**Apocalyptic Literature and the Book of Revelation**

Resources:

Revelation Revealed by Gordon Ferguson

Revelation by Jim McGuiggan

Worth is the Lamb by Ray Summers

Revelation: A Shorter Commentary G. K. Beale

Revelation’s Rhapsody Robert A Lowery

Apolcalyptic literature = unveiling. *apokalupsis* αποκαλυψισ vision as a literary device.

The name Revelation is a translation of *apokalupsis*  The word if found in Rev 1:1

Purpose:

1. To show in dramatic fashion that God is in control.

2. To reveal the kingdom of God. (The “day of the Lord” in the OT)

“The purpose of these writings was to stress the virtue of loyalty and of stimulate faith by showing in vivid fashion the certain overthrow of evil and final victory for God’s righteous cause.” (Summers: Worthy is the Lamb)

Characteristics of apocalyptic:

1. Generally produced because of troubled times.

Isaiah: Destruction of Samaria

Daniel: visions of **judgment of God on his enemies** (Rome and Greece) and vindication of God’s people. (four-part statue, four creatures, goat and ram, Kings of the North and South)

Ezekiel and Daniel: Captivity

Revelation: Roman persecution

Zechariah: Under the Persian rulers (admittedly not as terrible persecutors, but…)

Pseudepigrapha apocalpytics such as 1 Enoch Antiochus Epiphanes

2. Cryptic (coded) in style (ie. the message is not obvious to the uninitiated)

Why cryptic?

Out of wisdom and caution. When a nation is under great duress from another power, it is wise to speak of the destruction of the powerful enemy in symbolism. The safety of both writer and reader was at stake. It concealed the message to the outsider, but revealed it to the initiated insider.

All this is true, of course, about John and the Book of Revelation.

Revelation is both quite similar to OT apocalyptic and also different from it.

3. Prophecy vs Apocalyptic

Prophecy: Mainly preaching and secondarily prediction.

Apocalyptic: Mainly prediction and secondarily preaching.

Apocalyptic: A wider scope than prophecy. (whole world addressed, rather than just the Jews)

Apocalyptic: A heavy emphasis on eschatology (the study of end times) Daniel, by far, gives most clear glimpse of heaven and the resurrection in the OT. Ezekiel: valley of dry bones.

Apocalyptic (vs. prophecy): Very visual. A valley of dry bones

4. Apocalyptic literature always has a historical setting and significance. Knowledge of the historical situation is very important to understanding the vision.

Revelation: Domitian’s persecution.

Purpose: to give comfort, assurance and courage in difficult times.

5. Pseudonymous (but not Revelation because it was Christian rather than Jewish revelation)

6. Visions. Used in prophecy but dominant in apocalyptic. (Daniel 9?)

7. Symbolic. The rule of thumb with apocalyptic literature **ought** to be that, unlike historical, doctrinal or other literature, things should be taken figuratively, unless the context demands a literal interpretation. This is the exact reverse of historical or doctrinal literature, in which things should be taken literally unless the context demands it be taken figuratively.

There was a more or less accepted use of certain symbols.

Numbers used symbolically extensively.

1 = unity, unique, alone.

2 = strength, courage, energy (two are better than one) (two witnesses in Revelation) (two beasts war against the saints = a strong enemy)

3 = divine number. Number of God.

4 = the world (four winds, four cardinal directions, four angels, four creatures in Revelation = the four divisions of the wild animals. Four horsemen = powers of mankind, destructive powers of the world.

6 = sinister, Satan 6 falls one short of seven. Doom. 666 in Revelation.

7 = perfection, completeness 4 + 3 = 7 world + God = perfection. 7 spirits, 7 churches, 7 golden lampstands, 7 stars, 7 sections of Revelation, each in seven parts (7 signs and 7 I Am statements in John)

3-1/2 = incomplete, imperfect. Restless longings unfulfilled, waiting. (time, times and half a time Daniel 7) 3-1/2 used a lot in Revelation 1260 days the church was in the wilderness. Daniel 7:25 12:7 Rev 11:2,3 12:6,14 Rev 13:5

10 = completeness (all your fingers or all your toes) 10 commandments are the whole duty of men. The dragon, the first beast and the scarlet beast all have 10 horns.

