⁶ Beale, *Op. cit.*, p. 1143.

¹⁰⁷ Aune, *Op. cit.*, pp. 1183-1184.

these messages. Jesus and, in turn, his angel are legal witnesses to the earth of these prophecies, which originate at the center of the universe. This is the story of how it will end. These are the players and events that will stage earth's final scenes. "It will be based on moral and spiritual issues. This is how you are to merge into the flow of that history." The forensic nature of "testify" is suggested further by a penalty for disobeying the testimony in 22:18-19 (cf. 1:9, 11:3).¹⁰⁸

There are catchy expressions in this verse. The testimony is to "you ... in the churches." Who "you" is remains a challenging question. At first it would seem to refer to all the "members" of the seven churches. But – the messages began to the "angels" of the churches. They represent the people who would be messengers of these truths to God's people. Some infer its leaders. It is likely that it is primarily those who represent the leaders. This would ally itself with the "brothers" sent around to the churches (III John 10).¹⁰⁹ Secondly, it refers to all God's servants who become His witnesses. It is emphasized that the testimony is not a simple part of the book but represents its entirety.¹¹⁰

Verse 16 – "I am the root and the offspring of David, and the bright and morning star."

Jesus previously introduced Himself as the "Alpha and Omega" (1:8), "the first and the last" (1:17), and now "the root" of David's ancestry and "the offspring" of the descendants of him. But earlier in Revelation He was noted as "the root of David" (5:5), David being His offspring (cf. Isaiah 11:1, 10; 5:24; 53:2; Matthew 22:42-45; Acts 17:28-29). Though debate takes complex sides relative to this, the Messianic promises were to David's family through his descendants, yet He was also before him. The Davidic Messiah revealed the contents of this book to John. "In 5:5 he is 'the root of David,' a military metaphor drawn from Isa. 11:1 and 10 ('the root of Jesse ... will stand as a banner of the peoples'), which for the Jews connoted the Warrior Messiah who would destroy their enemies (see on 5:5). That image continues here, where the Root of David will be the judge of the wicked (vv. 11a, 15) but adds that he is also David's 'Offspring.'"¹¹¹

The "I am" designation is recorded frequently in the gospel of John and three times in Revelation (1:8, 17; 22:16). Self-identification notes that He is divine and the great Yahweh. In the declaration where Jesus characterizes Himself as the "morning star," He promised the overcomers of the Thyatira church that gift of Himself – "the morning star" (2:28). That, in turn, alludes to an ancient Messianic promise: "A star will come out of Jacob." Here, He embellishes this by noting the "bright" star (Isaiah 60:1-3). He is the "sun of righteousness" (Malachi 4:2).

In II Peter 1:17-19 the "morning star" alludes to the dawning of a new day. This suggests that the celestial expression Jesus declares here means that at the time of Revelation's fulfillment and His second coming will be like the dawning of a new day. He is the ultimate typology for recreation, a great metaphor for newness, beginning again, light. The morning star means that the darkness of the night is past. Something wonderfully new has begun.

¹⁰⁸ Beale, *Op. cit.*, p. 1143.

¹⁰⁹ Osborne, *Op. cit.*, p. 792.

¹¹⁰ Beale, *Op. cit.*, p. 1143.

¹¹¹ Osborne, *Op. cit.*, p. 792.

VERSE 17: “And the Spirit and the bride say, Come. And let him that heareth say, Come. And let him that is athirst come. And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely.”

Verse 17 – “And the Spirit and the bride say, Come.”

Jesus has just been speaking. Now a unique duo is introduced with a unified message: The Holy Spirit (*to pneuma* – “the spirit”) and “the bride” (*he nymphe*), in a unified communiqué, say “Come.”

The Spirit is the Spirit of prophecy (2:7, 11, 17, 29; 3:6, 13, 22; 19:10) or the divine Inspiration bringing these messages. The bride represents the people of God. The allusion here represents His church,¹¹² in awaiting her redemption (II Corinthians 11:2, Ephesians 5:31-32), as becoming part of the invitation to the world.

