

REVELATION SYMBOLISM UNVEILED

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REVELATION SYMBOLISM UNVEILED

The Book of Revelation is figurative in nature, with language augmented with symbolic words and supernatural visions. Revelation should not be read as a literal account set in chronological sequence. These notes attempts to demonstrate the way it should be interpreted, and to unravel the meaning of its symbolic language and visual forms.

THE STRUCTURE OF THE BOOK OF REVELATION

Before commencing this study, it will prove helpful to examine the structure of the Book of Revelation, as this will influence the manner of its interpretation.

Broadly speaking, Revelation may be divided into two halves.

The first half consists of Chapters 1 to 11, which commences with a salutation, a statement of the symbolic nature of the book, a statement of Christ's eternal divinity, and His address to the seven Churches in Asia. The first half ends in Chapter 11 with exaltation of God because His final judgment has been accomplished, and the temple of God has been opened in heaven.

The first half contains the following subject matter.

Salutation and disclosure of its symbolic nature.

Christ's message to the churches and address to the overcomers.

A vision of the throne in heaven.

The opening of the seven seals.

The sealing of the 144,000.

The seven trumpets.

The eating of the little book and the ministry of the two witnesses.

Proclamation of judgment on *"those who destroy the earth,..."*

A Proclamation that *"the temple of God was opened in heaven."* This signifies that from that time our worship is transferred from earth to heaven.

The main focus of the first half of Revelation is the Church throughout its history.

The second half, containing Chapters 12 to 22, commencing with the coming forth of Jesus and His Church, and their confrontation by Satan. It concludes with a vision of New Jerusalem, an invitation to enter in, and a warning of the quickness of His return.

The second half of Revelation contains the following subjects.

The emergence of the church from Israel opposed by Satan.

The emergence of Antichrist and the apostate church.

The emergence of the Spirit of Antichrist.

The 144,000 standing on Mount Zion with the Lamb.

Proclamation of judgment on the apostate church.

Vision of the overcomers and their song.

The seven bowls of wrath.

Destruction of “the Woman Babylon” - the harlot church.

The marriage of the Lamb - Christ the mighty conqueror.

Satan loosed - Armageddon.

The Bride of Christ - the New Jerusalem.

Visions of the new heaven and the new earth, and the invitation.

The main focus of the second half of Revelation is the rise of the satanic trinity and the Great Harlot, and their final total destruction.

The subject matter of Revelation is conveyed to us by a series of visions, which are couched in figurative language containing symbolic pictures that have to be interpreted.

When we compare these two halves of Revelation, we can see that both halves contain similar symbolic subject matter, as in the 144,000 in Chapter 7 and 144,000 in Chapter 14, also the seven trumpets in Chapters 8 and the seven bowls of wrath in Chapter 16. We find that we can gain a more complete picture of these events by studying them in conjunction with each other. This complementary outlining of events is by no means unusual in the bible. E.g.

- There are four gospel accounts of the life, ministry, and crucifixion of Jesus. To gain a complete picture we should compare accounts of the similar subject matter.
- In the story of Creation, Genesis 1:1-23 presents an overall view, whilst Genesis 2:7-25, & 3:1-24, present a complementary picture focusing on Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden.
- 2 Samuel - tells of the reign of David, his troubles, and his restoration as king, and 1 Chronicles outlines David's lineage, and his reign and death.

The Author of Revelation

The author of Revelation was the apostle John. Previously, during the reign of Emperor Domitian, there was acute persecution, and Christians were scattered throughout Asia. Because of his ministry of the testimony of Jesus Christ, John was exiled to the island of Patmos, in the Aegean Sea. It was during John's exile on the Island of Patmos that Revelation was written.

THE FIRST HALF OF REVELATION Chapters 1 - 11

SECTION 1

CHRIST'S ADDRESS TO THE CHURCHES AND OVERCOMERS

Revelation Chapter 1:1 to Chapter 3:22

Revelation Chapter 1

Rev 1:1-3

“The Revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave Him to show His servants -- things which must shortly take place. And He sent and signified it by His angel to His servant John, who bore witness to the word of God, and to the testimony of Jesus Christ, to all things that he saw. Blessed is he who reads and those who hear the words of this prophecy, and keep those things that are written in it; for the time is near.”

Verse 1 declares the origin and nature of the book. The revelation was from God - given to Christ - entrusted to His angel messenger - and revealed to John.

“things which must shortly take place” - Things relating to the church that must shortly be set in operation.

“signified it” - Vine's Expository Dictionary of Biblical Words defines *Signify* as follows - ‘*Semaino*’ - ‘Rev. 1:1’, where perhaps the suggestion is that of expressing by signs.’ This is verified by Christ’s statement in Rev 1:20 where he explains the mystery of the symbol of the lampstands. **“...the seven lampstands which you saw are the seven churches.”**

The language of Revelation is basically figurative, and therefore its contents are revealed by interpreting the various signs or symbols. Two things should be taken into account when interpreting symbols.

1. The clues to unravelling the meaning of the symbols are found in other Scriptures. In this case they are mostly in the Old Testament.
2. The meaning of symbols may vary according to the context in which they are used. For example, wine may be a symbol of joy; new life in Jesus; the blood of Jesus; the wrath of God; or the apostasies of the Harlot.

“bore witness to the word of God, and to the testimony of Jesus Christ” - John gave his witness to the word from God. The testimony of Jesus Christ is the prophetic truth of Christ presented to John by the Holy Spirit.

“Blessed is he who reads and those who hear the words of this prophecy” - A blessing is pronounced on those who read and set their hearts to understand the Book of Revelation.

“and keep those things which are written in it” - And to those who obey its instructions and heed its warnings, and so escape the pronounced judgments.

“for the time is near” - The time is near for apostasy to appear in the church, and God’s judgments to be manifested. The culmination of those judgments is at the close of the age.

Rev 1:4-6

“John, to the seven churches which are in Asia: Grace to you and peace from Him who is and who was and who is to come, and from the seven Spirits who are before His throne, and from Jesus Christ, the faithful witness, the firstborn from the dead, and the ruler over the kings of the earth. To Him who loved us and washed us from our sins in His own blood, and has made us kings and priests to His God and Father, to Him be glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen.”

“the seven churches which are in Asia” - There were more than seven churches in the province of Asia. Seven symbolizes completeness, so this address is relevant to the universal Church of all ages.

“Grace to you and peace from Him who is and who was and who is to come” - An apostolic benediction pronounced as from the eternal unchangeable LORD.

“and from the seven Spirits who are before His throne” - The benediction is also said to be directed from the presence of the “seven spirits,” or the Holy Spirit in His universal completeness.

“from Jesus Christ, the faithful witness” - He is the faithful Witness of all things to come that have been shown to Him by God.

“firstborn from the dead” - The first one resurrected with an immortal body.

“ruler over the kings of the earth” - Having universal authority and “head of all things to the Church.”

“who loved us and washed us from our sins in His own blood” - His life poured out has delivered us from the penalties associated with sin.

“has made us kings and priests to His God and Father” - Kings speaks of having Christ’s authority, but only when we are responding to His initiatives. A priest ministered God’s blessings to the people and we are entrusted with ministering to others the blessings of God, acquired for us by Jesus Christ.

Rev 1:7-8

“Behold, He is coming with clouds, and every eye will see Him, even they who pierced Him. And all the tribes of the earth will mourn because of Him. Even so, Amen. “I am the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End,” says the Lord, “who is and who was and who is to come, the Almighty.”

“He is coming with clouds” - In His ascent from earth Jesus was received in the clouds. The disciples were told that he would return in a similar manner. (Acts 1:11)

“every eye will see Him” - His miraculous return will be seen simultaneously by every person.

“all the tribes of the earth will mourn because of Him” - All who have rejected Him will mourn as His divine glory is made apparent and the realisation registers that they have rejected God’s Son and Saviour of the world.

“I am the Alpha and the Omega...and who is to come, the Almighty.” - This speaks of Christ’s divine eternal nature and the assurance of His second coming.

Rev 1:9-11

“I, John, both your brother and companion in the tribulation and kingdom and patience of Jesus Christ, was on the island that is called Patmos for the word of God and for the testimony of Jesus Christ. I was in the Spirit on the Lord's Day, and I heard behind me a loud voice, as of a trumpet saying, "I am the Alpha and the Omega, the First and the Last," and, "What you see, write in a book and send it to the seven churches which are in Asia: to Ephesus, to Smyrna, to Pergamos, to Thyatira, to Sardis, to Philadelphia, and to Laodicea.”

“John, both your brother and companion in the tribulation...for the word of God and for the testimony of Jesus Christ” - John identifies with His fellow Christians, and makes it clear that those who have the word of God and the testimony of Jesus Christ will suffer tribulation - whatever the age.

“I was in the Spirit” - The outer senses were dimmed and his spirit overshadowed by the Holy Spirit so that he was enabled to see and hear the spiritual things to be revealed to him. Being empowered by the Spirit, he was able to hear the Lord’s commands and see His revelations. He was to take careful note of all that he was shown so that he could send it to the churches listed.

“to the seven churches which are in Asia: to Ephesus, to Smyrna, to Pergamos, to Thyatira, to Sardis, to Philadelphia, and to Laodicea.” - They were not the only churches in the province of Asia. The significance of the number seven is that it represents completeness, and in this case the seven churches represent a complete overview of the universal Church, showing its good and bad characteristics throughout the ages.

Revelation 1:12-16

“Then I turned to see the voice that spoke with me. And having turned I saw seven golden lampstands, and in the midst of the seven lampstands One like the Son of Man, clothed with a garment down to the feet and girded about the chest with a golden band. His head and hair were white like wool, as white as snow, and His eyes like a flame of fire; His feet were like fine brass, as if refined in a furnace, and His voice as the sound of many waters; He had in His right hand seven stars, out of His mouth went a sharp two-edged sword, and His countenance was like the sun shining in its strength.”

“having turned I saw seven golden lampstands” - Straight away it is verified that this is a book in which truth is revealed by understanding the meaning of the symbols and visions. In verse 20, Jesus explains the meaning of the symbolic lampstands: ***“the seven lampstands which you saw are the seven churches.”***

“in the midst of the seven lampstands One like the Son of Man” - The presence of Jesus is shown to be in the midst of the churches, not like the Person who John saw on earth, but now the glorified Lord.

“clothed with a garment down to the feet” - The garment signifies His priesthood, and it going down to His feet marks His high rank - as Lord of lords and King of kings.

“girded about the chest with a golden band” - The golden band signifies God’s presence in Him.

“His head and hair were white like wool, as white as snow” - Signifying His absolute purity.

“His eyes like a flame of fire” - Fire symbolises judgment. As the Judge of all mankind He has penetrating insight, knowing the hearts of all men.

“His feet were like fine brass” - Brass is also a symbol of judgment as in the brass altar for sacrificial offerings. Jesus is the righteous Judge.

“His voice as the sound of many waters” - Also in (Ezekiel 43:2) - ***“His voice was like the sound of many waters.”*** - In both the Hebrew and Greek, the word for ‘voice’ and ‘sound’ are the same word, and so the phrase may be translated, ***“His voice as the voice of many waters,”*** instead of ***“sounds like many waters.”***

Water is a symbol of the word (Jn 15:3, Eph 5:26), and so His voice as of many waters is the voice of all spiritual knowledge, truth, and revelation. It is by the truth that His enemies are defeated. This leads to the statement,

“out of His mouth went a sharp two-edged sword” - Obviously this is not a literal sword it is the sword of truth as in (Heb 4:12) ***“the word of God (spiritual truth) is living and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword.”*** The truth is revealed as He presents it to His prophets and teachers.

“He had in His right hand seven stars” - Jesus reveals in Verse 20 that the seven stars are the seven angels or messengers of the seven churches.

In the early Church there were no denominations, and churches were known by their locality, as in the Church at Ephesus, or the Church at Pergamos. An angel was appointed by the Lord to watch over the Church, with its local fellowships, in each city. The literal meaning of ‘angel’ is *messenger*, and so the main task of the angel was to provide direction from the Lord through the Holy Spirit to each Church.

A person, such as an elder, was selected and anointed by the Lord to receive and pass on the directions from the Holy Spirit. In this respect the elder could be seen as a ‘messenger,’ which may be more appropriate to the Lord’s command to John, ***“to the angel of the church of Ephesus write,”*** and so on to the rest of the Churches.

“His countenance was like the sun shining in its strength” - In Him there is no darkness of deceit, or sin, or duplicity whatsoever. When the glory of the Lord re-enters the church, ***“the Sun of Righteousness shall arise with healing in His wings”*** (Mal 4:2)

Rev 1:17

“And when I saw Him, I fell at His feet as dead. But He laid His right hand on me, saying to me, “Do not be afraid; I am the First and the Last. I am He who lives, and was dead, and behold, I am alive forevermore. Amen. And I have the keys of Hades and of Death. Write the things which you have seen, and the things which are, and the things which will take place after this.”

“when I saw Him, I fell at His feet as dead” - John was so overwhelmed by the vision of the splendour of the Lord that he fell to the ground. John was strengthened by the touch of the Lord, who then repeated His instruction to ***“write the things which you have seen, and the things which are, and the things which will take place after this.”*** The events that were about to take place were relevant to the time of John’s writing, and to all stages of the churches’ history.

“I have the keys of Hades and of Death” - Jesus has the keys of authority over Hades, the abode of the dead, and Death. He has the right of judgment and destiny of all who pass through the ‘gates of death.’

Rev 1:20

“The mystery of the seven stars which you saw in My right hand, and the seven golden lampstands: The seven stars are the angels of the seven churches, and the seven lampstands which you saw are the seven churches.”

As previously explained, the lampstands are the churches, and the stars the angels who have the responsibility of receiving and passing on the Lord’s directives to the church.

Revelation Chapter 2.

Chapters 2 & 3 outline Jesus’ address to seven of the churches in the province of Asia. These churches existed at the time of John’s writing, and these warnings and commendations were directed by Jesus to literal churches, and were given for their understanding and future welfare.

Some people surmise that these churches are also indicative of the state of the universal Church in seven stages of her history. For instance, Ephesus is a picture of the first stage, and Laodecia of the end time church, and the others associated with historical periods in between. Whilst this may be true, any of the symptoms described may apply to any one church or period throughout history. In general, this section may be summarised as Christ’s warning to current churches, and those to come.

To the Church at Ephesus

Rev 2:1-6

“To the angel of the church of Ephesus write, 'These things says He who holds the seven stars in His right hand, who walks in the midst of the seven golden lampstands: 'I know your works, your labour, your patience, and that you cannot bear those who are evil. And you have tested those who say they are apostles and are not, and have found them liars; and you have persevered and have patience, and have laboured for My name's sake and have not become weary. Nevertheless I have this against you, that you have left your first love. Remember therefore from where you have fallen; repent and do the first works, or else I will come to you quickly and remove your lampstand from its place-- unless you repent. But this you have, that you hate the deeds of the Nicolaitans, which I also hate.”

Ephesus was one of the major cities of Asia Minor, and was famed for the pagan temple of Dianna. Paul ministered there for three years, then Timothy, and finally it was John's centre of operation.

“These things says He who holds the seven stars in His right hand” - He watches over the ones entrusted with passing on His directives to the churches. Holding them in His right hand indicates His faithfulness to uphold and protect them in their ministry.

“who walks in the midst of the seven golden lampstands” - His Spirit is constantly in the midst of the affairs of His church.

“your patience...you have persevered...have laboured for My name's sake and have not become weary” - The Ephesian church is commended for its good works patience, perseverance and endurance which are precious traits in the Lord's sight.

“you cannot bear those who are evil. And you have tested those who say they are apostles and are not, and have found them liars” - Paul says, ***“have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather expose them.”*** (Eph 5:11) We must be careful about judging personalities, and moral character, but works, doctrines, and ministries should be tested and judged. That is why the Lord commended the Ephesians for testing and exposing the ministries of false apostles. The need to test false apostles is just as relevant today, as there are many false claims of apostleship in our midst.

“you hate the deeds of the Nicolaitans” - The Nicolaitans opposed the tenants of the law by supporting a doctrine of moral freedom that in reality was self-indulgent and licentious.

“you have left your first love” - Their first works proceeded out of the love of the Lord, and His love was manifested in them and through them. Paul warned the Corinthians that works without the love of the Lord were ineffective and futile.

“Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, but have not love, I have become sounding brass or a clanging cymbal. And though I have the gift of prophecy, and understand all mysteries and all knowledge, and though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, but have not love, I am nothing. And though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, and though I give my body to be burned, but have not love, it profits me nothing.” (1 Cor 13:1-3)

The leaving behind of their first love, which was the main feature of their new life in Christ, was treated by the Lord so seriously that He warned, ***“I will come to you quickly and remove your lampstand from its place.”*** i.e. remove its spiritual warranty and His abiding presence, resulting in deadness and final extinction as a true church.

Message to the Overcomers

At the bottom of each of the seven addresses to the churches there is a section in which the Holy Spirit outlines the special blessings He will bestow on ***“he who overcomes.”*** Here is a brief summary of these blessings which will be expanded in the address to the churches.

To the church of Ephesus - ***“to eat from the tree of life.”*** (Rev 2:7)

To the church of Smyrna - ***“they shall not be hurt by the second death.”*** (Rev 2:11)

To the church of Pergamos - ***“I will give some of the hidden manna to eat. And I will give him a white stone, and on the stone a new name.”*** (Rev 2:17)

To the church of Thyatira - ***“I will give power over the nations...and I will give him the morning star.”*** (Rev 2:26-28)

To the church of Sardis - ***“He ...shall be clothed in white garments, and I will not blot out his name from the Book of Life”*** (Rev 3:5)

To the church of Philadelphia - ***“He who overcomes, I will make him a pillar in the temple of My God, and he shall go out no more. And I will write on him the name of My God and the name of the city of My God, the New Jerusalem, which comes down out of heaven from My God. And I will write on him My new name.”*** (Rev 3:12)

To the church of Laodicea - ***“To him who overcomes I will grant to sit with Me on My throne, as I also overcame and sat down with My Father on His throne.”*** (Rev 3:21)

When we examine the nature and extent of these blessings we conclude that

- (i) The blessings granted to the overcomers progressively increase as the degree to which they overcome increases.
- (ii) Those who overcome to the degree that they are pillars in the temple of God, have written on them the name of God, Christ, and New Jerusalem or Christ's Bride, and who share the authority of Christ's throne, are a comparatively small group of individuals within the church.
- (iii) These blessings are bestowed on those who overcome in this lifetime.

Each pronouncement of blessing is preceded by the condition, ***“to him who overcomes.”*** Overcoming precedes the blessing. To receive the blessings we must gain the victory over sin, over the world, and over the devil.

The Overcomer's Blessing

The first promise to the overcomers follows Christ's address to the Ephesian church: ***“He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. To him who***

overcomes I will give to eat from the tree of life, which is in the midst of the Paradise of God.” (Rev 2:7).

“to eat from the tree of life” - Many suppose this means to be partakers of eternal life after death. But that is the lot of all Christians. The overcomers walk in victory on earth, and are blessed by the Spirit here on earth. Jesus is the tree of life.

“the life was manifested, and we have seen, and bear witness, and declare to you that eternal life which was with the Father and was manifested to us.” (I Jn 1:2)

When we walk according to the spirit and not the flesh, we are in union with the Lord Jesus and consequently partakers of His life. ***“And this is the testimony: that God has given us eternal life, and this life is in His Son. He who has the Son has life; he who does not have the Son of God does not have life.”*** (I Jn 5:11-12)

To the Church at Smyrna

Rev 2:8-10

“And to the angel of the church in Smyrna write, 'These things says the First and the Last, who was dead, and came to life: "I know your works, tribulation, and poverty (but you are rich); and I know the blasphemy of those who say they are Jews and are not, but are a synagogue of Satan." Do not fear any of those things which you are about to suffer. Indeed, the devil is about to throw some of you into prison, that you may be tested, and you will have tribulation ten days. Be faithful until death, and I will give you the crown of life.”

Smyrna was situated in western Asia Minor, and because of its natural harbour, it became a commercial city of importance and wealth. Realising the rising power of Rome, the city leaders built a pagan temple in BC 195, and in BC 23, Smyrna was chosen for the site of a temple dedicated to worship of the Emperor Tiberius. Consequently the city became the centre of the cult of emperor worship. Polycarp was martyred there in AD 168. These facts explain the references to the ***“synagogue of Satan,”*** and ***“you will have tribulation ten days.”***

“These things says the First and the Last, who was dead, and came to life” - These were words of comfort to those facing severe persecution - that death had no power over them.

“I know your works, tribulation, and poverty (but you are rich)” - They are assured that their persecution is not unnoticed. Most likely they were poverty stricken because their goods had been plundered. But they are assured that they were in truth rich - rich in God’s grace and favour, and the promise of eternal life.

“I know the blasphemy of those who say they are Jews and are not” - They were Jews by national descent, but not true Jews, circumcised in the heart. They continued to blaspheme Christ and His disciples.

“but are a synagogue of Satan” - They continued to practice religion in a synagogue, but Christ refers to them as ‘a synagogue of Satan.’ When Polycarp was martyred, it was the Jews who most urgently cried out for his death.

“Do not fear any of those things which you are about to suffer” - Echoing Christ’s words, ***“do not fear those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. But rather fear Him who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell.”*** (Matt 10:28) - They were assured that their salvation was intact.

“the devil is about to throw some of you into prison” - Satan would use those under his power - as his instruments - most likely the Jews referred to as ‘the Synagogue of Satan.’

“that you may be tested” - Their faith may be proven to be from God, and that it may be a witness to all.

“you will have tribulation ten days” - Not a literal time, but a short but complete time for God’s purposes.

The Overcomer’s Blessing

“He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. He who overcomes shall not be hurt by the second death.” (Rev 2:11)

What is ***“the second death”***? In Revelation 21, we read, ***“But the cowardly, unbelieving, abominable, murderers, sexually immoral, sorcerers, idolaters, and all liars shall have their part in the lake which burns with fire and brimstone, which is the second death.”*** (Rev 21:8)

The Revelation term ***‘the lake of fire’*** is a symbol for God's eternal judgment, and its associated term ***‘second death’*** describes the outcome of the judgment. The second death is a total separation from God and dwelling in the kingdom of Satan and under the control of his hosts of wickedness and darkness.

The promise that they will not be hurt by the second death also assures them that they will not succumb to Satan’s attempts to deprive them of their salvation, and God’s heavenly blessings.

To the Church at Pergamos

Rev 2:12-16

“And to the angel of the church in Pergamos write, 'These things says He who has the sharp two-edged sword: "I know your works, and where you dwell, where Satan's throne is. And you hold fast to My name, and did not deny My faith even in the days in which Antipas was My faithful martyr, who was killed among you, where Satan dwells. "But I have a few things against you, because you have there those who hold the doctrine of Balaam, who taught Balak to put a stumbling block before the children of Israel, to eat things sacrificed to idols, and to commit sexual immorality. "Thus you also (like the Ephesians) have those who hold the doctrine of the Nicolaitans, which thing I hate. 'Repent, or else I will come to you quickly and will fight against them with the sword of My mouth.”

“He who has the sharp two-edged sword” - The sword of truth which was able to -

1. Convict to repentance.
2. Condemn to judgment.

After commending them for their faithfulness under persecution, they were warned of apostasy in their midst, and their need to repent.

“you dwell, where Satan's throne is” - Pergamos was an important religious and political centre which became the Roman capital in the province of Asia. Jesus said that they lived where “Satan's throne is” because it had many temples where pagan gods were worshipped. For instance it had a temple for the worship of Zeus, Athena, Dionysos, for the healing god Escupapius, and one for the worship of Augustus Ceasar.

“there those who hold the doctrine of Balaam” - Balaam was hired by Balak to curse the Israelites, but by God’s intervention, he blessed them instead. It is thought that as a consolation, Balaam showed Balak another way to weaken Israel - by encouraging the cohabitation of the men of Israel with the women of Moab. It is likely that those in Pergamos who were following the doctrine of Balaam were a group of anti-law practitioners who supported a doctrine of liberty and became self-indulgence and immoral.

Paul said to the Galatians: ***“For you, brethren, have been called to liberty; only do not use liberty as an opportunity for the flesh, but through love serve one another. For all the law is fulfilled in one word, even in this: “You shall love your neighbour as yourself.”*** (Gal 5:13-14)

“to put a stumbling block before the children of Israel, to eat things sacrificed to idols, and to commit sexual immorality” - In a wider sense, to eat things sacrificed to idols is to participate in things under the control of demons - things like yoga, martial arts, embracing tokens of pagan heritage, participating in lying signs and wonders, introducing worldly activities into meetings to attract members, to name just a few. Committing sexual immorality is seen in the growing liberality of the modern church, where those engaged in homosexuality, de facto relationships, fornication and adultery are often accepted into the fellowship.

“Thus you also have those who hold the doctrine of the Nicolaitans” - Thus, or because of what precedes (Balaam), they heeded the teaching of the Nicolaitans. The overall trend was fleshly indulgence, or hanging on to the desires of the flesh. A key to the overcoming life is the willingness to give up one's self-life to the death.

“Repent, or else I will come to you quickly and will fight against them with the sword of My mouth” - The whole church is commanded to repent or dissociate themselves from fleshly indulgence. Otherwise the Lord will pronounce truth and execute judgment.

The Overcomer's Blessing

“To him who overcomes I will give some of the hidden manna to eat. And I will give him a white stone, and on the stone a new name written which no one knows except him who receives it.” (Rev 2:16-17)

The blessings associated with the third promise to the overcomers speak of entering into a personal relationship with the Lord.

“I will give some of the hidden manna to eat” - Manna is our spiritual food - the word of God that is given for life. Hidden manna speaks of hidden revelations that will be opened to these overcomers.

“I will give him a white stone” - A white stone called a tesserae, inscribed with the recipient's name, was given to victors in games. It was a token of lifelong favour. Another white stone called a tesserae hospitales, was given to another as a token of lifelong friendship and hospitality. These tesserae illustrate the essence of the personal blessings granted to the recipients of the white stone. The new name written which no one knows except him who receives it, speaks of personal intimacy. It does not refer to a literal name, but a new and personal relationship with the Lord.

To the Church at Thyatira

Rev 2:18-25

“And to the angel of the church in Thyatira write, 'These things says the Son of God, who has eyes like a flame of fire, and His feet like fine brass:' I know your works, love, service, faith, and your patience; and as for your works, the last are more than the first. 'Nevertheless I have a few things against you, because you allow that woman Jezebel, who calls herself a prophetess, to teach and seduce My servants to commit sexual immorality and eat things sacrificed to idols.' And I gave her time to repent of her sexual immorality, and she did not repent. 'Indeed I will cast her into a sickbed, and those who commit adultery with her into great tribulation, unless they repent of their deeds.' I will kill her children with death, and all the churches shall know that I am He who searches the minds and hearts. And I will give to each one of you according to your works. 'Now to you I say, and to the rest in Thyatira, as many as do not have this doctrine, who have not known the depths of Satan, as they say, I will put on you no other burden.' But hold fast what you have till I come.”

“eyes like a flame of fire, and His feet like fine brass” - This again speaks of Christ's penetrating insight leading to judgment.

“I know your works, love, service, faith, and your patience; and as for your works, the last are more than the first.” - The Church at Thyratira is commended for its patient endurance and works.

“you allow that woman Jezebel, who calls herself a prophetess, to teach and seduce My servants to commit sexual immorality and eat things sacrificed to idols.” - The Church at Thyratira is condemned for permitting spiritual witchcraft, addressed here as Jezebel, after the pattern of King Ahab's wife who usurped her husband's authority, to be accepted in their midst. (1 Kings 21:5)

Spiritual witchcraft in women is a compulsive desire to control and manipulate others. Such a woman usually usurps her husband's authority as head of the family, and takes on positions with illegitimate spiritual authority. People without understanding are seduced into submitting to her control.

Christ's warning, which is just as relevant today, concerns women who wave the banner of equality, enticing other women to seek authoritative positions without having the legitimate authority to do so.

The reference to sexual immorality and eating things sacrificed to idols refers to spiritual adultery, or pursuing doctrines or practices emanating from the seducing spirits of Satan.

“I gave her time to repent of her sexual immorality, and she did not repent.” - God gives everyone time to repent and never exercises His judgment until He has revealed their wrongdoing by the Spirit.

“Indeed I will cast her into a sickbed, and those who commit adultery with her into great tribulation, unless they repent of their deeds.” - In explaining the necessity of a wife's submission to her husband, Paul writes ***“For this reason the woman ought to have a symbol of authority on her head, because of the angels.”*** (1 Cor 11:10-11) The words “a symbol of” have been added by translators. The original reading stated, “A woman should have authority on her head, that is, she should have the covering of her husband's headship. God has a ‘hedge’ of protection around His children, and has appointed His angels to guard and keep them. Without the covering of her husband's authority, the protection of the angels is removed, and she is vulnerable to attacks from Satan's spirits, which may result in all manner of tribulation, suffering and sickness.

“I will kill her children with death,” - Christ's warning is stern. Because those who have submitted to the control of overbearing women they have no legitimate headship, they have no covering and are therefore prey to attacks from demon spirits of sickness and death. The death here probably refers to spiritual death by losing their access to the life of Jesus.

“I am He who searches the minds and hearts. And I will give to each one of you according to your works.” - God' knows the thoughts and intents of our hearts and his judgments are measured with justice and righteousness.

“Now to you I say, and to the rest in Thyatira, as many as do not have this doctrine” - Are those who do not hold to, or have contact with this doctrine or the practice of female headship, which is akin to witchcraft.

“who have not known (been involved with) the depths (deeper Satanic practice) of Satan as they (others) say” - Some others even boasted of their deeper spiritual understanding of Satanic arts and practices.

“I will put on you no other burden” - For those who have not sought after the deeper knowledge of Satan and spiritual warfare Jesus tells them that they are not bound to do so. They are told to,

“hold fast what you have” - Or the spiritual truths that they have attained.

The Overcomer's Blessing

“And he who overcomes, and keeps My works until the end, to him I will give power over the nations-- 'He shall rule them with a rod of iron; they shall be dashed to pieces like the

potter's vessels'-- as I also have received from My Father; and I will give him the morning star.” (Rev 2:26-28).

“keeps My works until the end” - The Lord's personal charge - the works He commands of us.

“I will give power over the nations” - Authority over those opposed to the work.

He shall rule (Gk: 'poimaino' to shepherd) **them”** - To take authority over them and govern them as a shepherd.

“with a rod (sceptre) of iron” - Iron speaks of uncompromising authority.

“they shall be dashed to pieces like the potter's vessels” - The Lord will direct His servants in authoritative prayer to utterly destroy their opposing strength.

“as I also have received from My Father” - God has decreed that all nations will be subjected to the Lord. (Psalm 2:8-9)

“I will give him the morning star” - The morning star is a name given to Jesus, but points in particular to His glory. The overcomers will reflect the glory of His indwelling life.

Revelation Chapter 3

To the Church at Sardis

Rev 3:1-4

“I know your works, that you have a name that you are alive, but you are dead. "Be watchful, and strengthen the things which remain, that are ready to die, for I have not found your works perfect before God. "Remember therefore how you have received and heard; hold fast and repent. Therefore if you will not watch, I will come upon you as a thief, and you will not know what hour I will come upon you. "You have a few names even in Sardis who have not defiled their garments; and they shall walk with Me in white, for they are worthy.”

Sardis was the capital of ancient Lydia, a province of Asia Minor.

“you have a name that you are alive, but you are dead” - This condemnation equally applies to some modern churches that seek the power of the Holy Spirit with accompanying signs and wonders, whilst neglecting the solid teaching of the power of the cross and the risen Lord Jesus Christ. They are full of fleshly activity and displays of ‘spirituality’ in their worship. But underneath they are spiritually dead.

“Be watchful” - Take stock of yourselves. This warning is particularly relevant to elders who have the responsibility of oversight and teaching.

“strengthen the things which remain, that are ready to die” - Strengthen the solid teaching of the Spirit that is threatened with being overcome by the flesh.

“Remember therefore how you have received and heard; hold fast and repent.” - The foundational truth was presented to them by apostles, evangelists and teachers from the Lord. They are told to repent and return to the foundational truth presented to them.

“Therefore if you will not watch, I will come upon you as a thief, and you will not know what hour I will come upon you.” - This is a constant warning to all believers and presented often by Jesus in His parables.

“You have a few names even in Sardis who have not defiled their garments” - God usually preserves a remnant who remain faithful to the word, and so some have not submitted to the apostasy in their midst.

“they shall walk with Me in white” - Jesus will draw them into Himself and maintain their integrity and righteousness.

The Overcomer's Blessing

“He who overcomes shall be clothed in white garments, and I will not blot out his name from the Book of Life; but I will confess his name before My Father and before His angels.” (Rev 3:5)

“be clothed in white garments” - This is not the imputed righteousness ascribed to all Christians. The righteousness of Christ will be manifested through these overcomers as in Rev 19:8, ***“And to her it was granted to be arrayed in fine linen, clean and bright, for the fine linen is the righteous acts of the saints.”***

“I will not blot out his name from the Book of Life” - Salvation is not a guarantee of eternal life in God. Some lose their salvation by ‘falling away’ into sin, and not holding fast to their confession of faith to the end. To these overcomers, it is granted that their salvation cannot be negated.

“but I will confess his name before My Father and before His angels” - “but” means instead. Instead of blotting their name out, Jesus will confess their name before God and His angels. To confess his name is to acknowledge them in all their circumstances as His disciples. When they pray to the Father, they will have behind them the weight of Jesus' name. They will know the protection of God's angels.

To the Church at Philadelphia

Rev 3:7-11

“And to the angel of the church in Philadelphia write, 'These things says He who is holy, He who is true, 'He who has the key of David, He who opens and no one shuts, and shuts and no one opens': 'I know your works. See, I have set before you an open door, and no one can shut it; for you have a little strength, have kept My word, and have not denied My name. 'Indeed I will make those of the synagogue of Satan, who say they are Jews and are not, but lie-- indeed I will make them come and worship before your feet, and to know that I have loved you.' Because you have kept My command to persevere, I also will keep you from the hour of trial which shall come upon the whole world, to test those

who dwell on the earth. "Behold, I am coming quickly! Hold fast what you have, that no one may take your crown."

"who has the key of David" - The key speaks of authority. As David exercised authority over Israel as their king, so Jesus as The Messiah will reign over spiritual Israel, or the Church.

"who opens and no one shuts, and shuts and no one opens" - The decision concerning who is to enter His kingdom is exclusively the Lord's, who opens and closes the doors to all ministries.

"I have set before you an open door, and no one can shut It" - Philadelphia was known as "the missionary church", because of its efforts in spreading Christianity despite opposition from the Jews. Christ has set before them an open door of opportunity for evangelism.

"you have a little strength, have kept My word, and have not denied My name." (Strength is 'dunamis' or inherent spiritual empowerment). - They only had a measure of strength but this did not impede their missionary efforts by manifesting Christ's name and presenting His word. Their main foes were Jews who claimed to have God's favour, but in reality were under the power of Satan. Christ tells His faithful church that He will bring their opponents to repentance and subjection.

"Because you have kept My command to persevere" - We are also encouraged to stand firm in our trials.

"I also will keep you (safe) from the hour of trial which shall come upon the whole world, to test those who dwell on the earth" - Some use this reference to falsely support their claim that the Church will be raptured before the tribulation period that is to encompass the whole world. But this reading declares the Church will be confronted with the tribulation, but the Church at Philadelphia (which still exists) will be kept safe in this hour of testing.

"that no one may take your crown" - As in the garland given to the victor in the games - let no one deprive you of your crown of eternal life in Jesus Christ.

The Overcomer's Blessing

"He who overcomes, I will make him a pillar in the temple of My God, and he shall go out no more. And I will write on him the name of My God and the name of the city of My God, the New Jerusalem, which comes down out of heaven from My God. And I will write on him My new name." (Rev 3:12)

"a pillar in the temple of My God" - He will have a position of authority and strength in the Church - a support for its members.

"and he shall go out no more" - His loyalty will not be compromised by the world or the flesh. He will be exclusively the Lord's, and their relationship will not be broken.

"And I will write on him the name of My God" - He will receive the seal of God denoting that he is the exclusive property of God the Father.

“the name of the city of My God, the New Jerusalem” - The New Jerusalem is the Bride of Christ, and he will become part of the Bride.

“I will write on him My new name” - His name represents His attributes. The overcomers will know God’s refining hand and Christ’s attributes will be formed in them.

“which comes down out of heaven from My God.” - We shall see in the twelfth section, ‘The Bride Of Christ’ that God undertakes the work of refinement necessary to bring people into the status of the Bride.

To the Church at Laodicia

Rev 3:14-20

“And to the angel of the church of the Laodiceans write, 'These things says the Amen, the Faithful and True Witness, the Beginning of the creation of God: "I know your works, that you are neither cold nor hot. I could wish you were cold or hot. "So then, because you are lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will vomit you out of My mouth. "Because you say, 'I am rich, have become wealthy, and have need of nothing'-- and do not know that you are wretched, miserable, poor, blind, and naked-- "I counsel you to buy from Me gold refined in the fire, that you may be rich; and white garments, that you may be clothed, that the shame of your nakedness may not be revealed; and anoint your eyes with eye salve, that you may see. As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten. Therefore be zealous and repent. "Behold, I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears My voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and dine with him, and he with Me.”

Laodicea was situated about 50 miles south of Philadelphia on a major trade route, and was known for its manufacturing and banking operations. Christ extended to her no commendation whatsoever - only reproach for her luke-warmness. Laodicia represents the worldly, materialistic, unbelieving church of all ages, but points particularly to with the end-time church.

“These things says the Amen, the Faithful and True Witness,” - Jesus is the faithful witness of all things shown to Him by God.

“the Beginning of the creation of God - the Amen” - Christ is called the Beginning of the creation of God because He was the instrument God used in the creation process. He is the Amen because He is the fulfilment of all things.

“you are neither cold nor hot...you are lukewarm” - Luke warmness means to be settled in a comfortable, stagnant, unchallenging state - compromising with the world, expressing moral liberality, never seeking deeper truth in controversial topics like hell, Revelation, Millennialism, spiritual authority - avoiding uncomfortable issues like the path of the cross and refinement through suffering - having the Spirit, but untouchable to the Spirit - content with the trappings of the worldly church and their own spiritual state. This condition was so odious to the Lord that He warned that He was about to spew them out of His mouth if they did not repent.

“I could wish you were cold or hot” - To be cold is to be unsaved and untouched by the gospel truth. To be hot is to have an overheated spiritual fervour that is open to error and acceptance of lying signs and wonders. The Lord is able to 'touch' these people and bring about a change in their hearts. But the lukewarm are so spiritually entrenched and self-satisfied that they are virtually untouchable.

“I will (lit: am about to) vomit (reject with disgust) you out of My mouth” - Unless they repent, they will be rejected as a church under His control - guided by the Spirit. Individually they will lose their spiritual position 'in Him,' and He in them. Ultimately, if there is no repentance, their salvation is very much in jeopardy.

“Because you say, 'I am rich, have become wealthy, and have need of nothing” - Contentment with worldly affluence and pleasures has dulled their spiritual senses.

“do not know that you are wretched” - Do not know that you have been afflicted by the power of Satan to the end that you have lost your spiritual inheritance.

“Miserable” - To be pitied

“poor, blind” - Spiritually and mentally blind to the fact that you are spiritually bankrupt, destitute of Christian virtues, and powerless to accomplish anything.

“and naked” - Because they are spiritually content, they don't even have the robe of righteousness. The Lord implores them to -

“buy from Me”- Spiritual riches are not attained without cost - in this case, they should be prepared to give up their self-sufficiency and the trappings of the 'old man.'

“gold refined in the fire” - Gold is a symbol of our new life in Christ, or His life manifested in us. A prerequisite to this is the purging out of the fleshly demands associated with the 'old man' by the Spirit, through suffering. In reality Jesus is saying to embark on the path of the cross.

“white garments, that you may be clothed” - Being content with attending the worldly church regularly had made them complacent and self-satisfied. They did not see their true spiritual state and their need for the constant application of the blood of Jesus over their lives. They needed the robe of the Lord's imputed righteousness.

“that the shame of your nakedness may not be revealed” - Spiritual nakedness is a state where our sins are not covered. They are not put behind God's back.

“anoint your eyes with eye salve, that you may see” - An eye salve was produced in Laodicea, but Jesus is saying to them to be anointed by the Spirit, so that their blind spiritual eyes may be opened, and they may be made able to walk in paths of truth.

“As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten. Therefore be zealous and repent” - Having rebuked them sharply, the Lord now offers comfort and assurance. He will receive them if they are earnest in repentance.

“Behold, I stand at the door and knock” - He is knocking at the door of their hearts, appealing to them to invite Him in - a timeless invitation to all Christians.

“If anyone hears My voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and dine with him, and he with Me” - Dining is used as a symbol of close two-way personal fellowship.

The Overcomer's Blessing

Rev 3:21

“To him who overcomes I will grant to sit with Me on My throne, as I also overcame and sat down with My Father on His throne.”

The goal of our spiritual pilgrimage is to know such total union with Jesus, and acceptance by God, that we are trusted with the power and authority that Jesus received from the Father.

SECTION 2

VISION OF GODS THRONE

Revelation Chapter 4:1 to Chapter 5:14

Revelation Chapter 4

Rev 4:1-11

“After these things I looked, and behold, a door standing open in heaven. And the first voice which I heard was like a trumpet speaking with me, saying, “Come up here, and I will show you things which must take place after this.” Immediately I was in the Spirit; and behold, a throne set in heaven, and One sat on the throne. And He who sat there was like a jasper and a sardius stone in appearance; and there was a rainbow around the throne, in appearance like an emerald. Around the throne were twenty-four thrones, and on the thrones I saw twenty-four elders sitting, clothed in white robes; and they had crowns of gold on their heads. And from the throne proceeded lightnings, thunderings, and voices. Seven lamps of fire were burning before the throne, which are the seven Spirits of God. Before the throne there was a sea of glass, like crystal. And in the midst of the throne, and around the throne, were four living creatures full of eyes in front and in back. The first living creature was like a lion, the second living creature like a calf, the third living creature had a face like a man, and the fourth living creature was like a flying eagle. The four living creatures, each having six wings, were full of eyes around and within. And they do not rest day or night, saying: “Holy, holy, holy, lord God Almighty, who was and is and is to come!” Whenever the living creatures give glory and honour and thanks to Him who sits on the throne, who lives forever and ever, the twenty-four elders fall down before Him who sits on the throne and worship Him who lives forever and ever, and cast their crowns before the throne, saying “You are worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honour and power; for You created all things, and by Your will they exist and were created.”