Multiples of 10

70 = perfect completeness Jesus sent out 70 workers. Septuagint translated by 70

1000 = ultimate completeness

4 x 3 = 12 Number of religion. God’s people. 12 tribes, 12 apostles, 12 gates in New Jerusalem.

We should hesitate to use the numbers in Revelation as literal. They are intended to express an idea.

Ex. 144,000 is the full number of God’s people (12x12x10x10x10) and is certainly NOT literal!

Many other uses of stock symbols in apocalyptic literature.

The seas represent the peoples of the earth.

Horns = kings or powers

Many other stock images used in Revelation

Colors have traditional meanings as well

Red war, sacrifice Zech 6:2, Rev 6:4, Is 63:1-6, Joel 2:31, Rev 12:3, 17:3 Red heifer Numb 19:1-10, Heb 9:19

White purity and innocence Dan 7:9, Rev 1:14, Zech 6:3,6 (victory of God’s people) White by blood of lamb Rev 7:9,13-14, 19:?

Purple royalty or voluptuous ease (woman with purple and scarlet means wealty, but not by righteous means) Jer 10:9, Rev 17:4, 18:12

Blue heaven, sky, Holy Spirit Rev 9:17

Black famine, death, distress Zech 6:2, 6 Rev 6:5,12,

Pale yellow near the end of life Rev 9:17

Crimson blood, atonement

Pale death, terror-stricken Jer 30:6, Dan 10:8 Rev 6:8

Gold divinity, splendor Rev 1:13 15:6

Green death? 6:8, 8:7, 9:4

Etc.

8. Dramatic. Apocalyptic literature is very dramatic, vivid, forceful. Uses the grotesque and the terrifying to catch our attention. Rivers of blood, hail, locusts, dragons, death riding a horse with the grave following behind. Animals with many heads and heads with many horns, a dragon with a river of water from its mouth which overcomes the woman A dragon a beast and a false prophet, each of which vomits up a frog which joins in gathering an army. All exaggerated symbols, used for dramatic effect. We should avoid interpreting the small details of such dramatic visions (such as interpreting the ten toes of the statue in Daniel 2 as the Common Market)

Non-canonical apocalpyses:

1 Enoch

First vision:

God’s judgment announced. The righteous to remain safe. Fallen angels in prison, Enoch visits Sheol/Hades, sees the tree of life, prepared for the righteous, Jerusalem on a holy mountain, and a valley for the accursed.

Fourth vision:

An account of history, which after 150 BC becomes an apocalyptic. The Gentiles make a final assault on the Jews. The fallen angels and the wicked are judged and condemned to the abyss. Jerusalem to be replaced by a newer and greater city. All remaining Gentiles submit to the Jews. The righteous dead are raised, the Messiah appears and the New Kingdom is established. Familiar?

Very popular in the early church (and used by Jude)

The Assumption of Moses 1st half of 1st century.

The Heavenly one arises, the earth shakes, the mountains brought low, the sun turns to darkness, moon turned to blood, the stars moved, the sea falls into the abyss and the rivers dry up. God judges the Gentiles, and the faithful Jews rejoice.

The Secrets of Enoch 2 Enoch. Early 1st century

Seer goes to various heavens. Gardens maintained by angels. Abode of the wicked seen, with darkness, fire and suffering. Enoch sees God in the 10th heaven. Eternal abode of the righteous, without labor, sickness, anxiety, violence, night or darkness.

Baruch After AD 70

Baruch in the ruins of Jerusalem after its destruction by Nebuchadnezzar. Has a vision of four kingdoms: Babylon, Persia, Greece and Rome. Rome will be far harsher than her predecessors. Greater than the cedars of Lebanon. Rome to be destroyed by the Messiah. Vision of a coming golden age of the Messiah, sinners go to torment, righteous go to splendor with the angels. The pious are instructed to patient endurance, waiting for their deliverance.