Who is the “Come” addressed to? Most respond that it must represent the uncommitted. Jesus just reminded the reader, “Behold, I come quickly” (vss 7, 12). Now the church and the Spirit convey to all who haven’t responded, “Come.” The Holy Spirit, the divine inspiration sent to the world and the chosen, the bride in waiting, respond with the collective appeal of Jesus to “Come.” Come where? To the “root” and “offspring” of David.

A new thought begins in the next phrase.

Verse 17 – “And let him that heareth say, Come.”

The bride refers to the end-time church – the New Jerusalem (19:7-8, 21:9-10), ready and waiting. This next expression suggests that any individual who *hears* the words of Christ, this vast testimony, also say, “Come.” It is an invitation to the church and its members to come to Jesus because He is about to “come.” This phrase ties to the invitation given to John, “Thou must prophecy again before many peoples, and nations, and tongues and kings” (10:11). There, John “ate” the little open book containing end-time timing messages. That began the “urgency” message of the Loud Cry (11:3-6). Now, as the book draws to a close, the “urgency” is embellished by a Christocentric appeal. It is now especially “urgent” because you now know “He comes,” so invite others to “Come” also.

Expositor White uses this invitation to respond to heaven’s call. “In the power of the Spirit the delegated servants of Christ are to bear witness for their Leader. The yearning desire of the Saviour for the salvation of sinners is to mark all their efforts. The gracious invitation, first given by Christ, is to be taken up by human voices and sounded throughout the world: ‘Whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely.’ Revelation 22:17. The church is to say: ‘Come.’ Every power in the church is to be actively engaged on the side of Christ. The followers of Christ are to combine in a strong effort to call the attention of the world to the fast-fulfilling prophecies of the word of God. Infidelity and spiritualism are gaining a strong hold in the world. Shall those to whom great light has been given be cold and faithless now?”¹¹³

¹¹² Thomas, *Op. cit.*, p. 511.

¹¹³ White, Ellen G.; *Testimonies*, vol. 9, p. 43.

Verse 17 – “And let him that is athirst come. And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely.”

The “come” now changes from the second person (*erchou*) to the third person (*erchestho*). This suggests that the one hearing is in a positive state of understanding and acceptance of the testimony of Jesus. “Those who are thirsty” addresses a broad group who are receiving and identifying with the details of this book. “If you are still thirsty, you pine for more, you crave more (Jeremiah 29:13, Mark 7:6), drink of the water of life freely” (21:6, 22:1; cf. Isaiah 55:1) – identify with Jesus more deeply.

The word “freely” (*dorean*) means that it is without cost (21:6, Romans 3:24) and ties to “without money and without price” (Isaiah 55:1). “Hunger” and “thirst” are metaphors for unfulfilled spiritual needs. In Scripture these can only be filled by God (Psalm 42:2, 63:1, 143:6; Jeremiah 2:13), His words (Amos 8:11) by Christ (John 4:14-15, 7:37; I Corinthians 10:4) or by the pursuit of righteousness (Matthew 5:6).¹¹⁴ The Christ-centered appeal continues.

The invitation to “take” is a follow-up to the promise of 21:6: “I will give unto him that is athirst of the fountain of the water of life freely.”

Are these thoughts applicable to only the era of the seven literal churches, which many subscribe to? A first century audience is probable but not the only focus. The second coming is the deeper context, with Christ noting that He would come soon. It is primarily an end-of-the-age message. That is when the saints’ thirst will be fully quenched¹¹⁵ It parallels the picture of the last day of the Feast of Tabernacles when Jesus offered Himself to the thirsty (John 7:37-38). That feast celebrated the harvest, symbolic of the end of redemptive history.

“He who seeks to quench his thirst at the fountains of this world will drink only to thirst again. Everywhere men are unsatisfied. They long for something to supply the need of the soul. Only One can meet that want. The need of the world, ‘The Desire of all nations,’ is Christ. The divine grace which He alone can impart, is as living water, purifying, refreshing, and invigorating the soul.