The letter to the churches was preceded by a vision of Christ standing in the midst of the lampstands, which represented the seven churches. His general appearance was said to be “*like the Son of man,*” and in the vision that followed His physical features were portrayed with symbolic likenesses. E.g. “*His eyes like a flame of fire; His feet were like fine brass.*”

Chapter 4 is an introduction to the opening of the seven seals and revelation of things to come, and it is appropriate that it too should be preceded by a vision of God who orders and controls the future. Whereas the vision of Christ as “*the Son of man*” used physical features in its description, this is not the case in the description of God, who is a Spirit Being who “*no one has seen...at any time.*” (John 1:18). Here He is described as a form without reference to physical features. His attributes are portrayed by symbolic objects and beings around His throne.

The scene is introduced by this very important statement, “*Come up here, and I will show you things which must take place after this.*” The seals, the trumpets, and the pre-advent

judgments, reveal things that are to happen to the church - not just during the tribulation, but the whole period from the sending forth of the gospel message, until the Final Judgment.

Being anointed by the Spirit so that he could see the vision, John saw One seated on the throne. He is described in symbolic terms. ***“He who sat there was like a jasper and a sardius stone in appearance; and there was a rainbow around the throne, in appearance like an emerald...”***

“Jasper” - Jasper is a bright transparent stone which portrays Gods absolute purity.

“sardius stone” - Sardius is a fiery red stone representing His justice and judgments.

“Rainbow” - The rainbow around the throne reminds us that He is a covenant keeping God.

“twenty-four thrones--twenty-four elders--clothed in white robes--crowns of gold on their heads” - The twenty four elders have their origin in the twelve patriarchs and the twelve apostles, and so represent Christians who have been converted from both Mosaic and Gentile traditions, and therefore symbolise the Universal Church. Their closeness to the throne, their white robes, their thrones, and crowns, indicate that these represent the sanctified glorified church, who are kings and priests to God. Their whole demeanour is one of homage, praise and worship of Almighty God.

“from the throne proceeded lightnings, thunderings, and voices” - These things remind us of the awesome power and invincibility of God and that He is to be revered and glorified in His judgments.

“seven lamps of fire were burning before the throne, which are the seven Spirits of God” - This again represents the complete perfection of the penetrating knowledge of the Holy Spirit.

“Before the throne there was a sea of glass, like crystal” - The sea of glass represents the holiness of God which separates Him from His created beings. In Revelation 15:2, those who had gained the victory over the beast, his mark, and the number of his name, are actually standing on the sea of glass - showing their progression on the pathway to holiness.

“in the midst of the throne, and around the throne, were four living creatures” - Their position in the midst of the throne and around the throne, tells us that they are closely associated with God Himself. They portray some of His attributes He exhibited through Jesus Christ.

“full of eyes in front and in back” - He is the all-seeing, all-knowing God, perfect in knowledge and truth.

“The first living creature was like a lion” - As king of the beasts, the lion represents dominion, authority, and strength. Later in Revelation, Jesus is called, ***“the Lion of the tribe of Judah.”*** (Rev 5:5) God is supreme ruler, and none can thwart His purposes.

“the second living creature like a calf” - The Greek word 'moschos' is usually translated 'a bullock,' or in the Septuagint, 'an ox.' The ox symbolises patient enduring service. Jesus said of Himself, ***“the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many.”*** (Matt 20:28).

“the third living creature had a face like a man” - It pleased Jesus to recognise His humanity, often calling Himself ***“the Son of man.”*** And now, in His risen state as both ***“Son of man,”*** and ***“Son of God,”*** He is well qualified to act as our High Priest before the throne of God. ***“For we do not have a High Priest who cannot sympathise with our weaknesses, but was in all points tempted as we are, yet without sin.”*** (Heb 4:15)

“the fourth living creature was like a flying eagle” - Not just an eagle, a flying eagle. This represents the penetrating insight of the Spirit and His rapid discharge of God’s commands. In the Old Testament, the eagle is also used as a symbol of God's speedy care and divine protection. ***“You have seen how I bore you on eagles' wings.”*** (EXO. 19:4) ***“As an eagle stirs up her nest, flutters over her young, spreads abroad her wings, takes them, bears them on her wings: so the Lord alone did lead him,”*** (Deut. 32:11-12)

“each having six wings, were full of eyes around and within” - This showing God's eternal vigilance in watching over His children, and the speed with which His divine commands are executed.

“And they do not rest day or night, saying: "Holy, holy, holy, lord God Almighty, who was and is and is to come!” - These beings who minister to God day and night have a demeanour of continual praise and worship.

“Whenever (or while) the living creatures give glory...the twenty-four elders fall down before Him who sits on the throne and worship Him...and cast their crowns before the throne...saying. "You are worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honour and power; for You created all things, and by Your will they exist and were created” - God's attributes continually glorify His name, and this evokes a response from His glorified church. Those designated to be “the Bride of Christ” have a perpetual heart attitude of thanksgiving, praise, worship, and consecration.

SECTION 3

THE OPENING OF THE FIRST SIX SEALS

Revelation Chapter 5:1 to Chapter 7:17

Revelation Chapter 5

Rev 5:1-1

“And I saw in the right hand of Him who sat on the throne a scroll written inside and on the back, sealed with seven seals.”

At the start of Chapter 4, the Lord told John, **“Come up here, and I will show you things which must take place after this.”** (Rev 4:1) He had just been shown the present state of the church. Now he was told that he would be shown things or occurrences that would **“take place after this”** - that is, involving the church throughout its history, from the going forth of the gospel until the time of the last judgment. It should not be assumed that the occurrences portrayed by the opening of the seals are in chronological order. Some are concurrent, or overlapping with others.

“a scroll written inside and on the back, sealed with seven seals” - Seven symbolises completeness - not that this is a revelation of all knowledge, but that the seven seals represent seven disclosures covering the whole history of the Church age. That they are written on the front and back shows us that there is nothing lacking in the disclosures.

Rev 5:2

“Then I saw a strong angel proclaiming with a loud voice, “Who is worthy to open the scroll and to loose its seals?”

John was much aggrieved that no one was counted worthy to unseal the future of the church. Then an elder, or representative of the church for whose benefit these revelations of the future were to be disclosed, tells him that there is One who has the authority to open the seals. **“Do not weep. Behold, the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, has prevailed to open the scroll and to loose its seven seals.”** (Rev 5:5)

Rev 5:6

“And I looked, and behold, in the midst of the throne and of the four living creatures, and in the midst of the elders, stood a Lamb as though it had been slain, having seven horns and seven eyes, which are the seven Spirits of God sent out into all the earth.

“a Lamb as though it had been slain” - Peter refers to Jesus as a lamb without blemish or spot, ***“knowing that you were not redeemed with corruptible things, like silver or gold,...but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot.”*** (1 Peter 1:18-19)

“having seven horns” - Horns are a symbol of power. Jesus is almighty in power to overcome His adversaries.

“seven eyes, which are the seven Spirits of God sent out into all the earth” - Jesus has sent the fullness of the power of the Holy Spirit to the four corners of the earth to accomplish His will.

Rev 5:8-10

“Now when He had taken the scroll, the four living creatures and the twenty-four elders fell down before the Lamb, each having a harp, and golden bowls full of incense, which are the prayers of the saints. And they sang a new song, saying: "You are worthy to take the scroll, and to open its seals; for You were slain, and have redeemed us to God by Your blood out of every tribe and tongue and people and nation, And have made us kings and priests to our God; and we shall reign on the earth.”

“fell down before the Lamb” - Those brought near to the throne of God are totally consecrated to the Lord.

“each having a harp, and golden bowls full of incense, which are the prayers of the saints” - The harp is an instrument of worship. Praise and worship opens the door to God’s presence in our midst. ***“But thou art holy, O thou that inhabitest the praises of Israel.”*** (Ps 22:3 KJV) Prayers of praise and worship release God’s power to overcome in our circumstances.

“You are worthy to take the scroll, and to open its seals; for You were slain, and have redeemed us to God by Your blood” - Only Jesus was worthy to open the seals. It was Jesus who obtained redemption for all mankind by His shed blood.

“have made us kings and priests to our God; and we shall reign on the earth” - Those constituting the perfected church, or Bride of Christ, are kings and priests to God. In union with Christ they reign on earth to fulfil the purposes of God.

Rev 5:11-14

“Then I looked, and I heard the voice of many angels around the throne, the living creatures, and the elders; and the number of them was ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousands of thousands, saying with a loud voice: "Worthy is the Lamb who was slain to receive power and riches and wisdom, and strength and honour and glory and blessing!" And every creature which is in heaven and on the earth and under the earth and such as are in the sea, and all that are in them, I heard saying: "Blessing and honour and glory and power be to Him who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb, forever and ever!" Then the four living creatures said, "Amen!" And the twenty-four elders fell down and worshipped Him who lives forever and ever.”

Jesus has released the whole of creation from the bondage of Satan's curse, and all created beings give glory to God and Jesus Christ the Lamb. Accordingly, all beings around the throne respond with a declaration that the all-conquering Lord is worthy to receive all the manifold blessings of God.

Revelation Chapter 6

THE OPENING OF THE SEALS

At this stage, it is worthwhile to remind ourselves that we are interpreting symbols to discern the true meaning of the opened seals. To aid us, we use other Scriptures to unravel the symbolic meanings.

In adopting this approach, it is important that we are consistent. For instance, if we have adopted a figurative approach in interpreting the first four seals, why in the fifth should we see literal martyrs in heaven, and in the sixth interpret a literal earthquake, the literal darkening of the sun and moon, and the stars literally falling from the sky? To be consistent, we must continue to discern the meaning of the symbols used.

The First Seal

Rev 6:1-2

“Now I saw when the Lamb opened one of the seals; and I heard one of the four living creatures saying with a voice like thunder, “Come and see.” And I looked, and behold, a white horse. He who sat on it had a bow; and a crown was given to him, and he went out conquering and to conquer.”

The first four seals depict riders on variously coloured horses. In the Scriptures, horses symbolise the spiritual agents that bring about God's purposes. E.g. *“Then I turned and raised my eyes and looked, and behold, four chariots were coming from between two mountains, and the mountains were mountains of bronze. With the first chariot were red horses, with the second chariot black horses, with the third chariot white horses, and with the fourth chariot dappled horses-- strong steeds. Then I answered and said to the angel who talked with me, “What are these, my lord?” And the angel answered and said to me, “These are four spirits of heaven, who go out from their station before the Lord of all the earth.”* (Zech 6:1-5)

Horses are faithful and swift servants of man, and so they are used as symbols of the spiritual agents that bring about God's purposes throughout the earth.

Taken in order, the first rider is introduced by the first creature with the face of a lion, symbolising supreme authority. He announces with *“a voice like thunder,”* highlighting the authority of the one he introduces.

“And I looked, and behold, a white horse” - White symbolises righteousness. The white horse represents the gospel of salvation - God's agent to evangelise the whole world.

“He who sat on it - Jesus Christ, as “head over all things to the Church,” (Eph 1:23) is the director of all ministry. He is the rider of the white horse.

“had a bow; and a crown was given to him” - Psalm 45 paints the same picture of the Lord riding forth to overthrow His enemies.

“Gird Your sword upon Your thigh, O Mighty One, with Your glory and Your majesty.

And in Your majesty ride prosperously because of truth, humility, and righteousness; and Your right hand shall teach You awesome things.

Your arrows (swift silent judgments) are sharp in the heart of the King's enemies; the peoples fall under You.

Your throne, O God, is forever and ever; a sceptre of righteousness is the sceptre of Your kingdom.” (Ps 45:3-6)

Christ is ‘riding forth’ to overthrow Satan’s kingdom, and establish His own throughout all the earth. His kingdom of righteousness is established through the gospel. We have a further indication of Jesus being the rider of the white horse in Rev 19.

“Now I saw heaven opened, and behold, a white horse. And He who sat on him was called Faithful and True, and in righteousness He judges and makes war. His eyes were like a flame of fire, and on His head were many crowns. He had a name written that no one knew except Himself. He was clothed with a robe dipped in blood, and His name is called The Word of God. And the armies in heaven, clothed in fine linen, white and clean, followed Him on white horses. Now out of His mouth goes a sharp sword, that with it He should strike the nations. And He Himself will rule them with a rod of iron. He Himself treads the winepress of the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God. And He has on His robe and on His thigh a name written: KING OF KINGS AND LORD OF LORDS.” (Rev 19:11-16)

The Second Seal

Rev 6:3-4

“When He opened the second seal, I heard the second living creature saying, “Come and see.” Another horse, fiery red, went out. And it was granted to the one who sat on it to take peace from the earth, and that people should kill one another; and there was given to him a great sword.”

“When He opened the second seal, I heard the second living creature saying, “Come and see.” - Again, taken in order, the second horse is introduced by the creature with the face of an ox - symbolising patient service and endurance. When announcing the coming persecution by Antichrist, the Lord stresses the need for patience and endurance. “He who leads into captivity shall go into captivity; he who kills with the sword must be killed with the sword. Here is the patience and the faith of the saints.” (Rev 13:10)

“Another horse, fiery red” - Whereas the white horse represented light and truth leading to salvation, the second fiery red horse signifies deception and lawlessness, or apostasy. The Woman Babylon, or harlot church of Revelation 17, is pictured astride a scarlet beast, or Antichrist.

“And it was granted to the one who sat on it” - He who sat on it is Antichrist, whose influence, according to the apostle John, was already operating in the early church.

“to take peace from the earth” - The advent of Antichrist induced apostasy into the Church signalling the removal of harmony and peace. The Church, which was a ground for love and harmony, is now degraded by bitter feuding, division, hatred, and persecution.

“and there was given to him a great sword” - The sword is also a symbol of war. It is said of Antichrist in Revelation 13, ***“It was granted to him (the first beast, or Antichrist) to make war with the saints and to overcome them. And authority was given him over every tribe, tongue, and nation.”*** (Rev 13:7)

Millions were gravely persecuted and put to death for not accepting the authority and doctrines of the harlot or false church formed by Antichrist.

The Third Seal

Rev 6:5-6

“When He opened the third seal, I heard the third living creature say, “Come and see.” So I looked, and behold, a black horse, and he who sat on it had a pair of scales in his hand. And I heard a voice in the midst of the four living creatures saying, “A quart of wheat for a denarius, and three quarts of barley for a denarius; and do not harm the oil and the wine.”

“When He opened the third seal, I heard the third living creature say, “Come and see.” - Taken in order the third living creature had the face of a man. Black symbolises deprivation and mourning the loss of what once was. The black horse is often said to represent famine, but it would be a mistake to be bound in our interpretation to predicting a time of acute shortage of food only.

In his prophecies concerning God’s judgments at the end of the age, Isaiah also predicted such a time of deprivation.

“For behold, the Lord GOD of hosts is going to remove from Jerusalem and Judah both supply and support, the whole supply of bread, and the whole supply of water; The mighty man (world leaders) and the warrior (military power) the judge (the judicial system) and the prophet (highly acclaimed spiritual prophets), the diviner (spirit guides) and the elder (trusted older persons). The captain of fifty (bureaucratic officials) and the honourable man (men the world honours), the counsellor (consultants) and the expert artisan (acclaimed entertainers and artists), and the skilful enchanter (skilled orator).” (Isa 3:1-3 NAS)

Bread and water are used here as symbols for the things that man depends on. Isaiah is saying that God will remove those things that man relies on for his comfort and security, rather than God Himself.

Isaiah 24, which is apocalyptic in nature, prophesies that the earth will be emptied of its wealth and luxuries. Any reliance on money for security will be stripped away. ***“And it shall be: as with the people, so with the priest; as with the servant, so with his master; as with the maid, so with her mistress; as with the buyer, so with the seller; as with the lender, so with the borrower; as with the creditor, so with the debtor. The land shall be entirely emptied and utterly plundered, for the LORD has spoken this word.”*** (Isa 24:2-3)

Amos too forecasts a famine, but not of food. ***“Behold, the days come, saith the Lord GOD, that I will send a famine in the land, not a famine of bread, nor a thirst for water, but of hearing the words of the LORD: And they shall wander from sea to sea, and from the north even to the east, they shall run to and fro to seek the word of the LORD, and shall not find it.”*** (Amos 8:11-12) This does point to a lack of anointed teachers and prophets, but more to actually hearing and receiving the word. For instance, there are some who run to and fro seeking the latest ‘word of the Lord’ because it makes them appear spiritually mature, but they are not open to sound exposition of the word. Others with *“itching ears”* will turn to teachers that speak pleasant unchallenging words.

“had a pair of scales in his hand” - Scales speak of careful measurement. This judgment is carefully weighed by God, and meted out to each individual.

“A quart of wheat for a denarius (a day’s wages for a labourer), ***and three quarts of barley for a denarius”*** - The three quarts of barley are equivalent in value to a quart of wheat. The daily ration was enough to sustain life and health, but without excess.

The third living creature introducing the black horse had the face of a man. Basically this judgment is against the power of humanism - the attitude that man has within himself all that is necessary to meet every need without God’s assistance. By taking away all the things man depends on for his comfort and assurance, the doorway is then opened to repentance, and recognition of God as ***“Jehovah Jireh,”*** or ‘He who provides.’

“do not harm the oil and the wine” - The oil symbolises the Holy Spirit, the agent of contact between man and God, and the wine is a symbol of the blood of Jesus. In the whole period of judgmental privation, the doorway to approaching God and receiving His salvation is always kept open.

The Fourth Seal

Rev 6:7-8

“When He opened the fourth seal, I heard the voice of the fourth living creature saying, “Come and see.” So I looked, and behold, a pale horse. And the name of him who sat on it was Death, and Hades followed with him. And power was given to them over a fourth of the earth, to kill with sword, with hunger, with death, and by the beasts of the earth.”

“I heard the voice of the fourth living creature saying, “Come and see” - The face of the fourth creature introducing the pale horse and rider was as a flying eagle, signifying the operation of the Spirit. This is a spiritual judgment that is to fall on the earth. In the Thirteenth Chapter of Revelation, the sea symbolises the nations of the world, and earth a symbol of worldly religion.

This judgment is directed at those who have partaken of the apostasy of the worldly church. In the Thirteenth Chapter of Deuteronomy, God’s judgment on apostates was physical death. In the Church age His judgment is spiritual death.

“And I looked, and behold a pale horse” - The colour of this horse is said to be pale, or insipid greenish yellow. It is emblematic of the state of insipid spiritual weakness that pervades the worldly church.

“And the name of him who sat on it was Death, and Hades followed with him” - Again we must remember that the language is figurative, and therefore we should not expect a large percentage of the world’s population to be physically killed.

“Death” - In keeping with our figurative interpretation, the metaphorical meaning of death is the loss of spiritual life - that life which alone has any lasting value or worth. This is an appropriate judgment for those who have turned their backs on the Spirit, and have walked after the flesh and the world.

“And Hades followed with him” - Hades is the abode of the dead who are awaiting the final judgment. This appropriately symbolises the stagnant and spiritually dead end-time church. In the thirty seventh chapter of Ezekiel we are reminded of Ezekiel’s vision of the valley of dry bones. Thankfully they were revived by the Spirit of prophecy, which is also prophesied to be manifest towards the close of the age.

“And power (authority) was given unto them over the fourth part of the earth” - This judgment will fall wherever the taint of apostasy is present in the Church.

“to kill with sword, with hunger, with death, and by the beasts of the earth”

“to kill with sword” - These words are indicative of spiritual warfare.

Paul tells us that ***“...we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age, against spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places.”*** (Eph 6:12-13). One of our weapons in this spiritual battle is the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God - ***“...take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God.”*** (Eph 6:12-17)

Our sword is the sword of truth, and conversely, the sword that Satan uses to produce spiritual death is that of deceit and deception. Satan ***“does not stand in the truth, because there is no truth in him.”*** (John 8:44)

“to kill...with hunger” - People are turned away from spiritual truth by Satan’s demon spirits to deceiving doctrines, false teachers, and those who practice lying signs and wonders. They run here and there, always seeking but never finding truth. ***“...the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine, but according to their own desires, because they have itching ears, they will heap up for themselves teachers; and they will turn their ears away from the truth, and be turned aside to fables.”*** (2 Tim 4:3-5)

“to kill...with death” - This speaks of the activity of demon spirits of deceit and deception gradually inducing spiritual death, so that finally, a person is rendered incapable of receiving life giving spiritual truth.

“and with the beasts of the earth” - Beasts and birds of prey are sometimes used as symbols for demon spirits. (Isa 13:21-22) (Rev 18:3) Apostates unwittingly have fellowship with demons when they entertain those things under the control of Satan.

When God removes His hedge of protection, they fall prey to the spiritual identities behind the practices they have entertained.

The Fifth Seal

Rev 6:9-11

“When He opened the fifth seal, I saw under the altar the souls of those who had been slain for the word of God and for the testimony which they held. And they cried with a loud voice, saying, “How long, O Lord, holy and true, until You judge and avenge our blood on those who dwell on the earth?” Then a white robe was given to each of them; and it was said to them that they should rest a little while longer, until both *the number of their fellow servants and their brethren, who would be killed as they were, was completed.*”

The last three seals are not introduced by the four living creatures.

When the fifth seal was opened, John saw a vision of the souls of those who had been slain under the altar crying out to God to judge those who had persecuted the true saints.

Literalists interpret this as a scene in heaven, where martyrs who had been slain gathered under the altar of the heavenly tabernacle to cry out for vengeance on their adversaries on earth.

We will continue to support a figurative interpretation in keeping with the Lord’s first instruction to John, **“*Come up here, and I will show you things (happening to the church) which must take place after this.*”** This interpretation will regard these as spiritual martyrs, who have allowed their soulish or self-life to be put to death. The New Testament equivalent to the Old Testament altar is the cross of Jesus, on which He offered Himself as an atoning sacrifice for the sins of mankind.

“*I saw under the altar the souls of them that were slain*” - Notice that John’s attention was drawn to the souls of the slain, because they had laid their soul life or self-life on the altar of the cross of Jesus to be put to death by the Spirit.

“*...knowing this, that our old man was crucified with Him, that the body of sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves of sin.*” (Rom 6:6)

“*And those who are Christ's have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires.*” (Gal 5:24)

Throughout history, God has always created and preserved a remnant of perfected ones to fulfil His highest purposes. These ‘martyrs,’ who have given up their soul lives to the death are such a remnant, drawn out of the worldly church and set apart to Him.

“*for the word of God, and for the testimony (of Jesus Christ) which they held*” - The testimony is the true testimony of Jesus Christ, given to them by the Holy Spirit. **“*And the dragon was wroth with the woman (the church), and went to make war with the remnant of her seed, which keep the commandments of God, and have the testimony of Jesus Christ.*”** (Rev 12:17)

“*How long, O Lord, holy and true, until You judge and avenge our blood on those who dwell on the earth?*” - This request is in the form of a prayer, firstly extolling His name and secondly asking Him to hasten His judgment on those who persecute the Church on earth. God’s actions in heaven are often precipitated by the prayers of His children on earth. In this warfare between

the Church and Antichrist, those who have applied the cross to their old nature are entrusted with directing prayers to the throne of God, asking Him to intervene on behalf of the Church. These prayers have a twofold effect. They give God the authority to act on our behalf, and secondly, they weaken Satan's power to hold the Church in captivity.

“white robes were given unto every one of them” - In Revelation chapter 19 Christ's spiritual warriors wore white robes. ***“And the armies in heaven, clothed in fine linen, white and clean, followed Him on white horses.”*** (Rev 19:14-15) These were not the robes of righteousness granted to every Christian, but of triumph and victory.

“it was said unto them, that they should rest yet for a little season until their fellow servants also and their brethren, that should be killed as they were, should be fulfilled” - God is creating an army of those who have submitted to Him to be refined and purged of their self-life. They are overcomers - spiritual warriors, through whom He can manifest His power and glory in establishing Christ's kingdom at the end of the age.

The 'martyrs' were instructed to rest until their number was fulfilled.

Throughout history God has always prepared a refined and perfected remnants that will, in the fullness of His time, be a part of the perfected Church, or Bride of Christ. This will be enlarged on in the section, “the Bride of Christ.

The Sixth Seal

In the account of the opening of the sixth seal there is included the shaking of heaven and earth, and the sealing of the one hundred and forty thousand.

Rev 6:12-17

“I looked when He opened the sixth seal, and behold, there was a great earthquake (shaking); and the sun became black as sackcloth of hair, and the moon became like blood. And the stars of heaven fell to the earth, as a fig tree drops its late figs when it is shaken by a mighty wind. Then the sky receded as a scroll when it is rolled up, and every mountain and island was moved out of its place. And the kings of the earth, the great men, the rich men, the commanders, the mighty men, every slave and every free man, hid themselves in the caves and in the rocks of the mountains, and said to the mountains and rocks, "Fall on us and hide us from the face of Him who sits on the throne and from the wrath of the Lamb! "For the great day of His wrath has come, and who is able to stand?”

Remembering that this is figurative language, we must resist the temptation to predict a cataclysmic celestial calamity, and instead, discern the meaning of the various symbols.

“there was a great earthquake” - The Greek word translated ‘earthquake,’ is derived from ‘*seioo*’ ‘to shake.’ The phrase could also have been translated, “was a great shaking.” And this is what is foretold by the prophet Haggai, and the writer of Hebrews: ***“For thus says the LORD of hosts: 'Once more (it is a little while) I will shake heaven and earth, the sea and dry land and I will shake all nations, and they shall come to the Desire of All Nations, and I will fill this temple with glory,' says the LORD of hosts. 'The silver is Mine, and the gold is***

Mine,' says the LORD of hosts. 'The glory of this latter temple shall be greater than the former,' says the LORD of hosts. 'And in this place I will give peace,' says the LORD of hosts.' (Hag 2:6-9)

"See that you do not refuse Him who speaks. For if they did not escape who refused Him who spoke on earth, much more shall we not escape if we turn away from Him who speaks from heaven, whose voice then shook the earth; but now He has promised, saying, "Yet once more I shake not only the earth, but also heaven." Now this, "Yet once more," indicates the removal of those things that are being shaken, as of things that are made, that the things which cannot be shaken may remain." (Heb 12:25-27)

The sixth seal foretells of a time of world-wide 'shaking,' during which time the whole of the world's society, with all of its manmade institutions, including those in the apostate church, will be devastated under the pressure of God's judgment. Only those things that are of Him will remain, because they cannot be shaken.

The sun, moon, and stars, are often used in Scripture as poetic expressions to represent deities, nations, emperors, princes, and those in leadership roles. E.g. *"Now a great sign appeared in heaven: a woman clothed with the sun, with the moon under her feet, and on her head a garland of twelve stars."* (Rev 12:1) In this case the woman represents first Israel, then the church; the sun - the glory of God; and the moon under her feet - the foundation of the Mosaic Law; and the stars, the twelve tribes of Israel.

In Joseph's second dream, the sun represented his father, the moon his mother, and the stars his brothers. *"Then he dreamed still another dream and told it to his brothers, and said, "Look, I have dreamed another dream. And this time, the sun, the moon, and the eleven stars bowed down to me." So he told it to his father and his brothers; and his father rebuked him and said to him, "What is this dream that you have dreamed? Shall your mother and I and your brothers indeed come to bow down to the earth before you?"* (Gen 37:9-10)

The darkening of the sun, moon, and stars, is used elsewhere in Scriptural prophecies predicting the judgment and downfall of nations. Their sun, moon, and stars, or their illuminated glory, will be made darkness, as God puts out the light of their eminence.

EGYPT: *"Son of man, take up a lamentation for Pharaoh king of Egypt, and say to him...When I put out your light, I will cover the heavens, and make its stars dark; I will cover the sun with a cloud, and the moon shall not give her light. All the bright lights of the heavens I will make dark over you, and bring darkness upon your land,' says the Lord GOD."* (Ezek 32:2 & 7-8)

BABYLON: *"The burden of Babylon, which Isaiah the son of Amoz did see...The noise of a multitude in the mountains, like that of many people! A tumultuous noise of the kingdoms of nations gathered together! The LORD of hosts musters the army for battle. They come from a far country, from the end of heaven-- the LORD and His weapons of indignation, to destroy the whole land...Behold, the day of the LORD comes, cruel, with both wrath and fierce anger, to lay the land desolate; and He will destroy its sinners from it. For the stars of heaven and their constellations will not give their light; the sun will be darkened in its going forth, and the moon will not cause its light to shine." (Isa 13:1& 4-5 & 9-10)*

The judgment of the sixth seal is directed against world society in general - against all political, social, religious, and economic institutions - ***“the earth...and all that is in it, the world and all things that come forth from it.”*** (Isa 34:1)

The things that man had previously honoured and admired and pursued - wealth, power, individual recognition, social position, entertainments, luxuries, possessions, and so on - will be cast down in the shaking. The light of the glory of worldly society will be put out forever.

“the heaven departed as a scroll when it is rolled together” - The whole corrupt fabric of worldly society will be ‘rolled up,’ never to be restored.

“every mountain and island were moved out of their places” - Nations, world-wide institutions, and their leaders will be convulsed. There will be leadership spills, nations overthrown, and the structure of those things that remain will be drastically altered.

“And the kings of the earth, and the great men, and the rich men, and the chief captains, and the mighty men, and every bondman, and every free man, hid themselves in the dens and in the rocks of the mountains...” (Isa 2:15)

Isaiah gives us further insight into this time of shaking, when the proud arrogance of man will be stripped away.

“The loftiness of man shall be bowed down, and the haughtiness of men shall be brought low; the LORD alone will be exalted in that day, But the idols He shall utterly abolish. They shall go into the holes of the rocks, and into the caves of the earth, from the terror of the LORD and the glory of His majesty, when He arises to shake the earth mightily. In that day a man will cast away his idols of silver and his idols of gold, which they made, each for himself to worship, to the moles and bats, To go into the clefts of the rocks, and into the crags of the rugged rocks, from the terror of the LORD and the glory of His majesty, when He arises to shake the earth mightily.” (Isa 2:17-21)

Under the pressure of God’s shaking men will seek to escape from His judgment by hiding themselves, their possessions, and their accumulated wealth in the refuges provided by the world.

THE SEALING OF THE SAINTS

The One Hundred and Forty Four Thousand

In the section, ‘**STRUCTURE OF REVELATION,**’ before Chapter 1, we stated our intention of studying similar subjects in Parts 1 & 2 by comparing their contents. In this case we will compare the 144,000 in Chapter 7, with the 144,000 in Chapter 14.

We will examine three groups of people, each one depicting a different aspect of the Church.

1. The 144,000 of Chapter 7
2. The 144,000 of Chapter 14.
3. The great multitude that came through the tribulation of Chapter 7:9-17.

The First Group - The 144,000 of Chapter 7.

Revelation Chapter 7

Rev 7:1-3

“After these things I saw four angels standing at the four corners of the earth, holding the four winds of the earth, that the wind should not blow on the earth, on the sea, or on any tree. Then I saw another angel ascending from the east, having the seal of the living God. And he cried with a loud voice to the four angels to whom it was granted to harm the earth and the sea, saying, "Do not harm the earth, the sea, or the trees till we have sealed the servants of our God on their foreheads.”

Four angels are appointed to hold back the winds of God’s ensuing judgments until those belonging to God are sealed with the seal of His ownership. Although God’s seal is physically invisible, it will be spiritually observed and honoured by God’s agents of destruction. The sea represents the unsaved nations of the world and the earth the Church. In the Bible Trees are sometimes used as symbols for men. For instance -

*“To console those who mourn in Zion,
To give them beauty for ashes,...
That they may be called trees of righteousness,
The planting of the LORD, that He may be glorified.”
And they shall rebuild the old ruins,
They shall raise up the former desolations,
And they shall repair the ruined cities,
The desolations of many generations.” (Isa 61:3-4)*

Rev 7:4

“**And I heard the number of those who were sealed. One hundred and forty-four thousand of all the tribes of the children of Israel were sealed**”.

144,000 should not be regarded as a literal number. Its interpretation revolves around the symbolic value of the number twelve. Symbolically, twelve represents the fullness of God’s election - hence the twelve tribes of Israel, and the twelve apostles. In the reading below, twelve thousand were chosen from each tribe - the fullness of God’s election from each tribe. One hundred and forty four thousand represents the fullness of God’s election from both Jews and Gentiles. This will be explained in more detail as we study the reading.

Because this is not the official census listing of the twelve tribes, the traditional census listing (Num 1:1-16) will be placed alongside for comparison.

ACCORDING TO REVELATION

LISTING ACCORDING TO CENSUS

Rev 7:5-8

Num 1:1-16

“the tribe of Judah twelve thousand”

Reuben

“the tribe of <u>Reuben</u> twelve thousand”	Simeon
“the tribe of <u>Gad</u> twelve thousand”	Judah
“the tribe of <u>Asher</u> twelve thousand”	Issachar
“the tribe of <u>Naphtali</u> twelve thousand”	Zebulun
“the tribe of <u>Manasseh</u> twelve thousand”	Ephraim
“the tribe of <u>Simeon</u> twelve thousand”	Manasseh
“the tribe of <u>Levi</u> twelve thousand”	Benjamin
“the tribe of <u>Issachar</u> twelve thousand”	Dan
“the tribe of <u>Zebulun</u> twelve thousand”	Asher
“the tribe of <u>Joseph</u> twelve thousand”	Gad
“the tribe of <u>Benjamin</u> twelve thousand”	Naphtali

At first glance it may appear that the tribes listed in Revelation 7 represent Jews converted to Christianity. However there are inconsistencies when comparing this list with the official census list of tribes, and we must therefore endeavour to discover the reason for the differences.

- Judah is listed first, instead of Reuben, who was the traditional head of the tribes. Judah is mentioned first because it represents Jesus Christ, *“the lion of the tribe of Judah.”* He is the head of this body of people.
- Levi was not included in the official census list because the priestly tribe of Levi was kept by the tithes of the other tribes. The Lord was their inheritance. Levi is included in the Revelation list because the church is a kingdom of priests, and the Lord is also its inheritance.
- Joseph is included because he is a type of Christ, in that he was the beloved son, he was ‘sacrificed’ by his kin, ‘resurrected,’ and became the saviour of his people.
- The number 144,000 represents the fullness of God’s election from the Old and New Testaments - converted Jews and gentiles. This is spiritual Israel, or the whole church.
- Dan and Ephraim are missing because of their idolatry. (Judges 18:30, Hosea 4:17) Idolatry will have no place in the restored church.

Three facts stand out in this study of the 144,000 of Revelation 7. They are:

1. The overall picture is that of the whole church is drawn out from both Jews and gentiles.
2. Pains are taken to represent the Church in the form of the twelve tribes of Israel. This suggests that there will be a strong representation of Jewish converts in the end-time church - that there will be a major change of heart among the Jews towards accepting the Lord Jesus Christ, and that they will be grafted in according to God’s promise. *“And they (Israel) also, if they do not continue in unbelief, will be grafted in, for God is able to graft them in again. For if you were cut out of the olive tree which is wild by nature, and were grafted contrary to nature into a cultivated olive tree, how much more will these, who are natural branches, be grafted into their own olive tree”?* (Rom 11:23-24)
3. Before the last series of judgments, the whole church, or all of God’s children, will be sealed with the seal of His ownership. This does not mean that they will

be raptured away before the judgmental tribulation, but that they will be kept safe in God's presence. ***"The LORD also will roar from Zion, and utter His voice from Jerusalem; the heavens and earth will shake; but the LORD will be a shelter for His people, and the strength of the children of Israel."*** (Joel 3:16)

The Second Group - the 144,000 in Chapter 14

Rev 14:1-5

"Then I looked, and behold, a Lamb standing on Mount Zion, and with Him one hundred and forty-four thousand, having His Father's name written on their foreheads. And I heard a voice from heaven, like the voice of many waters, and like the voice of loud thunder. And I heard the sound of harpists playing their harps. They sang as it were a new song before the throne, before the four living creatures, and the elders; and no one could learn that song except the hundred and forty-four thousand who were redeemed from the earth. These are the ones who were not defiled with women, for they are virgins. These are the ones who follow the Lamb wherever He goes. These were redeemed from among men, being firstfruits to God and to the Lamb. And in their mouth was found no deceit, for they are without fault before the throne of God."

This 144,000 is not the whole church, but a select group within the church. Throughout the history of Israel and the church, there has always been a refined remnant, set apart by God. It is through this group that most of God's purposes are accomplished.

The following are some examples of the refined smaller group set apart from the whole Church.

- The church and the overcomers in Christ's letters to the Churches.
- The bride of Christ and the wedding guests - ***"Then he said to me, 'Write: 'Blessed are those who are called (or invited) to the marriage supper of the Lamb!'"*** (The marriage of Christ and His bride and the wedding guests.) (Rev 19:9)
- Zechariah's refined remnant - ***"And it shall come to pass in all the land," says the LORD, "That two-thirds in it shall be cut off and die, but one third shall be left in it: I will bring the one-third through the fire, will refine them as silver is refined, and test them as gold is tested. They will call on My name, and I will answer them. I will say, 'This is My people'; and each one will say, 'The LORD is my God.'"*** (Zech 13:8-9)
- The Sons of Zadok - A refined holy remnant who minister directly to God. - ***"But the priests, the Levites, the sons of Zadok, who kept charge of My sanctuary when the children of Israel went astray from Me, they shall come near Me to minister to Me; and they shall stand before Me to offer to Me the fat and the blood," says the Lord GOD. "They shall enter My sanctuary, and they shall come near My table to minister to Me, and they shall keep My charge."*** (Ezek 44:15-16)

- The remnant reserved in the time of Elijah - Elijah bemoaned the fact that he alone was left. ***“I have been very zealous for the LORD God of hosts; because the children of Israel have forsaken Your covenant, torn down Your altars, and killed Your prophets with the sword. I alone am left...”*** (1 Kings 19:14) But God assured Elijah that He had reserved a remnant: ***“Yet I have reserved seven thousand in Israel, all whose knees have not bowed to Baal, and every mouth that has not kissed him.”*** (1 Kings 19:18)
- Those who have the testimony of Jesus Christ - ***“And the dragon was enraged with the woman, and he went to make war with the rest of her offspring, who keep the commandments of God and have the testimony of Jesus Christ.”*** (Rev 12:17) Satan made war with this select group because they posed the most threat to his kingdom.

We will now examine the characteristics of the 144,000 of Chapter 14 that show why they are a select group within the Church.

“standing on Mount Zion” - They are pictured with the Lord, standing on Mount Zion.

Mount Zion was originally David’s fortress, but later embraced the temple area. Hence it was known as the dwelling place of God. ***“For the LORD has chosen Zion; he has desired it for His dwelling place.”*** (Ps 132:13) Mount Zion is a small section within Jerusalem, just as the 144,000 are a comparatively small section within the whole church.

Our spiritual pilgrimage leads to Mount Zion, ***“hidden in Jesus Christ in God”*** (Col 3:3) It is our spiritual home, and those reaching this blessed state come in to the knowledge of God’s continual abiding presence.

Mount Zion is also called the ***“city of the living God,”*** and is associated with the New Jerusalem, or the Bride of Christ.

“But you have come to Mount Zion and to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem...” (Heb 12:22)

“Then I, John, saw the holy city, New Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband.” (Rev 21:2)

New Jerusalem is a state of spiritual perfection rather than a physical city. It is said to come out of heaven from God because He is its maker. He undertakes the work of sanctification, through Jesus Christ, by the word and the Spirit. ***“...for he waited for the city which has foundations, whose builder and maker is God.”*** (Heb 11:10)

New Jerusalem, or the Bride, is also associated with the section within the church called ***“he who overcomes.”***

“He who overcomes, I will make him a pillar in the temple of My God, and he shall go out no more. And I will write on him the name of My God and the name of the city of My God, the New Jerusalem, which comes down out of heaven from My God. And I will write on him My new name.” (Rev 3:12)

“having His Father’s name written on their foreheads” - The 144,000 of Revelation 7 had to be sealed. This prepared and refined group from Revelation 14, have already been sealed with God’s name on their foreheads because they are entirely consecrated to Him.

“are the ones who were not defiled with women” - Obviously this is not literal because it would exclude those who are married, and marriage has God’s blessing. This is referring to spiritual harlotry, or idolatry. In particular, this group were not led astray by the “the Woman Babylon.”

“for they are virgins” - This speaks of total consecration. They are exclusively the Lord’s.

“who follow the Lamb wherever He goes” - It follows that they are completely at His disposal.

“redeemed from among men, being firstfruits to God and to the Lamb” - The purpose of God’s refining work on us is to bring forth a royal priesthood - the Bride of Christ. These are the firstfruits of that refining work, which will continue throughout eternity.

“in their mouth was found no deceit” - They are without guile or ulterior motives in their speaking and manner.

“without fault before the throne of God” - Not that they are sinless, but that they are sincere in their dedication and loyalty towards God.

“They sang as it were a new song before the throne, before the four living creatures, and the elders” - Throughout the Scriptures, a new song was sung to praise and worship God for new victories and benefits not received before. E.g. the song of Moses, and the song of Deborah.

This song is not a literal song, but a celebratory prayer within the heart. The 144,000 proclaim the victory of the Lord Jesus Christ over Antichrist and his confederacy, and the restoration and glory of the Church.

“no one could learn that song except the hundred and forty-four thousand who were redeemed from the earth (or church).” - No one but they could learn that song unless they were partakers of the work and victory.

When the fifth seal was opened, those who had put their self-lives on the cross asked, ***“How long, O Lord, holy and true, until You judge and avenge our blood on those who dwell on the earth?”*** (Rev 6:10). They were told that ***“they should rest a little while longer, until both the number of their fellow servants and their brethren, who would be killed as they were, was completed.”*** (Rev 6:11) This speaks of a special number of people of God’s election - hence the 144,000.

There has been a refined remnant, or overcomers, or bride, throughout the churches’ history, but those at the end of the age will have the special commission of bringing in the kingdom of Christ.