4 Ezra. After AD 70

Seven visions of Ezra. Grief of Jews over destruction of Jerusalem by Babylon is used as an image of grief of Jews over destruction of Jerusalem by Rome. Why? Ezra asks. He is told that it is not because God does not love his people. There will be ultimate deliverance. Increase of suffering should cause cheer because it means the deliverance of God is nearer. At the end, the sun will appear at midnight, blood will seep from wood, stones will speak, fish in the ocean will die, volcanic eruptions will happen, and sin will have the upper hand. But… A New Jerusalem will be revealed. Destruction of the eagle (Rome) is announced.

A few OT apocalyptic passages:

Joel 3:18-21 or Joel 2:1-11 The purpose? Joel 2:12 Notice the use of the Day of the Lord—a coming of the Kingdom.

Daniel 7:7-8, 11-14 Judgment on Rome

Isaiah 34;2-8 Judgment on Edom

Ezek 32:1-10 Judgment on Egypt

These give a good flavor of apocalyptic literature and give context to Revelation.

How to approach Revelation?

The visions had a definite setting and cause and we should understand the visions in the context of the immediate context and historical setting, which is the Church being persecuted by the Roman power.

About the visions and imagery: get the big point and do not get caught up in the details.

However, the book is for all and for all times, and the principles taught in the book apply to all people in all times and all settings. Daniel is a good example of this.

End-time theories (Eschatology):

Preterist a theologian who believes that the Scripture prophecies of the Apocalypse (the Book of Revelation) have already been fulfilled

Amillenialist Amillennialism (Latin: a- "no" + millennialism) is a view in Christian end-times theology named for its rejection of the theory that Jesus Christ will have a thousand-year long, [physical] reign on the earth. ...

Premillenialist The doctrine that the prophesied millennium of blessedness will begin with the imminent Second Coming of Christ.

Postmillenialist The doctrine that the Second Coming of Christ will be the culmination of the prophesied millennium of blessedness.

Possible views of interpreting the historical significance of Revelation:

1. It is either principally or entirely about the time of Roman persecution of the church.

2. It is principally about the apostasy of the Roman Catholic Church.

3. It is about the entire history of the world until Jesus comes back.

4. It is principally about end-times—about Armageddon, the rapture and the millennial reign of Christ which will ensue. Revelation is principally unfulfilled prophecy.

5. It is about how God deals with mankind in all ages, with no particular specific historical context.

Some are driven to despair by all this contradictory interpretation. What about you? Can we reach a fairly certain view of which is correct or at least nearly completely correct? Does it matter?

#1 The principal view we will be using. Called the Historical Background View

#3 The “Continuous Historical” approach. Revelation is the story of **Western** civilization. This was the view of Wyclyffe, Luther, Fox and many in the Reformation and is still a factor today.

1st seal = Domitian to Commodus AD 180

2nd seal = Commodus to Caracella

3rd seal = Caracella to Decius

4th seal = Decius to Gallienus (243-268) (many persecutions)

5th seal = Diocletian and friends (284-315) (greatest persecutions of all)

6th seal = Barbarian invasions (see below)

7th seal = trumpets

1st trumpet = Goths 395-410 (sacked Rome)

2nd trumpet = Genseric 428-468 (sacked Rome)

3rd trumpet = Atilla 433-457

4th trumpet = Odoacer 476-490 (ended Western Roman empire for good)

5th trumpet = Muslim invaders

6th trumpet = Turks

Ch 10 Great angel = Reformation

This is a classic example of argument by scenario

Little book opened = restoration of the Bible by Luther et al

7th trumpet = final triumph of the true church

Ch 12 Woman = true church desert = church under papacy

“Wrath of Satan” = Roman Catholic Church’s response to the Reformation

Great Harlot = papacy You get the idea.

First bowl 16:1-2 French revolution???

This is too narrow. It is the 16th century equivalent of premillenialism.

#4 above. This view is some common it deserves some extra comment here.