“Jesus did not convey the idea that merely one draft of the water of life would suffice the receiver. He who tastes of the love of Christ will continually long for more; but he seeks for nothing else. The riches, honors, and pleasures of the world do not attract him. The constant cry of his heart is, More of Thee. And He who reveals to the soul its necessity is waiting to satisfy its hunger and thirst. Every human resource and dependence will fail. The cisterns will be emptied, the pools become dry; but our Redeemer is an inexhaustible fountain. We may drink, and drink again, and ever find a fresh supply. He in whom Christ dwells has within himself the fountain of blessing,—‘a well of water springing up into everlasting life.’ From this source he may draw strength and grace sufficient for all his needs.”¹¹⁶

¹¹⁴ Aune, *Op. cit.*, p. 1229.

¹¹⁵ Beale, *Op. cit.*, p. 1150.

¹¹⁶ White, Ellen G.; *The Desire of Ages*, p. 187.

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

Verse 18 – “For I testify unto every man that heareth the words of the prophecy of this book,”

The authoritative tone of this introductory phrase establishes Jesus’ authorship. Much debate exists as to who is speaking and even if this and the next verse were part of John’s original manuscript. The earliest documents known have these verses.¹¹⁷ Verse 20 identifies Jesus as the speaker. That flows naturally from His previous thought in this chapter, directing us towards the end. “I (*ego*) am testifying (*martyron*)” parallels 22:16, “I, Jesus send the angel to testify.” What is He declaring? That He is coming soon (vss 7, 12, 20). These are summation statements to the book, setting its thematic structure fully into an end-time context.

“Every man that heareth the words of the prophecy” echoes the words in 1:3, addressing the seven churches:

Revelation 1:3

“Blessed is he that readeth”
“The words of this prophecy”

Revelation 22:18

“Testify unto every man that heareth”
“The words of the prophecy of this book”

In antiquity, books were read aloud. Thus, reading and hearing were synonymous.

The focus word is “prophecy.” Jesus testifies of this, which parallels verse 6, “these words are faithful and true.” The words “I testify” reflect an “oath formula.” When associated with apocalyptic messages, it serves to verify the absolute truth of the report. It is a validation statement like “thus saith the Lord” or “the Lord hath sworn” (Amos 4:2, 8:7) in the Old Testament. There, a prophetic oath is always spoken by Yahweh and not the prophet.¹¹⁸

Verse 18 – “If any man shall add unto these things, God shall add unto him the plagues that are written in this book:”

This exhortation follows the commands given to Israel before entering the promised land: “Now therefore hearken, O Israel, unto the statutes and unto the judgments, which I teach you, for to do *them*, that ye may live, and go in and possess the land which the LORD God of your fathers giveth you. Ye shall not add unto the word which I command you, neither shall ye diminish *ought* from it, that ye may keep the commandments of the LORD your God which I command you” (Deuteronomy 4:1-2).

There, the Torah came directly from Yahweh and must not be “supplemented or reduced.” Christ is warning against false teachers who distort the meaning of the prophe-

¹¹⁷ Thomas, *Op. cit.*, p. 514.

¹¹⁸ Aune, *Op. cit.*, p. 1230.

cies.¹¹⁹ This cannot apply to those with honest differing views. It focuses on anything that distorts this Christocentric message **and** the urgency of the apocalyptic timing.

Contextually, Jesus is presenting the apocalyptic messages as a specific code of law. However, the allusions to Deuteronomy are strong.

Deuteronomy

“hear the statutes ... you shall not add to the word ... nor take away from it’ (4:1-2; likewise 12:32); ‘and it will be when he hears the words ... every curse which is written in this book will rest on him, and the Lord will blot out his name from under heaven” (29:19-20).

Plagues for unfaithfulness (29:21)

Rev. 22:18-19

‘I testify to everyone who hears the words ... if anyone adds to them, God will add to him the plagues that have been written in this book, and if anyone takes away from the words of the book ..., God will take away his part from the tree of life and from the holy city....”