The Third Group - The Restored Church

Rev 7:9-17

“After these things I looked, and behold, a great multitude which no one could number, of all nations, tribes, peoples, and tongues, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes, with palm branches in their hands, and crying out with a loud voice, saying, “Salvation belongs to our God who sits on the throne, and to the

Lamb!" All the angels stood around the throne and the elders and the four living creatures, and fell on their faces before the throne and worshipped God, saying: "Amen! Blessing and glory and wisdom, thanksgiving and honour and power and might, be to our God forever and ever. Amen." Then one of the elders answered, saying to me, "Who are these arrayed in white robes, and where did they come from?" And I said to him, "Sir, you know." So he said to me, "These are the ones who come out of the great tribulation, and washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. "Therefore they are before the throne of God, and serve Him day and night in His temple. And He who sits on the throne will dwell among them. "They shall neither hunger anymore nor thirst anymore; the sun shall not strike them, nor any heat; "for the Lamb who is in the midst of the throne will shepherd them and lead them to living fountains of waters. And God will wipe away every tear from their eyes."

This "*great multitude which no one could number, of all nations, tribes, peoples, and tongues,*" - is a symbolic picture of the restored Church that has been delivered from apostasy, deadness and luke warmth by the refining effect of the tribulation. When asked who they were, the reply was-

"These are the ones who come out of the great tribulation." - The tribulation was the necessary catalyst to bring forth their refinement and restoration.

This answers those who declare that the Church will not have to endure the tribulation period, and those who pose the question, 'Why would a loving God subject His children to tribulation'? The writer of Hebrews answered that question in this way.

"...we have had human fathers who corrected us, and we paid them respect. Shall we not much more readily be in subjection to the Father of spirits and live? For they indeed for a few days chastened us as seemed best to them, but He for our profit, that we may be partakers of His holiness. Now no chastening seems to be joyful for the present, but painful; nevertheless, afterward it yields the peaceable fruit of righteousness to those who have been trained by it." (Heb 12:9-11)

The church at Laodicea is generally considered to be a picture of the end-time church. She is portrayed as being lukewarm, thinking of herself as being wealthy and in need of nothing, not realising that in fact she is 'wretched, miserable, poor, and blind.'

Now consider the state of those who have been refined by the tribulation. They are "*arrayed in white robes.*" They have "*washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.*" - This speaks of repentance, and turning away from their former wretched state.

"they are before the throne of God" - Accepted in His presence.

"serve Him day and night in His temple" - They are totally consecrated to His work. As a consequence of their repentance and changed heart, they will experience the blessings of God's covenant love.

"will dwell among them" - They will know His presence in their circumstances.

“shall neither hunger anymore nor thirst anymore” - Their physical and spiritual needs will be met.

“the sun shall not strike them, nor any heat” - There will be an end to persecutions and warfare.

“the Lamb who is in the midst of the throne will shepherd them and lead them to living fountains of waters” - Spiritual waters of life.

“God will wipe away every tear from their eyes” - All causes of distress and grief will be removed.

SECTION 4

THE OPENING OF THE SEVENTH SEAL

Revelation Chapter 8:1 to Revelation Chapter 11:19 and Revelation Chapter 16:1-21

In this section, our study of the seventh seal will include a comparison of the seven trumpets with the seven bowls of wrath, which portray God's testing judgment of the whole world during the period of the Tribulation, and proceeding on to the final judgment of all mankind at the close of the age.

The Seventh Seal

Rev 8:1

“When He opened the seventh seal, there was silence in heaven for about half an hour.”

“there was silence in heaven” - Silence is used here, (as in other places in the bible), to denote a cessation of activity rather than an absence of sound.

“Keep not thou silence, O God: hold not thy peace, and be not still, O God.” (Ps 83:1)

There will be a short period when heaven is silent. When heaven is still, it means that God will have stopped His intervention in curbing Antichrist's activities. ***“For the mystery of lawlessness is already at work; only He (the Holy Spirit) who now restrains will do so until He is taken out of the way. And then the lawless one (Antichrist) will be revealed, whom the Lord will consume with the breath of His mouth and destroy with the brightness of His coming.”*** (II Th 2:7-8)

This corresponds with the releasing of Satan from his restraints. ***“Now when the thousand years have expired, Satan will be released from his prison and will go out to deceive the nations which are in the four corners of the earth, Gog and Magog, to gather them together to battle, whose number is as the sand of the sea.”*** (Rev 20:7-8)

God's purpose in withdrawing His restraining hand is so that Antichrist's works will lose their subtlety, and will be in open display for all to recognise. Contrasted together will be the works of Antichrist, and those of Christ.

People will have to make a choice. ***“Multitudes, multitudes in the valley of decision! For the day of the LORD is near in the valley of decision.”*** (Joel 3:14) The choice will be quite clear - to repent and turn to Christ, or to continue in lawlessness.

This paves the way for the last series of judgments portrayed in the seven trumpets and the seven bowls of wrath. When God's restraints are lifted, Satan's demon spirits become operative, and turn into God's agents of judgment.

Those who turn to the Lord will be sealed with His seal of ownership, and will know God's protection. Those who continue to follow Antichrist will be brought into the valley of judgment. ***"I will also gather all nations, and bring them down to the Valley of Jehoshaphat; and I will enter into judgment with them there on account of My people,..."*** (Joel 3:2)

The Seven Trumpets & Seven Bowls of Wrath

We concluded in the previous section that the seven trumpets in the first half of Revelation, and the seven bowls of wrath in the second half, are complementary accounts of the end-time judgments of God, and that it is beneficial to study them together so that we might have a fuller understanding.

Before examining the trumpets and bowls of wrath in detail, we will demonstrate the similarity of the subject matter of each.

FIRST TRUMPET Rev 8:7.

Judgment on the earth (church). Hail and fire mingled with blood. Third of trees burnt up. All of the grass burnt up.

FIRST BOWL OF WRATH Rev 16:1-2.

Judgment on the earth (church). Foul and loathsome sore on all men who had the mark of the beast and worshipped his image.

SECOND TRUMPET Rev 8:8-9.

Judgment on the sea (nations). Burning mountain cast into the sea. The sea turned to blood - third of living creatures died a third of ships destroyed.

SECOND BOWL OF WRATH Rev 16:3.

Bowl cast into the sea (nations). Became as the blood of a dead man. Every living creature in the sea died.

THIRD TRUMPET Rev 8:10-11.

A burning star fell into **the rivers and springs of water**, making them bitter. Many men died because of the water.

THIRD BOWL OF WRATH Rev 16:4-7.

Bowls poured out on **rivers and springs of water**. They became blood.

FOURTH TRUMPET Rev 8:12-13.

A third of **sun**, moon, and stars struck, and became darkened.

FOURTH BOWL OF WRATH Rev 16:8-9

Fourth bowl poured out on sun. Men were scorched with great heat.

FIFTH TRUMPET Rev 9:1-12

The pit is opened, and hordes of demon spirits are released. The the light of truth is darkened - mankind is tormented.

FIFTH BOWL OF WRATH Rev 16:10-11.

Bowl poured out on the throne of the beast and his kingdom became full of darkness and torment.

SIXTH TRUMPET Rev 9:13-21.

Four angels at River Euphrates are released to kill a third of mankind with an army of two hundred million.

SIXTH BOWL OF WRATH Rev 16:12-16.

Bowl poured out on River Euphrates to dry up its waters. Demon spirits of deception are released to gather mankind to Armageddon.

SEVENTH TRUMPET Rev 11:15-29.

Proclamation Kingdoms of this world have become the kingdoms of Christ. Temple opened in heaven. **Lightnings, hail, earthquake, thunderings.**

SEVENTH BOWL OF WRATH Rev 16:17-21.

Proclamation from temple in heaven - it is done! Noises, **thunderings, lightnings, and great earthquake.** Great city divided into three. Babylon cast down. Great hailstones from heaven.

THE PREPARATION FOR ONCOMING JUDGMENT

Rev 8:3-5

“Then another angel, having a golden censer, came and stood at the altar. And he was given much incense, that he should offer it with the prayers of all the saints upon the golden altar, which was before the throne. And the smoke of the incense, with the prayers of the saints, ascended before God from the angel's hand. Then the angel took the censer, filled it with fire from the altar, and threw it to the earth. And there were noises, thunderings, lightnings, and an earthquake.”

Even though God is Almighty and invincible, and could easily sweep away all opposition to His kingdom, He has chosen to move in response to the prayers of the saints. It is the Churches' responsibility to initiate God's judgments through authoritative prayer.

However, in this case the angel before the throne is given much incense to mix with the prayers. He who gives the incense is the Lord our Mediator and High Priest, and the incense is the power of the Holy Spirit which is mixed with the prayers of the saints. In response to

the prayers and incense, fire is cast on the earth, signifying the beginning of the last series of judgments.

THE TRUMPETS AND BOWLS COMPARED

THE FIRST TRUMPET

Rev 8:7

“The first angel sounded: And hail and fire followed, mingled with blood, and they were thrown to the earth. And a third of the trees were burned up, and all green grass was burned up.”

THE FIRST BOWL OF WRATH

Rev 16:2

“So the first went and poured out his bowl upon the earth, and a foul and loathsome sore came upon the men who had the mark of the beast and those who worshipped his image.”

The First Trumpet - Rev 8:7

The first trumpet and bowls' judgments fall upon the earth, which is emblematic of the church, compared with the sea, which symbolises the unbelieving nations of the world. The apostle Peter tells us that before the rest of the world is judged, the church must be judged first. *“For the time has come for judgment to begin at the house of God; and if it begins with us first, what will be the end of those who do not obey the gospel of God?”* (1 Pet 4:17)

This judgmental testing of the Church is necessary so that God can righteously attest before all principalities and powers, to those who are faithful to Him, to the end that they might be sealed. It also opens the doorway to repentance for those who have unwittingly submitted to the apostasies of Antichrist.

After the first trumpet angel sounded, *“hail and fire followed, mingled with blood, and they were thrown to the earth.”* - Hail and fire represent severe judgment, and blood the accompanying spiritual death.

“A third of the trees were burned up, and all green grass was burned up” - As stated before in the Bible trees are sometimes used as a symbol for men.

The Symbolism of One Third

In the book of Revelation a *“third part”* is used extensively in God's judgments, as in *“So the four angels...were released to kill a third of mankind.”* (Rev 9:15) Again we see that a literal approach, in God killing billions of people is inappropriate, and the real truth is found in discovering its' symbolic meaning. First, we will examine the symbolic meaning of the number three in the bible, and its' part in God's creation.

In the nature of Gods' creation, number three stands for that which is essentially entire, and complete in its function and purpose. Here are some examples:-

Man is made up of spirit soul and body.
There are three dimensions - width, depth and height.
In time there is past present and future.
Father, Son and Holy Spirit.
Outer court, holy place and the holy of holies.
Land, sea and air.
Matter consists of solids, liquid and gas.

To destroy one part of any of these things takes away the completeness of its true identity and function.

Relating this concept to the killing of a third part of mankind, one third of his makeup, of body soul and spirit, would be put to death. The Greek word '*apokteino*,' 'to kill,' means figuratively, 'to extinguish or bring to nothing.' God's ultimate purpose for creating man was to create a being with whom He could have communion and a personal relationship. The spirit is the essential part of mans' being that is able to communicate with God, and to 'kill' a third part of mankind is to render his spirit inoperative.

God's judgment on those who have rebelled and turned their backs on Him, is to withdraw the quickening of His Spirit, making them spiritually dead and separated from Him.

Because of God's testing judgment, many professing Christians lacking a true commitment, will become disillusioned and fall away. All green grass, or nominal 'Christians' without a firm foundation in Jesus Christ, will abandon the faith.

The First Bowl of Wrath - Rev 16:2

The announcement of the first bowl of wrath judgment tells us that ***"a foul and loathsome sore came upon the men who had the mark of the beast and those who worshipped his image."*** This speaks of bringing into open view the foul stench of humanistic lawlessness and worldliness that has been hidden beneath the surface of the apostate church.

The all-conquering Lord is pictured with a sharp two-edged sword issuing from His mouth. (Rev 1:16) This shows that He will overthrow His enemies with the sword of the Spirit - the word of God. His end-time prophets and teachers will be anointed to present uncompromising truth that will expose the foul and loathsome sore beneath the surface of respectability. Not that they will be alone. Pictures of the end-time conflict portray the Lord leading His spiritual warriors. ***"These will make war with the Lamb, and the Lamb will overcome them, for He is Lord of lords and King of kings; and those who are with Him are called, chosen, and faithful."*** (Rev 17:14)

His prophets and teachers will unveil the truth of the corruption of the apostate church in company with the power of His anointing presence.

THE SECOND TRUMPET

Rev 8:8

“Then the second angel sounded: And something like a great mountain burning with fire was thrown into the sea, and a third of the sea became blood, and a third of the ships were destroyed.”

THE SECOND BOWL OF WRATH

Rev 16:3

“Then the second angel poured out his bowl on the sea, and it became blood as of a dead man; and every living creature in the sea died.

The second trumpet and bowls judgments are directed at the sea, or the godless nations of the world - or more correctly, the worldly system which is under the power of Satan.

The Second Trumpet - Rev 8:8

The second trumpet angel announces, “*something like a great mountain burning with fire was thrown into the sea.*” We find a clue to what that “something” is in the Old Testament, where Jeremiah identifies it as Babylon.

“And I will repay Babylon and all the inhabitants of Chaldea for all the evil they have done in Zion in your sight,” says the LORD. “Behold, I am against you, O destroying mountain, who destroys all the earth,” says the LORD. “And I will stretch out My hand against you, roll you down from the rocks, and make you a burnt mountain.” (Jer 51:24-25)

The mountain burning with fire and cast down, is a confirmation that the time has arrived for the destruction of Babylon the Great, or Antichrist’s secular kingdom.

“and a third of the sea became blood, and a third of the ships were destroyed.” - Antichrist’s secular kingdom is founded on his use of the power of money. In this judgment Antichrist’s control of trade, commerce and the world’s finances are removed. This is evidenced by the destruction of ships which are a symbol of trade and commerce. Man’s pursuit of wealth and power, and the things of the world, are consistently condemned by God. That is why their destruction figures so prominently in the account of Babylon’s fall in Revelation 18.

“And the merchants of the earth will weep and mourn over her, for no one buys their merchandise anymore.” (Rev 18:11)

“For in one hour such great riches came to nothing.’ Every shipmaster, all who travel by ship, sailors, and as many as trade on the sea, stood at a distance and cried out when they saw the smoke of her burning, saying, ‘What is like this great city?’ ‘They threw dust on their heads and cried out, weeping and wailing, and saying, ‘Alas, alas, that great city, in which all who had ships on the sea became rich by her wealth! For in one hour she is made desolate.’” (Rev 18:17-19)

The Second Bowl of Wrath - Rev 16:3

In the first bowl judgment, the emergence of the foul and loathsome sores points to the exposure and demise of the apostate church. This second judgment falls on the corrupted world system, the secular arm of Antichrist's kingdom.

“Then the second angel poured out his bowl on the sea, and it became blood as of a dead man;” - The sea speaks of the totality of Antichrist's reign over his secular kingdom and blood is a symbol of death pointing to the fact that Antichrist's reign is brought to an abrupt end. We shall see later that this is precipitated by the collapse of the world's monetary system.

“and every living creature in the sea died.” - All instruments and agents that Antichrist has used to establish and maintain his kingdom are rendered powerless.

THE THIRD TRUMPET

Rev 8:10-11

“Then the third angel sounded: And a great star fell from heaven, burning like a torch, and it fell on a third of the rivers and on the springs of water. The name of the star is Wormwood. A third of the waters became wormwood, and many men died from the water, because it was made bitter.”

THE THIRD BOWL OF WRATH

Rev 16:4-7

“Then the third angel poured out his bowl on the rivers and springs of water, and they became blood. And I heard the angel of the waters saying: "You are righteous, O Lord, the One who is and who was and who is to be, because You have judged these things. For they have shed the blood of saints and prophets, and You have given them blood to drink. For it is their just due." And I heard another from the altar saying, "Even so, Lord God Almighty, true and righteous are Your judgments.”

The Third Trumpet - Rev 8:10-11

“a great star” - ‘star’ sometimes refers to Satan's fallen angels. E.g. ***“his tail*** (Satan's deception) ***drew a third of the stars of heaven and threw them to the earth.”*** (Rev 12:4) This great star refers to one of Satan's chief angels of deception.

“Fell from Heaven” - Alternatively this may be interpreted as descended from Heaven. The word ‘heaven’ broadly means ‘from above.’ It may refer to the sky, the air, the celestial vault above the atmosphere, or of God's heavenly abode. In this case it refers to the abode of Satan's evil spirits. ***“For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age, against spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places.”*** (Eph 6:12)

“burning like a torch” - Paul warned us, ***“Satan himself transforms himself into an angel of light.”*** (2 Cor 11:14) This spirit of deception will descend like a torch of truth on an ailing church that is hungering for revival or spiritual empowerment.

“it fell on a third of the rivers and on the springs of water” - ‘Rivers’ are a symbol for the channels of spiritual life and truth that feed the church. ‘Springs’ are a symbol for the source of the rivers of truth - the bible colleges, seminaries, and institutions entrusted with training pastors and dispensing spiritual truth. An example of this is the academic “higher criticism” of the bible which cast much doubt on traditional authorship and content.

“The name of the star is Wormwood. A third of the waters became wormwood, and many men died from the water, because it was made bitter.” - In the Old Testament *wormwood* was associated with bitterness poison and death. This is the general effect of wormwood on the church. Truth is poisoned by deception, bringing about the bitterness of spiritual death.

The Third Bowl of Wrath - Rev 16:4

The third bowl of wrath judgment tells us the result of the spirit of deception falling on the rivers and streams - *“Then the third angel poured out his bowl on the rivers and springs of water, and they became blood.”* Blood is a symbol of spiritual death. The sources of light and truth in the church are contaminated with death. Instead of dispensing light and truth, they become agents of spiritual death.

The justice behind God’s judgment is now explained.

Rev 16:6

“For they have shed the blood of saints and prophets, and You have given them blood to drink. For it is their just due.” - The church has become entrenched in apostasy because of the falseness of many of its leaders - those who have been enthroned in their positions of authority because of their worldly qualifications, rather than because they have been formed and anointed by the Lord. It is not the unbelieving world that has persecuted and ‘slain’ the Lord’s true prophets and teachers. It is the false apostles, prophets, and teachers, who vehemently oppose those who expose the falsity of their positions, and the corruption in the church. Those who have opposed light and truth will be overtaken with spiritual death as *“their just due.”*

THE FOURTH TRUMPET

Rev 8:12

“Then the fourth angel sounded: And a third of the sun was struck, a third of the moon, and a third of the stars, so that a third of them were darkened. A third of the day did not shine, and likewise the night.”

THE FOURTH BOWL OF WRATH

Rev 16:8-9

“Then the fourth angel poured out his bowl on the sun, and power was given to him to scorch men with fire. And men were scorched with great heat, and they blasphemed the name of God who has power over these plagues; and they did not repent and give Him glory.”

The Fourth Trumpet - Rev 8:12 and The Fourth Bowl of Wrath Rev - 16:8-9

In the sixth seal, the sun, moon, and stars represented positions of high authority in the world. The darkening of the sun, moon, and stars told us that calamity would fall on all that was exalted in the world, and the light of their glory would be cast down.

However, as previously mentioned, the meaning of symbols may vary according to the context in which they are used. In this case, the sun, moon, and stars symbolise spiritual light and truth emanating from God, Jesus, and His anointed servants.

The same symbolic application is used by Isaiah in this prophecy to the end-time church: ***"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 an everlasting light, and your God your glory. Your sun shall no longer go down, nor shall your moon withdraw itself; for the LORD will be your everlasting light, and the days of your mourning shall be ended."*** (Isa 60:19-20)

Concerning the operation of the light of truth in the fourth trumpet and fourth bowl of wrath, the two judgments appear to contradict each other. In the fourth trumpet the light of spiritual truth is dimmed within the apostate church, whereas in the fourth bowl of wrath the searing light of truth is focused on the sin of individual people.

Fourth Trumpet - Light and truth are withdrawn. ***"a third of the sun was struck, a third of the moon, and a third of the stars, so that a third of them were darkened."*** (Rev 8:12)

Why? Jesus said, ***"...this is the condemnation, that the light has come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil."*** (John 3:19)

A principle of God's judgment is to give everyone according to the desire of his heart. They refused to hear His words because they loved darkness and followed the dictates of their hearts. And so they are inflicted with stumbling darkness.

Fourth Bowl of Wrath - ***"And men were scorched with great heat."*** (Rev 16:9) Men were seared with the heat of God's judgmental disclosure of their wickedness. Some respected leaders will be shown to have false authority, others - fraudulence, promiscuity, lawless disobedience, and all kinds of hidden impropriety. In spite of this, there will be little repentance. ***"they blasphemed the name of God who has power over these plagues; and they did not repent and give Him glory."*** (Rev 16:9)

The Final Three Woes

Rev 8:13.

Before the final three judgments, an angel warns of increased severity and distress. ***"And I looked, and I heard an angel flying through the midst of heaven, saying with a loud voice, "Woe, woe, woe to the inhabitants of the earth, because of the remaining blasts of the trumpet of the three angels who are about to sound!"***

Revelation Chapter 9 and Revelation Chapter 16:10-16

THE FIFTH TRUMPET

Rev 9:1-11

“Then the fifth angel sounded: And I saw a star fallen from heaven to the earth. To him was given the key to the bottomless pit. And he opened the bottomless pit, and smoke arose out of the pit like the smoke of a great furnace. So the sun and the air were darkened because of the smoke of the pit. Then out of the smoke locusts came upon the earth. And to them was given power, as the scorpions of the earth have power. They were commanded not to harm the grass of the earth, or any green thing, or any tree, but only those men who do not have the seal of God on their foreheads. And they were not given authority to kill them, but to torment them for five months. And their torment was like the torment of a scorpion when it strikes a man. In those days men will seek death and will not find it; they will desire to die, and death will flee from them. The shape of the locusts was like horses prepared for battle. On their heads were crowns of something like gold, and their faces were like the faces of men. They had hair like women's hair, and their teeth were like lions' teeth. And they had breastplates like breastplates of iron, and the sound of their wings was like the sound of chariots with many horses running into battle. They had tails like scorpions, and there were stings in their tails. Their power was to hurt men five months. And they had as king over them the angel of the bottomless pit, whose name in Hebrew is Abaddon, but in Greek he has the name Apollyon.”

THE FIFTH BOWL OF WRATH

Rev 16:10-11

“Then the fifth angel poured out his bowl on the throne of the beast, and his kingdom became full of darkness; and they gnawed their tongues because of the pain. They blasphemed the God of heaven because of their pains and their sores, and did not repent of their deeds.”

The fifth trumpet and bowl judgments focus on Satan's evil spirits being released from the bottomless pit to torment all those who do not have God's seal of protection.

The Fifth Trumpet - Rev 9:1-11

“And I saw a star fallen from heaven to the earth. To him was given the key to the bottomless pit” - The word “fallen” may also be translated ‘descended.’ A star, or angel, is given a key (or authority) to open the bottomless pit, the abode of Satan and his evil spirits.

The loosing of Satan's evil spirits from the bottomless pit heralds a time of increased satanic activity at the end of the age.

“he opened the bottomless pit, and smoke arose out of the pit like the smoke of a great furnace” - The smoke as from a great furnace represents a pall of spiritual darkness, deception, and confusion, that will settle on the apostate church and anti-Christian world.

“the sun and the air were darkened because of the smoke of the pit” - The sun and air symbolise light and spiritual truth, which are obscured and counterfeited by heresies, false prophecies and teachings and lying signs and wonders.

“Then out of the smoke locusts came upon the earth. And to them was given power, as the scorpions of the earth have power... They had tails like scorpions, and there were stings in their tails” - This prophecy tells us that there will be greatly increased demonic activity towards the close of the age. The ‘locusts’ are likened to scorpions because they have stinging tails. Tails are a symbol for lies, highlighting the fact that the chief weapon of demon spirits is lies and deception.

The locusts are commanded not to ***“harm the grass of the earth, or any green thing, or any tree,”*** showing that they are not real locusts, but are in fact a symbol for demon spirits.

This picture of destroying locusts, or demon spirits is mirrored in the first and second chapters of the prophet Joel, where they are referred to as God’s army of destruction. ***“So I will restore to you the years that the swarming locust has eaten, the crawling locust, the consuming locust, and the chewing locust, my great army which I sent among you.”*** (Joel 2:25)

Although demon spirits are God’s instruments of judgment, they have the capacity to destroy the power of the flesh, and open the door to repentance. For instance, one who harbours hatred and resentment opens the door to receiving spirits of hatred, resentment, and death - a torturing debility that forces a person to abandon his resentment and anger. The continuing cycle of sin, torment, and repentance, ‘burns out’ the power of the flesh, leading to refinement and spiritual growth.

Various symbolic attributes are used to portray the character of the demons.

“like horses prepared for battle” - horses are symbols of war. They are Satan’s spiritual warriors.

“On their heads were crowns of something like gold” - Crowns of gold speak of God-given authority. But these are ‘something like’ gold - telling us that they have false authority.

“their faces were like the faces of men” - Their titles and activities reflect human traits. E.g. spirits of hatred, lust, envy, unforgiveness, temper, and so on.

“They had hair like women’s hair” - Like the mythical sirens, they entice.

“their teeth were like lions’ teeth” - Despite their apparent benign enticing, their effect is destructive.

“And they had breastplates like breastplates of iron” - The locusts have impregnable defences against the power of man. Only testimony to their defeat by the cross of Jesus will strip away their false authority, and tear down their strongholds.

“the sound of their wings was like the sound of chariots with many horses running into battle” - The activity of demon spirits often generates fear because the symptoms they produce

are exaggerated so that they seem to have great power suggested by this reading. However they have no power over those grounded in the truth of Christ's victory over Satan.

The attacks of the demon spirits will be limited to those who do not have the seal of God's ownership.

“And they were not given authority to kill them, but to torment them for five months.” - Those without God's seal will suffer torment for ***‘five months.’*** The number five symbolises man's weakness met with God's grace. This is not the overall time of this demonic attack on the world, but the time of each individual experience - a measured time cut short by God's grace.

“men will seek death and will not find it; they will desire to die, and death will flee from them” - The general effect of the demonic attacks will be to create nervous disorders, emotional and psychological distress, precipitating thoughts of suicide.

“they had as king over them the angel of the bottomless pit, whose name in Hebrew is Abaddon, but in Greek he has the name Apollyon” - The meaning of the Hebrew ‘Abaddon,’ and the Greek ‘Apollyon,’ is DESTROYER. Satan is ‘the destroyer’ - the chief angel of the bottomless pit, and king over all demon spirits.

The Fifth Bowl of Wrath - Rev 16:10-11

“Then the fifth angel poured out his bowl on the throne of the beast” - In Revelation 13, it is said that ***“the dragon (Satan) gave him (the beast, or Antichrist) his power, his throne, and great authority.”*** (Rev 13:2)

The throne of the beast is the ruling centre from which he operates throughout the world.

We shall see later that Antichrists' kingdom has two components - one secular, and the other religious. The secular component operates through the great banking and trading organisations which are the controllers of world finance. The throne of Antichrist's religious kingdom is the Papacy of the Roman Catholic Church, and the heads of all false churches and religions.

“and his kingdom became full of darkness” - In Revelation Chapter 18, a great angel from heaven proclaims, ***“Babylon the great is fallen, is fallen, and has become a dwelling place of demons, a prison for every foul spirit, and a cage for every unclean and hated bird! For all the nations have drunk of the wine of the wrath of her fornication, the kings of the earth have committed fornication with her, and the merchants of the earth have become rich through the abundance of her luxury.”*** (Rev 18:2-3)

Antichrist's kingdom becomes prey for every tormenting demon spirit of darkness and gloom.

“and they gnawed their tongues because of the pain. They blasphemed the God of heaven because of their pains and their sores” - They were confronted with the public disclosure of their evil deeds, and the frustration and hopelessness of their future.

“and did not repent of their deeds” - Despite their obvious chastisement, few will understand its purpose and turn in repentance to the Lord.

THE SIXTH TRUMPET

Rev 9:13-21

“Then the sixth angel sounded: And I heard a voice from the four horns of the golden altar which is before God, saying to the sixth angel who had the trumpet, **“Release the four angels who are bound at the great river Euphrates.”** So the four angels, who had been prepared for the hour and day and month and year, were released to kill a third of mankind. Now the number of the army of the horsemen was two hundred million; I heard the number of them. And thus I saw the horses in the vision: those who sat on them had breastplates of fiery red, hyacinth blue, and sulphur yellow; and the heads of the horses were like the heads of lions; and out of their mouths came fire, smoke, and brimstone. **By these three plagues** a third of mankind was killed-- by the fire and the smoke and the brimstone which came out of their mouths. For their power is in their mouth and in their tails; for their tails are like serpents, having heads; and with them they do harm. But the rest of mankind, who were not killed by these plagues, did not repent of the works of their hands, that they should not worship demons, and idols of gold, silver, brass, stone, and wood, which can neither see nor hear nor walk. And they did not repent of their murders or their sorceries or their sexual immorality or their thefts.

THE SIXTH BOWL OF WRATH

Rev 16:12-16

“Then the sixth angel poured out his bowl on the great river Euphrates, and its water was dried up, so that the way of the kings from the east might be prepared. And I saw **three unclean spirits like frogs coming out of the mouth of the dragon, out of the mouth of the beast, and out of the mouth of the false prophet.** For they are spirits of demons, performing signs, which go out to the kings of the earth and of the whole world, to gather them to the battle of that great day of God Almighty. “Behold, I am coming as a thief. Blessed is he who watches, and keeps his garments, lest he walk naked and they see his shame.” And they gathered them together to the place called in Hebrew, Armageddon.”

Both the sixth trumpet and sixth bowl judgments are centred on the “great river Euphrates,” which was a natural barrier separating Israel and the nation of Babylon - a type of spiritual Babylon, or Antichrist’s kingdom. In each case the forces of spiritual Babylon are loosed, so that they can aggress on all those in the world who are not sealed by God.

The Sixth Trumpet - Rev 9:13-21

The sixth trumpet judgment starts with the command to **“*release the four angels who are bound at the great river Euphrates.*”** - From this statement we may observe these facts.

- The location of the angels is at the great river Euphrates, the border of the Babylonian Empire. Since this is an end-time judgment, we may assume that the angels are associated with spiritual Babylon, or Antichrist’s kingdom.

- The angels had been bound and stopped from working, pointing to the fact that the kingdom of Antichrist was being restrained in its operation.
- At the command to release them, we can assume that the restraints imposed on the operation of the kingdom of Antichrist are lifted. We may associate this with Paul's statement to the Thessalonians, ***“For the mystery of lawlessness (Antichrist) is already at work; only He who now restrains will do so until He is taken out of the way.”*** (II Th 2:7) The loosening of the four angels signals the release of the restraints imposed on Antichrist, and on his army of deceiving spirits.

“So the four angels, who had been prepared for the hour and day and month and year, were released” - They were released at a specific time designated by the Lord.

“to kill a third of mankind” - To kill, that is to render inoperative, a third part of mankind, is to take away the essential purpose of his being. In this case it is his spirit through which he communicates with God.

“Now the number of the army of the horsemen was two hundred million” - Like the locusts, these represent a myriad of demon spirits, but specifically, spirits of Antichrist. Although they belong to Antichrist's army of destruction, they are in fact ordered and measured by God, doing His work in overthrowing the kingdom of Antichrist.

“I saw the horses in the vision:” - horses are symbols of God's agents sent forth to accomplish his will. In this case they are demon spirits of Satan that are being used to accomplish His purposes.

“those who sat on them had breastplates of fiery red, hyacinth blue, and sulphur yellow” - These colours relate to the plagues that are about to come; - ***“fiery red,”*** to the fire, ***“hyacinth blue,”*** to the smoke, and ***“sulphur yellow”*** to the brimstone.

“the heads of the horses were like the heads of lions” - The lion's heads, symbolising their capacity to devour.

“out of their mouths came fire, smoke, and brimstone” - Combined, ***“fire, smoke, and brimstone,”*** represent harsh judgment from God. Out of their mouths deception issues forth, resulting in false teaching and prophecies; that pollute the truth of the gospel.

“By these three plagues a third of mankind was killed” - The lies and deceptions that spew forth from the mouths of the demon spirits leave a portion of mankind spiritually dead. The judgment is directed at 'mankind' outside the true church, but does include those in the apostate church who have resisted the truth, and opposed the true saints. In general judgment is directed at all those who have rejected the truth, and have accepted the lies of Antichrist.

“By the fire and the smoke and the brimstone which came out of their mouths.” - The reading now refers to separate plagues.

“Fire” - speaks to total destruction.

“Smoke” - symbolises deceit and deception that clouds and obscures the truth.

“Brimstone” - is another name for sulphur. Compounds of sulphur are combustible, producing a toxic poisonous vapour. This speaks of the heresies and false doctrines that poison the truth.

“For their power is in their mouth and in their tails; for their tails are like serpents, having heads; and with them they do harm.” - As with the locusts, their power was in their tails, or the lies. Tails are a symbol of lies and deception, and deception is the main tool that Satan uses to destroy mankind.

After bearing the weight of God’s judgment, there will be little repentance.

“But the rest of mankind, who were not killed by these plagues, did not repent of the works of their hands, that they should not worship demons, and idols of gold, silver, brass, stone, and wood, which can neither see nor hear nor walk. And they did not repent of their murders or their sorceries or their sexual immorality or their thefts.”

The following reading explains how people have opened themselves to God’s judgment.

“The coming of the lawless one is according to the working of Satan, with all power, signs, and lying wonders, and with all unrighteous deception among those who perish, because they did not receive the love of the truth, that they might be saved. And for this reason God will send them strong delusion, that they should believe the lie, that they all may be condemned who did not believe the truth but had pleasure in unrighteousness.” (II Th 2:9-12)

They do not love the truth, or sound doctrine, but turn instead to that which is unchallenging to their ears - just as Paul warned. **“For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine, but according to their own desires, because they have itching ears, they will heap up for themselves teachers; and they will turn their ears away from the truth, and be turned aside to fables.”** (2 Tim 4:3-4) By receiving to themselves ‘unrighteous deception,’ they will bear the result of their folly.

The Sixth Bowl of Wrath - Rev 13:12-16

The sixth bowl of wrath judgment also focuses on the **“great river Euphrates.”** **“Then the sixth angel poured out his bowl on the great river Euphrates, and its water was dried up, so that the way of the kings from the east might be prepared.”** - The great river Euphrates formed a natural barrier separating Israel from her Babylonian enemies. Applying this to spiritual Babylon at the close of the age, drying up the Euphrates indicates the removal of all spiritual barriers that have been restraining the operation of Antichrist. Paul says the main cause of this is the “falling away” or a diminishing of spiritual zeal and commitment. **“Let no one deceive you by any means; for that Day will not come unless the falling away comes first,”** (2 Thess 2:3) This paves the way for the full development of Antichrist’s kingdom - particularly in the apostate church. God allows this to happen for three reasons.

1. This is a time of choice, where all must decide who they will follow - Christ or Antichrist.
2. The tares, or those in Antichrist’s kingdom are being gathered together to face judgment.

3. This paves the way for the final confrontation of Christ and His faithful followers, and Antichrist and his confederacy, at the battle of Armageddon. And just as the Egyptians were gathered together for final destruction at the Red Sea, in like manner Antichrist and his followers will be destroyed at Armageddon.

“so that the way of the kings from the east might be prepared” - The kings of the east are the leaders in Antichrist’s kingdom. In the church, it is those with positions of false authority - false apostles, prophets, and evangelists - people who have gained world-wide acceptance and acclaim, and yet whose ministries are not approved by the Lord. When the restraint is removed the way is paved to their world-wide acceptance.

“And I saw three unclean spirits like frogs coming out of the mouth of the dragon, out of the mouth of the beast, and out of the mouth of the false prophet” - The counterfeit trinity of Satan combines to send forth demon spirits, which are said to be like frogs - emblematic of their vileness and odiousness.

“For they are spirits of demons, performing signs (or false miracles and wonders) which go out to the kings of the earth (the church) and of the whole world” - Their target is the leaders of the world and the harlot church, and their aim is to entice and seduce them through counterfeit signs, wonders, and miracles.

“to gather them to the battle of that great day of God Almighty...And they gathered them together to the place called in Hebrew, Armageddon” - The battle of Armageddon is not a physical battle, but a final spiritual conflict between Christ and His truth, and Antichrist, who through His forces of darkness and deception is endeavouring to destroy the Church.

“Behold, I am coming as a thief.” - Part of Antichrist’s stratagem is a deception concerning end-time events. Premillennial doctrine presents the view that the Church will be raptured before the tribulation which is a physically tormenting tribulation period; a thousand year reign of Christ reigning on earth; a revolt and physical battle of Armageddon, where physical armies of the world surround Christ’s saints who are gathered in Jerusalem; Antichrist’s defeat; literal fire pouring down from heaven, and a final rapture. No wonder Christ’s coming is likened to the stealth of a thief - unnoticed and unexpected.

The truth is that the battle of Armageddon is under way, and forces of deception are now surrounding the Church. That is why Christ issues the warning: ***“Blessed is he who watches, and keeps his garments, lest he walk naked and they see his shame.”***

SECTION 5

PRELUDE TO THE OPENING OF THE SEVENTH TRUMPET

Revelation Chapter 10:1 - 11:14

Chapter 10:1 - 11:14, is a parenthesis, or break in the Trumpets narrative, presenting us with a prelude to the opening of the Seventh Trumpet judgment. Towards the end of it we are informed that the Seventh Trumpet judgment is the culmination of all prophecy, and of God's judgmental dealings with man on earth prior to the Last Judgment separating the saved from the unsaved.

Rev 10:1-7

"I saw still another mighty angel coming down from heaven, clothed with a cloud. And a rainbow was on his head, his face was like the sun, and his feet like pillars of fire. He had a little book open in his hand. And he set his right foot on the sea and his left foot on the land, and cried with a loud voice, as when a lion roars. When he cried out, seven thunders uttered their voices. Now when the seven thunders uttered their voices, I was about to write; but I heard a voice from heaven saying to me, "Seal up the things which the seven thunders uttered, and do not write them." The angel whom I saw standing on the sea and on the land raised up his hand to heaven and swore by Him who lives forever and ever, who created heaven and the things that are in it, the earth and the things that are in it, and the sea and the things that are in it, that there should be delay no longer but in the days of the sounding of the seventh angel, when he is about to sound, the mystery of God would be finished, as He declared to His servants the prophets."

The vision opens with a picture of the Lord Jesus Christ descending from heaven. This is not His visible appearance when he comes in the clouds to rapture away His saints. Here, His Spirit and His glory visit the scene on earth, to bring the overwhelming light of end-time truth, to restore and glorify His Church, and to judge and destroy Antichrist and his kingdom. ***"And then the lawless one (Antichrist) will be revealed, whom the Lord will consume with the breath of His mouth and destroy with the brightness of His coming."*** (II Th 2:8)

Again, His attributes are symbolically portrayed.

"clothed with a cloud" - Emblematic of the Lord coming in judgment. ***"Then I looked, and behold, a white cloud, and on the cloud sat One like the Son of Man, having on His head a golden crown, and in His hand a sharp sickle."*** (Rev 14:14), (Isa 19:1)

"a rainbow was on his head" - He is the Lord of the New Covenant of grace and mercy.

"his face was like the sun" - Similar to Rev 1:16, where it says, ***"His countenance was like the sun shining in its strength."*** His glory, His light and truth will be reflected.

"his feet like pillars of fire" - The pillar of fire led the children of Israel out of Egypt. At this time His Church will know His presence and His guidance.

“he set his right foot on the sea and his left foot on the land” - The sea represents the unchristian peoples of the world, and the land represents the Church. Setting His feet on the land and sea, shows us that His culminating work embraces both believers and unbelievers.

“cried with a loud voice, as when a lion roars” - With royal authority as Lord of lords and King of kings.

“When he cried out, seven thunders uttered their voices” - Thunders represent judgment, and seven, completion. The seventh trumpet judgment is the perfect completion of God’s judgmental dealings with mankind on earth.

“Seal up the things which the seven thunders uttered, and do not write them” - John was about to write down the details of the seventh judgment uttered by the seven thunders, but was told to seal them up. Similarly, Daniel was told to seal the details of the end time until an appropriate time before the close of the age. ***“But you, Daniel, shut up the words, and seal the book until the time of the end; many shall run to and fro, and knowledge shall increase.”*** (Dan 12:4)

“raised up his hand to heaven and swore by Him who lives forever and ever...that there should be delay no longer” - The Lord raises His hand to Almighty God in a solemn oath, that there will now be no delay in commencing the seventh judgment.

“in the days of the sounding of the seventh angel, when he is about to sound, the mystery of God would be finished, as He declared to His servants the prophets” - At the point of the angel sounding the commencement of the seventh judgment, all the mysteries of God’s dealing with man will have been revealed by His end-time prophets. We are assured that nothing is kept back, or hidden from those who are about to face judgment. ***“Surely the Lord GOD does nothing, unless He reveals His secret to His servants the prophets.”*** (Amos 3:7)

The Little Book

Rev 10:8-11

“Then the voice which I heard from heaven spoke to me again and said, “Go, take the little book which is open in the hand of the angel who stands on the sea and on the earth.” And I went to the angel and said to him, “Give me the little book.” And he said to me, “Take and eat it; and it will make your stomach bitter, but it will be as sweet as honey in your mouth.” Then I took the little book out of the angel's hand and ate it, and it was as sweet as honey in my mouth. But when I had eaten it, my stomach became bitter. And he said to me, “You must prophesy again about many peoples, nations, tongues, and kings.”

John, as the representative of all end-time prophets, is asked to take a little book, and eat its contents. At the appropriate time towards the end of the age, the Lord’s anointed prophets will be asked to do the same. They will be presented prophetic truth concerning the seventh judgment, and they will be asked to ‘eat it,’ or mentally digest it so that it becomes part of them.

It will be sweet to the tasting, because it is pleasing to the spirit to receive revelation from the Lord. But it will be bitter when the revealed truth is digested, and the full implication of the awful judgment awaiting unrepentant mankind is realised. `

“And he said to me, “You must prophesy again about many peoples, nations, tongues, and kings” - As the mysteries of the seventh judgment are unravelled to them, they are to “prophesy again,” unflinchingly and openly declaring their revelations.