A (sarcastic) comment about this viewpoint: “To some the book becomes largely a problem of celestial mathematics; and they are more concerned with the calculating of time charts than they are of securing social and economic and political righteousness for their immediate neighbors. (Donald Richardson *The Revelation of Jesus Christ*, 1939)

According to the most common premillennial view Ch 4-19 is about a seven year period which will follow the “rapture” as prophesied in Daniel 9:24-27. This “seventieth week” is separated by a very long and indeterminate amount of time from the other sixty-nine weeks of Daniel 9, marking the end of the Christian Era. During this seven-year period the temple will be rebuilt in Jerusalem, and the Antichrist will rule. Ezekiel’s temple (Ezek 40) is a description of this temple. The two great prophets in Rev 11 are two literal people who will live on the earth.

The antichrist will be an actual, single, identifiable person, and will be the “man of sin” in 2 Thess 3. The “beast” in Rev is also an actual future person. Antichrist will impose his rule and attach Christians. He will be defeated and destroyed after 3-1/2 years in a battle known as Armageddon. This is the interpretive method of the Scofield Bible.

At the end of the 7 years, Jesus will come and establish his kingdom.

This view has the Kingdom of God principally established at some time in the future. It downplays the coming of the Kingdom at Pentecost or when Jesus came.

This view is untenable for several reasons:

1. Revelation 1:1 God seems to have anticipated some false interpretations here.

2. Makes Revelation have virtually no value to its primary audience: The primitive church.

3. Blatant overliteralizing

4. Serious covenant errors. Has Jewish sacrifices being reestablished in a rebuilt temple. Has Jesus coming down from the true heavenly tabernacle to occupy a physical throne which is only a shadow of the real one (Hebrews 9:11-12)

5.(the biggest problem) It makes the kingdom of God a physical kingdom. (Luke 17:20-21 the kingdom of God is within (or among) you.) My kingdom is not of this world John 18:36)

A wise statement about this mode of interpretation from Isaac Newton (remarking about Daniel):

***The folly of Interpreters has been, to foretell times and things, by this Prophecy, as if God designed to make them Prophets. By this rashness they have not only exposed themselves, but brought the Prophecy also into contempt. The design of God was much otherwise. He gave this and the Prophecies of the Old Testaments, not to gratify men's curiosities by enabling them to foreknow things, but that after they were fulfilled they might be interpreted by the event; and his own Providence, not the Interpreters, be then manifested thereby to the world. For the event of things predicted many ages before, will then be a convincing argument that the world is governed by providence***

#5 “Philosophy of History” method. This view has a ring of truth.

It is a book about how God deals with his people in general (but not about any specific event)

Symbols are tendencies, fulfilled again and again.

Ex: Beast from the sea (Rev 13) is “secular powers antagonistic to the Church.”

2nd Beast = any religious power which allies with secular power to oppose God’s church.

There is some truth here.

Multiple fulfillment of prophecies. I agree with this view, but it is too limited.

My suggestion:

A combination of preterist/Historical Background and Philosophy of History is the wisest approach to understanding Revelation.

Historical background:

What is the setting of the book?

Our strongest hint is Revelation John 1:9 I, John, your brother and companion in the suffering and kingdom and patient endurance that are ours in Jesus, was on the island of Patmos because of the word of God and the testimony of Jesus.

**Patmos**

A small island southwest of Ephesus, west of Miletus and south of the island of Samos. About 8 miles long and 2 miles wide. Northernmost of the Dodecanese islands (most important of which is Rhodes).

The monastery of St. John dominates the island. Established in the 1088 by “Saint Christodoulos”. The island at the time was “deserted, uncultivated, completely covered with brambles and entirely arid. It is completely mountainous with virtually no arable land. It was deserted because it was subject to raids by pirates. The island, like Mount Athos, was to be perpetually free of women. Later this was amended to allow women on the northernmost peninsula. Three years later, the pirate raids were so oppressive, Christodoulos amandoned the island.

Many mystics, mostly Orthodox come here, believing it is a source of mystical energy.