“Plagues that are written in this book” (22:18)

What might the “add to” or “take away” allude to? Clues are found in Deuteronomy:

- The integrity of God’s commands must be preserved (statutes and judgments – Deuteronomy 4:1-2).
- Adding other gods with idolatrous practices (Deuteronomy 12:30-32, 29:19-29)
- Minimizing the urgent timing the messages are set in (Revelation 1:1, 3; 3:11; 22:7, 12, 20).

This ominous decree reverses the beatitudes of 1:3, 22:7 and 14 (cf. Numbers 5:23, Deuteronomy 29:20). This centers on divine law similar to Galatians 1:8-9 (“If anyone preaching to you a gospel other than what you have accepted, let him be eternally condemned”).¹²⁰

The sentence is the “plagues that are written in *this* book.” What are they?

- Torture plague of demonic horsemen (9:18, 20)
- Infliction on earth-dwellers of the two witnesses (11:6)
- Plagues of the Seven Bowls (15:1, 6, 8; 16:9, 21)
- Plagues inflicted on Babylon the Great (18:4, 8)
(cf. Deuteronomy 29:21, 28:58-61; Jeremiah 25:13, 26:2; Proverbs 30:5-6; II Peter 3:16)

They will be treated as unbelievers and suffer the second death.¹²¹

“The punishment in 22:18-19 is formulated in ironic terms: those *adding* to the *book* will have *added* to them the plagues of the *book*; those *taking away* from the words of the *book* will have *taken away* from them the eternal blessings *written in the book*. The purpose of the ironic statement is to express figuratively the ‘eye for eye’ nature of biblical judgment, where people are punished in proportion to their sin and sometimes by the very means of their own sin (see on 11:5 for a similar ironic formulation).”¹²²

¹¹⁹ Osborne, *Op. cit.*, p. 795.

¹²⁰ Aune, *Op. cit.*, pp. 1213-1215.

¹²¹ Osborne, *Op. cit.*, p. 797.

¹²² Beale, *Op. cit.*, p. 1153.

The warning declaration of Jesus canonizes this book. It is complete, fixed and authoritative.¹²³

Verse 19 – “And if any man shall take away from the words of the book of this prophecy,”

The previous verse warns against adding to the prophetic message. Here, Christ's burden is against those who diminish the importance of its content. As before, the curse is conditional. “If” any man shall ... The misuse of the Book of Revelation would be a willful act. God's wrath would be kindled.

“If the word is desecrated by extending its meaning, God adds a curse. If the oracle is minimized through soothsaying or trivialization of its omens and blessings, God will forbid eternal reward.

“Thus, the reader is warned here that distorting God's message in these prophecies is tantamount to apostasy, and the person guilty of it will become an apostate unbeliever in God's eyes.... (cf. John 15:1–8; Heb. 2:1–4; 6:4–8; 10:26–31; James 5:19–20; 2 Pet. 2:20–21; 1 John 5:16; as well as Rev. 2:5; 3:3; 21:8; 22:18–19).”¹²⁴

Verse 19 – “God shall take away his part out of the book of life, and out of the holy city, and from the things which are written in this book.”

Three associated curses come with the depreciation of the prophecy and attenuating its value:

1. The Book of Life rewards are removed (no access to the Tree of Life).
2. The privilege of residing in the holy city is cancelled.
3. All rewards and blessings of the saints presented in this apocalyptic book – “the prophecy” – will be annulled.

This is called a “curse formula”¹²⁵ based on no human law, but divine decree (cf. Galatians 1:8-9). The censure is an eternal excommunication. They will experience the second death (2:11, 20:6).

The names of all who become God's followers are written in the Book of Life (3:5). For the overcomers, their names will remain. “I will not blot out his name out of the book of life.” The record was established at “the foundation of the world” (13:8). Jesus warns that re-engineering of truth that mitigates its urgent themes results in the blotting out that person's name from the Book of Life.