Revelation Chapter 11

Measuring the Church

Rev 11:1-2

“Then I was given a reed like a measuring rod. And the angel stood, saying, “Rise and measure the temple of God, the altar, and those who worship there. But leave out the court which is outside the temple, and do not measure it, for it has been given to the Gentiles. And they will tread the holy city underfoot for forty-two months.”

The angel wasn’t asking John to measure the physical temple at Jerusalem, which at this time was already destroyed. Again we are required to interpret the metaphoric language to ascertain the true message behind the instruction.

“measure the temple of God” - Metaphorically, the temple is the church of God. The angel’s instruction to John was not a command that he was to obey literally. Rather, he was to contemplate the legitimacy of those in the church - to see who was worthy of being set apart to God.

John’s instruction can be seen as an indication that God will ‘measure’ the church before the seventh judgment to ascertain who are His true children, who will be shielded from the coming judgment.

“the altar, and those who worship there” - In the New Testament Church, the altar is the cross of Jesus Christ. And this provides us with the focal point in testing the legitimacy of all true worshippers. To all true children of God, the cross is central to their justification, to their approaching God’s throne of grace, to their worship, their ministry, their victory over sin - in fact, to every aspect of their lives. God will judge us in the light of our attitude to the cross in two areas.

- **Our relationship with other members of the body:** We are all unworthy, for all have sinned. We have all been partakers of God’s unconditional love, His grace, and forgiveness. Therefore if we harbour hatred, unforgiveness, or condemning judgments and resentments against others, we are violating the cross of Christ. For instance, if we do not forgive, we are not forgiven, and consequentially we must face judgment.
- **Our relationship with Christ:** Jesus said, ***“If anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me. For whoever desires to save his (self) life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake will find it*** (his true spiritual life - that of Christ dwelling in him.)” (Matt 16:24-25)

“But leave out the court which is outside the temple, and do not measure it, for it has been given to the Gentiles” - To ascertain the meaning of the ***“court which is outside the temple,”*** we must turn to the plan of the former temple at Jerusalem. The outer court of the Gentiles was not a part of the original temple, but an addition by Herod.

To an observer it looked to be part of the temple, and yet it was a ‘tacked on’ addition for Gentiles or unbelievers. Symbolically, it represents all the religious trappings that have been introduced into the church by man - having the appearance of legitimacy, but in fact, apostate. It represents all those who present an outward show of Christianity, but have no true roots in the cross of Jesus Christ, and whose works are of the flesh rather than the Spirit.

“they will tread the holy city underfoot for forty-two months” - The symbolic significance of the time period of forty two months, (also referred in the Bible to as 3½ years, 1,260 days, and times, time, and ½ a time) is a time of tribulation or privation, ended by God when it has fulfilled its purpose.

E.g. it was the period of drought proclaimed by Elijah. ***“But I tell you truly, many widows were in Israel in the days of Elijah, when the heaven was shut up three years and six months, and there was a great famine throughout all the land;”*** (Luke 4:24-26)

It was the period of time that Antiochus iv, (a type of Antichrist), persecuted the Jews and desecrated the temple.

The number 3½ became a symbol for a time of tribulation (of indefinite length).

In the reference above, ***“they”*** refers to the Gentiles in the outer court - or symbolically, the tares, or the fleshly or worldly ‘Christians,’ who are subjected to Antichrist rather than Christ. It is not the world that threatens the legitimacy of the true Church, but the false ‘Christians’ in her midst.

The “forty two months” above, is the whole period during the history of the Church, where she has been trodden down by those in her midst who have been under the power of Antichrist. This was evident even in John’s day, when he warned, ***“Little children, it is the last hour; and as you have heard that the Antichrist is coming, even now many antichrists (those under the power of Antichrist) have come, by which we know that it is the last hour. They went out from us (left the true faith), but they were not (really) of us; for if they had been of us, they would have continued with us; but they went out that they might be made manifest, that none of them were of us.”*** (I Jn 2:18-19)

When John is told to ***“leave out the court which is outside the temple,”*** we are shown that this group of pseudo Christians will be exempt from God’s protection in the time of the seventh judgment.

The Two Witnesses

Rev 11:3-12

“And I will give power to my two witnesses, and they will prophesy one thousand two hundred and sixty days, clothed in sackcloth. These are the two olive trees and the two lampstands standing before the God of the earth. And if anyone wants to harm them, fire proceeds from their mouth and devours their enemies. And if anyone wants to harm them, he must be killed in this manner. These have power to shut heaven, so that no rain

falls in the days of their prophecy; and they have power over waters to turn them to blood, and to strike the earth with all plagues, as often as they desire. Now when they finish their testimony, the beast that ascends out of the bottomless pit will make war against them, overcome them, and kill them. And their dead bodies will lie in the street of the great city which spiritually is called Sodom and Egypt, where also our Lord was crucified. Then those from the peoples, tribes, tongues, and nations will see their dead bodies three-and-a-half days, and not allow their dead bodies to be put into graves. And those who dwell on the earth will rejoice over them, make merry, and send gifts to one another, because these two prophets tormented those who dwell on the earth. Now after the three-and-a-half days the breath of life from God entered them, and they stood on their feet, and great fear fell on those who saw them. And they heard a loud voice from heaven saying to them, "Come up here." And they ascended to heaven in a cloud, and their enemies saw them."

The main clue to the identity of the *"two witnesses"* is the reference to them being able to withhold rain, and to turn rivers into blood.

Elijah told King Ahab that there would be no rain until he commanded it. *"And Elijah the Tishbite, of the inhabitants of Gilead, said to Ahab, "As the LORD God of Israel lives, before whom I stand, there shall not be dew nor rain these years, except at my word."* (1 Kings 17:1)

As commanded by God, Moses struck the rivers of Egypt with his rod, and they turned to blood. *"And Moses and Aaron did so, just as the LORD commanded. So he lifted up the rod and struck the waters that were in the river, in the sight of Pharaoh and in the sight of his servants. And all the waters that were in the river were turned to blood."* (Ex 7:20-21)

Moses was appointed to deliver God's word to the children of Israel, and so he represents the WORD. Elijah was the first major prophet, and so represents the SPIRIT OF PROPHECY. The two witnesses to Jesus Christ are the word of God and the spirit of prophesy. Together they represent the prophetic teaching of the word of God. The two witnesses are not two figures that will come upon the scene at the end of the age. The ministry of prophetic teaching that has been greatly diminished, will return with life and vitality as the end of the age approaches.

*"And I will give power to my two witnesses, and they will prophesy one thousand two hundred and sixty days, clothed in sackcloth. These are the two olive trees and the two lampstands standing before the God of the earth." - The "two witnesses" are also described metaphorically as *"the two olive trees and the two lamp stands."**

This imagery is taken from Zechariah. *"And he said to me, "What do you see?" So I said, "I am looking, and there is a lampstand of solid gold with a bowl on top of it, and on the stand seven lamps with seven pipes to the seven lamps. Two olive trees are by it, one at the right of the bowl and the other at its left." So I answered and spoke to the angel who talked with me, saying, "What are these, my lord?" Then the angel who talked with me answered and said to me, "Do you not know what these are?" And I said, "No, my lord." So he answered and said to me: "This is the word of the LORD to Zerubbabel: 'Not by might nor by power, but by My Spirit,' says the LORD of hosts."* (Zech 4:2-6)

The two olive trees represent the two witnesses, the lamp stands the church and the oil the Holy Spirit. This is a picture of the anointed ministry of prophetic teaching being dispensed to the church. The reading concludes, ***“Not by might nor by power, but by My Spirit,’ says the LORD of hosts.”*** By this we are shown that Antichrist will be destroyed and the Church restored, not by the power of man, but by the Holy Spirit. And the dispensers of the Spirit will be the two witnesses, the spirit of prophecy, and the anointed teaching of the word.

Rev 11:5

“And if anyone wants to harm them, fire proceeds from their mouth and devours their enemies. And if anyone wants to harm them, he must be killed in this manner.”

The ministry of the “two witnesses” will be vehemently opposed by Satan because they are the biggest threat to his kingdom. They must oppose him by wielding the weapons of warfare in authoritative prayer to cast down his strongholds. ***“For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal but mighty in God for pulling down strongholds, casting down arguments and every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God, bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ...”*** (2 Cor 10:4-5)

Some of these weapons are,

- The power and authority invested in the name of Jesus Christ.
- The sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God.
- The blood of Jesus Christ.
- The authority to bind and loosen. ***“Assuredly, I say to you, whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven.”*** (Matt 18:18)
- The authority to revoke all curses.
- To rebuke and rebut all obstacles as Jesus rebuked the fig tree.

By the use of these weapons in authoritative prayer, Satan’s strongholds are cast down and his opposition is ‘killed,’ or brought to nothing. Of course it must be understood that all authoritative prayer must be initiated and guided by the Holy Spirit.

Rev 11:6

“These have power to shut heaven, so that no rain falls in the days of their prophecy; and they have power over waters to turn them to blood, and to strike the earth with all plagues, as often as they desire.”

The above words aid our understanding in two ways. Firstly, they enable us to identify the two witnesses as Moses, representing the word of truth, and Elijah, representing the spirit of prophecy. Secondly, they show us how they are to maintain their ministry in the face of opposition by Satan.

“These have power to shut heaven, so that no rain falls in the days of their prophecy” - The Greek word translated power here is *exousia*, which should have been translated as authority.

The two witnesses have the authority to use the power of the name of Jesus Christ, and all other spiritual weapons to negate Satan's attacks against their ministry.

The word 'heaven,' has the root meaning 'above,' and may refer to God's abode, the atmosphere, the 'heavenlies,' or the domain of Satan and his *"rulers of darkness."* *"For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age, against spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places."* (Eph 6:12)

In this case 'heaven' refers to the domain of Satan, and the 'rain' as waves of deceit and deception that oppose their ministry of truth. Jesus told His disciples, *"...how can one enter a strong man's house and plunder his goods, unless he first binds the strong man? And then he will plunder his house."* (Matt 12:29) Using the authority to bind or loosen entrusted to us, the two witnesses may prevent the rain of deception from affecting their ministries.

"they have power over waters to turn them to blood - The power to expose waters of heresy and deception showing them to be what they are in truth - waters of death.

"and to strike the earth with all plagues, as often as they desire." - Figuratively, the word 'plague' means, an inflicted calamity, or a wound of some kind. They have power to direct authoritative prayer at those who oppose their ministry.

Jesus gave us the right to use the authority of His name to tread down and render inoperative all of the power and works of Satan opposing us. *"Behold, I give you the authority to trample on serpents and scorpions, and over all the power of the enemy, and nothing shall by any means hurt you."* (Luke 10:19-20)

We have an example in Paul's ministry. *"Then Saul, who also is called Paul, filled with the Holy Spirit, looked intently at him. and said, "O full of all deceit and all fraud, you son of the devil, you enemy of all righteousness, will you not cease perverting the straight ways of the Lord? "And now, indeed, the hand of the Lord is upon you, and you shall be blind, not seeing the sun for a time." And immediately a dark mist fell on him, and he went around seeking someone to lead him by the hand."* (Acts 13:9-11)

At the start of the main reading, it is said, *"they will prophesy one thousand two hundred and sixty days, clothed in sackcloth."* This 1260 days is the same period where the Church has been trodden down by carnality and worldliness. The voice of prophetic teaching has been present in the Church, but "clothed in sackcloth," or in mourning because of the presence of the spirit of Antichrist in her midst.

But thankfully, the word of God promises that the ministry of the prophet and teacher will be restored in power at the close of the age. In the last chapter in the Old Testament, Malachi prophesies, *"Remember the Law of Moses, My servant, which I commanded him in Horeb for all Israel, with the statutes and judgments. Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the LORD."* (Mal 4:4-5)

And in response to His disciples question, *"Why then do the scribes say that Elijah must come first,"* Jesus answered, *"Indeed, Elijah is coming (future tense) first and will restore all things. "But I say to you that Elijah has come already (past tense), and they did not know him but did to him whatever they wished. Likewise the Son of Man is also about to*

suffer at their hands." Then the disciples understood that He spoke to them of John the Baptist. (Matt 17:10-13)

When Jesus said that Elijah had come already, He was referring to John the Baptist, indicating that the same spirit of prophecy that rested on Elijah, had also rested on John the Baptist. But He also said that Elijah is coming in the future to restore all things. He was not saying that Elijah would appear in person, but that the same spirit of prophecy that rested on Elijah, and on John the Baptist, would return to the Church at the close of the age, and would be Gods' instrument in restoring all things.

The "two witnesses," or ministry of prophetic teaching will be re-instated in power at the close of the age, but first must encounter a setback.

Rev 11:7-10

"Now when they finish their testimony, the beast that ascends out of the bottomless pit will make war against them, overcome them, and kill them. And their dead bodies will lie in the street of the great city which spiritually is called Sodom and Egypt, where also our Lord was crucified. Then those from the peoples, tribes, tongues, and nations will see their dead bodies three-and-a-half days, and not allow their dead bodies to be put into graves. And those who dwell on the earth will rejoice over them, make merry, and send gifts to one another, because these two prophets tormented those who dwell on the earth."

"the beast that ascends out of the bottomless pit will make war against them, overcome them, and kill them" - Coinciding with the restraints on Antichrist being removed, it is said that he will make war against the two witnesses and kill (*apokteino* - fig: to extinguish, to abolish) them. It is not difficult to surmise that the spirit of antichrist has been active in the church, and that in the last decades the ministry of prophetic teaching has all but disappeared.

"And their dead bodies will lie in the street" - The Church will have prophets in their midst but their accuracy will be compromised by false doctrines and teaching such as dispensational premillennialism.

"of the great city which spiritually is called Sodom and Egypt, where also our Lord was crucified" - The city ***"where also our Lord was crucified,"*** was Jerusalem, which is a symbolic reference to the church. The titles "Sodom," and "Egypt" allude to the corrupted nature of the church at the close of the age. Sodom was noted for her moral depravity, and Egypt symbolises worldliness. The above words also imply that the spiritual conditions existing at the close of the age will be like those that existed in Jerusalem when Christ was crucified.

"Then those from the peoples, tribes, tongues, and nations will see their dead bodies three-and-a-half days, and not allow their dead bodies to be put into graves" - The apostate church loves to appear respectable and spiritually alive, and so the titles of prophet and teacher are treasured in her midst, even though their life has been extinguished.

"those who dwell on the earth will rejoice over them, make merry, and send gifts to one another, because these two prophets tormented those who dwell on the earth" - The ministry of the two witnesses had been a source of irritation to those in the apostate church, and their disclosure of its apostasies was a source of unease and torment to their consciences. Now their

demise is seen as a judgment from God and a vindication of their own spirituality. Consequently there is much relief and rejoicing.

Rev11:11-12

“Now after the three-and-a-half days the breath of life from God entered them, and they stood on their feet, and great fear fell on those who saw them. And they heard a loud voice from heaven saying to them, “Come up here.” And they ascended to heaven in a cloud, and their enemies saw them.”

“Now after the three-and-a-half days the breath of life from God entered them, and they stood on their feet, and great fear fell on those who saw them” - The ministry of prophetic teaching will be restored, and it will be so obvious that their disclosures are delivered in the anointing of the Holy Spirit that great fear will fall on the apostates.

“And they heard a loud voice from heaven saying to them, “Come up here.” And they ascended to heaven in a cloud, and their enemies saw them” - Again we should remind ourselves that the language is figurative - not literal. The two witnesses had not sought honour, or even recognition. Now God bestows it on them, and to their enemies’ dismay, their ministries are elevated to positions of honour in the Church.

The overall sense of the message of the two witnesses is that, after bearing faithful testimony against the prevailing errors in the church, are persecuted and silenced for a considerable time. During that period their ministry is treated with contempt and scorn, and there is much relief that they are so silenced. But their ministry will be revived, and they will again bear faithful witness to the truth. This will be accompanied by an obvious attestation of God’s approval.

Rev 11:13

“In the same hour there was a great earthquake, and a tenth of the city fell. In the earthquake seven thousand men were killed, and the rest were afraid and gave glory to the God of heaven.”

The forthright proclamations of the two witnesses will convulse the church, and the light of truth will destroy many of the exponents of apostasy. Many will be convicted and repent and return to God. This is in keeping with the Lord’s prophecy that Elijah will come first and restore all things.

This prepares the way for the third and final woe. ***“The second woe is past. Behold, the third woe is coming quickly.”*** (Rev 11:14).

THE SEVENTH TRUMPET

Rev 11:15-19

“Then the seventh angel sounded: And there were loud voices in heaven, saying, “The kingdoms of this world have become the kingdoms of our Lord and of His Christ, and He shall reign forever and ever!” And the twenty-four elders who sat before God on their

thrones fell on their faces and worshipped God, saying: "We give You thanks, O Lord God Almighty, the One who is and who was and who is to come, because You have taken Your great power and reigned. The nations were angry, and Your wrath has come, and the time of the dead, that they should be judged, and that You should reward Your servants the prophets and the saints, and those who fear Your name, small and great, and should destroy those who destroy the earth." Then the temple of God was opened in heaven, and the ark of His covenant was seen in His temple. And there were lightnings, noises, thunderings, an earthquake, and great hail."

THE SEVENTH BOWL OF WRATH

Rev 16:17-21

"Then the seventh angel poured out his bowl into the air, and a loud voice came out of the temple of heaven, from the throne, saying, "It is done!" And there were noises and thunderings and lightnings; and there was a great earthquake, such a mighty and great earthquake as had not occurred since men were on the earth. Now the great city was divided into three parts, and the cities of the nations fell. And great Babylon was remembered before God, to give her the cup of the wine of the fierceness of His wrath. Then every island fled away, and the mountains were not found. And great hail from heaven fell upon men, each hailstone about the weight of a talent. Men blasphemed God because of the plague of the hail, since that plague was exceedingly great."

The Seventh Trumpet - Rev 11:15-19

The Seventh Trumpet predicts the aftermath, rather than detailing the judgment itself. When it is apparent that God is about to unleash His judgment on those who have rejected His truth, and who have persecuted His saints, there are acclamations of praise and worship from the congregation in heaven. The proclamation of the eternal victory of God and His Christ is announced: "*The kingdoms* (singular - the kingdom of Satan as ruler of this world) *of this world have become the kingdoms of our Lord and of His Christ, and He shall reign forever and ever!*"

Then the twenty-four elders before the throne of God, who represent the true Church on earth, lead the congregation in praise and worship. "*We give You thanks, O Lord God Almighty, the One who is and who was and who is to come, because You have taken Your great power and reigned.*" On behalf of the Church they offer thanksgiving, because the persecutors of the saints are faced with judgment.

Next, the twenty-four elders extol God as they declare the end of all things - the Final Judgment, the reward of the faithful, and the final destruction of those who have destroyed the earth. "*And the twenty-four elders who sat before God on their thrones fell on their faces and worshipped God, saying: The nations were angry, and Your wrath has come, and the time of the dead, that they should be judged, and that You should reward Your servants the prophets and the saints, and those who fear Your name, small and great, and should destroy those who destroy the earth.*"

"*Then the temple of God was opened in heaven, and the ark of His covenant was seen in His temple*" - This denotes the transfer of our relationship with God from earth to heaven, and eternal existence in union with the Lord.

“And there were lightnings, noises, thunderings, an earthquake, and great hail” - An awesome display of the power of the Almighty marks the end of all prophecy and vision. And as far as the earth and all of its corruption is concerned, IT IS FINISHED.

The Seventh Bowl of Wrath - Rev 16:17-21

“Then the seventh angel poured out his bowl into the air” - In Ephesian 2:2, Satan is called ***“the prince of the power of the air, the spirit who now works in the sons of disobedience.”*** The seventh bowl of wrath is poured out into the air, or into Satan’s and Antichrist’s kingdom.

“and a loud voice came out of the temple of heaven, from the throne, saying, “It is done!” - The pouring forth of the bowl into Satan’s kingdom is accompanied by a triumphant shout from heaven - ***“It is done.”*** The downfall of Babylon is now assured.

“And there were noises and thunderings and lightnings; and there was a great earthquake, such a mighty and great earthquake as had not occurred since men were on the earth” - The immediate result of the bowl being poured into the air is that the whole world (essentially, the kingdom of Satan and Antichrist), is shaken violently. The whole fabric of society, including every institution, will be convulsed.

“Now the great city (Babylon the great) was divided into three parts” - not a literal three parts. This is a figurative description of Antichrist’s kingdom internally disintegrating. Whereas the forces of Antichrist worked cohesively together in endeavouring to destroy Christ’s kingdom, now the power of Almighty God is displayed as He turns Satan’s agents in on themselves to bring about their total destruction.

We are shown how this operates in the Old Testament: ***“I will call for a sword against Gog (a type of Antichrist) throughout all My mountains,” says the Lord GOD. “Every man’s sword will be against his brother.”*** (Ezek 38:21)

And similarly in the New Testament, in the destruction of Babylon. ***“And the ten horns which you saw on the beast, these will hate the harlot, make her desolate and naked, eat her flesh and burn her with fire. “For God has put it into their hearts to fulfil His purpose, to be of one mind, and to give their kingdom to the beast, until the words of God are fulfilled.”*** (Rev 17:16-17)

“and the cities of the nations fell” - ‘nations’ is a symbol for non-Christians, or those under the power of Antichrist. The ‘cities’ are the strongholds of Antichrist’s kingdom - the great banking houses, industrial corporations and commercial juggernauts, which will face financial ruin.

“And great Babylon was remembered before God, to give her the cup of the wine of the fierceness of His wrath” - Now great Babylon is to bear the full weight of God’s wrath, and her total destruction is decreed.

“every island fled away, and the mountains were not found” - The shaking will extend from the very centre of Antichrist’s kingdom to its circumference. Every exalted position with false authority - even to the farthest reaches of Antichrist’s kingdom, will be swept away by God’s judgment.

“And great hail from heaven fell upon men, each hailstone about the weight of a talent. Men blasphemed God because of the plague of the hail, since that plague was exceedingly great”

- Again, this is not literal. It is a very graphic, figurative account of the ferocity of God's final judgment on Babylon. Yet, despite being confronted with this judgment, and having an opportunity to repent and return to God, the hearts of these people are so fixed in rebellious lawlessness, that there will be little sign of repentance. Instead, they will blame God for their calamities.

THE SECOND HALF OF REVELATION - Chapters 12 – 22

SECTION 6

THE EMERGENCE OF THE CHURCH AND HER CONFRONTATION BY SATAN

Revelation Chapter 12

Rev 12:1

“Now a great sign appeared in heaven: a woman clothed with the sun, with the moon under her feet, and on her head a garland of twelve stars.”

Again we are required to interpret the symbols to decipher the meaning of this passage. The general theme of this chapter is the emergence of the church from the nation of Israel, and her persecution by Satan.

“a woman” - The woman first represents Israel, and then after Christ’s sacrificial death and resurrection, spiritual Israel or the church.

“clothed with the sun” - The sun represents the glory of God. Israel and later the Church, are distinguished from the world by the presence of God in their midst.

“with the moon under her feet” - The moon represents the foundation of the Word, first introduced through the Mosaic law, and extended further through the full Scriptural canon. All we know of God is reflected through the Word, or the Bible.

“and on her head a garland of twelve stars” - The garland of twelve stars represent the twelve tribes of Israel, and later the twelve apostles of the Church.

Rev 12:2

“Then being with child, she cried out in labour and in pain to give birth.”

“Then being with child” - The child is Jesus Christ the Messiah, brought forth out of the nation of Israel.

“she cried out in labour and in pain to give birth” - By and large, Israel’s history is one of rebellious disobedience and correction. Although the Messiah was long awaited, there was no easy pathway to His acceptance. In his time, Isaiah prophesied, **“And to whom has the arm of the LORD been revealed? For He shall grow up before Him as a tender plant, And as a root out of dry ground. He is despised and rejected by men, A Man of sorrows and acquainted with grief. And we hid, as it were, our faces from Him; He was despised, and we did not esteem Him.”** (Isa 53:1&3)

The nation of Israel was crying out for her Messiah, but one in the mould of an all-powerful monarch, who would deliver them from the yoke of bondage to the Roman Empire.

Rev 12:3-4

“And another sign appeared in heaven: behold, a great, fiery red dragon having seven heads and ten horns, and seven diadems on his heads. His tail drew a third of the stars of heaven and threw them to the earth. And the dragon stood before the woman who was ready to give birth, to devour her Child as soon as it was born.”

“a great, fiery red dragon” - This is a symbolic representation of Satan.

“having seven heads and ten horns, and seven diadems on his heads” - The numbers seven and ten are symbols of completeness and perfection, horns are a symbol of power and diadems, or crowns, are a symbol of authority - together signifying that Satan has complete authority and power. Jesus called Satan **“the ruler of this world.”** (Jn 12:31, 14:30 & 16:11) As ruler of this world, he is symbolically pictured with ten horns of power, and seven crowns of authority.

“His tail drew a third of the stars of heaven and threw them to the earth” - Before his fall, Satan was honoured and favoured by God. **“You were the anointed cherub who covers; I established you; you were on the holy mountain of God...You were perfect in your ways from the day you were created, till iniquity was found in you.”** (Ezek 28:14-15) Satan’s iniquity was that he said in his heart, **“...I will ascend into heaven, I will exalt my throne above the stars (angels) of God;...I will ascend above the heights of the clouds, I will be like the Most High.”** (Isa 14:13-14)

Because he became envious, and his heart was lifted up, he rebelled and drew a third of the angels into his revolt against God. Isaiah pictures his fate: **“How you are fallen from heaven, O Lucifer, son of the morning!”** (Isa 14-12)

Not only was Satan cast down from heaven to earth, but by his tail, a symbol of lies and deception, in declaring that he was equal to God, drew a third of the angels with him.

“And the dragon stood before the woman who was ready to give birth, to devour her Child as soon as it was born” - Satan incited Herod to uncontrollable jealousy, and so he sent forth a decree to **“put to death all the male children who were in Bethlehem and in all its districts, from two years old and under.”** (Matt 2:16) **“But Joseph was divinely warned of Herod’s intention, and fled to Egypt with the child.”** (Matt 2:13)

Rev 12:5

“She bore a male Child who was to rule all nations with a rod of iron. And her Child was caught up to God and His throne.”

It is prophesied of Jesus that He will rule (lit: shepherd) the nations with a rod of iron (or with uncompromising authority.) - (Ps 2:9, Rev 2:27, & 19:15)

“And her Child was caught up to God and His throne” - All of Satan’s attempts to destroy Jesus failed. Even after inciting the chief priests and leaders to crucify Him, He was **“caught up to God and His throne.”**

Rev 12:6

“Then the woman fled into the wilderness, where she has a place prepared by God, that they should feed her there one thousand two hundred and sixty days.”

“Then the woman fled into the wilderness where she has a place prepared by God” - As a result of Satan’s persecutions, the Church was dispersed into the wilderness of the Gentile nations, *“A place prepared by God.”* This is not a single location, but tells us that the flight and settling of every Christian had God’s oversight and direction.

“that they should feed her there” - *“They”* is not a reference to any particular group of people, but to whom it is appointed by God. Generally it means that the dispersed Christians will be sustained and nourished by God.

“one thousand two hundred and sixty days” - This is a symbolic time of tribulation and privation - due to the presence of the spirit of Antichrist, and persecution by the followers of the harlot. *“I saw the woman (the harlot of chapter seventeen), drunk with the blood of the saints and with the blood of the martyrs of Jesus. And when I saw her, I marvelled with great amazement.”* (Rev 17:6).

Rev 12:7-9

“And war broke out in heaven: Michael and his angels fought with the dragon; and the dragon and his angels fought, but they did not prevail, nor was a place found for them in heaven any longer. So the great dragon was cast out, that serpent of old, called the Devil and Satan, who deceives the whole world; he was cast to the earth, and his angels were cast out with him.”

Now the scene switches to heaven, where we are shown the consequence of Christ’s death on the cross, and His resurrection in victory. On the cross Jesus represented the whole of mankind. He bore their guilt and punishment, perfectly fulfilling all demands of justice and righteousness. Every one of Satan’s legal claims against mankind was nailed to the cross. Before the cross, Satan could stand before God’s throne and accuse mankind - as he did with Job - demanding their punishment. Now that every legal claim was removed, Satan had no just position in heaven, and so he and his angels were cast to the earth.

Rev 12:10

“Then I heard a loud voice saying in heaven, “Now salvation, and strength, and the kingdom of our God, and the power of His Christ have come, for the accuser of our brethren, who accused them before our God day and night, has been cast down.”

“Now salvation, and strength, and the kingdom of our God, and the power of His Christ have come” - There is a celebratory shout of victory in heaven in anticipation of the coming manifestation of the kingdom of God.

“have come” - That is after Christ’s death and ascension, and the expulsion of Satan.

“Salvation” - A complete deliverance from the kingdom and power of Satan and eternal salvation to all those who believe in Jesus Christ.

“Strength” - (Gk: *‘dunamis’* - ‘power’) Almighty God’s attributes of power, strength, and ability, are now manifested, and Satan is cast down.

“the kingdom of our God” - The rule of God on earth.

“the power of His Christ - The Greek word *‘exousia’* translated here as power is in fact authority. Jesus said, **“All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth.”** (Matt 28:18)

Rev 12:11

“And they overcame him by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony, and they did not love their lives to the death.”

“they overcame him” - It is on the basis of Christ’s victory on the cross, that the saints are now able to overcome Satan. The victory of the Lord Jesus Christ over Satan has now become the victory of the saints. And the authority attached to the name of the Lord has been entrusted to His saints. The means by which the saints apply Christ’s victory are then outlined.

“by the blood of the Lamb” - The blood (and life) of Jesus Christ was poured out on the altar of the cross as a sacrificial offering to atone for the sins of mankind. No matter how dreadful the sin, or how harsh Satan’s accusations, an appeal in repentance and belief in the atoning power of the blood of Jesus, means that our sins are covered, and we are counted as righteous. Satan is defeated.

“and by the word of their testimony” - Their testimony is to Christ’s atoning work on the cross, spoken in belief that it applies to us personally, and that the victory Christ achieved over Satan is now transferred to us.

“they did not love their lives to the death” - They did not love their self-lives to the death. This is a major factor in overcoming Satan. We may make a blanket confession that we choose to allow the Holy Spirit to **“put to death the deeds of the body** (or fleshly desire),” but we may cling to certain desires or attitudes, not willing to let them go yet, and so we only have a partial victory over Satan. Paul makes the choice clear in Romans 8. **“For if you live according to the flesh you will die** (be deprived of the divine life of Jesus working in us); **but if by the Spirit** (by truly relinquishing carnal desires) **you put to death the deeds of the body, you will live** (walk in the light of that life).” (Rom 8:13) Once we are truly willing to forsake a carnal desire or attitude, the Lord can work in our circumstances to bring forth the victory.

Rev 12:12-14

“Therefore rejoice, O heavens, and you who dwell in them! Woe to the inhabitants of the earth and the sea! For the devil has come down to you, having great wrath, because he knows that he has a short time.” Now when the dragon saw that he had been cast to the earth, he persecuted the woman who gave birth to the male Child. But the woman was given two wings of a great eagle that she might fly into the wilderness to her place, where she is nourished for a time and times and half a time, from the presence of the serpent.”

“Woe to the inhabitants of the earth and the sea” - The land and the sea incorporates both believers and the unbelieving world. Because Satan knows that his time is short, his wrath is poured forth on the church, and the world.

“he persecuted the woman who gave birth to the male Child” - The early church was persecuted by unbelieving Jews and Roman emperors. What followed was called the Dispersion, in which Christians were dispersed throughout Asia. Later, the Church was persecuted throughout the centuries by those under the power of Satan - by the Harlot, by adherents of pagan religions, and by those controlled by the Babylon the Great.

“But the woman was given two wings of a great eagle” - The ‘a great eagle’ should not be interpreted with a single symbolic equivalent - like representing the Roman Empire. Looking at it broadly, we are shown that the dispersing church was to be protected and guided in her flight as if miraculously supplied with wings (as being guided and overshadowed by the Spirit). We may expect the same miraculous care of end-time Christians as they come out of the Woman Babylon.

“where she is nourished for a time and times and half a time, from the presence of the serpent” - This is an extension of verse 6. Right through her history, though plagued by persecution and the presence of Antichrist, the Church will be nourished and kept alive.

Rev 12:15-16

“So the serpent spewed water out of his mouth like a flood after the woman, that he might cause her to be carried away by the flood. But the earth helped the woman, and the earth opened its mouth and swallowed up the flood which the dragon had spewed out of his mouth.”

“So the serpent spewed water out of his mouth like a flood after the woman” - The flood of water spewing from Satan’s mouth represents the continual stream of heretical teachings and false doctrines that have confronted and threatened the Church.

“the earth opened its mouth and swallowed up the flood” - The earth, in this case the world, has always been home to a myriad of empty philosophies and strange beliefs and theories. The heretical teachings are defused to the degree that their power to destroy the Church is removed.

Rev 12:17

“And the dragon was enraged with the woman, and he went to make war with the rest of her offspring, who keep the commandments of God and have the testimony of Jesus Christ.”

Having failed to destroy the Church in general through his lies and deception, Satan now turns his attention to a select group within the Church, ***“who keep the commandments of God and have the testimony of Jesus Christ.”*** These Christians have made a total commitment to God, and have allowed their flesh to be put to death by the Spirit. Consequently the life of Jesus reigns in them, and in His obedience, they ***“keep the commandments of God.”***

“and have the testimony of Jesus Christ” - In Revelation 19:10 an angel told John that ***“...I am your fellow servant, and of your brethren who have the testimony of Jesus....For the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy.”***

The testimony of Jesus Christ is the pure truth of Jesus Christ presented by the Holy Spirit to those who have been delivered from all interference by their carnal fleshly nature. Because these people have allowed their flesh to be crucified, Jesus is able to present His testimony through them. As those holding the testimony of Jesus Christ are such a threat to Satan’s work and kingdom, they are singled out for his direct attack on their lives and ministries.

SECTION 7

THE EMERGANCE OF ANTICHRIST AND HIS KINGDOM

Revelation Chapter 13

Chapter 13 describes the emergence into the world of two distinct, yet related beasts, each deriving their power from Satan. The first emerges from the sea which represents the turbulent nations of the world. The second arises from the earth, representing the religions of the world including the worldly church.

The First Beast - The Development of Antichrist's Kingdom through Nations of the World

Rev 13:1-2

“Then I stood on the sand of the sea. And I saw a beast rising up out of the sea, having seven heads and ten horns, and on his horns ten crowns, and on his heads a blasphemous name. Now the beast which I saw was like a leopard, his feet were like the feet of a bear, and his mouth like the mouth of a lion. The dragon gave him his power, his throne, and great authority.”

Again, horns symbolise power, heads authority, crowns rulership and the number seven completeness. The beast has been given all of the power and authority of Satan.

The meaning of the above imagery is revealed by the vision recorded in the 7th chapter of Daniel, where **“*Daniel spoke, saying, 'I saw in my vision by night, and behold, the four winds of heaven were stirring up the Great Sea. And four great beasts came up from the sea (the turbulent nations), *each different from the other...*"*The first was like a lion...a second, like a bear...another, like a leopard...a fourth beast, dreadful and terrible, exceedingly strong...*”*** (Dan 7:2-3)

The vision was explained to Daniel: **“*Those great beasts, which are four, are four kings* (or empires) *which arise out of the earth.*”** The first, ‘like a lion’, is the Babylonian Empire, the second, ‘like a bear’, the Persian Empire, the third, ‘like a leopard’, the Greek Empire, and the fourth, ‘dreadful and terrible’, was the Roman Empire.

The first beast is a symbolic representation of Antichrist, and the four kingdoms depict the evolution of his kingdom in the world through his presence and influence on each kingdom.

Antichrist's character is first reflected in Babylon, the seat of all apostasy and worldly arrogance. Here, Isaiah outlines some of God' complaints against her.

Her arrogance due to her affluence - “*hear this now, you who are given to pleasures, who dwell securely, who say in your heart, 'I am, and there is no one else besides me...*” (Isa 47:8)

Her harlotry - *“They shall come upon you in their fullness because of the multitude of your sorceries, for the great abundance of your enchantments.”* (Isa 47:9). *“...let now the astrologers, the stargazers, and the monthly prognosticators stand up and save you from what shall come upon you.”* (Isa 47:13)

Her preoccupation with wealth from trade and commerce - Babylon was well sited for mercantile commerce, and was continually host to a crowd of foreign merchants. God told her that her wealth and the merchants she lauded would not save her: *“Thus shall they be to you with whom you have laboured, your merchants from your youth; they shall wander each one to his quarter. No one shall save you.”* (Isa 47:15). Her pride would be cast down: *“How the oppressor has ceased, the golden city ceased!”* (Isa 14:4)

The Persians were renowned for their magnificent cities, and the multitude of their deities. As a nation they worshipped a number of major gods, and individually an assortment of personal gods that were supposed to control their destiny.

The Greek Empire was renowned for the development of worldly philosophies and wisdom, classical architecture, and the beautification of gods in human form. However the Roman Empire was the most humanistic of all worldly cultures and governments in the way that it glorified man and his achievements.

The roots of humanistic philosophy were generated from the Greek and Roman cultures. Humanistic philosophy was revived and further developed in the Renaissance movement (a rebirth, or surge of interest in classical culture). The Renaissance man was an ideal developed in Renaissance Italy, and expressed in a statement by one of its most accomplished representatives, Leon Battista Alberti - “a man can do all things if he will.” The glorification of man has been further developed in the present day New Age movement, which in its full-blown form asserts that man is a god, and that he has within himself a reservoir of resources to accomplish all things.

The end result of Antichrist’s intrusion into the development of these four great world empires is that his influence has become firmly established in the secular world.

“The dragon gave him his power, his throne, and great authority” - Premillennialists see Antichrist as a world dictator coming to power at the end of the age, however the above scriptures show us that he is a major spirit being, or archangel of Satan, that has influenced the nations and religions of the world throughout all ages.

The first beast of Revelation, or Antichrist, is a major spirit being empowered by Satan, entrusted with the task of destroying Christ’s Church and kingdom on earth. The nature of Antichrist’s attack on the church becomes apparent when we discern the meaning of the prefix ‘anti.’ Anti has two meanings, the first to ‘oppose’ and the second ‘instead of.’ Combining these we see that Antichrist opposes the true church by creating a counterfeit church and religion with false doctrines. To this end Satan gives all power and authority to Antichrist. Because God is just and righteous, Satan does have authority to infiltrate circumstances where there is rebellion, lawlessness, and disobedience to God.

The Little Horn

When we look further into Daniel’s vision, we see yet another development of Antichrist’s dominion. Daniel saw a little horn arising out of the fourth beast, or Roman

Empire. ***“And there, in this horn, were eyes like the eyes of a man, and a mouth speaking pompous words.”*** (Dan 7:8) ***“I was watching; and the same horn was making war against the saints, and prevailing against them.”*** (Dan 7:21)

To this point, Antichrist’s kingdom was expressed through his control of worldly governments, and the societies that evolved from them. But the little horn of Daniel that emerged from the Roman Empire marks an extension of his power into the realm of religion. The little horn arising out of the Roman Empire, is the papacy of the Roman Catholic Church, the throne of the harlot, the centrepiece of Antichrist’s religious kingdom.

Rev 13:3-4

“And I saw one of his heads as if it had been mortally wounded, and his deadly wound was healed. And all the world marvelled and followed the beast. So they worshipped the dragon who gave authority to the beast; and they worshipped the beast, saying, “Who is like the beast? Who is able to make war with him?”

In the papacy and the Roman Catholic Church, Antichrist created a perfect power base to oppose the true Church - a counterfeit church with false doctrines that achieved world-wide acceptance.

“I saw one of his heads as if it had been mortally wounded” - Heads are a symbol of authority and it was the doctrinal authority of the Roman Catholic Church that was wounded. When Martin Luther nailed his articles of faith on the door of the Castle Church in Wittenberg, he sparked a reaction against the doctrines of the Catholic Church that precipitated the great Reformation movement. Protestantism was born, and new non-Catholic churches were formed throughout Europe. It did appear that the Roman Catholic Church was mortally wounded.

“and his deadly wound was healed” - The Counter Reformation, a movement within the Roman Catholic Church in the 16th and 17th centuries, revitalised the church by commissioning renown Renaissance painters, architects, and scholars, to produce great works that glorified the church.

“And all the world marvelled and followed the beast” - As a mark of her resilience, the power of the Catholic Church was restored to a large degree, and she has retained her status as the largest church in Christendom, with her Pope as having doctrinal infallibility.

Rev 13:5-6

“And he was given a mouth speaking great things and blasphemies, and he was given authority to continue for forty-two months. Then he opened his mouth in blasphemy against God, to blaspheme His name, His tabernacle, and those who dwell in heaven.”

History records the shocking corruption of a great many of the popes, and their blasphemies against Christ and His Church. The following are two examples: Pope Boniface VIII declared in 1302, ***“We, therefore, assert, define, and pronounce that it is necessary to salvation to believe that every human being is subject to the pontiff of Rome.”*** In the thirteenth century the Popes ***“inculcated that pernicious maxim, that the Bishop of Rome is the supreme***

lord of the universe, and that neither princes nor Bishops, civil governors nor ecclesiastical rulers, have any lawful power in church or state but what they derive from him.”

Rev 13:7-8

“It was granted to him to make war with the saints and to overcome them. And authority was given him over every tribe, tongue, and nation. All who dwell on the earth will worship him, whose names have not been written in the Book of Life of the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world.”

History records the ferocity with which the popes defended their authority and power. Literally millions of people who opposed the doctrines of the Catholic Church were tried by an ecclesiastical court called the ‘Inquisition.’ Having been found guilty and condemned as heretics, they were handed over to secular authorities to be imprisoned, tortured, and put to death.

Despite the reforms instigated by the Second Vatican Council in 1965, the Catholic Church still retains many of the apostate doctrines and practices she has exercised over the centuries. E.g. Worship of Mary, prayers to angels and saints, the sign of the cross, prayer beads, doctrine of transubstantiation, the confessional and absolution of sin by priests, celibacy of priesthood, infant baptism, tradition granted equality with the scriptures, communion cup forbidden to laity, holy water, infallibility of pope, canonisation of dead saints, worshipping images and relics, mass, kissing the pope’s ring, etc.