There is a cave in the south of the island where, it is claimed, John received his vision on a Sunday (the Lord’s day v. 10) in 95 AD.

Date of authorship:

Most likely during the reign of Domitian (AD 81-96)

It is clear that the church, not just John, is being persecuted.

Nero persecuted the church in Rome, but that appears to be about it.

People are being commanded to worship the emperor. Domitian demanded this, but Nero did not.

Time of Vespasian (AD 69-79):

Revelation 17:9-11 Five have fallen (Augustus, Tiberius, Caligula, Claudius, Nero) one is (Vespasian) one who is to come for a little while (Titus, ruled two years) and “the beast who was, and is not and is also an eighth and is of the seven = Domitian, whom Revelation pictures as the reincarnation of Nero because both persecuted the church, but Domitian is much worse.

(note, this view ignores Galba, Otho and Vitellius who Daniel does not in Daniel 7.)

Response: It appears the writer is “throwing himself back” into the Vespasian age.

Time of Domitian:

This was the unanimous belief of the church fathers and agrees with Revelation 17, as well as the assumption that the Christians are being ordered to worship the emperor. All agree that John was exiled to Patmos about AD 95.

Domitian demanded to be addressed as “my Lord and my God” Domitian (Seutonius)

Conclusion AD 81-96, but most likely 94-96 when we know the persecution was active.

Authorship:

The apostle John, the son of Zebedee is the “traditional” view.

In favor:

External evidence:

Papias 125 AD probably, but hard to say for sure quoted by Eusebius

Justin Martyr Dialogue with Trypho AD 150 from Asia John is the apostle John

Irenaeus ~ AD 170 born and raised in Asia, a pupil of Polycarp, bishop of Smyrna, who knew John personally John the apostle wrote during the reign of Domitian

Origen ~AD 220 What shall we say of him who reclined on the breast of Jesus, I mean John? Who has left us one gospel, in which he confesses that he could write so many that the whole world could not contain them. He also wrote the Apocalypse, commanded as he was, to conceal, and not to write the voices of the seven thunders. (quoted by Eusebius, *Ecclesiastical History*)

Also: Tertullian (AD 200), Clement of Alexandria (AD 210), Hippolytus (Rome, 220), Cyprian, Athanasius, Ambrose, Augustine, Jerome. A who’s who of early church fathers.

John was buried in Ephesus (Polycrates, bishop of Ephesus, AD 170)

Internal evidence:

The writer is clearly a Jewish Christian

The writer clearly assumes he has great authority over the churches in Asia (and we know that John came there some time soon after AD 70 and was over the church in Ephesus for 25 years)

Uses *logos* (Rev 19:13)

Piercing mentioned (Rev 1:7)

Lamb of God stressed (only John in Jn 1:29,36) 23 times in Revelation

Against:

Only internal evidence.

Dionysius of Alexandria AD 250 Used internal evidence, declaring that the writing style was too different to allow the same author as the gospel of John.

Eusebius AD 330 quotes Papias, and concludes that it was Presbyter/Elder John, a separate John. (but Irenaeus is definite that the “elder John” is the apostle John)

Papias (from Eusebius, Ecclesiastical History)

If, then, any one should come, having followed personally the elders, I would question him concerning the words of the elders, what Andrew or what Peter said, or what Philip, or what Thomas or James or what John or Matthew or any one of the disciples of the Lord said, and the things which Aristion and the elder John, disciples of the Lord said.

Possible explanation: Aristion and the elder John are living still, which is why he listed John twice.

As to internal evidence, both John and Revelation are very simple in language structure, but Revelation uses many ungrammatical constructions, whereas John does not

Possible answer: John was extremely carefully constructed, and Revelation was written down in a very short time as the result of a very emotional experience. “Write what you see and hear.”

Bottom line: If we must abandon the idea of common authorship, it is most likely that Revelation is the one to which we would ascribe John as author.

John was exiled to Patmos in AD 95 by Domitain. Almost certainly the last living apostle. 85+ years old? According to tradition, John had a vision in a cave on the island which we have as the book of Revelation.