“For human agents to misconstrue and put a forced, half truthful, and mystical construction upon the oracles of God, is an act which endangers their own souls, and the souls of others. ... [Rev. 22:18, 19 quoted]. Those who, by their human construction, shall make the Scripture to utter that which Christ has never placed upon it, weaken its force, making the voice of God in instruction and warnings to testify falsehood, to avoid the inconvenience incurred by obedience to God's requirements, have become sign-

¹²³ Thomas, *Op. cit.*, p. 517.

¹²⁴ Osborne, *Op. cit.*, p. 797.

¹²⁵ Aune, *Op. cit.*, pp. 1213-1215.

boards, pointing in the wrong direction, into false paths, which lead to transgression and death.”¹²⁶

Though Revelation would not be formally a part of the Canon for 100–300 more years after it was penned, its tenants and principles were fixed upon recording. The terminus of the book is in sight. The protective aura man is to give the whole book is clearly implied. The counsel is to “every man that heareth the words of the prophecy of this book” (vs 18).

VERSE 20: “He which testifieth these things saith, Surely I come quickly. Amen. Even so, come, Lord Jesus.”

Verse 20 – “He which testifieth these things saith, Surely I come quickly. Amen.”

Jesus is the “one who testifies these things” (*ho martyron tauta*) (cf. 1:2, 5; 3:14; 22:16, 18). These ties confirm that Jesus is speaking. He has promised an imminent return in verses 7 and 12. This is His last notice in “prophetic present tense” that he will return “presently.” The word “surely” here in the KJV is *nai* and really conveys: “Yes,” I will come soon. This same word was used in 1:7 regarding His coming. This affirms the certainty of the book’s great objective to reveal issues, events and players related to the *parousia*.¹²⁷

The testimony has come from Jesus, the angel, John and the Spirit (19:10), 1:4-5, affirming the interest that the trinity has in the context of the full apocalyptic theme given. In that light, the structure is in a legal format. When judgment and witnesses are addressed in chapter 11, a case is before the court. It concludes with the witnesses going to heaven (11:12) with some legal issue settled.

“Behold, I will send my messenger, and he shall prepare the way before me: and the Lord, whom ye seek, shall suddenly come to his temple, even the messenger of the covenant, whom ye delight in: behold, he shall come, saith the LORD of hosts. But who may abide the day of his coming? and who shall stand when he appeareth? for he *is* like a refiner’s fire, and like fullers’ soap: And he shall sit as a refiner and purifier of silver: and he shall purify the sons of Levi, and purge them as gold and silver, that they may offer unto the LORD an offering in righteousness. Then shall the offering of Judah and Jerusalem be pleasant unto the LORD, as in the days of old, and as in former years. And I will come near to you to judgment; and I will be a swift witness against the sorcerers, and against the adulterers, and against false swearers, and against those that oppress the hireling in *his* wages, the widow, and the fatherless, and that turn aside the stranger *from his right*, and fear not me, saith the LORD of hosts” (Malachi 3:1-5).

An anticipated eschatological event is portrayed. Christ’s timing ties to the fulfillment of the described prophetic events. He will come quickly as they begin to occur. As the coming is proleptic, so are the visionary messages and events (2:16; 3:11; 16:15; 22:7, 12). All historical applications become metaphors for the implied end-time meaning. The Book has relevance to the *parousia* because its prophecy relates to **that** event.

What are the “things” (*tauta*) of which Jesus testified? We can note the thoughts in verses 12-19, but the broader application goes back to 1:1-2. He testified of what God had revealed to Him. Thus, the **whole** book is a record of that witness.

It appears as though John has added “Amen” to Christ’s final words. It is a response to Christ’s “Yes.” Then he says:

¹²⁶ White, Ellen G.; *Fundamentals of Christian Education*, pp. 386-387.

¹²⁷ Thomas, *Op. cit.*, p. 520.

Verse 20 – “Even so, come, Lord Jesus.”

This acknowledges Christ's deity (*kyrie Iesou*) (cf. II Timothy 4:8, Titus 2:13, I Corinthians 16:22). Many expositors attempt to tie a eucharistic background to “come.” In that context, the “coming” would be liturgical within the framework of the Lord's Supper. Thus, he comes repeatedly throughout the ages. But there is a prophetic issue that militates strongly against this. Prophecy is event-driven. This book is filled with events that are built around timing clues. The “coming” relates to the repeated revelation of those events, issues or people who enact the final scenes of earth's history. The eucharistic concept robs man of the urgent message of the apocalypse and of the very purpose for prophecy.