“All who dwell on the earth will worship him, whose names have not been written in the Book of Life of the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world” - The gross apostasy inherent in the Catholic Church did not stay within her walls after the Reformation. Unfortunately many of the reformers brought elements of apostasy with them into the new Protestant churches. E.g. separation of the clergy and laity, ministry the province of clergy, hierarchy of clergy, revered titles, monastic orders, ritual prayers and liturgy, ordered services, infant baptism, priestly vestments, venerated church buildings with their stained glass windows and statues glorifying the saints, and their lavish ornaments and objects of worship, and so on.

By and large, the whole of Christendom, has been tainted by Antichrist’s influence. And as with the church, so with the world. The ‘religion’ of getting and spending, the pursuit of luxury and pleasure, and the glorification of man, have captivated the secular world.

Rev 13:10

“He who leads into captivity shall go into captivity; he who kills with the sword must be killed with the sword. Here is the patience and the faith of the saints.”

Here is an assurance to all the saints who grieve over the apostasy in the Church, and the seeming triumph of evil over good. Antichrist and all those who he has used to further his kingdom will be visited with just retribution. The saints are urged to exercise patient endurance, and to have faith in the fulfilling of God’s righteous judgments.

The Second Beast

Rev 13:11-13

“Then I saw another beast coming up out of the earth, and he had two horns like a lamb and spoke like a dragon. And he exercises all the authority of the first beast in his presence, and causes the earth and those who dwell in it to worship the first beast, whose deadly wound was healed. He performs great signs, so that he even makes fire come down from heaven on the earth in the sight of men.”

“Then I saw another beast coming up out of the earth” - The first beast came out of the sea, or nations of the world. The second rises out of the worldly religions, denoting his religious nature. In Rev 20:10, and Rev 16:13, he is called *“the false prophet.”*

The apostle John recognised the presence of the second beast, or false prophet, in the Church in his own time, and gave him another title that better describes his relationship to the first beast. *“And this is the spirit of the Antichrist, which you have heard was coming, and is now already in the world.”* (I Jn 4:3)

The spirit of the Antichrist or false prophet, is the third member of Satan’s counterfeit trinity - SATAN, ANTICHRIST, and FALSE PROPHET or SPIRIT OF ANTICHRIST.

The spirit of the Antichrist, counterfeits the work of the Holy Spirit in the Church.

- The Holy Spirit is the Lord’s instrument in building the Church of Christ.
The spirit of Antichrist is Antichrist’s instrument in building the false church or harlot.
- The Holy Spirit indwells believers as a Spirit of regeneration.
The spirit of Antichrist legitimately indwells the lawless and the disobedient - all those who have rebelled against God’s appointed ways.
- The Holy Spirit empowers Christians with gifts of the Spirit, enabling them to minister to others in supernatural power.
The spirit of Antichrist operates in people, using them as his instruments to perform false signs and wonders, and counterfeit gifts of the Spirit.
- The Holy Spirit directs praise and worship to Jesus Christ and God.
The spirit of Antichrist directs worship away from God to the created - things like Mary and the Saints, the Pope and his cardinals and to a plethora of religious objects, to man and his works and idols, to false religions, occultist practices, and all things gratifying the flesh. When man worships such things, he is in fact worshipping the spirits behind them, or ultimately Antichrist and Satan.
- The Holy Spirit is God’s instrument of truth, speaking through prophets and teachers.
The spirit of Antichrist is Satan’s instrument of deceit and deception, speaking through false prophets and false teachers.
- The Holy Spirit is the same substance as the Father and Son.

The second beast or spirit of Antichrist is the same substance as Satan and Antichrist. He is not the papacy or the Catholic Church. They are part of the harlot, or false church. The spirit of antichrist is spirit.

- The Holy Spirit is the source of all life - physical and spiritual.
The spirit of Antichrist working in a person brings about spiritual death.

The spirit of the Antichrist has been active in the Church in undermining the work of the Spirit of Christ by introducing false doctrines, inciting religious lawlessness, producing lying signs and wonders, and by promoting worldly anti-Christian wisdom, and the ideas and worth of man.

“he had two horns” - Horns symbolise power or power bases. The kingdom of Antichrist has two components, one religious and one secular.

“like a lamb and spoke like a dragon” - The second beast, or spirit of Antichrist is spirit, but the instruments he uses to speak through are human. This particular reference to appearing like a lamb, but speaking like a dragon, points to the papal throne. The pope, assuming the role of ‘the vicar of Christ,’ presents a lamb-like demeanour in offering prayers of peace and good will for the world. But his proclamations from the papal throne betray him, and his false doctrines and decrees are from the dragon, and not the Lamb.

“he exercises all the authority of the first beast in his presence” - The spirit of Antichrist operates in the presence of Antichrist, ***“the lawless one.”*** (2 Th 2:8-9) He has a legal right to operate in a climate of spiritual lawlessness, such as in the harlot, or apostate church. But where there is obedience to the will of Christ, as in the true Church, the spirit of Antichrist is unable to operate.

“and causes the earth and those who dwell in it to worship the first beast, whose deadly wound was healed” - To worship the first beast is to accept his ways, and to pay homage to his human instruments on earth. In this respect, ‘Strong’s’ definition of ‘worship’ is interesting: ‘a probable derivative of 2965 (meaning to kiss, like a dog licking his master's hand); to fawn or crouch to, i.e. (literally or figuratively) prostrate oneself in homage, do reverence to, adore.’

Once chosen, the Pope is clothed with the Pontifical robes and enthroned. In a ceremony called ‘adoration,’ the cardinals kiss his feet. The whole world, including leaders of state, and of worldly churches, pay such homage to the pope, that it is considered an extraordinary honour to gain an audience with the pontiff.

“He performs great signs, so that he even makes fire come down from heaven on the earth in the sight of men.” - The reading is linked to Elijah calling down fire from heaven to prove that his ministry was from God. Elijah prayed, ***“Lord God of Abraham, Isaac, and Israel, let it be known this day that You are God in Israel and that I am Your servant, and that I have done all these things at Your word...Then the fire of the LORD fell and consumed the burnt sacrifice....”*** (IKing 18:36 & 38). In other cases in the Old Testament, (Deut 4:11, 2 Kgs 1:10, 1 Chr 21:26, & 2 Chr 7:1) fire attested to the legitimacy of God’s servants.

What is the fire? In the above cases, fire represents proof of God’s approval, and the legitimacy of the ministry.

What this reading in Revelation is saying is that the spirit of Antichrist does great signs and wonders so that people will see the supernatural element as like Elijah's fire from heaven, appearing to be a sign of legitimacy having God's approval.

Rev 13:14

“And he deceives those who dwell on the earth by those signs which he was granted to do in the sight of the beast, telling those who dwell on the earth to make an image to the beast who was wounded by the sword and lived.”

Jesus warned that *“false christs and false prophets will rise and show great signs and wonders to deceive, if possible, even the elect.”* (Matt 24:24) Unfortunately, when people are confronted with a supernatural happening, in charismatic meetings they automatically suppose that it is from God.

“in the sight of the beast” - This means in the presence of the lawlessness that Antichrist promotes.

“telling those who dwell on the earth to make an image to the beast” - An image to the beast is a visible representation of the beast that reflects his character, just as the true Church is an image of the Lord Jesus Christ. *“But we all, with unveiled face, beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, just as by the Spirit of the Lord.”* (2 Cor 3:18)

Similarly, the harlot, or false church, is created in the image of Antichrist, reflecting his lawlessness, proud arrogance, deceitfulness and rebellion against God.

Rev 13:15

“He was granted power to give breath (or spirit) to the image of the beast, that the image of the beast should both speak and cause as many as would not worship the image of the beast to be killed.”

It is spirit breathed into an institution that gives it power to affect the eternal destiny of those it influences. The Holy Spirit infuses life and truth into the church, leading people to eternal salvation in the presence of Christ. The spirit of Antichrist emits deceit and deception through the image of the beast, leading to spiritual death.

“He was granted power to give breath to the image of the beast” - Because of man's rebellion and lawlessness, God has granted the spirit of Antichrist the right to invest the apostate church with the power of his presence.

God searches the mind and the heart of man to give him according to his ways.

**“I, the LORD , search the heart,
I test the mind,
Even to give every man according to his ways,
According to the fruit of his doings.”** (Jer 17:10)

The second beast, or spirit of Antichrist, has a legitimate right to impart his spirit wherever there is rebellion, lawlessness and worship of the created rather than the Creator.

“that the image of the beast should both speak and cause as many as would not worship the image of the beast to be killed” - The Catholic Church has ‘spoken’ by means of the publication of Papal Decrees, proclaiming the primacy of its doctrines and the infallibility of its pontiffs.

E.g. *‘Whoever refuses to enter and remain in the Catholic Church cannot be saved.’* Vatican 11 Lumen Gentium, 14.

Millions of people who would not bow to Rome’s authority were excommunicated, or tortured or killed.

THE MARK AND NUMBER OF THE BEAST

Rev 13:16-17

“He causes all, both small and great, rich and poor, free and slave, to receive a mark on their right hand or on their foreheads, and that no one may buy or sell except one who has the mark or the name of the beast, or the number of his name.”

“He causes (or conditions) ***all, both small and great, rich and poor, free and slave”*** - The spirit of Antichrist pre-conditions all. The word ‘all’ is universal, and that is why it is emphasised by ***“both small and great, rich and poor, free and slave.”***

“to receive a mark on their right hand or on their foreheads” - The word ‘receive’ literally means ‘to give.’ So what this reading is saying is that the spirit of Antichrist pre-conditions all people, so that he can give them a mark. To understand what the mark is, we should first examine the mark placed by God on the hands and foreheads of His children.

“Seven days you shall eat unleavened bread, and on the seventh day there shall be a feast to the LORD...” ***And you shall tell your son in that day, saying, 'This is done because of what the LORD did for me when I came up from Egypt. 'It shall be as a sign to you on your hand and as a memorial between your eyes, that the LORD'S law may be in your mouth; for with a strong hand the LORD has brought you out of Egypt.’*** (Exod 13:6, & 8-9)

God instituted a ceremony of eating unleavened bread to imprint on their minds (a memorial between your eyes), and on everything they did (a sign on your hand), that it was He who had brought them out of Egypt. He was ‘Jehovah Jireh,’ their Provider. God’s mark was to stress our need to place our dependence on Him.

The mark of the beast has the opposite effect. It imprints on people’s minds and hands, (every attitude, and in all that they undertake), that they are their own provider. All that they have or achieve is by their own efforts. It is a blasphemous independence from God.

God used an annual ceremony of eating unleavened bread to imprint His mark of His children. The spirit of Antichrist also uses a ‘ceremony’ to implant his mark - that of buying and selling. The continual process of buying and selling promotes an independent attitude that asserts that all of our material possessions, and our standing in the world are acquired by our own industry and effort.

“that no one may buy or sell except one who has the mark or the name of the beast, or the number of his name” - This is more correctly translated, ***“that no one may buy or sell except having the mark or the name of the beast, or the number of his name.”*** This allows us to make a slight mental adjustment that gives a different slant on the meaning. The spirit of Antichrist so conditions everyone to the end that no one can buy or sell without having been given Antichrist’s mark of independence.

It is not that we need the mark to buy and sell, but that all who buy and sell have been given the mark.

That is the state of unredeemed man - **ALL** have been conditioned through buying and selling to receive the mark of self-dependence, with its accompanying fear, anxiety, and stress. Unfortunately many Christians remain in this state. The attitude that we should escape the mark by retreating to a self-supporting farm or colony, and amass a stock of food, shows that the mark is well and truly implanted. In the time of tribulation, God has promised, ***“the heavens and earth will shake; but the LORD will be a shelter for His people, and the strength of the children of Israel.”*** (Joel 3:16)

ALL have received the mark, but we can certainly overcome it. In the fifteenth chapter of Revelation, we are shown a vision of people who had triumphantly come out of the influence of the mark of the beast.

“And I saw something like a sea of glass mingled with fire, and those who have the victory (alternatively - those that came out triumphantly) ***over the beast, over his image and over his mark and over the number of his name, standing on the sea of glass, having harps of God.”*** (Rev 15:2)

We first see the image of the sea of glass in Rev 4:6 - ***“Before the throne there was a sea of glass, like crystal.”*** The sea of glass like crystal represents the absolute purity and holiness of God, which separates Him from mankind.

The overcomers in Rev 15 are actually standing on the sea of glass, signifying that they have acquired a measure of holiness. The fire mingled with the glass symbolises God’s judgmental dealings with them that had brought about their refinement and purity. They had accepted the path of the cross.

The relevant point of this vision is that these people had received the mark like everyone else. But they had allowed God to break their bondage to dependence on self, the world, and other men. They had grown in their relationship with God, so that He had become to them “Jehovah Jireh” - ‘He who provides.’ Casting off their self-dependence and turning to God in an attitude of trust, resulted in a new position before the throne. Now these overcomers stand on the sea of glass, signifying their purity and closer relationship to God. They have ‘harps of God,’ showing their attitude of praise and worship.

To sum up this section on the mark of the beast:

1. The spirit of Antichrist conditions ALL people through the process of buying and selling, that he might give them the mark of self-dependence.
2. All have had the mark at some stage, but it is possible to triumph over it and come out of its influence.

3. Like every other bondage, we must forsake it, put it on the cross, and ask the Lord to triumph over it through His power in us.

Satan Uses the Power of Money to Control the World

The section above describes how the Satanic Trio have used the power of money to control mankind. However Satan's agenda goes far beyond controlling the lives of individuals. Satan's ultimate purpose is to use the power of money to control the whole world - every government, and every institution. His aim is to establish a single world governing body that is under his control. Satan has been operating towards this end during the past centuries, and already holds the supply of the world's finances under his control, using the "*ten kings*" as his instruments.

As an example of how this has happened, we will quote from Mayer Amschel Rothschild, the founder of the 'House of Rothschild,' the first and most influential international banking dynasty, and his son Nathan who controlled the Bank of England, "*Let me issue and control a nation's money and I care not who writes the laws.*" - Mayer Amschel Rothschild.

"I care not what puppet is placed on the throne of England to rule the Empire on which the sun never sets. The man who controls Britain's money supply controls the British Empire, and I control the British money supply." - Nathan Mayer Rothschild.

The alliance of Antichrist with the ten kings will be studied further in the next section.

Rev 13:18

"Here is wisdom. Let him who has understanding calculate the number of the beast, for it is the number of a man: His number is 666."

This could have been just as correctly translated, "*it is the number of man,*" and this brings out its true meaning. Symbolically, **6** is the number of man because he was created on the sixth day and **666** is the totality of man. It is the philosophy of HUMANISM, which is the common denominator of all strands of the New Age movement.

The humanistic philosophy asserts that man has within himself the potential to provide all of his needs, to solve all of the world's problems, and eventually bring about a world-wide state of utopia. It is an attitude that glorifies man and all of his achievements, engendering worship of the created rather than God the Creator. It is therefore a key element in the spirit of Antichrist's ploy to divert worship away from God to Satan, "*the ruler of this world.*"

Those with the Mark are Subject to Judgment

Since the final trumpet and bowl of wrath judgment is directed at the satanic trinity, and the destruction of Babylon the great, those who haven't come out of the influence of the spirit of Antichrist must endure God's punishment.

"Then a third angel followed them, saying with a loud voice, 'If anyone worships the beast and his image, and receives (to appropriate to oneself) his mark on his forehead or on his hand, 'he himself shall also drink of the wine of the wrath of God, which is poured out full strength into the cup of His indignation. He shall be tormented with fire and brimstone

(symbols of judgment) *in the presence of the holy angels and in the presence of the Lamb. "And the smoke of their torment ascends forever and ever; and they have no rest day or night, who worship the beast and his image, and whoever receives the mark of his name."* (Rev 14:9-11).

"anyone worships the beast and his image" - To worship the beast is to endorse and partake of the nature and actions of the spirit of Antichrist, like lawlessly pursuing spiritual empowering with false wonders and miracles. To worship his image is to engage in the apostasies of the harlot or false church - in particular to honour his 'flagship,' the Catholic Church, its pontiff, and all of its trappings.

"receives his mark on his forehead or on his hand" - To receive the mark of the beast is a positive appropriation of the attitude of Godless self-dependence, fully accepting the responsibility of procuring life's needs without reference to God.

"receives the mark of his name." - The name signifies the attributes of the person. To receive the mark of the name of Antichrist is to partake of his attributes - rebellious idolatry and lawlessness.

The judgments outlined above are not part of the end time Final Judgment. They are part of the seventh trumpet and bowl of wrath judgments that have the potential of turning hearts back to God in repentance. Their overall character is spiritual rather than physical - ***"they have no rest day or night, who worship the beast and his image, and whoever receives the mark of his name."***

SECTION 8

ANTICIPATORY WARNINGS OF THE COMING JUDGMENT

Revelation 14:1-5, the description of the one hundred and forty four thousand, is followed by a warning of impending judgment.

Revelation Chapter 14

Rev 14:6-7

“Then I saw another angel flying in the midst of heaven, having the everlasting gospel to preach to those who dwell on the earth--to every nation, tribe, tongue, and people--saying with a loud voice, ‘Fear God and give glory to Him, for the hour of His judgment has come; and worship Him who made heaven and earth, the sea and springs of water’”

The predicted end-time judgment is announced by an angel having the everlasting gospel. Judgment is associated with increased evangelism. *“And this gospel of the kingdom will be preached in all the world as a witness to all the nations, and then the end will come.”* (Matt 24:14). Whilst this is a time of severe tribulation, it is also a time of repentance, refinement, and gathering in of lost souls.

“Fear God and give glory to Him” - God is glorified in His judgments. Finally, His longsuffering and patience with the world’s wickedness will end. His judgment will fall, and His righteousness and holiness will be vindicated. And so the angel tells us to **“fear God,” “give glory to Him,”** and **“worship Him,”** who made **“the springs of water,”** or sources of light and truth.

Rev 14:8

“And another angel followed, saying, “Babylon is fallen, is fallen, that great city, because she has made all nations drink of the wine of the wrath of her fornication.”

“Babylon is fallen” - an anticipatory proclamation of the outcome of the judgment. Babylon is the symbolic name for the kingdom of Antichrist, which is manifested in two areas.

1. The Great harlot, or apostate church.
2. The secular part of his kingdom which controls the governments and institutions of the world.

Rev 14:9-10

“Then a third angel followed them, saying with a loud voice, "If anyone worships the beast and his image, and receives his mark on his forehead or on his hand, "he himself shall also drink of the wine of the wrath of God, which is poured out full strength into the

cup of His indignation. He shall be tormented with fire and brimstone in the presence of the holy angels and in the presence of the Lamb.”

“If anyone worships the beast and his image, and receives his mark on his forehead or on his hand” - The mark of Antichrists nature of self-sufficiency, self-dependence and glorification of man is impressed on his mind, or outlook, and on his hand or everything that he does.

“he himself shall also drink of the wine of the wrath of God” - He, or those receiving the mark etc. of the beast, will also be partakers of the fierce judgment of God that will be metered out to Satan and his followers.

“He shall be tormented with fire and brimstone in the presence of the holy angels and in the presence of the Lamb” - Fire and brimstone are symbols of severe judgment.

It is the Lord who executes judgment, and the angels are His instruments. ***“For as the Father has life in Himself, so He has granted the Son to have life in Himself, and has given Him authority to execute judgment also, because He is the Son of Man.”*** (John 5:26-27)

Rev 14:11

“And the smoke of their torment ascends forever and ever; and they have no rest day or night, who worship the beast and his image, and whoever receives the mark of his name.”

“worships the beast and his image, and receives (as an attitude and way of life) ***the mark of his name.”*** - To worship the beast and his image is to accept and consistently engage in the things he propagates and the apostasy of the harlot - worldliness, lawlessness, idolatry, self-centredness - an overall attitude which is anti-God. To receive the mark of his name is to receive to oneself the doctrine of man or humanism.

Rev 14:12-13

“Here is the patience of the saints; here are those who keep the commandments of God and the faith of Jesus. Then I heard a voice from heaven saying to me, “Write: ‘Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord from now on.’” “Yes,” says the Spirit, “that they may rest from their labours, and their works follow them.”

“Here is the patience of the saints; here are those who keep the commandments of God and the faith of Jesus” - Here the faith of all true Christians will be proved.

“Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord from now on...that they may rest from their labours, and their works follow them” - To enter God’s rest is to die to self and the labours of the flesh. The Lord is then able to work through them and produce lasting fruit.

Rev 14:14-16

“Then I looked, and behold, a white cloud, and on the cloud sat One like the Son of Man, having on His head a golden crown, and in His hand a sharp sickle. And another angel

came out of the temple, crying with a loud voice to Him who sat on the cloud, "Thrust in Your sickle and reap, for the time has come for You to reap, for the harvest of the earth is ripe." So He who sat on the cloud thrust in His sickle on the earth, and the earth was reaped."

"having on His head a golden crown and in His hand a sharp sickle" - The Lord seated on a cloud with a golden crown on His head, and sickle in His hand, tells us that He has divine authority to execute judgment.

"Thrust in Your sickle and reap, for the time has come for You to reap" - The sickle was used as a harvesting instrument to gather the crop into bundles. This is the time of separation foretold by the Lord in the parable of the wheat and the tares. *"Let both (the wheat and the tares) grow together until the harvest, and at the time of harvest I will say to the reapers, 'First gather together the tares and bind them in bundles to burn them, but gather the wheat into my barn.'"* (Matt 13:30)

This is also the time of the great last harvest which produces a huge gathering into the Lord's kingdom. It is a time of repentance and of coming out of the harlot church to renewal in the Lord.

Rev14:17-19

"Then another angel came out of the temple which is in heaven, he also having a sharp sickle. And another angel came out from the altar, who had power over fire, and he cried with a loud cry to him who had the sharp sickle, saying, '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."

"Then another angel came out of the temple which is in heaven, he also having a sharp sickle." - Another angel with another sickle announces that the appointed time has come for the gathering together of the wicked to face the Lord's judgment.

"another angel came out from the altar, who had power (authority) over fire" - Fire is a symbol of judgment, and the angels are used by the Lord to execute His judgments.

"gather the clusters of the vine of the earth, for her grapes are fully ripe" - The grapes are the wicked. The imagery is taken from the crushing of grapes in a winepress. The time has fully come for the execution of judgment on the wicked, or those who have accepted the ways of Antichrist rather those of God.

Rev 14:20

"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."

"And the winepress was trampled outside the city" - The city refers to Jerusalem, emblematic of the true Church. The execution of these last judgments will occur outside of the Church because those in the Church have been sealed.

“and blood came out of the winepress, up to the horses' bridles, for one thousand six hundred furlongs” - Taken literally, one could imagine a river of blood 200 miles long, and 4½ feet deep. There is no need for such a literal application, since the rest of the passage is obviously figurative. For instance, there will not be a gigantic winepress sitting on the earth, full of wicked people. The meaning of this passage is that not one wicked person will escape the full execution of God's judgement.

SECTION 9

THE GREAT HARLOT AND BABYLON THE GREAT

Further Disclosures of the Nature of Babylon the Great

This section opens with further disclosures of the nature of the harlot, and Babylon the Great. It is these prophetic insights that enable us to recognise the operation of Antichrist at the close of the age. It is the disclosure of the works of Antichrist that precipitate his fall. The restraints are removed, Antichrist is revealed, and he and his kingdom will be cast down by Christ and His “called chosen and faithful.”

“For the mystery of lawlessness is already at work; only He who now restrains will do so until He is taken out of the way. And then the lawless one will be revealed, whom the Lord will consume with the breath of His mouth and destroy with the brightness of His coming.”
(II Th 2:7-8)

In chapters 8 and 16 the unveiling of Antichrist and the destruction of his kingdom form the main part of the seventh trumpet and seventh bowl of wrath judgments. The emergence of Antichrist was described in Revelation Chapter 13, and further disclosures and the fall of Babylon the Great are portrayed from Revelation 17:1 through to Chapter 19:6.

Revelation Chapter 17

Rev 17:1-2

“Then one of the seven angels who had the seven bowls came and talked with me, saying to me, “Come, I will show you the judgment of the great harlot who sits on many waters, with whom the kings of the earth committed fornication, and the inhabitants of the earth were made drunk with the wine of her fornication.”

“the great harlot” - Harlotry speaks of turning away from God to worship things created by man.

“So it was, as soon as Gideon was dead, that the children of Israel again played the harlot with the Baals, and made Baal-Berith their god. Thus the children of Israel did not remember the LORD their God, who had delivered them from the hands of all their enemies...” (Judges 8:33-34)

The great Harlot is the false counterfeit church that Antichrist has established with the aim of turning man away from true worship of God, to worshipping the profusion of idols in her midst, and to be seduced by the aura of her mystic rituals that have been inspired by the spirit of Antichrist. To all intents and purposes the Harlot looks so like the true Church that its apostasies have passed unnoticed by most Christians. But despite her imposing appearance, there is little worship of God and Christ in Spirit and in truth.

“who sits on many waters” - The many waters tell us that the Harlot, or false church has been established in countries throughout the world.

“with whom the kings of the earth committed fornication, and the inhabitants of the earth were made drunk with the wine of her fornication.” - The imposing buildings, the impressive regalia of her priests, and the aura created by the mysticism of her rituals, have seduced many inhabitants of the world, and even kings and world dignitaries pay homage to her.

Rev 17:3-4

“So he carried me away in the Spirit into the wilderness. And I saw a woman sitting on a scarlet beast which was full of names of blasphemy, having seven heads and ten horns. The woman was arrayed in purple and scarlet, and adorned with gold and precious stones and pearls, having in her hand a golden cup full of abominations and the filthiness of her fornication.”

“he carried me away in the Spirit” - The reality of the presence of the kingdom of Antichrist is a spiritual revelation, and so John had to be in the Spirit to see and comprehend it.

“into the wilderness” - The wilderness symbolises spiritual deadness, or absence of the presence of Christ’s Spirit. That is where Antichrist and his spirit operates.

“I saw a woman sitting on a scarlet beast” - The woman is the apostate church, and the beast who carries her is the beast of Revelation 13, or Antichrist. The fact that she is sitting on the beast shows that she is supported by the power of Antichrist.

“which was full of names of blasphemy” - The beast, or Antichrist has promoted blasphemous names and titles. The essence of blasphemy is in giving a divine status to man and his works.

“having seven heads and ten horns” - Seven and ten are symbols of completeness, heads authority, and horns power. The beast has been given all authority and power by Satan.

“The woman was arrayed in purple and scarlet, and adorned with gold and precious stones and pearls” - We will see that this description of scarlet and opulent vestments ornamented with jewels points specifically to the pope and cardinals of the Roman Catholic Church. The robes of popes and cardinals are scarlet, the pope’s mitre is gold studded with precious stones, and his vest is encrusted with pearls. Catholic rites and ceremonies are presented to the world in a pomp and splendour that incites sensory awe and reverence, overshadowing the corrupt nature of the idolatrous worship beneath the surface.

“having in her hand a golden cup full of abominations and the filthiness of her fornication” - This is just as Jeremiah prophesied, she is a golden cup of enticing abominations to the world.

“Babylon (a type of the harlot) was a golden cup in the LORD’S hand, that made all the earth drunk. The nations drank her wine; therefore the nations are deranged.” (Jer 51:7)

Rev 17: 5:6

“And on her forehead a name was written: MYSTERY, BABYLON THE GREAT, THE MOTHER OF HARLOTS AND OF THE ABOMINATIONS OF THE EARTH...I saw the woman, drunk with the blood of the saints and with the blood of the martyrs of Jesus. And when I saw her, I marvelled with great amazement.”

The titles of the Harlot will be discussed in detail later in this chapter.

“I saw the woman, drunk with the blood of the saints and with the blood of the martyrs of Jesus” - This calls to mind the martyrdom of millions of the saints during the Spanish inquisition, and similar persecutions.

“And when I saw her, I marvelled with great amazement” - When John saw the vision and saw that it was the harlot who claimed to be the universal Church of Christ, yet was full of blasphemies and abominations, and drunk with the blood of the martyrs of Christ, he ***“marvelled with great amazement,”***

Rev 17:7-8

“But the angel said to me, “Why did you marvel? I will tell you the mystery of the woman and of the beast that carries her, which has the seven heads and the ten horns. The beast that you saw was, and is not, and will ascend out of the bottomless pit and go to perdition. And those who dwell on the earth will marvel, whose names are not written in the Book of Life from the foundation of the world, when they see the beast that was, and is not, and yet is.”

The angel then sets forth a series of cryptic clues to further explain to John the identity of the harlot and the beast that supports her.

“the beast that you saw was, and is not, and will ascend out of the bottomless pit and go to perdition...and is not, and yet is.” - The riddle describes three stages of the beast’s existence.

“it was” - Antichrist was a key influence in the development of the pre-Christian pagan kingdoms.

“is not...and yet is” - Antichrist ‘is not and yet is,’ because even though he was present at that time, his power was being restrained by the Holy Spirit, and the revelation of his presence and working had not yet been revealed by the Lord’s prophets and teachers. ***“For the mystery of lawlessness is already at work; only He (the Holy Spirit) who now restrains will do so until He is taken out of the way.”*** (II Th 2:7)

“will ascend out of the bottomless pit” - In Revelation 20, we are told that Satan will be bound from deceiving the nations for a thousand years, which we shall see is the church age. The bottomless pit is a symbol of confinement and restraint. When it says Satan is cast into the bottomless pit, it means that his influence, including that of Antichrist, has been bound or confined. During the church age the power of Satan and Antichrist to deceive the nations has been restrained to a large degree by the Holy Spirit.

In Revelation Chapter 11, we see that Antichrist ascends out of the bottomless pit, and as the two witnesses are silenced, he will resume his work of deceiving the nations. ***“Now when they (the two witnesses - prophetic teaching) finish their testimony, the beast that ascends out of the bottomless pit will make war against them (the two witnesses), overcome them, and kill them.”*** (Rev 11:7) When prophetic truth is withdrawn, deception will follow, and people will be confronted by blatant evidence of Antichrist’s lying signs and wonders. They will have to make a choice - to participate or withdraw.

“and go to perdition” - Antichrist’s end is inevitable. ***“Then the beast was captured, and with him the false prophet who worked signs in his presence, by which he deceived those who received the mark of the beast and those who worshipped his image. These two were cast alive into the lake of fire burning with brimstone.”*** (Rev 19:20)

Rev 17:9

“Here is the mind which has wisdom: The seven heads are seven mountains on which the woman sits.”

“The seven heads are seven mountains on which the woman sits” - The seven mountains (alternate meaning - ‘hills’) is an unmistakable reference to the seven hills that surround the city of Rome. The authority and reign of the Harlot is centred in Rome. We conclude that the harlot, or Antichrist’s counterfeit church is the Roman Catholic Church. In Verse 3, she is shown being carried by Antichrist, who succeeded in establishing her as his foundational seat of religious apostasy.

THE TITLES OF THE HARLOT

In Revelation 17:5 we read -

“And on her forehead a name was written: MYSTERY, BABYLON THE GREAT, THE MOTHER OF HARLOTS AND OF THE ABOMINATIONS OF THE EARTH”

On the forehead of the harlot three titles were written which portray her nature and character. It should be noted that these descriptive titles relate to the false practices and doctrines of the Harlot rather than the millions of adherents to the Catholic Church.

THE MOTHER OF HARLOTS AND (MOTHER OF) THE ABOMINATIONS OF THE EARTH - The two names make up one title - mother of harlots and abominations.

“THE MOTHER OF HARLOTS” - She is called ‘mother’ because she is the source of the multitude of foul and detestable abominations that have issued forth from the Catholic Church to contaminate Christendom. The word ‘harlot’ is used in a spiritual sense of being unfaithful to God in pursuing all manner of idolatries. Idolatry is manifested in the undue reverence paid to created things, including man, putting his doctrines and beliefs above those of God. Other examples of idolatrous worship in the Catholic Church include the undue reverence paid to statues, buildings, paintings, relics, and acts of worship like pilgrimages to shrines and sacred sites, genuflecting to the altar, and kissing statues and the Pope’s ring.

Despite breaking away from Catholicism during the Reformation, many of the Protestant churches retained some of the traditions of the Roman Catholic Church. For instance separation of clergy and laity hierarchical leadership, ornate buildings with stained glass windows, clerical vestments and titles, and formal prayers and rituals.

It would be a mistake to blame the Catholic Church for the apostasy and worldliness that has permeated Protestant churches today. The spirit of the Antichrist has been actively

involved in their midst, inducing them to indulge in harlotry with the world, taking on board many of its causes and liberation of moral standards. They have allowed the morality of the world in matters like fornication, adultery, and homosexuality to have precedence over the Scriptures and commandments of God. The whole church has fallen prey to apostasy and worldliness.

Although addressed to Judah, the first five chapters of Isaiah are a parallel prophecy relating to the church in the end times. Here is part of God's summation of the general state of the end time church.

***“From the sole of the foot even to the head,
There is no soundness in it,
But wounds and bruises and putrefying sores;
They have not been closed or bound up,
Or soothed with ointment.”*** (Isa 1:6)

“AND THE ABOMINATIONS OF THE EARTH” - The word ‘abomination’ refers to that which is foul and detestable. It applies particularly to the created laying claim to the attributes of God. For instance, the official title of the Pope as *“Bishop of Rome, Vicar of Jesus Christ, Successor of the Prince of the Apostles, Supreme Pontiff of the Universal Church, Primate of Italy, Archbishop and Metropolitan of the Roman Province, Sovereign of the State of Vatican City, Servants of the Servants of God.”* (Wikipedia). The title, *“Vicar of Jesus Christ”* is interpreted as one standing in the place of Christ on earth.

Associated with the Pope is the “Doctrine of Infallibility.” *“Papal infallibility is a dogma of the Catholic Church which states that, by action of the Holy Spirit, the Pope is preserved from even the possibility of error when in his official capacity he solemnly declares or promulgates to the universal Church a dogmatic teaching on faith or morals. This doctrine was defined dogmatically in the First Vatican Council of 1869-1870.”* (Wikipedia).

Furthermore, despite the Scriptures stating **“For there is one God and one Mediator between God and men, the Man Christ Jesus,”** (1 Tim 2:5), Mary was adopted as a mediatrix between man and God. The Catholic Church refers to Mary as *Mediatrice*, and she bears the additional title, *“Queen of Heaven.”* Prayers are offered to Mary and the Saints, who are created beings, thereby giving them a divine status.

“BABYLON THE GREAT” - The title “Babylon”, being figurative, does not refer to the ancient city of Babylon in Mesopotamia. At the time of John writing Revelation, ‘Babylon’ was a well-known code reference to Rome. Ancient Babylon was renowned for her luxuries, sorceries, idolatry, and religious apostasy.

After Babylon was defeated, her pagan religious rites and practices passed down through following empires, and finally found a home in Rome. Because Rome's corruption was even more than Babylon, she was referred to as “Babylon the Great.” Many of her idolatries, apostasies and pagan rites were transferred directly into the Roman Catholic Church. Below are a few examples.

- The title “Pontifex Maximus,” (‘interpreter of mysteries’), was given to Babylonian emperors. It was adopted by Roman Caesars, and later by the bishop of Rome. As

‘interpreter of all mysteries,’ the pontiff was soon declared to be infallible in interpretation of doctrinal matters.

- The Babylonians allotted days and events to various pagan gods. The Catholic Church adapted this practice by allotting special days to various saints.
- The observance of lent was taken from the annual celebration of the death and ‘resurrection’ of Tammuz, the son of Nimrod.
- The celebration of the birth of Jesus was transferred to the date of the birth of Sol, the Babylonian sun god.
- The sign of the cross originated from the mystic ‘Tau’ of the Babylonian cult, standing for the letter ‘T’ from Tammuz.
- Confession to a priest was a pagan custom, having its origin in the entry into the Babylonian ‘mysteries.’
- Celibate priests, and dedicated virgins who were called by their Chaldean title ‘Nun,’ were features of the Babylonian religion.

Other Catholic practices were adopted from pagan origins. For instance:

- The ‘host’, the circular wafer used by Catholics, originated in Egyptian pagan worship, where the wafer was supposed to turn into the flesh of the god Osiris.
- Candles, incense, and holy water were taken from pagan religious rites.

“MYSTERY” - The whole of Antichrist’s kingdom, both religious and secular components, are shrouded in such mystery that their true identity and source remains hidden from most people in the world.

The ancient Babylonian cult religion was steeped in mystical rites and practices. Entry into the ‘mysteries’ was restricted to the priests, who progressed through various orders, or ascending degrees of revelation (as in the Masonic Lodge). Many of the Babylonian rites and mysteries were brought to Rome, and incorporated into the Roman Catholic Church. Consequently much of the religion of the harlot is also shrouded in mystery, and its interpretation is limited to the priesthood. E.g.

- Masses were universally conducted in Latin, which was beyond the comprehension of the laity.
- Mystic symbolism is associated with adornments on vestments and accessories.
- There are numerous intricate liturgies, ceremonial rites, and sacraments. An example is the doctrine of transubstantiation of the host into the actual flesh and blood of Jesus.
- For many centuries Catholics were forbidden to read the Bible so that interpretation of the scriptures was the responsibility of the priests.
- Speaking generally, whilst the ordinary lay person was kept in a state of ignorance and dependence, an attitude has developed that if it is mystical, it must be very spiritual. Hence a great deal of spiritual prestige is associated with ‘high’ churches - that features mystical liturgies and ceremonial practices.

Antichrist’s Secular Kingdom

- In Antichrist’s secular kingdom there are secret societies that practice worship of Lucifer that have wittingly or unwittingly placed themselves under the control of Satan. E.g. the Illuminati, whose aim is to subject the whole world to the control of an elitist group they have fostered.

- The gradual subjugation of the governments to the controllers of world finance has been achieved with such secrecy that it has escaped the notice of all but a few.

Having discussed the titles of the Harlot we shall return to the interpretation in this chapter.

Rev 17:10-11

“There are also seven kings. Five have fallen, one is, and the other has not yet come. And when he comes, he must continue a short time. "And the beast that was, and is not, is himself also the eighth, and is of the seven, and is going to perdition.”

“There are also seven kings. Five have fallen” - Five great empires had emerged and fallen - Egypt, Assyria, Babylon, Persia, and Greece.

“one is” - At the time of John’s writing, the Roman Empire was in full sway.

“and the other has not yet come. And when he comes, he must continue a short time” - The kingdom yet to come at the time of John’s writing is Antichrist’s secular kingdom, an invisible kingdom that operates in secret, endeavouring to bring all governments and institutions under Satan’s control.

“And the beast that was, and is not, is himself also the eighth, and is of the seven, and is going to perdition” - The eighth kingdom is Antichrist’s world kingdom, forged in union with the ten kings. It is an invisible kingdom that has worked secretly behind all governing authorities and institutions, undermining their power, and subjecting them to its control. It already dictates the policies of most of the nations of the world. This will be discussed more fully in the description of the ten kings.

Antichrist is declared to be the eighth king or world power. It clearly reflects his nature of deceitfulness, lawlessness, secrecy, evil and disdain for all legitimate authority, and all that is in the world, that is noble, righteous and God-fearing. He is of the seven empires because he was instrumental in their development, but along with Satan and the False Prophet his end is eternal perdition in the lake of fire.

THE TEN KINGS

Rev 17:12-13

“The ten horns which you saw are ten kings who have received no kingdom as yet, but they receive authority for one hour as kings with the beast. These are of one mind, and they will give their power and authority to the beast.”

We have already stated that Antichrist’s kingdom has two areas of operation, one emanating from the counterfeit religion he has created, and a secular branch that endeavours to subject all ruling authorities to Satan’s control.

Antichrist's world kingdom is an invisible kingdom, working stealthily behind all governing bodies and institutions using the power of money to subject them to his control. The Ten Kings are not individual persons but authoritative positions in the realm of world finance. The leaders of Antichrist's secular kingdom are prominent world figures who have been seduced by the spirit of Antichrist, to the end that they have been brought into one mind with Antichrist in their common aim of usurping the legitimate control of all governments and institutions. Their ultimate aim is to form a single world government that is under their control.

Below are some quotes from noted world leaders, who have recognised and expressed their concerns about the working of these invisible powers.

"Some of the biggest men in the United States, in the field of commerce and manufacture are afraid of something. They know that there is a power somewhere so organised, so subtle, so watchful, so interlocked, so complete, so pervasive that they had better not speak above their breath when they speak in condemnation of it." President Woodrow Wilson.

"The money powers prey upon the nation in times of peace and conspire against it in times of adversity. It is more despotic than a monarchy, more insolent than autocracy and more selfish than a bureaucracy. It denounces, as public enemies, all who question its methods or throw light upon its crimes. I have two great enemies, the Southern Army in front of me and the bankers in the rear. Of the two, the one at the rear is my greatest foe." President Abraham Lincoln - 1866.

"The real menace of our republic is the invisible government which, like a giant octopus, sprawls its slimy length over our city, state and nation. At the head is a small group of banking houses, generally referred to as 'international bankers.'" John F. Hylan, mayor of New York, 1911.

"The invisible money power is working to control and enslave mankind. It financed Communism, Fascism, Marxism, Zionism and Socialism. All of these are directed to make the United States a member of a World Government." Bill Graham.

"The ten horns which you saw are ten kings" - Ten is not a literal number but symbolises completeness, and horns denote power. Their number and power is measured by God to perfectly bring about His will.

"who have received no kingdom as yet, but they receive authority for one hour as kings with the beast" - The ten 'kings' receive the same authority and power as kings from the beast, but have no official title as kings to rule over nations. They exert the power of kings in international affairs in union with the beast for 'one hour,' or a short time in the world's history.

"These are of one mind, and they will give their power and authority to the beast" - This may seem improbable, but we will see that the ten kings are involved with secret societies like the Illuminati and Masonry that practice direct worship of Lucifer. Members of the Illuminati believe that they are especially elite, having received intellectual light and wisdom from Lucifer, and that they are the only ones worthy of reigning over the world. Their aim is to bring all governments and institutions under its control, and uses its influence to install its members in positions of authority and power throughout the world. They also recognised the

controlling power of money, and that those who control the supply of money could control the world.

Who are The Ten Kings?

The ten kings are the controllers of world finance who have operated in union with Antichrist over the last few centuries. They are the heads of the world's banking dynasties and industrial consortiums. They are an organised group of people being led by the spirit of Antichrist, with a common aim of usurping all legitimate authority of governments and institutions, to set up a single world government under their control. Their organisation has no official title, as they choose to work behind the scenes with such secrecy that they and their agenda is unseen and unknown by the rest of the world. They have infiltrated major governing bodies, but their hidden agenda of destabilisation and the redirecting of power to their own body passes unnoticed. Leading world figures, even Presidents, have been brought under their control. They exert considerable influence and control over institutions like the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund, United Nations, the Bank for International Settlements, the C.I.A, and the Council on Foreign Relations.

To show how The Ten Kings have been able to gain authority and power to rule over governments and institutions, we shall present a very brief history of the rise of international banking houses.

Undoubtedly this must start with the founding of the House of Rothschild by Mayer Amschel, who was born in Frankfurt-On-The-Main in 1743. Rothschild, who was himself an Illuminati, summoned Adam Weishaup, a professor of canon law, and asked him to form a branch of the Illuminati in Bavaria. It was founded in 1777 with the financial backing of the House of Rothschild, and became a base for them both to pursue their quest of world domination.

Rothschild sired five sons, whom he trained and set up in branches of the House of Rothschild in London, Berlin, Vienna, Paris, and Naples.

Later Nathan Rothschild supplied finance to the Bank of England to avert a financial crisis, and eventually gained control of it. The Bank of England was the central bank of the United Kingdom, which was responsible for regulating the price of gold. His statement, quoted earlier, *"I care not what puppet is placed on the throne of England to rule the Empire on which the sun never sets. The man who controls Britain's money supply controls the British Empire, and I control the British money supply,"* was no idle boast.

The power and influence of the Rothschild dynasty expanded as it supplied finance to establish other industrial enterprises. It was Rothschild capital that financed Rockefeller (oil), Harriman (railroads), Carnegie (steel), Cecil Rhodes (South Africa Mining), the J P Morgan, M Warburg, and Kuhn Loeb banking dynasties in Europe and America, and the building of the Suez Canal and European railroads.

The Conquest of America

Having gained control of the finances of Britain and Europe, the international bankers directed their attention towards America. Their aim was to establish a central or reserve bank in America that was under their control. It is worth looking at the International Bankers

conquest of America in more detail, as it provides us with an illustration of the manner of their operation.

The International Bankers had prepared carefully, and already had agents and establishments in America at their disposal. Banking houses: J Kuhn & Loeb, J.P. Morgan and Company, and their German representative, M.M.Warburg Company of Hamburg. Politicians: they had Congressman Nelson Aldridge, Republican whip in the Senate, Chairman of the National Monetary Commission, business associate of J.P.Morgan, and father-in-law of John D. Rockefeller Jnr. They needed a banking expert to advise Congress. They had sent Paul Warburg, brother of Max of M.M.Warburg Company to America.

To prepare the way, the International Bankers used their power to trigger the collapse of the Knickerbocker Trust Company, a well-established and trusted financial institution, showing Congress America's need of a central or reserve bank to regulate its economy. Paul Warburg was appointed to lead a team to investigate European banking methods and to recommend a model for a reserve bank - of course it was the one already devised beforehand by the International Bankers. They needed a compliant President who would sign the Federal Reserve Act to make it law.

They produced Woodrow Wilson, who as an unlikely candidate, was elected through the political manipulation of the International Bankers. Unsuspectingly the President was brought under their control through persistent badgering with economic jargon that was above his head.

Without going into details of the deceptive manoeuvring of the Bankers, the Banking Act was hastily passed in December 1913, when many of the members of Congress had left for Christmas holidays.

The Reserve banking system was made up of twelve regional banks, with one of them, the New York Bank acting as the Reserve Bank of America. From them a Board was elected to govern American finance.

The Reserve Bank foisted on the American Republic, had all the appearance of being a government owned and run organisation, but in fact was owned and operated by the International Bankers.

The private ownership of the Federal Reserve System has been verified by the American Judicial System. In the case, *Lewis v United States*, 680 F,2d 1239 (1982), the Court of Appeals, Poole, Circuit Judge, "*held that federal reserve banks are not federal instrumentalities for the purposes of the Act, but are independent privately owned and locally controlled corporations.*"

Congressman Louis Mc Fadden described its true nature in his speech to Congress, "*When the Federal Reserve Act was passed, the people of these United States did not perceive that a world banking system was being set up here. A super-state controlled by international bankers and industrialists...acting together to enslave the world... Every effort has been made by the Federal Reserve Board to conceal its power. But the truth is, the Federal Reserve Board has usurped the government of the United States. It controls everything here; and it controls our foreign relations. It makes or breaks governments at will. No man, and no body of men, is more entrenched in power than the arrogant credit monopoly which operates the Federal Reserve Board and the Federal Reserve Banks.*" Congressman Louis McFadden, House Committee on Banking and Currency Chairman (1920-31).

After realising the true nature of the Federal Reserve, President Wilson wrote, *“A great industrial nation is controlled by its system of credit. Our system of credit is privately concentrated. The growth of our nation, and therefore all our activities are in the hands of a few men. We have come to be one of the worst ruled and one of the most completely controlled and dominated governments in the civilised world. No longer a government by free opinion, no longer a government by conviction and the vote of the majority but a government by the opinion and duress of a small group of dominant men.”* From *“The New Freedom,”* by Woodrow Wilson

Even more astounding was the fact that the Federal Reserve banking Act gave the Board the authority to create its own money by printing bank notes or by book entries, and then to lend it out at interest. The Reserve Bank used this costless finance to purchase government bonds, or debts which then had to be repaid with accrued interest.

This legalized corruption sounds too incredible to be true, but it is verified in a ‘House Banking and Currency Committee’ report in 1964, pp. 9. It states, *“The privately owned Reserve Banks create Federal Reserve Notes out of thin air to buy government bonds from the United States Treasury, and lending into circulation at interest, and by bookkeeping entries of checkbook credit to the United States Treasury.”*

In gaining control of the economy of America, the Ten Kings gained control over the economies of the whole world. Arguably, the American economy is the largest in the world, and when the Federal Reserve regulates money supply and the price of capital, the countries of the world takes notice, and adjust their economies. What happens on Wall Street affects share markets around the world, and the American dollar has been used as a standard to regulate exchange rates around the world.

The Ten Kings have used their agents to precipitate world unrest and anarchy, initiating wars and revolutions, lending capital to countries to run the war, and to build infrastructure in the aftermath. Using the limitless supply of capital at their disposal, the ten kings have gained control of most industrial areas - mining, munitions, agriculture, pharmaceuticals, transport, and media. Their agents are embedded in all areas of education, undermining moral values and attempting to destroy all religions.

From the above account of the working of the Ten Kings, we can see that although they have no recognizable titles or kingdoms, they do in fact rule behind the scenes as kings, as they exert their control over all world governments. We can also see that their allegiance is to Antichrist rather than God, and their aim is to subdue all nations to their control. But because they ***“are of one mind...they will give their power and authority to the beast.”*** (Rev 17:13). All of their power and all that it has achieved has been placed at Antichrists’ disposal. Being of one mind, they work together to achieve their common aim of destroying all national sovereignty and governments, and to usher in a new world order with a single world government subjected to their control.

David Rockefeller stated on 9th September 1994: *“This present window of opportunity, during which a truly peaceful and interdependent world order might be built, will not be open for too long - We are on the verge of a global transformation. All we need is the right major crisis and the nations will accept the New World Order.”*

Turning to Revelation: 17:14.

Rev 17:14

“These will make war with the Lamb, and the Lamb will overcome them, for He is Lord of lords and King of kings; and those who are with Him are called, chosen, and faithful.”

“these will make war with the Lamb” - The ten kings are Antichrist’s instruments in this end of the age conflict which is to decide the fate of the world. Both the Lord Jesus Christ, and His adversary Antichrist, are attempting to establish their kingdoms in the world.

“and the Lamb will overcome them, for He is Lord of lords and King of kings” - The result of the battle is assured. The Lord Jesus Christ will overthrow their attempts to gain global control because He is LORD of lords, and KING of kings, and none can withstand His mighty power. By His intervention He will bring to nothing the power and authority of the ten kings and their global juggernauts.

“and those who are with Him are called, chosen, and faithful” - They are the Lord’s instruments of light and truth. They are called and chosen - or divinely selected by the Lord to discharge their appointed office. Of particular importance at this time will be the office of prophetic teaching (as the two witnesses rise to their feet). They are faithful, or trustworthy and diligent in their ministries.

The overcoming of Antichrist by the Lord will be manifested in four ways.

1. The Brightness of His Coming:

Prophecies describe the glory of the Lord returning and entering into the church in the last days. This is not the visible Lord, but the glory of His Spirit which will empower the church to overcome her adversaries.

“And then the lawless one will be revealed, whom the Lord will consume with the breath of His mouth and destroy with the brightness of His coming.” (2 Thess 2:8)

*“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.”* (Isa 60:1-3)

2. In Answer to Prayer God will Pour out His Spirit

In the book of Joel, the prophet presents an account of the last day’s conflict between God and Satan. The first chapter describes the initial desolation, the second, restoration, and the third chapter God’s judgment. In the second chapter, in the midst

of the desolation, the Spirit of God calls on God's people to turn to Him with prayer and fasting.

***"Now, therefore," says the LORD ,
"Turn to Me with all your heart,
With fasting, with weeping, and with mourning."
So rend your heart, and not your garments;
Return to the LORD your God,
For He is gracious and merciful,
Slow to anger, and of great kindness"*** (Joel 2:12-13)

In response to their prayers God promised to pour out His Spirit to bring about restoration.

***"Be glad then, you children of Zion,
And rejoice in the LORD your God;
For He has given you the former rain faithfully,
And He will cause the rain to come down for you —
The former rain,
And the latter rain in the first month.
The threshing floors shall be full of wheat,
And the vats shall overflow with new wine and oil."*** (Joel 2:23-24)

The ministry of Christ's end-time servants will receive further empowerment by the holy Spirit resulting in many souls being convicted, and turning to the Lord in repentance.

3. The Sword of Truth

Again it should be stressed that this final conflict between Christ and Antichrist is spiritual in nature rather than physical. It is a conflict between truth and deception. By the revelation of truth Antichrist's kingdom will be exposed and his stronghold of deception will be destroyed.

In Chapter Nineteen Christ is pictured on a white horse, leading His army to battle in this end time conflict. In this figurative description, it says of Christ, ***"out of His mouth goes a sharp sword, that with it He should strike the nations."*** (Rev 19:15) This is the sword of truth that casts down strongholds. His end time truth will be imparted to His prophets and teachers, who will present spiritual truth to the beleaguered Church. Antichrist's working and deceptions will be exposed, and those held captive will be set free by the truth.

The sword of truth will expose the operation of the Ten Kings in Antichrist's secular kingdom. The Ten Kings have gained the ownership and control of all branches of the media, and have been able to regulate what is released to the general public. However, they have not been able to control the Internet which has become a major tool in circulating truth. It is by revealing and the circulation of the truth of the operation of the Ten Kings that their plans of world domination will be exposed and finally thwarted.

Revealed truth will precipitate prayer throughout Christendom, drawing God into the conflict,

4. **The Destruction of Antichrist's Economic Stronghold**

This will be through a massive economic recession (as forecast in Revelation 18). Antichrist has used the power of money to bring governments and institutions under his control, and when the economy of the world collapses, the ten kings will not escape its effects. Their accumulated wealth will disappear. Antichrist will be deprived of his use of the power of money to control world affairs.

Antichrist's kingdom will be cast down, never to be restored. This will be studied in more detail in the following chapters.

Rev 17:15-17

“Then he said to me, “The waters which you saw, where the harlot sits, are peoples, multitudes, nations, and tongues. And the ten horns which you saw on the beast, these will hate the harlot, make her desolate and naked, eat her flesh and burn her with fire. For God has put it into their hearts to fulfil His purpose, to be of one mind, and to give their kingdom to the beast, until the words of God are fulfilled.”

“The waters which you saw, where the harlot sits, are peoples, multitudes, nations, and tongues” - Again it is stressed that the extent of the harlot, or apostate church, is world-wide.

“And the ten horns which you saw on the beast, these will hate the harlot” - Many reasons could be proposed why the ten kings should hate the harlot.

- The Catholic Church has a huge controlling impact on the spirits and minds of much of the population of the world - from the least to those in positions of power. She therefore threatens the global authority of the ten kings.
- The Catholic Church has immense wealth and property gained by bequests, collections, and historical seizure of land and property. The possessions of the papal kingdom are difficult to bring under secular control.
- The current ecumenical movement foreshadows a world church with the Pope as its head. This would be the ultimate expression of the harlot, and as a world power of much influence, it would be a source of animosity to the ten kings.
- Part of Antichrist's aim is to destroy all religions, replacing them with worship of Satan.

The bottom line is that **“God has put it into their hearts (the ten kings) to fulfil His purpose”** in destroying the harlot.

“these will...make her desolate and naked, eat her flesh and burn her with fire” - They will make her -

“desolate” - by depriving her of all her influence, pomp and splendour. They will make her *“naked”* by exposing her sins, her fraudulence and apostasy. They will *“eat her flesh* (plural - masses of flesh)” - that is they will strip away her wealth and possessions.

“burn her with fire” - she will be utterly destroy. This should cause no surprise, as it is typical of God’s judgment to turn evil in on itself to cause total destruction.

Rev 17:18

“And the woman whom you saw is that great city which reigns over the kings of the earth.”

As a prelude to the announcement of her fall, it is reaffirmed that the harlot is Rome, an extension of spiritual Babylon, the home of the harlot, and whose influence pervades the administrations of the leaders of the earth.

Revelation Chapter 18

We have already ascertained that Babylon was a well-known code word for Rome, and that the title ‘Babylon the Great’ refers to the kingdom of Antichrist. We have also determined that Antichrist’s kingdom has two areas of operation, one religious, and the other secular, and so the title Babylon the Great encompasses both the religious and secular aspects of his kingdom.

Chapter 17 focused on the disclosure and demise of the Harlot, the centre piece of Antichrist’s religious kingdom. Chapter 18 turns our attention to the secular branch of Antichrist’s kingdom. This is an invisible kingdom at work behind all governments and institutions to bring them under Satan’s control.

We may ask, how did the ancient city of Rome influence the development of Antichrist’s secular kingdom? Rome was the first truly international empire, which reigned over all of the nations of the known world. Rome was the centre of trade and commerce, and the trade routes she developed reached the perimeters of her vast empire. She had the first international monetary system, with taxes collected in Roman currency in all countries under her domain. Roman emperors were worshipped as divine beings, and their reign was under the control of Satan.

Apart from their worship of pagan gods, the entire culture of Rome was man-centred, focusing on the achievements of man, reflected in their buildings, aqueducts, temples, arenas, theatres, and their world-wide network of roads. Rome was the forerunner of the humanistic New Age movement, foreshadowing a world based on the achievements of man, without any need of reference to God.

The Announcement of the Fall of Babylon the Great

Rev 18:1-2

“After these things I saw another angel coming down from heaven, having great authority, and the earth was illuminated with his glory. And he cried mightily with a loud voice, saying, “Babylon the great is fallen, is fallen, and has become a dwelling place of demons, a prison for every foul spirit, and a cage for every unclean and hated bird!”

“Babylon the great is fallen, is fallen.” - With a triumphant shout a mighty angel announces the inevitability of the future destruction of Antichrist’s kingdom.

“and has become a dwelling place of demons, a prison for every foul spirit” - Those in Antichrist’s kingdom have been engaged in activities controlled by demon spirits, and as the bottomless pit is opened God’s judgment falls and hosts of demon spirits engulf Antichrists kingdom. People have embraced demonic activities and now have to endure their tormenting destructive powers.

“and a cage for every unclean and hated bird” - Birds of prey are used here as symbols for spirits of Satan that prey on fleshly weakness, causing all manner of internal strife, division, and destruction. The apostle James warned his brethren of the possibility of this happening in their midst. ***“But if you have bitter envy and self-seeking in your hearts, do not boast and lie against the truth. This wisdom does not descend from above, but is earthly, sensual, demonic. or where envy and self-seeking exist, confusion and every evil thing are there.”*** (James 3:14-16)

Rev 18:4-5

“And I heard another voice from heaven saying, “Come out of her, my people, lest you share in her sins, and lest you receive of her plagues. “For her sins have reached to heaven, and God has remembered her iniquities.”

This is the most timely warning being issued to Christians today. Peter warned, of God’s judgment falling on the apostate church. ***“For the time has come for judgment to begin at the house of God; and if it begins with us first, what will be the end of those who do not obey the gospel of God?”*** (1 Pet 4:17) And this is the warning issuing forth from God’s true end-time prophets - Come out of Babylon the great - the apostate church the “religion” of the world, and forsake all apostasy.

The warning also applies to those who have been taken into captivity in Antichrist’s secular kingdom, allowing their lives to be dominated by accumulating assets by speculations, trading etc., and engaging in things under the control of the god of this world, rather than the things of God.

“For her sins have reached to heaven” - Not that her sins have just come to God’s notice, but figuratively speaking, they have piled up to heaven.

“and God has remembered her iniquities” - The time reserved for her judgment has come. God’s judgment of Babylon is certain because it has been pronounce from heaven, but those who heed God’s warning will escape His judgment.

Rev 18:6-7

“Render to her just as she rendered to you, and repay her double according to her works; in the cup which she has mixed, mix double for her. "In the measure that she glorified herself and lived luxuriously, in the same measure give her torment and sorrow; for she says in her heart, ‘I sit as queen, and am no widow, and will not see sorrow.’”

“Render to her just as she rendered to you” - It is not the church who executes God’s judgment but she has the responsibility to direct prayer to God, asking Him to execute His judgment in the measure He now outlines -

“repay her double according to her works; in the cup which she has mixed, mix double for her” - Figuratively speaking, the full measure of God’s wrath will overtake her.

“In the measure that she glorified herself and lived luxuriously, in the same measure give her torment and sorrow” - Included in Antichrist’s idolatrous secular kingdom are all those who have been seduced into sharing in her sensual pleasures and hunger for wealth and power. God’s judgment is directed to Antichrist’s worldly regime, and to all whom have been partakers of it. The pursuit of affluence, luxury and pleasure, will be replaced by torment and sorrow as worldly possessions are stripped away.

“for she says in her heart, 'I sit as queen, and am no widow, and will not see sorrow” - This echoes Isaiah’s prophetic damnation of ancient Babylon which is a parallel prophecy relating to Babylon the Great. **“And you said, 'I shall be a lady forever,' so that you did not take these things to heart, nor remember the latter end of them. Therefore hear this now, you who are given to pleasures, who dwell securely, who say in your heart, 'I am, and there is no one else besides me; I shall not sit as a widow, nor shall I know the loss of children.”** (Isa 47:7-8)

Worldly affluence engenders an attitude of false security and complacency. But Isaiah’s warning concludes, **“But these two things shall come to you in a moment, in one day: the loss of children, and widowhood. They shall come upon you in their fullness because of the multitude of your sorceries, for the great abundance of your enchantments... Therefore evil shall come upon you; you shall not know from where it arises. And trouble shall fall upon you; you will not be able to put it off. And desolation shall come upon you suddenly, which you shall not know.”** (Isa 47:9-11)

Rev 18:8

“Therefore her plagues will come in one day--death and mourning and famine. And she will be utterly burned with fire, for strong is the Lord God who judges her.”

“in one day” - Echoing Isaiah’s warning - Antichrist’s worldly kingdom will collapse “in a moment,” or “in one day” - not a literal day but a brief moment in time. Antichrist’s control over people through worldly finance will be shattered.

“death and mourning and famine. And she will be utterly burned with fire” - Figuratively - hearts will be devastated and mourn for the loss of possessions and worldly pleasures. Being utterly burned with fire speaks of the complete end of Antichrist’s worldly kingdom.

Rev 18:9-11

“The kings of the earth who committed fornication and lived luxuriously with her will weep and lament for her, when they see the smoke of her burning, "standing at a distance for fear of her torment, saying, 'Alas, alas, that great city Babylon, that mighty city! For in one hour your judgment has come.'" And the merchants of the earth will weep and mourn over her, for no one buys their merchandise anymore”

“The kings of the earth” - These are not literal kings but rulers in Antichrist’s kingdom.

For a brief period the ten kings reign over the financial institutions of the world, but in one moment their control over the world is broken, and Antichrist’s worldly kingdom is cast down. Those who gained their wealth through financial investments will lament as they realise that all is lost.

“standing at a distance for fear of her torment” - They will have a dread of being involved in any further transactions with financial markets and institutions, for fear of bringing calamity upon themselves.

“And the merchants of the earth will weep and mourn over her for no one buys their merchandise anymore” - The “merchants of the earth,” or those who have become affluent through buying and selling, will mourn at their loss of trade. This is another indication of a collapse of the world economy.

Rev 18:12-13

“merchandise of gold and silver, precious stones and pearls, fine linen and purple, silk and scarlet, every kind of citron wood, every kind of object of ivory, every kind of object of most precious wood, bronze, iron, and marble; "and cinnamon and incense, fragrant oil and frankincense, wine and oil, fine flour and wheat, cattle and sheep, horses and chariots, and bodies and souls of men.”

Items like gold and silver, precious stones and pearls, fine linen and purple, silk and scarlet, every kind of citron wood, every kind of object of ivory, every kind of object of most precious wood, fragrant oil and frankincense, symbolise affluence and luxury.

Items like oil, wheat, cattle and sheep, wood, bronze, iron, and marble, cinnamon, wine and oil, and fine flour are used as symbols of trade and commerce in the basic needs of life, the backbone of the economy.

“horses and chariots, and bodies and souls of men,” - Horses and chariots symbolise the weaponry of war and the bodies and souls of men point to the fact that Antichrist has no regard for human life and has no compunction using wars, slavery, rebellions and genocide to bring about his purposes.

Rev 18:14

“The fruit that your soul longed for has gone from you, and all the things which are rich and splendid have gone from you, and you shall find them no more at all.”

God pronounces His judgment against the Antichrist’s worldly kingdom, and all the objects it has used to seduce His children into idolatrous worship - ***“all the things which are rich and splendid have gone from you, and you shall find them no more at all.”***

Rev 18:15-19

“The merchants of these things, who became rich by her, will stand at a distance for fear of her torment, weeping and wailing, and saying, 'Alas, alas, that great city that was

clothed in fine linen, purple, and scarlet, and adorned with gold and precious stones and pearls! For in one hour such great riches came to nothing.' Every shipmaster, all who travel by ship, sailors, and as many as trade on the sea, stood at a distance and cried out when they saw the smoke of her burning, saying, 'What is like this great city?' They threw dust on their heads and cried out, weeping and wailing, and saying, 'Alas, alas, that great city, in which all who had ships on the sea became rich by her wealth! For in one hour she is made desolate.'"

Those who lament at the fall of Antichrist's idolatrous worldly economic system are the *"merchants,"* and *"shipmasters,"* or those who have been made wealthy through their dealings with commodities, the stock market, and trade and commerce. Again the suddenness of her crash is emphasised. In 'one hour' their great wealth is stripped away, and their empire is made desolate.

Rev 18:20

"Rejoice over her, O heaven, and you holy apostles and prophets, for God has avenged you on her!"

There is rejoicing in heaven and on earth as God's righteous judgment is made apparent.

Rev 18:21

"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.'"

There will not be a gradual decline, but a sudden abrupt and completely final end of Antichrist's worldly kingdom.

Rev 18:21-23

"The sound of harpists, musicians, flutists, and trumpeters shall not be heard in you anymore. No craftsman of any craft shall be found in you anymore, and the sound of a millstone shall not be heard in you anymore. The light of a lamp shall not shine in you anymore, and the voice of bridegroom and bride shall not be heard in you anymore. For your merchants were the great men of the earth, for by your sorcery all the nations were deceived."

The activities portrayed above will not literally disappear from the earth. This is a figurative picture of all activities and influence of Babylon the Great - every trace of her influence being extinguished forever.

Rev 18:24

"And in her was found the blood of prophets and saints, and of all who were slain on the earth."

The final condemning summation concerning the spiritual and worldly arms of Babylon the Great is that she is responsible for the blood of God's prophets and saints, and all assassinations, murders and slayings throughout the earth.

The climax of the fall of Babylon the Great and the Harlot portrayed in Chapter 18, extends into the first nine verses of Chapter 19, where a large multitude in heaven direct exaltation and praise and worship to the throne of God.

Revelation Chapter 19

Rev 19:1-6

“After these things I heard a loud voice of a great multitude in heaven, saying, "Alleluia! Salvation and glory and honour and power belong to the Lord our God! "For true and righteous are His judgments, because He has judged the great harlot who corrupted the earth with her fornication; and He has avenged on her the blood of His servants shed by her." Again they said, "Alleluia! Her smoke rises up forever and ever!" And the twenty-four elders and the four living creatures fell down and worshipped God who sat on the throne, saying, "Amen! Alleluia!" Then a voice came from the throne, saying, "Praise our God, all you His servants and those who fear Him, both small and great!" And I heard, as it were, the voice of a great multitude, as the sound of many waters and as the sound of mighty thunderings, saying, "Alleluia! For the Lord God Omnipotent reigns!"

For those on the earth who have learned to fear God and hate evil, this will also be a time of worship and praise. As Peter declared, God has patiently endured the apostasy in the church and world, granting a full measure of time for repentance and salvation. ***“The Lord is not slack concerning His promise, as some count slackness, but is longsuffering toward us, not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance.”*** (2 Pet 3:9) But now the allotted time for judgment has come, and God is glorified in His justice, righteousness, holiness, and almighty power.

Exaltation of God and His Christ continues in heaven, as a voice declares, ***“Let us be glad and rejoice and give Him glory, for the marriage of the Lamb has come.”***

Rev 19:7-9

“Let us be glad and rejoice and give Him glory, for the marriage of the Lamb has come, and His wife has made herself ready." And to her it was granted to be arrayed in fine linen, clean and bright, for the fine linen is the righteous acts of the saints. Then he said to me, "Write: 'Blessed are those who are called to the marriage supper of the Lamb!'" And he said to me, "These are the true sayings of God.”

The bride of Christ will be studied fully in Section 11.

The rest of chapter 19 will be covered in the following section in the Battle of Armageddon.

SECTION 10

THE BATTLE OF ARMAGEDDON

To gain a full picture of the battle of Armageddon, we must draw together the strands of all associated Old and New Testament Scriptures. Revelation 16:12-16, 19:11-21, 20:7-10, and the 38th and 39th Chapters of Ezekiel present different aspects of the Battle of Armageddon. By studying the four accounts we gain a complete picture of the nature of the Battle of Armageddon.

Before starting, we should remember that this is not a physical battle, where armies under the command of a world figure nominated as Antichrist, surround the Christians of the world who are camped at Jerusalem. This is a spiritual battle of truth verses deception, in which Christ's "***called, chosen, and faithful***" ministers wield the sword of truth to unmask the deceptions, in both areas of Antichrist's kingdom, that have taken the vast majority of the population of the world captive.

THE FIRST PICTURE OF ARMAGEDDON - From Rev 16:12-16

The description below is in fact the only mention of Armageddon in the bible. The reading clearly shows that this battle is spiritual in nature, where the Church is opposed by demonic powers under the control of Satan, Antichrist, and the false prophet - or spirit of Antichrist.

Armageddon is the Greek name for the Mountain of Megiddo, a strategic Old Testament battle site where Israel fought many of her enemies. Because of its history, Armageddon is a symbol for the last great and conclusive battle between God and the forces of Satan.

Rev 16:12-16

"Then the sixth angel poured out his bowl on the great river Euphrates, and its water was dried up, so that the way of the kings from the east might be prepared. And I saw three unclean spirits like frogs coming out of the mouth of the dragon (Satan), out of the mouth of the beast (Antichrist), and out of the mouth of the false prophet (the spirit of Antichrist). For they are spirits of demons, performing signs, which go out to the kings of the earth and of the whole world, to gather them to the battle of that great day of God Almighty. "Behold, I am coming as a thief. Blessed is he who watches, and keeps his garments, lest he walk naked and they see his shame." And they gathered them together to the place called in Hebrew, Armageddon."

"the great river Euphrates, and its water was dried up, so that the way of the kings from the east might be prepared." - The river Euphrates was a natural barrier between Israel and Babylon and other northern and eastern enemies. The drying up of the Euphrates, and the preparation of the way of the kings of the east, speaks of the removal of God's restraint on Antichrist which precipitates Antichrist's attack on the Church.

The Holy Spirit has been restraining Antichrist, but at God's appointed time, His restraining hand will be removed, and a flood of deceptions and lying wonders will engulf the Church. ***"He who now restrains will do so until He is taken out of the way." "The coming of the lawless one is according to the working of Satan, with all power, signs, and lying wonders, and with all unrighteous deception among those who perish."*** (II Th 2:7, 9-10)

"And I saw three unclean spirits like frogs coming out of the mouth of the dragon (Satan), out of the mouth of the beast (Antichrist), and out of the mouth of the false prophet (the spirit of Antichrist). - The unclean spirits are likened to frogs because they are at home in mud and mire, and their incessant croaking reminds us of the persistence of the stream of deceit and deception issuing forth from the satanic trio.

"For they are spirits of demons, performing signs, which go out to the kings of the earth and of the whole world, to gather them to the battle of that great day of God Almighty." - Leading figures in the Church and the whole world will be confronted by the lying wonders and deceptions of Antichrist, and their perception of truth will be challenged.

There will be an emergence of anti-Christian world figures, who under the influence of demon spirits, will undermine the Church by challenging the validity of Christian doctrines, morals, doctrines and beliefs, and deny the legitimacy of the bible as being applicable to modern society.

The Church itself will be confronted with people within its ranks with false ministries that incite people to accept false teachings, doctrines, prophecies, and false signs and wonders.

In Antichrist's secular kingdom it signals the advent of the ten kings, and their emergence as controllers of world affairs.

Next, Christ issues a warning. ***"Behold, I am coming as a thief. Blessed is he who watches, and keeps his garments, lest he walk naked and they see his shame."*** - Christ's coming unnoticed like a thief, is not His coming to rapture the saints to Himself. In that case He will appear ***"as the lightning comes from the east and flashes to the west, so also will the coming of the Son of Man be."*** (Matt 24:27)

This reading is His coming into His kingdom, when His Spirit enters the Church to restore it. He will remove all false authorities, teachings and doctrines, and set His Church in order. Christ warns us that when the signs of apostasy appear in the Church, we are to ***'keep our garments,'*** or maintain ourselves in righteousness and truth, lest in the light of His coming we are exposed as being naked, having garments of lawlessness and disobedience.

THE SECOND PICTURE OF ARMAGEDDON - From Rev 19:11-21.

In this picture of the Battle of Armageddon, our attention is directed towards heaven, where the Lord commands His army of faithful followers on earth.

Rev 19:11-14

"Now I saw heaven opened, and behold, a white horse. And He who sat on him was called Faithful and True, and in righteousness He judges and makes war. His eyes were like a flame of fire, and on His head were many crowns. He had a name written that no one

knew except Himself. He was clothed with a robe dipped in blood, and His name is called The Word of God. And the armies in heaven, clothed in fine linen, white and clean, followed Him on white horses.

“Now I saw heaven opened” - The Greek word for ‘heaven’ has as a general meaning ‘above,’ applying to the regions above the earth, it could mean the atmosphere (Mt 6:26), the heavens of the stars, planets, etc. (Mt 24:29), the sky (Mt 16:2), or the abode of God (Mt 5:34). The opening of heaven is to reveal Christ and the field of His operation, which is not limited to the abode of God. It extends to the atmosphere, which is the operating sphere of Satan, who is called **“the prince of the power of the air.”** (Eph 2:2), and the earth itself, where, by His Spirit He commands His followers.

Christ is symbolically pictured riding forth from heaven, the abode of God, on a white horse to war against Antichrist and his followers. He is pictured as a spiritual warrior, the commander of His army of **“called, chosen, and faithful”** on earth.

“and behold, a white horse And He who sat on him was called in righteousness He judges and makes war” - This is a prophetic fulfilment of Psalm 45:3-4.

**“Gird Your sword upon Your thigh, O Mighty One,
With Your glory and Your majesty.
and in Your majesty ride prosperously because of truth, humility, and righteousness;...”**

The Lord’s army in the Church on earth joins with the Lord in the spiritual battle against Antichrist. Under His command, using the authority of His name, they wield the power inherent in the Scriptures in **“pulling down strongholds, casting down arguments and every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God, bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ...”** (2 Cor 10:4-5)

“His eyes were like a flame of fire” - He judges with penetrating clarity of perception.

“on His head were many crowns” - This is indicative of His universal reign and title - ‘Lord of lords and King of kings.

“He had a name written that no one knew except Himself...and His name is called The Word of God” - A name expresses a full disclosure and comprehension of every detail of the person. Here the name is linked with logos - He is the Word, or logos of God, the complete revelation of God expressed through the Scriptures, His attributes, His actions, and His spoken word. The complete comprehension of His divine and human attributes is beyond the capability of any creature but Himself.

“He was clothed with a robe dipped (or sprinkled) in blood” - This is not His own blood but that of His foes. The picture is taken from Isaiah 63:3: **“I have trodden the winepress alone... 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.”** Again this must be taken as figurative language, expressing the defeat and destruction of His foes.

“And the armies in heaven, clothed in fine linen, white and clean” - As previously stated, these are not angels, but living saints who have accepted the path of the cross and have allowed

their fleshly natures to be put to death. Consequently they are described as being clothed in ‘fine linen, white and clean.’

We shall see that in the case of the robes of the bride of Christ, **“the fine linen is the righteous acts of the saints.”** (Rev 19:8) This is not speaking of imputed righteousness, but the righteous works of Christ accomplished through a person without the defilement of the flesh.

Because they have put their flesh on the cross, Christ is able to work through them without the intrusion of their flesh. They are pictured as being **“in heaven,”** but this is not a geographical position, but a position of spiritual authority. Because of their total consecration, they, like the overcomers of Laodicia, are entrusted with the authority of Christ’s throne in using authoritative prayer against the strongholds of Antichrist in the church. **“To him who overcomes I will grant to sit with Me on My throne, as I also overcame and sat down with My Father on His throne.”** (Rev 3:21)

“followed (*Strongs*: ‘properly - to be in the same way with’) **Him on white horses”** - Followed is not directional, but united and one in purpose. The Lord initiates, and those who follow Him speak out what the Lord has given them. The white horses tell us that these are righteous and victorious spiritual warriors. As such, they are totally obedient to Jesus their Commander, and one with Him in defeating Antichrist’s attack on the Church.

The end result of the battle in the heavenly places is dependent on the battle in the Church. The outcome is not a matter of power but the use of legitimate authority. Christ is omnipotent, but Antichrist has every right to hold people in the church captive as long as they accept his alternative religion. The Lord cannot forsake His integrity, justice and righteousness. Towards His disciples He is **“Faithful and True.”** Towards Antichrist and his deceiving spirits, **“in righteousness He judges and makes war.”** As the Lord’s army wields the truth to set the captives free, Antichrist’s authority and power are lessened, and Christ and His heavenly angels can legitimately strip him of his spiritual position and power in the spiritual realm, until eventually he is cast into the lake of fire.

Rev 19: 15-16

“Now out of His mouth goes a sharp sword, that with it He should strike the nations. And He Himself will rule them with a rod of iron. He Himself treads the winepress of the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God. And He has on His robe and on His thigh a name written: KING OF KINGS AND LORD OF LORDS.”

“out of His mouth goes a sharp sword” - Obviously this is not a literal sword. It is **“the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God”** (Eph 6:17) The truth is revealed to His anointed prophets and teachers, who present it on earth as He directs them.

“that with it He should strike the nations” - The Greek word ‘ethnos’ for ‘nations,’ is generally used in Revelations to mean all those who are not Christians. Such will be the anointing on the Lord’s anointed ministers as they proclaim the word of God, that the hearts and consciences of all who hear will be seared with the burning light of truth. **“For the word of God is living and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the division of soul**

and spirit, and of joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart.” (Heb 4:12-13)

Because this is a spiritual battle, it is fought on two fronts - in the Church, and in the spiritual realm in the heavenly places. ***“For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age, against spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places.”*** (Eph 6:12)

God has entrusted the outcome of this battle into the hands of the Church and Christ, who is ***“head over all things to the church.”*** (Eph 1:22) At the end of the age Christ empowers His army of prophets and teachers to send forth uncompromising truth concerning the harlot, the apostasy in the Church, and the lawless working of Antichrist in both areas of his kingdom.

In the Third Chapter of Joel which describes characteristics of the end-time judgment of God, two valleys are mentioned, the valley of Jehoshaphat, and the valley of decision. They are not geographical valleys, but figurative places that are used to describe aspects of God’s judgment.

The Valley of Decision.

When the truth has been set forth, everyone who hears are put in what the prophet Joel declares to be ***“the valley of decision.”*** This is not by choice because everyone who hears the truth will automatically be required to make a decision.

***“Multitudes, multitudes in the valley of decision!
For the day of the LORD is near in the valley of decision.
The sun and moon will grow dark,
And the stars will diminish their brightness.
The LORD also will roar from Zion,
And utter His voice from Jerusalem;
The heavens and earth will shake;
But the LORD will be a shelter for His people,
And the strength of the children of Israel.
“So you shall know that I am the LORD your God,
Dwelling in Zion My holy mountain.”*** (Joel 3:14-17)

Everyone who hears will be confronted with a choice - truth or deception, Christ or Antichrist, the true Church of Christ or the apostate church. In Revelation 18 we are confronted with this stern warning: ***“And I heard another voice from heaven saying, “Come out of her, my people, lest you share in her sins, and lest you receive of her plagues. For her sins have reached to heaven, and God has remembered her iniquities.”*** (Rev 18:4-6)

Those who ignore the warning must face the harshness of God’s judgment that is to fall on the earth. To those who repent and ***“Come out of her,” “the LORD will be a shelter for His people, and the strength of the children of Israel*** (the Church).”

“He Himself will rule them with a rod of iron” - The Greek word *‘poimaino,’* which here is translated as ‘rule,’ generally means ‘to tend to as a shepherd,’ or ‘to feed.’ The rod of iron speaks of the uncompromising authority granted to the Lord as Judge of the living and the dead. The nations will have been confronted with the exposure of Antichrist, and the

uncompromising challenge of the gospel. The Lord will judge and reign as a shepherd, but with uncompromising truth and authority.

“He Himself treads the winepress of the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God” - This is not speaking of eternal punishment in hell. It is the fierce judgment meted out on earth in the battle of Armageddon on those who have persecuted the true children of God, and who have not repented on hearing the truth.

“And He has on His robe and on His thigh a name written: KING OF KINGS AND LORD OF LORDS” - The Lord’s authority and majesty will be manifested as His righteous judgments fall.

Rev 19:17-18

“Then I saw an angel standing in the sun; and he cried with a loud voice, saying to all the birds that fly in the midst of heaven, “Come and gather together for the supper of the great God, “that you may eat the flesh of kings, the flesh of captains, the flesh of mighty men, the flesh of horses and of those who sit on them, and the flesh of all people, free and slave, both small and great.”

This corresponds to the passage in Ezekiel 39:17-20, where demon spirits of Satan are invited to prey on the unrepentant followers of Antichrist. Other associated passages are Rev 9:2-11, where the pit is opened and hordes of demon spirits emerge to torment those who have the mark of the beast; and Joel Chapter 2, where locusts, or demon spirits of destruction, are called by God, ***“my great army which I sent among you.”*** (Joel 2:25)

God’s Great Army

In Revelation 9:1-12 the bottomless pit is opened and swarms of locusts, symbolising demon spirits, pour out on the earth and torment all those who haven’t got the seal of God’s ownership. In a parallel reading in the first and second chapters of Joel, locusts (again symbolising demon spirits), swarm over the earth leaving a trail of destruction. Both readings figuratively describe a feature of God’s judgment in the last days.

In Joel’s account, the prophet refers to the locusts as ***“My great army.”*** In other words, God has ultimate control over the demon spirits, they are directed where He wills as agents of punishment.

***“...The crawling locust,
The consuming locust,
And the chewing locust,
My great army which I sent among you.”*** (Joel 2:25)

Men preferred darkness rather than light, and the things of Satan rather than the things of God, and justly, God uses the demon spirits they were involved with as instruments in their punishment. As a result of the pit being opened, and demon spirits flooding the earth, rampant violence and atrocities are commonplace. One particular result we can expect to see in both areas of Antichrist’s kingdom is that demon spirits will cause hatred and animosity to infiltrate all areas, to the end that internal destruction follows.

The Valley of Jehoshaphat

In the third chapter of Joel, the prophet gives us a glimpse of the internal division and self-destruction that will take place in Antichrist's kingdom.

***"I will also gather all nations,
And bring them down to the Valley of Jehoshaphat;
And I will enter into judgment with them there
On account of My people, My heritage Israel (the Church)." (Joel 3:2)***

We gain insight about the figurative meaning of the "**Valley of Jehoshaphat**" when we read excerpts from the twentieth chapter of 2 Chronicles, where King Jehoshaphat was confronted by massive armies from surrounding nations.

"It happened after this that the people of Moab with the people of Ammon, and others with them besides the Ammonites, came to battle against Jehoshaphat... And Jehoshaphat feared, and set himself to seek the LORD, and proclaimed a fast throughout all Judah. So Judah gathered together to ask help from the LORD..."

As they waited on the Lord God, a message was given to a prophet in their midst.

"Then the Spirit of the LORD came upon Jahaziel the son of Zechariah... And he said, 'Listen, all you of Judah and you inhabitants of Jerusalem, and you, King Jehoshaphat! Thus says the LORD to you: 'Do not be afraid nor dismayed because of this great multitude, for the battle is not yours, but God's. You will not need to fight in this battle. Position yourselves, stand still and see the salvation of the LORD, who is with you, O Judah and Jerusalem!' Do not fear or be dismayed; tomorrow go out against them, for the LORD is with you.'"