The word “come” is written in the imperative and is most unusual in the New Testament within a prayer (Luke 11:3). It conveys John's strong emotional desire for that event. It secondly serves to draw the reader into a similar state of expectancy and anticipation. Jesus had promised the disciples, “I will come again and receive you unto myself” (John 14:3). John passionately responds to Christ's promise, “Come” (I Corinthians 1:7; Galatians 1:12; II Thessalonians 1:7; I Peter 1:13, 4:13). This amazing prophetic work draws to a close with a prayer from the seer, which is to echo till the end of time.

“The coming of the Lord has been in all ages the hope of His true followers. The Saviour's parting promise upon Olivet, that He would come again, lighted up the future for His disciples, filling their hearts with joy and hope that sorrow could not quench nor trials dim. Amid suffering and persecution, the ‘appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ’ was the ‘blessed hope.’ When the Thessalonian Christians were filled with grief as they buried their loved ones, who had hoped to live to witness the coming of the Lord, Paul, their teacher, pointed them to the resurrection, to take place at the Saviour's advent. Then the dead in Christ should rise, and together with the living be caught up to meet the Lord in the air. ‘And so,’ he said, ‘shall we ever be with the Lord. Wherefore comfort one another with these words.’ 1 Thessalonians 4:16-18.

“On rocky Patmos the beloved disciple hears the promise, ‘Surely I come quickly,’ and his longing response voices the prayer of the church in all her pilgrimage, ‘Even so, come, Lord Jesus.’ Revelation 22:20.”¹²⁸

VERSE 21: “The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all. Amen.”

With the exception of Romans, all of Paul's letters end with “Grace be with you.” This phrase serves as a call for heaven's power on the student of the document presented. In that light, many call Revelation an “epistle.”

There are many subjective ideas as to why John concludes this apocalyptic and prophetic book like this. He has unfolded some of the most solemn themes to occur at the end of earth's history in the sacred Canon. The past few verses have drawn attention to issues of judgment and finality. Within those messages was the tender invitation from the Spirit and the saints to those undecided – “Come.”

Now, the thought of grace being asked for all expositors delving into these words conveys more than “God give you wisdom and understanding.” It appears to get into the very core of commitment and destiny. Grace, power and divine strength be extended to you that your choices will be eternally with the Lord Jesus Christ.

¹²⁸ White, Ellen G.; *The Great Controversy*, pp. 302-303.

“By disobeying the commands of God, man fell under the condemnation of his law. This fall called for the grace of God to appear in behalf of sinners. We should never have learned the meaning of this word ‘grace’ had we not fallen. God loves the sinless angels, who do his service, and are obedient to all his commands; but he does not give them grace. These heavenly beings know naught of grace; they have never needed it; for they have never sinned. Grace is an attribute of God shown to undeserving human beings. We did not seek after it, but it was sent in search of us. God rejoices to bestow this grace upon every one who hungers for it. To every one he presents terms of mercy, not because we are worthy, but because we are so utterly unworthy. Our need is the qualification which gives us the assurance that we shall receive this gift.”¹²⁹

John has “sought not only to strengthen the believers but to bring the unbelievers to Christ as well” (22:17; cf. 22:11a, 15).¹³⁰ He has gone to great lengths to authenticate the message as being directly from the Lord (22:6, 8, 18-19). Now at the end, it is exceptionally fitting to convey a brief but deeply spiritual thought: “Grace to you.” It is his farewell to readers in ages to come.

The final thought isn’t to “the saints” or “the churches” but to *panton* – “all.” With that benediction, the end of this epistle arrives. Amen.

¹²⁹ White, Ellen G.; *The Review and Herald*, September 15, 1896.

¹³⁰ Osborne, *Op. cit.*, p. 798.

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