They were told to go out next day and position themselves overlooking the valley, and there wait on the Lord. ***"Position yourselves, stand still and see the salvation of the LORD, who is with you, O Judah and Jerusalem!' Do not fear or be dismayed; tomorrow go out against them, for the LORD is with you."***

King Jehoshaphat organized his musicians and singers to assemble before them, and praise the Lord.

"Now when they began to sing and to praise, the LORD set ambushes against the people of Ammon, Moab, and Mount Seir, who had come against Judah; and they were defeated. For the people of Ammon and Moab stood up against the inhabitants of Mount Seir to utterly kill and destroy them. And when they had made an end of the inhabitants of Seir, they helped to destroy one another." (From 2 Chron 20:1-23)

We may learn the following lessons from this account.

- The battle was the Lord's.
- They had to believe and trust God, relinquish it into God's hands and be still.
- When they praised and worshipped God, He responded by casting down their enemies.
- The Valley of Jehoshaphat is a valley of self-destruction.

A common feature of God's just judgment, is to allow those who have allowed themselves to be controlled by Satan, to be destroyed by the agents of evil they had embraced.

It is by the division and strife caused by demon spirits that Antichrist's kingdom will disintegrate. This strife and division is reflected in the next two end-time readings.

*“The people will be oppressed,
Everyone by another and every one by his neighbour...”* (Isa 3:5)

*“That a great panic from the LORD will be among them.
Everyone will seize the hand of his neighbour,
And raise his hand against his neighbour's hand...”* (Zech 14:13)

It is not just in the ranks of Antichrist's kingdom that division will occur but it will extend even to the throne of the beast. E.g.

“Now the great city was divided into three parts, and the cities of the nations fell. And great Babylon was remembered before God, to give her the cup of the wine of the fierceness of His wrath.” (Rev 16:19-20)

“And the ten horns which you saw on the beast, these will hate the harlot, make her desolate and naked, eat her flesh and burn her with fire.” (Rev 17:16-17)

It is in the light of this division and destruction caused by demon spirits, that we should view the invitation by God in this reading, *“Come and gather together for the supper of the great God, that you may eat the flesh of kings, the flesh of captains, the flesh of mighty men, the flesh of horses and of those who sit on them, and the flesh of all people, free and slave, both small and great.”*

Rev 19:19

“And I saw the beast, the kings of the earth, and their armies, gathered together to make war against Him who sat on the horse and against His army.”

This portrays the battle order. Antichrist and those under his control on earth - earthly leaders and those subjected to them, opposed to the Lord Jesus Christ and His army in the Church.

Rev 19:20

“Then the beast was captured, and with him the false prophet who worked signs in his presence, by which he deceived those who received the mark of the beast and those who worshipped his image. These two were cast alive into the lake of fire burning with brimstone.”

Following the exposure and defeat of Antichrist and the false prophet, or spirit of Antichrist and his influence on the Church, they have no more authority to afflict the saints, and so are seized by Christ's mighty angels and cast into the lake of fire.

This reading reinforces the fact that this is a spiritual war and shows us that antichrist is a spiritual being and not a human figure at the end of the age.

Rev 19:21

“And the rest were killed with the sword which proceeded from the mouth of Him who sat on the horse. And all the birds were filled with their flesh.”

The rest, or those on earth used by Antichrist, are destroyed and made powerless when the light of truth exposes their deceptions and apostasies. Their final outcome is to be tormented by the demon spirits they had allowed to control them.

THE THIRD PICTURE OF ARMAGEDDON - From Rev 20:7-11

Rev 20:7-11

“Now when the thousand years have expired, Satan will be released from his prison and will go out to deceive the nations which are in the four corners of the earth, Gog and Magog, to gather them together to battle, whose number is as the sand of the sea. They went up on the breadth of the earth and surrounded the camp of the saints and the beloved city. And fire came down from God out of heaven and devoured them. The devil, who deceived them, was cast into the lake of fire and brimstone where the beast and the false prophet are. And they will be tormented day and night forever and ever.”

The reading above, has a parallel Old Testament counterpart - Ezekiel Chapter 38 verse 1 to the end of chapter 39, which are linked together by their common references to Gog and Magog. These figuratively portray the Church enveloped by the forces of Satan, led by “Gog,” who symbolises Antichrist.

As Gog’s origin and nature is uncertain, so Antichrist’s true identity as a spirit being, and the nature of his attack on the Church will not be clearly recognised by most Christians. And just as Gog’s allies are widely spread, so Antichrist’s attack on the Church will be world-wide and all embracing.

“Now when the thousand years have expired” - The thousand year reign of Christ occurs during the church age. This will be explained in detail in the following Section, The One Thousand Years Reign of Christ on Earth.

“Satan will be released from his prison and will go out to deceive the nations which are in the four corners of the earth, Gog and Magog, to gather them together to battle, whose number is as the sand of the sea.” - Satan being released here corresponds with the drying up of the Euphrates River, and the release of the power of Antichrist represented here by Gog and Magog.

“They went up on the breadth of the earth and surrounded the camp of the saints and the beloved city.” - ***“the camp of the saints”*** is a symbolic reference to the Church, and being surrounded suggests that she will be engulfed in the deceptions generated by false teachers, false prophets, and those with false ministries, and besieged by anti-Christian worldly beliefs and opinions.

“And fire came down from God out of heaven and devoured them” - Fire, or judgment of God, coming down from heaven, tells us that these deceptions will be exposed and eliminated

by God's intervention. His chief weapon will be the sword of TRUTH, which will destroy Antichrist's power of deception.

“The devil, who deceived them, was cast into the lake of fire and brimstone where the beast and the false prophet are. And they will be tormented day and night forever and ever.” - Fire is a symbol of God's judgment, and a lake of fire of eternal judgment. The essence of God's judgment is complete separation from all of God's love, peace, and harmonious blessings, abiding in the presence of all that is dark and evil.

Literalists see in this reading the Christians of the world gathered at Jerusalem, and surrounded by military forces controlled by a human Antichrist. The invading armies are said to meet their doom as literal fire descends from God and devours them. But to appreciate the true symbolic nature of the reading, we must study the full parallel account of Antichrist's attack in Ezekiel 38 and 39.

THE FOURTH PICTURE OF ARMAGEDDON - From Ezekiel Chapters 38 and 39

Introduction

Ezekiel extends our view of Gog: **“Son of man, set your face against Gog, of the land of Magog, the prince of Rosh, Meshech, and Tubal, and prophesy against him...”** **Persia, Ethiopia, and Libya are with them, all of them with shield and helmet; Gomer and all its troops; the house of Togarmah from the far north and all its troops-- many people are with you.”** (Ezek 38:2, & 5-6)

Historical evidence of Gog is vague and any attempt to link his empire to modern countries (e.g. Rosh to Russia) has no creditability. This gathering of nations symbolically portrays the nature of the confederacy of Antichrist.

Both Revelation 20, and the 38th and 39th chapters of Ezekiel are figurative accounts of Antichrist's attack on the Church. In both accounts Antichrist is referred to as “Gog.” In Revelation 20, Antichrist's attack is on the camp of the saints and the beloved city, and in the Ezekiel chapters, on the mountains of Israel where God's children have found rest. In both cases they are symbolic references to the Church, brought out of the apostasy and worldliness, and into God's rest.

At the outset we must realise that it is God who will bring about Antichrist's attack on the Church. **“It will be in the latter days that I will bring you against My land, so that the nations may know Me, when I am hallowed in you, O Gog, before their eyes. Thus says the Lord GOD: ‘Are you he of whom I have spoken in former days by My servants the prophets of Israel, who prophesied for years in those days that I would bring you against them?’”** (Ezek 38:16-17)

Just as Almighty God hardened Pharaoh's heart so that he might come against Israel and be defeated, in like manner Antichrist and his confederates are to be brought against the Church to be destroyed. Through Antichrist's exposure and defeat, God's righteousness and His victory over all wickedness, and His faithful care of His children will be revealed.

Chapter 28 and 29 of Ezekiel outline the last great battle between Antichrist and Christ and His Church, may be divided into three sections.

1. The attack by the forces of Antichrist.
2. The defeat of Antichrist.
3. The restoration of the Church.

The Attack by the Forces of Antichrist

Ezek 38:1-7

“Now the word of the LORD came to me, saying, "Son of man, set your face against Gog, of the land of Magog, the prince of Rosh, Meshech, and Tubal, and prophesy against him, "and say, 'Thus says the Lord GOD: "Behold, I am against you, O Gog, the prince of Rosh, Meshech, and Tubal. "I will turn you around, put hooks into your jaws, and lead you out (or cause you to come out), with all your army, horses, and horsemen, all splendidly clothed, a great company with bucklers and shields, all of them handling swords. "Persia, Ethiopia, and Libya are with them, all of them with shield and helmet; "Gomer and all its troops; the house of Togarmah from the far north and all its troops-- many people are with you. "Prepare yourself and be ready, you and all your companies that are gathered about you; and be a guard for them.”

The nations that are mentioned were to the north, south, west, and east of Israel, telling us that Antichrist’s confederacy is world-wide.

Although the prophecy is addressed to Antichrist and those under his power, it is in fact warning the Church of what is to come. Thus right at the start, the God of all comfort reassures His children of their deliverance from the danger. Figuratively speaking, He will put hooks in their jaws, or take total control over them, and cast them out of the Church.

“all your army, horses, and horsemen, all splendidly clothed, a great company with bucklers and shields, all of them handling swords” - Antichrist’s army, or those used by him, is said to be well equipped and well disciplined. Joel similarly described the well-ordered ranks of the demon spirits mounted against the Church in the latter days. ***“Their appearance is like the appearance of horses; and like swift steeds, so they run”...“They run like mighty men, they climb the wall like men of war; every one marches in formation, and they do not break ranks.”...“They do not push one another; every one marches in his own column.”*** (Joel 2:4,7, & 8)

Ezek 38:8

“After many days you will be visited. In the latter years you will come into the land of those brought back from the sword and gathered from many people on (or to) - (alternatively, ‘to’ is just as correct, and certainly more applicable) the mountains of Israel, which had long been desolate; they were brought out of the nations, and now all of them dwell safely.”

“After many days you (Antichrist and his hosts) ***will be visited*** (by God).” - Antichrist’s attack will be initiated by God for His purposes.

“you will come into the land of those brought back from the sword and gathered from many people on the mountains of Israel, which had long been desolate,” - Previously in Ezekiel, God prophesied that He would return and pasture His children on the “mountains of Israel.” *“And I will bring them out from the peoples and gather them from the countries, and will bring them to their own land; I will feed them on the mountains of Israel, in the valleys and in all the inhabited places of the country. I will feed them in good pasture, and their fold shall be on the high mountains of Israel. There they shall lie down in a good fold and feed in rich pasture on the mountains of Israel.”* (Ezek 34:13-14) *“But you, O mountains of Israel, you shall shoot forth your branches and yield your fruit to My people Israel, for they are about to come.”* (Ezek 36:8)

“The mountains of Israel” - Symbolise God’s nurture and protection. He promises that He will deliver His children from the bondage of their persecutors, and establish them in His safety and rest. The mountains *“had long been desolate,”* - the Church has been far short of her true inheritance in Christ.

“they were brought out of the nations, and now all of them dwell safely” - But now the Church is to be brought out of the influence of Antichrist and apostasy into the nurture and into the rest of God.

Ezek 38:9-12

“You will ascend, coming like a storm, covering the land like a cloud, you and all your troops and many peoples with you.” 'Thus says the Lord GOD: "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'-- "to take plunder and to take booty, to stretch out your hand against the waste places that are again inhabited, and against a people gathered from the nations, who have acquired livestock and goods who dwell in the midst of the land.”

Having been drawn out of Babylon the great, or power of Antichrist, the Church is settled in God’s nurture and rest. To Antichrist she appears vulnerable and defenceless. But to those in God’s rest, He is their defence. To see their real state, we will study a parallel reading from Zechariah. Although this reading is addressed to the Israelites, enjoining them to come out of ancient Babylon and return to Jerusalem, it has a parallel, and even more pertinent application to the Church, who has been held captive by spiritual Babylon. *“Jerusalem shall be inhabited as towns without walls, because of the multitude of men and livestock in it. ‘For I,’ says the LORD, ‘will be a wall of fire all around her, and I will be the glory in her midst.’ ‘Up, up! Flee from the land of the north,’ says the LORD; ‘for I have spread you abroad like the four winds of heaven,’ says the LORD. ‘Up, Zion! Escape, you who dwell with the daughter of Babylon.’ For thus says the LORD of hosts”...“Sing and rejoice, O daughter of Zion! For behold, I am coming and I will dwell in your midst,’ says the LORD. ‘Many nations shall be joined to the LORD in that day, and they shall become My people. And I will dwell in your midst.”* (Zech 2:4-8,10)

“to take plunder and to take booty, to stretch out your hand against the waste places that are again inhabited, and against a people gathered from the nations, who have acquired livestock and goods who dwell in the midst of the land” - The Church was desolate, bound in

apostasy. Now she has been gathered out of Antichrist's control, and brought into the centre of the land. In spiritual terms the land represents our entering into our full spiritual inheritance in Christ Jesus.

Acquiring livestock and goods speaks of the completeness of God's provision to those who dwell in the centre of the land: e.g. *"And God is able to make all grace abound toward you, that you, always having all sufficiency in all things, may have an abundance for every good work."* (2 Cor 9:8). *"Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ."* (Eph 1:3)

Ezekiel 38:13

"Sheba, Dedan, the merchants of Tarshish, and all their young lions will say to you, 'Have you come to take plunder? Have you gathered your army to take booty, to carry away silver and gold, to take away livestock and goods, to take great plunder?'"

Sheba and Dedan were commercially strong Arabian countries, named after sons of one of Abraham's concubines. Dedan, with the Edomites, rejoiced at Israel's Babylonian captivity. Tarshish was a strong trading city to the north. Together these nations represent the power of the world and the flesh and the mark and number of the beast. In the time of the shaking of the Church, Antichrist will try to draw God's children out of their rest and dependence on Him. To plunder the 'bounty' of the restored Church is to strip away the blessings of the 'land.' Christians will be confronted with strong pressure to abandon their position of rest to shore up their provision, and return to the world and the power of commerce for their security.

The Defeat of Antichrist

Ezek 38:14-17

"Therefore, son of man, prophesy and say to Gog, 'Thus says the Lord GOD: "On that day when My people Israel dwell safely, will you not know it? 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. It will be in the latter days that I will bring you against My land, so that the nations may know Me, when I am hallowed in you, O Gog, before their eyes. Thus says the Lord GOD: "Are you he of whom I have spoken in former days by My servants the prophets of Israel, who prophesied for years in those days that I would bring you against them?"'"

Even though the Church will be hard-pressed on every side, we are assured that God is over all the circumstances and will bring about the defeat of Antichrist and hallow and glorify His name.

Ezekiel associates the time of the Church being drawn out of the power of Antichrist and corruption of the world and into God's bounty and rest, with the great shaking which was prophesied by Haggai and confirmed in the New Testament in Hebrews. *"For thus says the LORD of hosts: "Once more (it is a little while) I will shake heaven and earth, the sea and dry land; and I will shake all nations, and they shall come to the Desire of All Nations, and I will fill this temple with glory,' says the LORD of hosts."* (Hag 2:6-7) - (Heb 12:26)

In verses **18-20, Ezekiel** prophesies, **“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. For in My jealousy and in the fire of My wrath I have spoken: 'Surely in that day there shall be a great earthquake in the land of Israel, so that the fish of the sea, the birds of the heavens, the beasts of the field, all creeping things that creep on the earth, and all men who are on the face of the earth shall shake at My presence. The mountains (exalted worldly positions) shall be thrown down, the steep places (areas of deception) shall fall, and every wall (barrier to the truth) shall fall to the ground.”** (Ezek 38:18-20)

Although the great shaking will cause severe discomfort, the end result will be beneficial to the Church. The author of Hebrews writes, **“‘Yet once more,’ indicates the removal of those things that are being shaken, as of things that are made (of the flesh of man), that the things which cannot be shaken (of the Spirit) may remain. Therefore, since we are receiving a kingdom which cannot be shaken, let us have grace, by which we may serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear.”** (Heb 12:27-28)

Primarily, this judgmental shaking is directed at all that has been initiated by man, and glorifies man. Whilst all that is exalted by man is cast down, the things of the Spirit will remain, because they cannot be shaken.

The Church will be cleansed from all that has infiltrated through the spirit of Antichrist. In the midst of the shaking, the true children of God will abandon the things of the flesh and the world, and enter into the practical experience of partaking of the Lord’s life. They will retreat further into the abiding presence of God the Father, our rock, our refuge, and our strength. Their lives will be **“hidden with Christ in God.”** (Col 3:3)

Ezek 38:21-23

“I will call for a sword against Gog throughout all My mountains,” says the Lord GOD. **“Every man's sword will be against his brother. "And I will bring him to judgment with pestilence and bloodshed; 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 known in the eyes of many nations. Then they shall know that I am the LORD.””**

“I will call for a sword against Gog throughout all My mountains,” says the Lord GOD. **Every man's sword will be against his brother”** - As previously shown it is a common principle of God’s judgment on those who have submitted themselves to be servants of Satan, that they will finally turn on one another and destroy one another. E.g. (Jud 7:22, 1 Sam 14:20, 2 Chron 20:23, Hag 2:22) Such is the end of the harlot - **“And the ten horns which you saw on the beast, these will hate the harlot, make her desolate and naked, eat her flesh and burn her with fire.”** (Rev 17:16) Antichrist’s kingdom will be destroyed from within.

“I will bring him to judgment with pestilence and bloodshed; 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” - Pestilence, bloodshed, flooding rain, great hailstones, fire and brimstone, are symbols of heavy unrelenting judgment.

The thirty-eighth chapter ends with the triumphant announcement - then the whole world will know that He who judges is the Lord God Almighty.

Ezek 39:1-8

Chapter 39 commences in the same vein as Chapter 38.

“And you, son of man, prophesy against Gog, and say, 'Thus says the Lord GOD: "Behold, I am against you, O Gog, prince of Rosh, Meshech, and Tubal; "and I will turn you around and lead you on, bringing you up from the far north, and bring you against the mountains of Israel. "Then I will knock the bow out of your left hand, and cause the arrows to fall out of your right hand. " You shall fall upon the mountains of Israel, you and all your troops and the peoples who are with you; I will give you to birds of prey of every sort and to the beasts of the field to be devoured. "You shall fall on the open field; for I have spoken," says the Lord GOD. "And I will send fire on Magog and on those who live in security in the coastlands. Then they shall know that I am the LORD. "So I will make My holy name known in the midst of My people Israel, and I will not let them profane My holy name anymore. Then the nations shall know that I am the LORD, the Holy One in Israel. "Surely it is coming, and it shall be done," says the Lord GOD. "This is the day of which I have spoken.”

For emphasis, the prophet is again asked to prophesy against Gog, or Antichrist and his allies, declaring their utter defeat and destruction.

“I will turn you around and lead you on, bringing you up from the far north, and bring you against the mountains of Israel” - God will direct Antichrist’s forces into the battle that will cause their destruction.

“Then I will knock the bow out of your left hand, and cause the arrows to fall out of your right hand” - Antichrist’s chief weapon is deception. He will be disarmed as his arrows of deception are knocked out of his hand by the truth.

“You shall fall upon the mountains of Israel, you and all your troops and the peoples who are with you” - Here again, the mountains of Israel represent the Church. It is the Lord who will defeat Antichrist, but His agents of truth will be the prophets and teachers in the Church.

“I will give you to birds of prey of every sort and to the beasts of the field to be devoured” - Birds of prey and the beasts of the field are symbols for demon spirits who will figuratively devour Antichrist’s forces. They were used by Satan’s spirits to deceive and corrupt the Church. Now they become God’s instruments to bring about the complete destruction of Antichrist’s followers.

The Restoration of the Church

Ezek 39:9-10

“Then those who dwell in the cities of Israel will go out and set on fire and burn the weapons, both the shields and bucklers, the bows and arrows, the javelins and spears; and they will make fires with them for seven years. "They will not take wood from the field nor cut down any from the forests, because they will make fires with the weapons; and they will plunder those who plundered them, and pillage those who pillaged them," says the Lord GOD.”

This passage is a figurative description of the cleansing of the Church, or removal of all apostasy - **“...thus they shall cleanse the land.”** (Ezek 39:16)

“Then those who dwell in the cities of Israel” - ‘Israel,’ (or ‘the house of Israel),’ is a type of the church in general. Here, it is not the whole of Israel, but the cities of Israel that have the responsibility of burning the weapons.

The Hebrew word for city is, *‘a place guarded by a watch.’* They are the strongholds of Israel. Their equivalent in the Church are those who have the responsibility as watchmen over the Church. They are the anointed apostles, prophets, and elders, who guard the doctrine of Christ.

“will go out and set on fire and burn the weapons, both the shields and bucklers, the bows and arrows, the javelins and spears; and they will make fires with them for seven years” - The shields and bucklers, bows and arrows, and the javelins, speak of the defensive and offensive weapons of Antichrist - the counterfeit structure and ministries, the heresies, false prophecies and teaching, the lying signs and wonders - the totality of apostasies that have contaminated the Church.

The guardians of the truth will **“set on fire and burn the weapons,”** and **“make fires with them for seven years”** by exposing the lies, deceptions and apostasies. The burning with fire implies the complete destruction of all that has defiled, so that nothing is left to pollute the Church. The seven-year period is not literal, but rather speaks of completeness. Those with anointed ministries will undertake the task with resolution and thoroughness.

“They will not take wood from the field nor cut down any from the forests, because they will make fires with the weapons” - Wood from the field or from the forests, speak of the origins of the weapons that were made of wood. This points to the originators of the weapons of lies and deceptions. The attention of those with this cleansing ministry should be directed towards the exposure of errors and deceptions, rather than maligning the character or manner of the life of the perpetrators.

“and they will plunder those who plundered them, and pillage those who pillaged them” - Those who plundered and pillaged the Church are Satan and Antichrist and their host of evil spirits, and the people under their control on earth. To plunder them is to strip away their means of contaminating the Church. Those engaged in this ministry will need to be experienced campaigners in spiritual warfare - in deliverance, binding and loosening, and in the use of authoritative prayer. Jesus pointed to this when He said, **“But if I cast out demons by the Spirit of God, surely the kingdom of God has come upon you. Or how can one enter a strong man's house and plunder his goods, unless he first binds the strong man? And then he will plunder his house.”** (Matt 12:28-29)

Ezek 39:11

“It will come to pass in that day that I will give Gog a burial place there in Israel, the valley of those who pass by east of the sea; and it will obstruct travellers, because there they will bury Gog and all his multitude. Therefore they will call it the Valley of Hamon Gog.”

This is a difficult passage because some of the Hebrew words have a wide range of meanings and applications, and translators have chosen applications or added extra words to support a preconceived literal meaning.

Reasserting that these Chapters should be regarded as figurative, and in the context of cleansing the land, we will again endeavour to ascertain the meaning of the symbolic language.

“in that day that I will give (or assign to) Gog a burial place there in Israel” - This is not a burial place for weapons - It is for Gog, that is, for all of his followers in the Church who are entrenched in apostasy because their hearts are hardened, and they are not open to the truth.

“A burial place” - Is in reality a place where the dead (in this case the spiritually dead) are deposited. Their burial place is ***“there in Israel,”*** because, even though they are spiritually dead, they will still claim to be of the Church. To the world they will appear to be part of the true Church, but in fact they will be gatherings of apostates.

This speaks of the separation of the tares from the wheat. In this parable, Jesus said, ***“Let both grow together until the harvest, and at the time of harvest I will say to the reapers, First gather together the tares and bind them in bundles to burn them, but gather the wheat into my barn.”*** (Matt 13:30) This separation is already happening as like-minded people gravitate to cult religions and ‘churches’ that practice heresy. Their assemblies will be places of spiritual death.

“the valley of those who pass by east of the sea” - The Hebrew word for valley, means a deep gorge with steep sides. This points to confinement, indicating that once entrenched in apostasy, it is difficult to escape from Antichrist’s control. This is because they did not receive the ***“love of the truth.”***

The valley is said to be on ***“the east side of the sea.”*** The ‘east side of’ has alternative meanings, ‘in front of,’ and ‘over against.’ The sea is a consistent symbol of the nations, or the world. The apostate church in character, is aligned to the world.

“of those who pass by east of the sea; and it will obstruct travellers” - The Hebrew word ‘abar’ which is here translated ‘those who pass by,’ and ‘travellers’ in the N.K.J.V., and ‘passengers,’ in the K.J.V., comes from the root meaning ‘to pass over.’ Although it has a wide range of applications, its basic meaning is to pass from a fixed point to another a distance away. Its spiritual meaning, and that is the one that should be applied here, is those who depart from the truth of the doctrine of Christ, and move away from the true Church and their covenant with God. The apostle John described such a process. ***“Little children, it is the last hour; and as you have heard that the Antichrist is coming, even now many antichrists (those captivated by Antichrist) have come, by which we know that it is the last hour. They went out from us, but they were not of us; for if they had been of us, they would have continued with us; but they went out that they might be made manifest, that none of them were of us.”*** (I Jn 2:18-19)

The reading then says that it (the valley) shall ***“obstruct”*** the travellers, or those who have left the true faith. Their apostate assemblies will be confined in their ‘valley,’ and so be obstructed from causing harm to the true Church.

“Therefore they will call it the Valley of Hamon Gog” - Verse 11 could be summed up briefly as follows: God will separate those under the power of Antichrist from the true Church, and confine them to places where they will not obstruct true believers,

Ezek 39:12-13

“For seven months the house of Israel will be burying them, in order to cleanse the land. *Indeed all the people of the land will be burying them, and they will gain renown for it on the day that I am glorified,*” says the Lord GOD.”

Whereas ***“those who dwell in the cities,”*** or those entrusted with presenting truth, are charged with the responsibility of exposing and destroying all lies and deception, it is ***“all the people of the land,”*** or all in the Church, who have the responsibility of burying them, or removing every trace of their influence. Everyone will have such a zeal for the holiness of God’s name and the sanctuary, that every part of the Church and its ministry will be purified and sanctified to the LORD.

In Zechariah’s figurative description, even the bells on the horses and household pots will be consecrated to God’s work. ***“In that day **“HOLINESS TO THE LORD” shall be engraved on the bells of the horses. The pots in the LORD’S house shall be like the bowls before the altar. Yes, every pot in Jerusalem and Judah shall be holiness to the LORD of hosts. Everyone who sacrifices shall come and take them and cook in them. In that day there shall no longer be a Canaanite (an unconsecrated person) in the house of the LORD of hosts.”***** (Zech 14:20-21)

Ezek 39:14-15

“They will set apart men regularly employed (or continually), with the help of a search party (added words), to pass through the land and bury those bodies remaining on the ground, in order to cleanse it. At the end of seven months they will make a search. The search party will pass through the land; and whenever anyone sees a man's bone, he shall set up a marker by it, till the buriers have buried it in the Valley of Hamon Gog.” (NKJ)

The added words in the New King James Version are misleading, and so we will use the Revised Standard Version, which is closer to a literal translation.

“They will set apart men to pass through the land continually and bury those remaining upon the face of the land, so as to cleanse it; at the end of seven months they will make their search. And when these pass through the land and any one sees a man's bone, then he shall set up a sign by it, till the buriers have buried it in the Valley of Hamon-gog.” (RSV)

Although the Church experiences an initial cleansing from the influence of the spirit of Antichrist, remnants of apostasy will need to be rooted out. Spiritual ‘watchmen,’ with ministries anointed by the Lord, will have the responsibility of exposing remaining false ministries and doctrines, which will be destroyed and ‘buried’ when exposed to the light of truth.

As evidence of the thoroughness of the purging of the Church of every trace of apostasy, at the end of ‘seven months,’ or when the Church has been completely cleansed, the spiritual watchmen will continue to monitor the normal function of the Church to expose any remaining influence of Antichrist that might re-surface. Elders are overseers of their local churches, and so they are the ‘buriers’ who are responsible for maintaining the sanctity of the Church.

Ezek 39:17-20

“And as for you, son of man, thus says the Lord GOD, 'Speak to every sort of bird and to every beast of the field: "Assemble yourselves and come; gather together from all sides to My sacrificial meal which I am sacrificing for you, a great sacrificial meal on the mountains of Israel, that you may eat flesh and drink blood. You shall eat the flesh of the mighty, drink the blood of the princes of the earth, of rams and lambs, of goats and bulls, all of them fatlings of Bashan. You shall eat fat till you are full, and drink blood till you are drunk, at My sacrificial meal which I am sacrificing for you. ...You shall be filled at My table with horses and riders, with mighty men and with all the men of war," says the Lord GOD.” (see also Rev 19:17-18)

In Revelation 18:2, a mighty angel ***“cried mightily with a loud voice, saying, “Babylon the great is fallen, is fallen, and has become a dwelling place of demons, a prison for every foul spirit, and a cage for every unclean and hated bird!”*** Having been cast out of the true Church, the harlot or false church is declared to be home to every foul demon spirit, and ***“every unclean and hated bird”*** - another metaphorical description of satanic spirits.

Ezekiel uses the same symbolism, where ***“every sort of bird and...every beast of the field,”*** are metaphors for every foul demon spirit of Satan. They are invited to feast on and consume all in the apostate church that had persecuted the true saints of Christ, and opposed His beloved Church. Those that Antichrist has used to oppose the truth are symbolically pictured as associated with warfare - ***“the princes of the earth,” “horses and riders,”*** and ***“mighty men,”*** all ***“men of war.”*** They are collectively called ***“fatlings (or fat cows) of Bashan,”*** pointing to their prosperity, their pride, and disdain for God’s true ways. In their opposition to the gospel of Christ they readily accepted and obeyed the prompting of demon spirits. Now these same spirits are agents of torture and undoing.

Ezek 39:21

“I will set My glory among the nations; all the nations shall see My judgment which I have executed, and My hand which I have laid on them.”

In verse 18, Antichrist’s leaders on earth are likened to ***“rams and lambs, of goats and bulls,”*** the animals used in ritual sacrifices. God has chosen to make them His ***“sacrificial meal”*** to glorify His justice and righteousness before the nations.

Ezek 39:22-24

“So the house of Israel shall know that I am the LORD their God from that day forward. The Gentiles shall know that the house of Israel went into captivity for their iniquity; because they were unfaithful to Me, therefore I hid My face from them. I gave them into the hand of their enemies, and they all fell by the sword. According to their uncleanness

and according to their transgressions I have dealt with them, and hidden My face from them.””

As stated before the house of Israel is a type of the church in general. Down through the ages it has been contaminated by the influence of the spirit of Antichrist. Like the house of Israel, the church was allowed to go into captivity because it was unfaithful to God. The Church was given into the power of her enemies, the spirits of Antichrist, because of the many who embraced his lawlessness.

As in the parable of the wheat and the tares, those under the power of Antichrist with their apostasies have been allowed to coexist with true saints, lest in the upheaval of casting them out, some of the children of God may be destroyed in the process. But it will not be so at the end of the age. ***“The Son of Man will send out His angels, and they will gather out of His kingdom all things that offend, and those who practice lawlessness.”*** (Matt 13:41)

When the Church is finally cleansed from ***“all things that offends,”*** the world will see that she went into captivity because of her lawlessness and unfaithfulness to God.

Ezek 39:25-29

“Therefore thus says the Lord GOD: 'Now I will bring back the captives of Jacob, and have mercy on the whole house of Israel; and I will be jealous for My holy name—'after they have borne their shame, and all their unfaithfulness in which they were unfaithful to Me, when they dwelt safely in their own land and no one made them afraid. 'When I have brought them back from the peoples and gathered them out of their enemies' lands, and I am hallowed in them in the sight of many nations, 'then they shall know that I am the LORD their God, who sent them into captivity among the nations, but also brought them back to their own land, and left none of them captive any longer. And I will not hide My face from them anymore; for I shall have poured out My Spirit on the house of Israel,' says the Lord GOD.”

God’s promise is that after ***“all things that offend, and those who practice lawlessness”*** have been cast out, the church will be restored with a right relationship with the Lord and God the father. To precipitate this restoration, the Holy Spirit will be poured forth as in the latter rain to precipitate a last great harvest. Notice that the Spirit will be poured out on ***‘the house of Israel,’*** or the church in general. This will not merely be a revival emanating from the charismatic arm of the church, but a spiritual ‘fire’ that will envelop the whole church.

Many who had been held captive by the deceptions of Antichrist will be brought under a fire of conviction to repentance, and will come out of the apostate church. Multitudes who were held captive by the spirit of the world will turn to the Lord and receive salvation. The return of those who have been held captive, to the care and nurture of God, will cause the world to hallow and glorify His name.

SECTION 11

THE ONE THOUSAND YEAR REIGN OF CHRIST ON THE EARTH

Revelation Chapter 20

INTRODUCTION

In the first six verses of Revelation chapter 20, there are references to a thousand year period during which Satan is bound, whilst Christ and his saints reign on earth. This is the only direct reference to such a thousand-year reign in the bible. It has become known as the millennial period.

MILLENNIALISM

The term millennium is derived from the Latin roots, mille - thousand, and annum - year. It was adopted as a theological term indicating the thousand-year period of the reign of Christ on earth.

Neither Christ nor any of the Apostles, in all their teachings and prophecies, gave any indication of a physical thousand year reign of Christ on earth. Consistently they spoke of the spreading of the gospel to all nations, a growing apostasy and darkness, a tribulation period, and the coming of the Lord to gather His saints to Himself. And yet these few verses have given rise to much controversy, and the propagation of various millennial theories.

The basic reason why there is so much controversy is because of the different methods of interpretation of these verses, and some related verses in the Old Testament. A literal interpretation sees Christ physically reigning from Jerusalem over a world-wide political and religious kingdom for an actual thousand-year period. A figurative interpretation sees Christ's reign as a spiritual reign in the Church over the period of its history.

The thousand years is not a literal thousand years but the period of the Church age in which Christ reigns spiritually with His saints.

When Christ first came, the Jews refused to accept Him as their Messiah because they were expecting Him to overthrow the yoke of the Roman Empire, and establish a physical kingdom in Jerusalem. They couldn't accept that His reign was spiritual, and not physical, and so rejected Him and His kingdom. And now, despite Jesus saying, "*My kingdom is not of this world* (or not a worldly political kingdom)," (Jn 18:36) a large percentage of Christians are eagerly anticipating the time when He will physically reign over the world from Jerusalem.

Because this question is so vitally important to our personal relationship with Christ, and our reigning with Him, we will briefly outline the three main millennial theories - Postmillennialism, Premillennialism and Amillennialism.

Postmillennialism - Christ comes after the millennium occurs. Postmillennialism was formulated and presented in the teaching in England of Daniel Whitby, 1638-1726. This interpretation maintains that the Church will gradually overcome all evil on earth ushering in a millennial period of peace and prosperity before Christ returns. Historical evidence of deterioration of world order has made this theory largely unpopular.

Premillennialism - Christ will return before the millennium.

There are many variations in premillennial beliefs but each has the common basis of Christ's return before the start of the thousand year period.

Following are three premillennial beliefs.

Historic Premillennialism - A very basic premillennial belief was held by a percentage of Christians for the first three centuries. As a doctrine it was not fully developed or explained beyond the basic idea that Christ would return and establish the promised kingdom in Israel, and that He would reign in Jerusalem for a thousand years. It was eventually discredited when some of its adherents wrote of the wealth and luxury associated with the premillennial kingdom.

In the fourth century Augustine roundly condemned the materialistic attitudes associated with Historic Premillennialism and for centuries it was practically ignored.

Dispensational Premillennialism - Premillennialism was virtually non-existent from the time of Augustine until the late 1850's, when it was revived by John Nelson Darby in the form of Dispensational Premillennialism. It should be understood at the outset that premillennialists consistently employ a literal historical interpretation of the bible.

When Darby contemplated Old Testament promises of the restoration of the nation of Israel, he reasoned that these promises to Israel should be regarded as literal promises of a physical kingdom. He then concluded that there are two separate dispensations - a heavenly one for the church, and an earthly one for Israel - that the Jews would never be part of the church. He wrote, "*The Church is in relationship with the Fathers, and the Jews with Jehovah...The Jewish nation is never to enter the Church.*" (From "The Hopes of the Church of God"). Premillennialists claim that there are two separate programs for Israel and the Church - two methods of judgment, and two eternal destinies.

According to Darby, the earthly dispensation for Israel will involve the literal fulfilling of the Old Testament prophecies of the restoration of the kingdom of Israel - a kingdom in which Christ will reign from Jerusalem for a literal thousand year period of peace and prosperity, the nations of the world will be subjected to Israel, and the temple, the daily sacrifices, and sacrificial feasts will be restored.

Darby documented his findings with extensive notes and bible references, and when his beliefs were accepted by Cyrus Scofield, and included in his study reference bible in 1909, Premillennialism was catapulted into the Protestant mainstream. With the support of major Publishing Houses, the Scofield and Ryrie study bibles became models for future study bibles, entrenching Premillennialism among Bible-believing churches - particularly in America.

Although there are many variations, this is the order of events adopted by most present-day premillennialists.

- There will be a literal seven-year period of tribulation during which Antichrist will set up his throne in Jerusalem and have a world-wide religious and political kingdom.
- The saints will be raptured from earth before the tribulation.
- At the end of the tribulation period, Christ will return with His saints in their resurrection bodies and reign spiritually with Christ, and Antichrist will be deposed.
- Christ will set up a worldly kingdom in Jerusalem, and all nations will be subjected to Israel.
- The temple will be restored, and the Jewish animal sacrifices and feasts will be re-instituted as memorial ceremonies.
- There will be a 1000-year reign of peace and harmony during which Satan will be bound and imprisoned in a bottomless pit.
- Satan will be released, and incite the nations to war against the saints who are gathered at Jerusalem.
- There will be a final judgment followed by the resurrection and rapture of all believers.
- Fire will come down from heaven and destroy the satanic army and Satan will be cast into the lake of fire.

Note that the premillennial theory involves two raptures of the saints, despite this not being mentioned anywhere in the Bible.

Premillennial advocates insist that Old Testament passages picturing the restoration and future blessing of Jerusalem and Mount Zion are literal, and therefore point to Israel being restored with a world-wide dominion.

Amillennialism (Or Non-millennialism) - meaning no literal physical reign of Christ on earth for a thousand years.

Amillennialists believe that many Old Testament prophecies should be understood as being figurative. In the case of Israel being restored, Israel is regarded as spiritual Israel or the Church. Israel is restored spiritually with the advent of Jesus Christ and the establishment of His spiritual kingdom throughout the whole world.

In line with the rest of Revelation, Amillennialists adopt a figurative interpretation of the verses in Revelation 20. The thousand year period is the church age during which Christians reign with Christ in establishing His spiritual kingdom on earth. It is concluded with the second coming of the Lord.

“For this we say to you by the word of the Lord, that we who are alive and remain until the coming of the Lord will by no means precede those who are asleep. For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of an archangel, and with the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first. Then we who are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And thus we shall always be with the Lord. Therefore comfort one another with these words.” (1 Thess 4:15-18)

Regarding Israel, Paul prophesies that many will be converted and grafted into the Church. “ *And they (Israel) also, if they do not continue in unbelief, will be grafted in, for God is able to graft them in again.*” (Rom 11:23-24)

The Amillennial model is simple and biblical, and it is the one we adopt. The 1000 years is a figurative time - the complete time needed for the Lord to evangelise the world, and allow for all who will to come to repentance. “*But, beloved, do not forget this one thing, that with the Lord one day is as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day. The Lord is not slack concerning His promise, as some count slackness, but is longsuffering toward us, not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance.*” (2 Pet 3:8-9)

Amillennialists maintain that to look forward to a physical reign of Christ in the future is to minimise and neglect His spiritual reign now, where Christians right down throughout the ages have been expected to reign with Him as “*kings and priests.*”

Regarding the Old Testament passages concerning the restoration of Jerusalem and Mount Zion, Amillennialists see Jerusalem and Mount Zion as symbolic references to the Church - as in this example from Hebrews. Speaking to Christians the writer of Hebrews states “*But you have come to Mount Zion and to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, to an innumerable company of angels, to the general assembly and church of the firstborn who are registered in heaven, to God the Judge of all, to the spirits of just men made perfect, to Jesus the Mediator of the new covenant, and to the blood of sprinkling that speaks better things than that of Abel.*” (Heb 12:22-24) The Old Testament passages are therefore considered to refer to a promise of blessing and restoration of the end-time Church.

We will now study the first six verses of Revelation Chapter 20 in detail by interpreting its symbolism and figurative language.

Rev 20:1-6

“Then I saw an angel coming down from heaven, having the key to the bottomless pit and a great chain in his hand. He laid hold of the dragon, that serpent of old, who is the Devil and Satan, and bound him for a thousand years; and he cast him into the bottomless pit, and shut him up, and set a seal on him, so that he should deceive the nations no more till the thousand years were finished. But after these things he must be released for a little while. And I saw thrones, and they sat on them, and judgment was committed to them. Then I saw the souls of those who had been beheaded for their witness to Jesus and for the word of God, who had not worshipped the beast or his image, and had not received his mark on their foreheads or on their hands. And they lived and reigned with Christ for a thousand years. But the rest of the dead did not live again until the thousand years were finished. This is the first resurrection. Blessed and holy is he who has part in the first resurrection. Over such the second death has no power, but they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with Him a thousand years.”

“Then I saw an angel coming down from heaven, having the key to the bottomless pit and a great chain in his hand. He laid hold of the dragon, that serpent of old, who is the Devil and Satan, and bound him for a thousand years.” - Right at the outset it is obvious that the language is figurative. How could a spirit being like Satan be bound with a physical chain? Satan is spiritually bound by the Holy Spirit as the saints proclaim the gospel truth of the cross of Christ.

Many people reject the idea that Satan is bound in the church age on the grounds of the rampant wickedness evident in the world. However we must understand that the Greek word 'deo' 'to bind' may be used literally or figuratively. An example of its figurative use is found in the case of the woman who was bent over by an infirmity. Jesus asked, ***“ought not this woman, being a daughter of Abraham, whom Satan has bound (‘deo’) --think of it--for eighteen years, be loosed from this bond on the Sabbath?”*** (Luke 13:16) The woman was not completely immobile but restricted in her movements.

Other examples of it being used figuratively by Paul - ***“And see, now I go bound in the spirit to Jerusalem, not knowing the things that will happen to me there.”*** (Acts 20:22)

And again - ***“For the woman who has a husband is bound by the law to her husband as long as he lives. But if the husband dies, she is released.”*** (Rom 7:2)

It is in this figurative sense that Satan's overall power is bound or restricted. Note that the word does not say that Satan is completely bound, but bound from deceiving the nations. He has been restrained from fully deceiving the nations and stopping the spread of the gospel. The result is that now the gospel has been preached to all nations, and there are over two billion self-professing Christians in seven continents. As previously stated, the thousand years is the perfect and complete time for the world to be evangelised, and for all who will, to receive salvation.

When the truth of the cross is used in conjunction with the prayers and testimonies of the saints, and they wield their authority in the name of Jesus, the Holy Spirit registers His agreement by binding the power of Satan. ***“For there are three that bear witness in heaven: the Father, the Word, and the Holy Spirit; and these three are one.”*** (1 John 5:7)

“and he cast him into the bottomless pit,” - A bottomless pit speaks of being in a non-escapable situation. For Satan there is no way around the cross of Jesus where he was defeated.

“and shut him up and set a seal on him so that he should deceive the nations no more till the thousand years were finished.” - The seal is the seal of God's authority, similar to the king's seal in the story of Daniel in the Lion's den. ***“Then a stone was brought and laid on the mouth of the den, and the king sealed it with his own signet ring and with the signets of his lords, that the purpose concerning Daniel might not be changed.”*** (Dan 6:17-18) The Holy Spirit is entrusted with watching over God's seal and upholding His authority.

“But after these things he must be released for a little while” - How is Satan released from his restriction? If the gospel truth is the ***“chain”*** that binds him, then the removal of the gospels effectiveness removes the restraints on Satan's activities.

The scriptures reveal that at the end of the age there will be a falling away, a time of spiritual darkness where the voices of prophecy and teaching virtually cease altogether. ***“Let no one deceive you by any means; for that Day will not come unless the falling away comes first...”*** (2 Thess 2:3) As a result of this spiritual decline and lack of commitment, the church is becoming insipid and worldly and God justly withdraws his seal, and ***“He (the Holy Spirit) who now restrains will do so until He is taken out of the way.”*** (2 Thess 2:7)

Rev 20:4

“And I saw thrones, and they sat on them, and judgment was committed to them. Then I saw the souls of those who had been beheaded for their witness to Jesus and for the word of God, who had not worshipped the beast or his image, and had not received his mark on their foreheads or on their hands. And they lived and reigned with Christ for a thousand years”

This is the key verse used by premillennialists to support their belief that Christ will reign with his saints on earth for a literal period of one thousand years. But, like the rest of the book of Revelation this should be treated figuratively. The thousand years in which the saints reign with Christ on earth is not a literal time period of one thousand years, but an indefinite period of time, required by God for the gospel to be preached to all nations ***“...not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance.”*** All who are to be saved are to hear the truth. It is the Church age in which the saints reign spiritually in union with Christ.

“Then I saw the souls of those who had been beheaded for their witness to Jesus and for the word of God” - John saw a group of people who had been ‘beheaded’ for the sake of their witness to Jesus and the word. The fact that this is figurative is made evident by the fact that though beheaded, they lived and reigned with Christ for one thousand years, or the period of the Church age.

Symbolically the head speaks of rule, as for instance, the head governing the body, or Christ being ***“the head of all things to the church.”*** These people have given up the self-government of their lives so that Christ may reign in them and through them. John’s attention is drawn to their souls, for it is the carnal soulish self-life that has to be put “to death.” It is a spiritual principle that if one is to reign with Jesus, he must of his own will consign his carnal self-life to the altar of the cross to be put to death by the Spirit. God is then able to engage in a life-long work of stripping away the flesh and replacing it with the reign of Christ. Jesus told His disciples, ***“If anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow Me, and, unless a grain of wheat falls into the ground and dies, it remains alone; but if it dies, it produces much grain.”*** (Lk 9:32, & Jn 12:24)

“who had not worshipped the beast or his image, and had not received his mark on their foreheads or on their hands” - Because of their total commitment to the Lord, they lived their lives in union with Him and through Him, and consequently overcame the mark and image of the Beast on their hands, or all that they did, and on their foreheads, all of their thoughts and mental attitudes.

“they lived and reigned with Christ for a thousand years” - This is not the whole Church, but a special group of Christians who ***“did not love their lives to the death”*** (Rev 12:11), and consequently Christ can reign in them and through them without the interference of their carnal flesh.

The spiritual martyrs in the above reading have been continually manifested down through the Church age, and they have reigned with Christ as ***“kings and priests,”*** being used by Him in establishing His kingdom on earth.

Rev 20:5-6

“But the rest of the dead did not live again until the thousand years were finished. This is the first resurrection. Blessed and holy is he who has part in the first resurrection. Over such the second death has no power, but they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with Him a thousand years.”

“But the rest of the dead did not live again until the thousand years were finished.” - The rest of the dead relate to the rest of the Church apart from the spiritual martyrs. They will be raised to Christ with immortal bodies when He comes to gather all saints to Himself at the close of the age.

“This is the first resurrection” - This statement reverts back to the spiritual martyrs. The first resurrection is a spiritual resurrection in which those who have given up their self-lives are raised (to a spiritual position) in heavenly places and united with Christ Jesus.

The raising of this group to a position where they *“sit together in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus”* (Eph 2:5-6) is referred to in the reading as *“the first resurrection.”* Their first death was the death of their self-life.

Their position in heavenly places is one of authority - sharing the authority of Christ’s throne, as in the case of the overcomers at Laodicia. *“To him who overcomes I will grant to sit with Me on My throne, as I also overcame and sat down with My Father on His throne.”* (Rev 3:18)

“Blessed and holy is he who has part in the first resurrection. Over such the second death has no power” - The second death is eternal damnation. *“Then Death and Hades were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death. And anyone not found written in the Book of Life was cast into the lake of fire.”* (Rev 20:14-15)

The words sometimes quoted, “once saved always saved,” are really not true. If a person falls away and renounces the gospel truth of his salvation, he has lost his salvation. That is why Paul warned the Colossians: *“...to present you holy, and blameless, and above reproach in His sight - if indeed you continue in the faith, grounded and steadfast, and are not moved away from the hope of the gospel...”* (Col 1:22-23)

This does not apply to those who partake of the first resurrection, and so they will not be hurt by the second death.

“and shall reign with Him a thousand years - The result being that throughout the ages *“they lived and reigned with Christ for a thousand years.”*

Verses 7-10 of Revelation 20 were covered in Section 9, in the study of “The Battle of Armageddon.”

THE GREAT WHITE THRONE

Rev 20:11-15.

“Then I saw a great white throne and Him who 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, standing before God, and books were opened. And another book was opened, which is *the Book of Life*. And the dead were judged according to their works, by the things which were written in the books. The sea gave up the dead who were in it, and Death and Hades delivered up the dead who were in them. And they were judged, each one according to his works. Then Death and Hades were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death. And anyone not found written in the Book of Life was cast into the lake of fire.”

“Then I saw a great white throne and Him who sat on it, from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away. And there was found no place for them.” - He who was seated on the throne was the Lord Jesus Christ, to whom all judgment was entrusted by God the Father. *“For the Father judges no one, but has committed all judgment to the Son, that all should honour the Son just as they honour the Father.”* (John 5:22-23)

He alone was qualified as *“the Son of God,”* and *“the Son of man,”* being well able to identify with our human frailty and weaknesses. *“For we do not have a High Priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but was in all points tempted as we are, yet without sin.”* (Heb 4:15)

The great white throne judgment heralds the end of the present dispensation here on earth and atmosphere, which according to Peter, are to be dissolved in fire. *“...looking for and hastening the coming of the day of God, because of which the heavens will be dissolved, being on fire, and the elements will melt with fervent heat?”* (2 Peter 3:12-13)

“And I saw the dead small and great, standing before God, and books were opened. And another book was opened, which is the Book of Life. And the dead were judged according to their works, by the things which were written in the books.” - Books were opened which recorded the history of the deeds of every person during their life on earth, and these deeds provided grounds for their judgment.

There was a second book called ‘The Book of Life,’ in which was recorded the names of all those who had been saved by their belief in Jesus Christ, and their commitment to Him as their Lord. The righteous ones are not being judged concerning their salvation, which has already been secured. This is a judgment concerning rewards and their status in their new life on the new earth.

The wicked are also being judged on the basis of their works. The first reason for this is that God is shown to be righteous, even to the hosts of wickedness.

It is also possible that their work on earth will determine their state in hell, for this reading from Isaiah seems to suggest that there are various levels of severity.

*“Yet you (Satan) shall be brought down to Sheol,
To the lowest depths of the Pit.”* (Isa 14:15)

The Judgment of the Righteous According to Works

Works are a Testimony to the Legitimacy of our Faith

The key Bible reading states, ***“And they were judged, each one according to his works.”*** Of course one is saved through faith and not by works. That is clearly stated by Paul in his letter to the Ephesians.

“For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, not of works, lest anyone should boast. (Eph 2:8-10)

But the question arises, how do you judge whether faith is genuine, and not just words without belief and commitment behind them? The apostle James tells us that faith without works is dead, and that if faith is genuine, works will automatically follow. ***“What does it profit, my brethren, if someone says he has faith but does not have works? Can faith save him? Thus also faith by itself, if it does not have works, is dead.”*** (James 2:14 & 17)

Why are works an indication of the genuineness of our faith and salvation? If we have been saved and baptised into Jesus Christ, He dwells in us, and we in Him. His life and His love for us and for others is in us. If we belong to the Lord, and His life and His love are in us, it is natural that we desire to be used by Him to express His love to others.

In doing ‘good works,’ it is not necessary that we should be engaged in prominent ministries, but that we do the works that arise out of love for one another. They are the type of works Jesus used as illustrations in the parable of the separation of the sheep from the goats.

“Come, you blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world: for I was hungry and you gave Me food; I was thirsty and you gave Me drink; I was a stranger and you took Me in; I was naked and you clothed Me; I was sick and you visited Me; I was in prison and you came to Me.” Then the righteous will answer Him, saying, ‘Lord, when did we see You hungry and feed You, or thirsty and give You drink? When did we see You a stranger and take You in, or naked and clothe You? Or when did we see You sick, or in prison, and come to You?’ And the King will answer and say to them, ‘Assuredly, I say to you, inasmuch as you did it to one of the least of these My brethren, you did it to Me.’ (Matt 25:34-40)

Note the nature of these works. They arise out of seeing someone in need, followed by a response with a work that arises out of genuine love for others. It is love for one another that identifies us as Christians.

“By this all will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another.” (John 13:35)

The Judgment Seat of Christ

All Christians must stand before the judgment seat of Christ, which is not for salvation, but for rewards for our works on earth.

“Therefore we make it our aim, whether present or absent, to be well pleasing to Him. For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that each one may receive the things done in the body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad.” (2 Corinthians 9:10)

Apparently there are varying degrees of status and blessing in our life on the new earth that are allocated to recipients according to their works on earth. ***“Then Death and Hades were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death. and anyone not found written in the Book of Life was cast into the lake of fire.”***

To bring down the curtain on this age, God banishes death and Hades, the abode of the dead, and they will have no part in our existence with Jesus on the new earth and heavens. Satan and those aligned with him are cast into the lake of fire.

The “lake of fire” should not be viewed literally. Fire is a symbol of judgment, and a lake of fire expresses eternal judgment.

SECTION 12

THE BRIDE OF CHRIST

At the end of Section 8, which portrayed the fall of Babylon the Great, there was praise and exaltation directed to the throne of God, thanking Him because His righteous judgment had been manifested in the casting down of Antichrist's kingdom. What follows is this exuberant declaration that *"the Lord God Omnipotent reigns,"... "for the marriage of the Lamb has come."*

Rev 19:6-9

"And I heard, as it were, the voice of a great multitude, as the sound of many waters and as the sound of mighty thunderings, saying, 'Alleluia! For the Lord God Omnipotent reigns! Let us be glad and rejoice and give Him glory, for the marriage of the Lamb has come the Lord God Omnipotent reigns. And to her it was granted to be arrayed in fine linen, clean and bright, for the fine linen is the righteous acts of the saints. Then he said to me, 'Write: 'Blessed are those who are called to the marriage supper of the Lamb!'" And he said to me, "These are the true sayings of God."

Who, or what is "the Bride of Christ"? The general thought is that it is the whole Church resurrected with Christ at His second coming. Let us consider the description of the bride in the above reading. The first thing to notice is that the reading portrays two companies of people.

There is the Bride - *"His wife has made herself ready."*

And there are the wedding guests - *"Blessed are those who are called to the marriage supper of the Lamb."*

Similarly in Christ's marriage parables, there is the bridegroom, representing Christ, and those who were invited to the marriage.

When we examine the structure of Israel and the Church down through the ages, we see that there has always been a specially prepared smaller group within the whole body that God has used to fulfil His purposes. They are variously called "the sons of Zadok," "the overcomers," the "two witnesses," the "144,000," and "the called, chosen, and faithful." They are those who have given up their self-lives to the death, and have embraced the refining hand of God to the end that no intruding manifestation of their flesh intrudes on their ministry.

It is this smaller group within the main body that have been purified by God to be the Lamb's wife. In the reading above, it says of the Bride, *"and to her it was granted to be arrayed in fine linen, clean and bright, for the fine linen is the righteous acts of the saints."* This is not the imputed righteousness granted to all Christians because of the virtue of the blood of Jesus. Because of God's refinement of the Bride, carnal flesh has been stripped away, and her works are declared to be righteous because they are accomplished through Christ in the power of the Holy Spirit. They are called righteous acts because they are not tarnished by fleshly interference.

EXAMPLES OF A SMALLER GROUP WITHIN THE NATION OF ISRAEL

The Seven Thousand

When Elijah lamented to God that he alone was left of all the prophets, God reassured him by saying, ***“Yet I have reserved seven thousand in Israel, all whose knees have not bowed to Baal, and every mouth that has not kissed him.”*** (1 Kings 19:18)

The Sons of Zadok

The next two readings again reveal two companies of people with contrasting degrees of loyalty to God. The first group, the priests who fell short in their ministry to God, were told that they would bear their shame. Nevertheless they would still have charge over the temple. The modern equivalent would be that ministers who do not carry out their ministry of representing Christ faithfully, would still have charge of the oversight of church activities.

“And they shall not come near Me to minister to Me as priest, nor come near any of My holy things, nor into the Most Holy Place; but they shall bear their shame and their abominations which they have committed. Nevertheless I will make them keep charge of the temple, for all its work, and for all that has to be done in it.” (Ezek 44:13-15)

The second group, the sons of Zadok, had been faithful in times of apostasy, and were rewarded by having a personal relationship with God, in which they would minister directly to Him, knowing His personal direction and guidance.

“But the priests, the Levites, the sons of Zadok, who kept charge of My sanctuary when the children of Israel went astray from Me, they shall come near Me to minister to Me; and they shall stand before Me to offer to Me the fat and the blood,” says the Lord GOD. “They shall enter My sanctuary, and they shall come near My table to minister to Me, and they shall keep My charge.” (Ezek 44:15-16)

EXAMPLES OF A SMALLER GROUP WITHIN THE LARGER BODY OF THE CHURCH

The One Hundred and Forty Four Thousand

In Revelation 14: 1-5, we see another special group that are a representation of the Bride of Christ. One hundred and forty thousand who have the name of God on their foreheads, stand with Christ on Mount Zion, which we shall see is another symbolic representation of the Bride of Christ.

“Then I looked, and behold, a Lamb standing on Mount Zion, and with Him one hundred and forty-four thousand, having His Father's name written on their foreheads... These are the ones who were not defiled with women, for they are virgins. These are the ones who follow the Lamb wherever He goes. These were redeemed from among men, being firstfruits to God and to the Lamb. And in their mouth was found no deceit, for they are without fault before the throne of God.” (Rev 14:1, 4-5)

Jerusalem, or the city as a whole, is a symbol of the church, and Mount Zion was a smaller area within the city. Mount Zion originally referred to the stronghold of Zion, or David's city, but was later expanded to include the site of Solomon's temple with the ark of God's presence. ***"For the LORD has chosen Zion; he has desired it for His dwelling place."*** (Ps 132:13)

Mount Zion is another representation of the Bride of Christ. ***"But you have come to Mount Zion and (or even) to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem."*** (Heb 12:22) In the next reading we see that 'heavenly Jerusalem', or 'New Jerusalem', comes down from heaven dressed as a bride.

"Then I, John, saw the holy city, New Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband." (Rev 21:2-3)

The fact that the 144,000 are standing on Mount Zion shows that they are part of the Bride of Christ.

The Attributes of the Bride of Christ

By examining the attributes of the ***"one hundred and forty-four thousand, having His Father's name written on their foreheads,"*** we gain further insight into the nature of the Bride of Christ.

"one hundred and forty four thousand" - The number twelve is linked with the elective purposes of God as in twelve tribes and twelve apostles. Twelve multiplied by twelve symbolises the full number of those elected by God, in this case to be the bride of Christ.

It is God who elects and forms the Bride. ***"Then I, John, saw the holy city, New Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband."*** (Rev 21:2). It is said to come out of heaven from God because He is its maker. He undertakes the work of refinement and sanctification, through the working of the Spirit. ***"...for he waited for the city which has foundations, whose builder and maker is God."*** (Heb 11:10)

Our initial description of the bride says, ***"His wife has made herself ready."*** Even though God forms the bride, He can only fashion each person as they fully surrender to His workmanship on the path of the cross.

"standing on Mount Zion" - Standing on mount Zion confirms that they are members of the Bride of Christ.

"having His Father's name written on their foreheads" - To the overcomers in Philadelphia it was promised, ***"I will write on him the name of My God and the name of the city of My God, the New Jerusalem (or the Bride of Christ)."*** This spiritual mark signifies that the bride is His own creation, prepared especially by Him to be presented to His Son. She has the blessing of His care and protection.

"were not defiled with women, for they are virgins" - They are not physical, but spiritual virgins - they are totally consecrated to the Lord.

“the ones who follow the Lamb wherever He goes” - Follow is not directional, but compliance to the Lord’s will in all things in all circumstances.

“redeemed from among men, being firstfruits to God and to the Lamb” - God’s ultimate aim is for man’s spiritual growth and refinement and perfection. This is an ongoing work that will extend into our future eternal life. These are firstfruits of that work from man, perfected to the glory of God and the lord Jesus Christ.

“in their mouth was found no deceit” - They are without guile or ulterior motives in their speaking and manner. Their mouths have been consecrated to the Lord, so that He can speak through them.

“without fault before the throne of God” - It is not that they are sinless, but that they have a purity of heart in their commitment, dedication, and loyalty towards God.

The Overcomers

Overcomers are those who have learned to overcome the power of their flesh, the world, and the devil. They have learned that they have no capacity within themselves to overcome, but agree with Paul who said, ***“I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me.”*** (Phil 4:13) Their overcoming is through the power of the indwelling life of Christ.

The description of the overcomers in Rev 3:12, and 3, demonstrates their relationship to the Bride, or New Jerusalem.

“He who overcomes, I will make him a pillar in the temple of My God, and he shall go out no more. And I will write on him the name of My God and the name of the city of My God, the New Jerusalem, which comes down out of heaven from My God. And I will write on him My new name.” (Rev 3:12)

“To him who overcomes I will grant to sit with Me on My throne, as I also overcame and sat down with My Father on His throne.” (Rev 3:21)

In Rev 21:2, the Bride of Christ is called ‘New Jerusalem.’ ***“Then I, John, saw the holy city, New Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband.”***

In Rev 3:12, Jesus promises to write the name of ***“the New Jerusalem, which comes down out of heaven”*** on the overcomers. In other words, they are to be designated as part of the Bride of Christ. Further blessings are directed to the overcomers in Rev 3:21, where Jesus granted to them ***“to sit with Me on My throne”*** (or to share His authority), and in Rev 21:7-8, ***“He who overcomes shall inherit all things, and I will be his God and he shall be My son.”***

The “called, chosen, and faithful.”

This is another select group within the main body of the Church who have been called by Christ to engage with Him in warfare against Antichrist and the ten kings.

“These (the ten kings) will make war with the Lamb, and the Lamb will overcome them, for He is Lord of lords and King of kings; and those who are with Him are called, chosen, and faithful.” (Rev 17:14)

In Chapter 19, we are told that those accompanying the Lord in the battle against Antichrist were arrayed in ***“fine linen, clean and bright,”*** a similar description to that of the Bride, who is clothed ***“in fine linen, clean and bright, for the fine linen is the righteous acts of the saints.”***

They too had embarked on the path of the cross, allowing their flesh to be put to death by the working of the Holy Spirit. They were chosen by Christ because He knew that they would faithfully follow His commands.

Those who Have the Testimony of Jesus Christ

The testimony of Jesus Christ is the truth of Jesus Christ revealed by the Holy Spirit. In Revelation 10 it is called the spirit of prophecy. ***“For the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy.”*** (Rev 19:10) Those who have the testimony of Jesus Christ have the ministry of prophetic teaching ordained and empowered by the Holy Spirit.

Revelation 12:17 presents us with another picture of a smaller group within the larger body of the church that have this ministry of prophetic teaching. Having failed to destroy the church in general, Satan concentrates his fury on this select group because they are those who Christ can use most effectively to destroy his works. ***“And the dragon was enraged with the woman, (the Church) and he went to make war with the rest of her offspring, who keep the commandments of God and have the testimony of Jesus Christ.”*** (Rev 12:17)

Jesus is able to manifest His true testimony, or absolute truth of Himself, through them, and it is by this truth that Satan’s lies and deceptions are rendered powerless.

THE MARRIAGE SUPPER OF THE LAMB

The key reading at the start of this section finishes with this declaration:

“Then he said to me, “Write: ‘Blessed are those who are called to the marriage supper of the Lamb!’” And he said to me, “These are the true sayings of God.” (Rev 19:9)

The Bride is constituted of people down through the Church age, who have been prepared by God to be refined and consecrated vessels to bear the testimony of Jesus Christ. Those who have been chosen to be a manifestation of the bride at the close of the church age hold a unique position, because they are the ***“called, chosen, and faithful”*** - ones who will stand with Christ in the overthrowing of Antichrist’s kingdom.

It would appear likely that the marriage of the Lamb with His Bride will occur on the new earth, when members of the Bride down through the ages will be assembled together with their Lord, to be united with Him in a celebratory marriage supper.

The ones *“who are called to the marriage supper of the Lamb”* are the invited guests from the rest of the Church.

A VISION OF A CITY THAT IS A SYMBOLIC REPRESENTATION OF THE BRIDE

This reading describes a vision of a city, the parts of which symbolically portray the attributes of the Bride of Christ.

We read in Revelation Chapter 12 that Satan focused his attack on those who had the testimony of Jesus Christ in order to stop the formation of the Bride, or perfected church. In this climate of warfare, members of the Bride have trusted their protection into God’s hands.

The City was to be Viewed in the Spirit

Rev 21:9-11

“Then one of the seven angels who had the seven bowls filled with the seven last plagues came to me and talked with me, saying, “Come, I will show you the bride, the Lamb's wife.” And he carried me away in the Spirit to a great and high mountain, and showed me the great city, the holy Jerusalem, descending out of heaven from God, having the glory of God. Her light was like a most precious stone, like a jasper stone, clear as crystal.”

“Come, I will show you the bride, the Lamb's wife.” And he carried me away in the Spirit to a great and high mountain, and showed me the great city, the holy Jerusalem,” - To view New Jerusalem, the Bride of Christ, John was transported in the Spirit to a viewing point on a great and high mountain. This tells us that the flesh, or worldly eyes cannot discern the bride of Christ. Jerusalem is a symbol of the Church and New Jerusalem is the perfected Church. New Jerusalem is not a physical city, but a symbolic representation of the perfected Church, chosen out of the main body of the Church to be refined and perfected by God. Because of their purity, they are a reflection of the glory of God. Because the Bride of Christ is the first fruit or forerunner of the perfected Church, this vision is a prophetic picture of the future fully perfected Church that will exist in an age to come.

“descending out of heaven from God, having the glory of God” - God undertakes the preparation of the Bride for His Son. In the purifying process, the flesh of the members of the Bride gives way to the reign of the Lord’s presence within, and so the glory of God is seen to rest on her.

“Her light was like a most precious stone, like a jasper stone, clear as crystal...” - Jasper and crystal speak of clarity - in this case of the life and truth of Jesus. It is illuminated with the glory of the knowledge of the Lord.

The Gates of the City

Rev 21:12-13

“Also she had a great and high wall with twelve gates, and twelve angels at the gates, and names written on them, which are the names of the twelve tribes of the children of Israel:

three gates on the east, three gates on the north, three gates on the south, and three gates on the west.”

“Also she had a great and high wall with twelve gates, and twelve angels at the gates, and names written on them, which are the names of the twelve tribes of the children of Israel” - New Jerusalem is the perfect spiritual fulfilment of the nation of Israel as God intended it to be. Despite all of its faults and shortcomings, Israel was God’s instrument in preparing the way for the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the establishment of spiritual Israel, or the Church.

The Walls and their Foundations

Rev 21:14

“Now the wall of the city had twelve foundations, and on them were the names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb.”

“the city had twelve foundations, and on them were the names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb” - The walls speak of our protection, standing between us and the forces of Satan that would harm us. The Scriptures tell us that the truth is our main defensive weapon against Satan’s deceptions and accusations.

*“He shall cover you with His feathers,
And under His wings you shall take refuge;
His truth shall be your shield and buckler.”* (Ps 91)

The original twelve apostles of the Lamb have been referred to as ‘the apostles of the witness,’ because they were direct witnesses to the life and teachings of Jesus. They bore the responsibility of recording and passing on what they had seen and heard.

It is by their foundational truth that they presented that we are able to refute Satan’s lies, and stand firm in the Lord. *“...they overcame him by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony...”* (Rev 12:11-12)

Paul told the gentiles that they were *“...members of the household of God, having been built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief cornerstone,...”* (Eph 2:19-20)

Rev 21:18-20

“The construction of its wall was of jasper; and the city was pure gold, like clear glass. The foundations of the wall of the city were adorned with all kinds of precious stones: the first foundation was jasper, the second sapphire, the third chalcedony, the fourth emerald, the fifth sardonyx, the sixth sardius, the seventh chrysolite, the eighth beryl, the ninth topaz, the tenth chrysoprase, the eleventh jacinth, and the twelfth amethyst.”

“The construction of its wall was of jasper; and the city was pure gold, like clear glass” - The wall above the foundation was made of jasper, an opaque gemstone having a variety of colours. It is known for its hard indestructability, combining beauty with strength.

The city itself ***“was pure gold, like clear glass,”*** signifying the absolute purity of God in her midst, having neither spot nor blemish of any kind.

“The foundations of the wall of the city were adorned with all kinds of precious stones” - The foundations were adorned with layers of precious gem stones, which symbolise the graces of God wrought by the Holy Spirit. As well as the gifts of the Spirit, there is ***the fruit of the Spirit*** (which) ***“is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control.”*** (Gal 5:22-23) Our strength is in Jesus Christ and the graces of His indwelling life wrought in us by the Holy Spirit.

The meaning of the gem stones should be looked on collectively as representing the abundance and variety of God’s graces bestowed on the Bride.

The Dimensions of the City

Rev 21:15-17

“And he who talked with me had a gold reed to measure the city, its gates, and its wall. The city is laid out as a square; its length is as great as its breadth. And he measured the city with the reed: twelve thousand furlongs. Its length, breadth, and height are equal. Then he measured its wall: one hundred and forty-four cubits, according to the measure of a man, that is, of an angel.”

The city is laid out as a cube; its length, breadth, and height being twelve thousand furlongs, that is, 1500 miles long, 1500 miles wide and 1500 miles high. Literalists view this city as the actual reconstructed city of Jerusalem in the millennial age. The immensity of the dimensions would seem to preclude this, and further point to this as a figurative description of the Bride.

The cube results from the joining together of the three dimensions to form a solid three dimensional object. Symbolically, the cube stands for that which is complete and entire. The holy of holies was in the form of a cube, and contained the ark, signifying the presence of God. The number twelve in biblical numerology signifies the completeness of God’s election.

Putting these facts together shows that the number of the members of the Bride, or perfected Church, is made up according to God’s perfect election.

Compared to the height of the city (1500 miles), the walls (***“one hundred and forty-four cubits”*** or 216 feet) are diminutive because New Jerusalem is guarded by God’s mighty angels.

The Gates of Pearl

Rev 21-21

“The twelve gates were twelve pearls: each individual gate was of one pearl...”

The pearl is used as a symbol because it illustrates how one must enter the status of the Bride. The pearl is produced in the oyster as a result of suffering. When a foreign particle causes irritation, the oyster forms layers of nacre around it, thereby producing a pearl. Likewise

to enter the status of the Bride, one must be prepared to endure the refining suffering used by God to purge out the carnal fleshly nature so that it might be replaced by that of Christ.

With its luminous purity, the pearl symbolises the openness and purity of the bride's heart that is wholly devoted to the Lord.

The City Streets

Rev 21:21-23

“...And the street of the city was pure gold, like transparent glass. But I saw no temple in it, for the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are its temple. The city had no need of the sun or of the moon to shine in it, for the glory of God illuminated it. The Lamb is its light.”

“the city was pure gold...And the street of the city was pure gold, like transparent glass” - Pure gold, like transparent glass, symbolises the purity of God expressed through the life of Christ within.

“I saw no temple in it, for the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are its temple” - Jesus spoke of He and the Father indwelling us and we in them. *“If anyone loves Me, he will keep My word; and My Father will love him, and We will come to him and make Our home with him.”* (John 14:23) Those of the Bride will personally know the indwelling presence of the Lord and the Father.

“The city had no need of the sun or of the moon to shine in it, for the glory of God illuminated it. The Lamb is its light.” - In the following verses Isaiah pictures Mount Zion, the perfected Church, or the Bride of Christ. *“...then the LORD will create above every dwelling place of Mount Zion, and above her assemblies, a cloud and smoke by day and the shining of a flaming fire by night. For over all the glory there will be a covering. And there will be a tabernacle for shade in the daytime from the heat, for a place of refuge, and for a shelter from storm and rain.”* (Isa 4:5-6)

Entry into the City

Rev 21:24

“And the nations of those who are saved shall walk in its light, and the kings of the earth bring their glory and honour into it. Its gates shall not be shut at all by day (there shall be no night there). And they shall bring the glory and the honour of the nations into it. But there shall by no means enter it anything that defiles, or causes an abomination or a lie, but only those who are written in the Lamb's Book of Life.

“And the nations of those who are saved shall walk in its light, and the kings of the earth bring their glory and honour into it. Its gates shall not be shut at all by day. And they shall bring the glory and the honour of the nations into it.” - The Bride will be a source of spiritual truth and life down through the ages and particularly to those entering into the restored Church through the tribulation. Isaiah states, its gates shall be always open to receive in to it the wealth, honour, and glory of those in the world.

“Therefore your gates shall be open continually;

*They shall not be shut day or night,
That men may bring to you the wealth of the Gentiles,
And their kings in procession.” (Isa 60:11-12)*

“But there shall by no means enter it anything that defiles, or causes an abomination or a lie, but only those who are written in the Lamb's Book of Life” - Anything that obstructs the purity of the life of Jesus reigning within her will be excluded. The abomination of dominant flesh will be banished from it.

Revelation Chapter 22

Rev 22:1-5

“And he showed me a pure river of water of life, clear as crystal, proceeding from the throne of God and of the Lamb. In the middle of its street, and on either side of the river, was the tree of life, which bore twelve fruits, each tree yielding its fruit every month. The leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations. 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. They shall see His face, and His name shall be on their foreheads. There shall be no night there: They need no lamp nor light of the sun, for the Lord God gives them light. And they shall reign forever and ever.”

Chapter 22 gives us further insights into the nature of the Bride of Christ, which is also referred to as New Jerusalem, and the perfected Church. We are reminded that the perfected Church has been manifested down through the Church age through those who have laid their carnal self-lives on the altar of the cross, thereby allowing God to perfect them by His refining hand. They are the first fruits of the perfected Church, which will have its fulfilment in the age to come. They have no organisation, or recognition by the Church in general, nevertheless spiritually, they are recognised by Christ as His bride, and are especially used by Him in establishing His kingdom on earth.

“And he showed me a pure river of water of life, clear as crystal, proceeding from the throne of God and of the Lamb” - We are reminded of Ezekiel Chapter 47, where the prophet saw a vision of a stream of water flowing from the threshold of the temple, giving life and growth to everything it touched. This speaks of the Holy Spirit being sent forth by God to the members of the Bride, and through them to the Church in general, as a means of revival and restoration.

Members of the Bride will experience a continual flow of spiritual life from the throne of God and the Lamb. Individual members of the Bride have within themselves a source of spiritual life with which to minister to others. Jesus said, **“He who believes (to have faith in and fully trust) in Me, as the Scripture has said, out of his heart will flow rivers of living water.”** (John 7:38-39)

“In the middle of its street, and on either side of the river, was the tree of life” - Essentially Jesus Christ is the tree of life, for it is through His life in the members of the Bride that He is able to use them to transmit His life to others. Being **“in the middle of its street,”** points to the fact that Christ is the focal point of all life flowing from the Bride.

“which bore twelve fruits, each tree yielding its fruit every month” - For further insight we will turn to Ezekiel’s parallel description.

“Then he brought me back to the door of the temple; and there was water, flowing from under the threshold of the temple... Then he brought me and returned me to the bank of the river. When I returned, there, along the bank of the river, were very many trees on one side and the other. Then he said to me: "This water flows toward the eastern region, goes down into the valley, and enters the sea. When it reaches the sea, its waters are healed. And it shall be that every living thing that moves, wherever the rivers go, will live. There will be a very great multitude of fish, because these waters go there; for they will be healed, and everything will live wherever the river goes. It shall be that fishermen will stand by it from En Gedi to En Eglaim; they will be places for spreading their nets. Their fish will be of the same kinds as the fish of the Great Sea, exceedingly many. But its swamps and marshes will not be healed; they will be given over to salt. Along the bank of the river, on this side and that, will grow all kinds of trees used for food; their leaves will not wither, and their fruit will not fail. They will bear fruit every month, because their water flows from the sanctuary. Their fruit will be for food, and their leaves for medicine.” (Ezek 47:1, & 6-12)

This apocalyptic vision of Ezekiel is a figurative description of the Holy Spirit proceeding from the throne of God in the form of a river of water. It flows from Jerusalem, through the barren wilderness until it reaches the Dead Sea, the most saline and lifeless body of water on the earth. Everywhere it goes, and everything it touches comes to life. The exception is some **“swamps and marshes will not be healed.”**

Figuratively this describes the Holy Spirit being poured forth from the throne of God on to the lifeless and desolated church, bringing about a massive revival and restoration. The only parts that cannot be restored are ‘swamps and marshes,’ places of entrenched apostasy that cannot be moved by the Spirit. Fishermen **“spreading their nets”** speaks of evangelists, bringing in masses of fish, or unsaved souls.

Along the banks of the river are life bearing trees, or people empowered with the gifts and power of the Holy Spirit, which are used to impart spiritual food and healing.

The description of the river of living waters in Revelation is a condensed version of Ezekiel’s vision, the main difference being that the account in Revelation reveals that the Bride is the instrument through which the indwelling life of Christ is transmitted to the rest of the church.

“twelve fruits, each tree yielding its fruit every month” - **“Twelve”** symbolises the completeness of God’s provision, and **“every month,”** its consistency.

“The leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations” - The Greek word *‘therapeia’* for healing, has a basic meaning ‘to attend,’ or ‘render a service to another.’ The ministry of the Bride is not restricted to believers. She is a source of light and salvation to the nations or unbelievers, and in this respect she is a source of healing to those who are spiritually dead.

“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” - The **‘curse’** relates back to the curse of the Fall, where man lost personal oneness with God. There shall be no such curse in those of the Bride, but like the sons of Zadok they shall draw near to God to minister to Him ‘face to face.’

The throne speaks of God's reign which hinges on obedience. Because of the obedience of the members of the Bride and their desire to faithfully serve them, God and the Lamb are able to express their reign through them. It follows that ***"His servants shall serve Him."*** ***"They shall see His face, and His name shall be on their foreheads"*** - The Lord will reveal Himself to them personally, and His name, designating His ownership care and protection, will be written on their minds and hearts.

"There shall be no night there" - There will be no spiritual blindness or darkness in her midst.

"They need no lamp nor light of the sun, for the Lord God gives them light" - They are spiritually enlightened by God through the Holy Spirit.

THE EPILOGUE OR CONCLUSION TO THE BOOK OF REVELATION

Having finished the main portion of the prophetic revelation, John is now presented with a short epilogue or conclusion.

Rev 22:6-10

"Then he said to me, "These words are faithful and true." And the Lord God of the holy prophets sent His angel to show His servants the things which must shortly take place. "Behold, I am coming quickly! Blessed is he who keeps the words of the prophecy of this book." Now I, John, saw and heard these things. And when I heard and saw, I fell down to worship before the feet of the angel who showed me these things. Then he said to me, "See that you do not do that. For I am your fellow servant, and of your brethren the prophets, and of those who keep the words of this book. Worship God." And he said to me, "Do not seal the words of the prophecy of this book, for the time is at hand."

"These words are faithful and true" - A solemn declaration that all the words of the Book of Revelation are the true words of Jesus Christ to His Church.

"to show His servants the things which must shortly take place" - The events prophesied in the Book of Revelation must commence taking place shortly after the writing of Revelation.

"Behold, I am coming quickly!" - Christ's coming quickly refers to His commencement in fulfilling all of Revelation's prophecies.

"Blessed is he who keeps the words of the prophecy of this book" - In the first chapter, Christ announced a blessing on all those who read and hear the words of the Book of Revelation - ***"Blessed is he who reads and those who hear the words of this prophecy, and keep those things which are written in it; for the time is near."*** (Rev 1:3) Now a similar blessing is pronounced on all those who keep or store the words of the Revelation in their hearts, and be guided by them.

"And when I heard and saw, I fell down to worship before the feet of the angel who showed me these things. Then he said to me, "See that you do not do that. For I am your fellow servant, and of your brethren the prophets, and of those who keep the words of this book."

Worship God.” - Again John is stopped from worshipping the angel, who declared that he was a fellow servant, and that his worship should be directed to God.

“Do not seal the words of the prophecy of this book, for the time is at hand.” - Earlier in Revelation John Was told to seal up the words of the thunderings, but now is told to hold back nothing, for the time for the prophecy to commence was at hand.

Rev 22:11-13

“He who is unjust, let him be unjust still; he who is filthy, let him be filthy still; he who is righteous, let him be righteous still; he who is holy, let him be holy still.” ***“And behold, I am coming quickly, and My reward is with Me, to give to every one according to his work. I am the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End, the First and the Last.”***

“He who is unjust, let him be unjust still; he who is filthy, let him be filthy still; he who is righteous, let him be righteous still; he who is holy, let him be holy still” - This is not an exhortation to the wicked not to change their ways, but a solemn warning that when the time for judgment comes, the dye is cast. The truly righteous will be righteous still.

“behold, I am coming quickly, and My reward is with Me, to give to every one according to his work.” - 2 Corinthians tells us that ***“we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that each one may receive the things done in the body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad.”*** (2 Cor 5:10-11) This is a further warning that when the events of Revelation are fulfilled, He is coming without delay to judge, and to give to each according to their works.

“I am the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End, the First and the Last” - Christ now proclaims why He is entitled to judge. He and the Father are ONE, the eternal **I AM**, without beginning and without end.

Rev 22:14-15

“Blessed are those who do His commandments, that they may have the right to the tree of life, and may enter through the gates into the city. But outside are dogs and sorcerers and sexually immoral and murderers and idolaters, and whoever loves and practices a lie.”

“Blessed are those who do His commandments, that they may have the right to the tree of life, and may enter through the gates into the city” - This blessing is pronounced on those qualified to enter into the Bride during the Church age because of their obedience. They who have forsaken self-will readily obey the commandments of the Lord, and consequently have the right to be partakers of the life of Christ, and to enter through the gates of New Jerusalem or the Bride of Christ.

“outside are dogs and sorcerers and sexually immoral and murderers and idolaters, and whoever loves and practices a lie” - No access will be given to the rebellious or evil doers. Paul tells the Corinthians ***“Do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived. Neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor***

homosexuals, nor sodomites, nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners will inherit the kingdom of God." (1 Cor 6:9-11)

Rev 22:16-17

"I, Jesus, have sent My angel to testify to you these things in the churches. I am the Root and the Offspring of David, the Bright and Morning Star." And the Spirit and the bride say, "Come!" And let him who hears say, "Come!" And let him who thirsts come. Whoever desires, let him take the water of life freely."

"I, Jesus, have sent My angel to testify to you these things in the churches" - A confirmation that Jesus is the author of the Book of Revelation, and that the angel was His appointed messenger.

"I am the Root and the Offspring of David" - As the Root and the Offspring of David, Jesus is the fulfilment of all Messianic prophecies.

"Is the Bright and Morning Star" - Just as the morning star heralds the coming of the new day so Christ heralds the coming of the age of heavenly glory.

"And the Spirit and the bride say, "Come!" And let him who hears say, "Come!" And let him who thirsts come. Whoever desires, let him take the water of life freely" - An invitation to the Church and those who hear to come and receive the blessings of the cross of Christ. A further invitation is issued by the Bride for all to allow the Spirit to lead them into the bride relationship.

Rev 22:18-19

"For I testify to everyone who hears the words of the prophecy of this book: If anyone adds to these things, God will add to him the plagues that are written in this book; and if anyone takes away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part from the Book of Life, from the holy city, and from the things which are written in this book."

The book ends with a solemn warning that the original text of the Book of Revelation as John wrote it must not be altered. This does not mean that explanatory notes may not be used as an aid to understanding, but that other material must not be incorporated in the original text, or some of the original text deleted.

Rev 22:20-21

"He who testifies to these things says, "Surely I am coming quickly." Amen. Even so, come, Lord Jesus! The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all. Amen."

This is another assurance that the Lord Jesus is coming without delay. His coming is revealed in the unfolding of the Book of Revelation. This is followed by the Apostle John's worshipful response, and a pronounced blessing: *"Even so, come, Lord Jesus! The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all. Amen."*