Theme of Revelation: Peel back the layers of history and even the terrible persecutions and what do we find? **The lamb is on the throne and God is in control.**

Message of Revelation: **Be encouraged and faithful to Jesus Christ. Jesus, not Caesar, is Lord.**

Objective: to comfort persecuted Christians.

Description of Revelation: A “divine picture-book”. “Spiritual cartoons,” representing the historical development of the early Christian church.

To do this, God uses the grotesque, the dramatic.

“Revelation is a series of apocalyptic images given to John by the Holy Spirit to set forth Christ as eternally victorious over all world conditions and thus to encourage the Christians of John’s day and every succeeding day until the return of our Lord. It is also a message of warning to the church to keep itself pure and free from worldly entanglements. It is a message of warning to the enemies of the church that the church, through Christ, will eventually triumph and that those who oppose it will find themselves broken by the righteous power of God.” (Worthy is the Lamb)

Romans appeals to the intellect/mind

Psalms appeals to the emotions

Revelation appeals to the imagination.

Outline of Revelation

Ch 1 Prologue

Ch 2-3 Letters to the Seven Churches

Ch 4-7 The Seven Seals

Ch 8-11 The Seven Trumpets

Ch 12-16 Seven Mystical Figures

Ch 15-16 The Seven Vials

Ch 17-20 Enemies of the Church Overthrown

Ch 21-22 The Kingdom of God Revealed

**Revelation Ch 1**

Revelation 1:1 The revelation of Jesus Christ which God gave to him to show to his servants what must soon come to pass (things it is necessary to come to pass shortly).

What is the book about? Things that will soon take place.

*Dei*  δει morally necessary. In other words, God’s justice requires that these prophecies must be fulfilled soon. Jesus: It is necessary that I go to Jerusalem to die Matt 16:21

En taxeos εν ταχέως quickly Paul: come to me quickly 2 Tim 4:9 taxeos

Rev 1:1, 22:6 must soon take place

Rev 1:3, 22:10 is at hand (right near by)

Compare to Daniel 9:26 which concerns “the distant future.” (written 550 BC about 167 BC)

Could this be some time two thousand or more years in the future?

1:3 First of seven “beatitudes.”

1. Blessed is he who reads this prophecy and takes it to heart. 1:3

2. Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord. 14:13

3. Blessed is he who watches and is prepared for the Lord’s coming 16:15

4. Blessed are those who are invited to the Lamb’s wedding supper 19:9

5. Blessed are those who have part in the first resurrection 20:6

6. Blessed is he who keeps the words of this book. 22:7

7. Blessed are those who wash their robes. 22:14

Guess what: You are blessed.

Rev 1:4-5,11 Who is it from? God, the Holy Spirit (the seven spirits) and Jesus Christ

Who was the letter to? “to the churches…” Rev. 1:4 This disproves the futurist interpretation model because it would have virtually no relevance to “the seven churches in the province of Asia.”

Specifically, to Ephesus, Smyrna, Pergamum, Thyatira, Sardis, Philadelphia and Laodicea.

Why them? Because these were the churches, more or less, that John himself was shepherd of.

Why them? So that the message could be “Catholic” (ie for the whole church) as it was not to any particular church outside John’s ministry.

Therefore, although it is addressed to the seven churches, it is addressed to all the churches.

(besides, Rev 1:3 Blessed are those who hear it and take it to heart Rev 2:7 whoever has an ear…what the Spirit says to the churches)

Rev 1:9 John can totally relate to the terrible persecutions that the church is about to undergo.

Why was he on Patmos? Because of the Word of God. (blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness sake)

Rev 1:12-18 Q: Is this the picture one gets of Jesus in the gospels? Definitely not!!!

The principle picture of Jesus in Revelation (although there are other pictures) is of mind-blowing power. Chief image of Jesus in Revelation is one of power! (rod of iron 19:15, winepress of his wrath 19:15, terrible in anger 6:16f, etc.)

A voice “like a trumpet” v 10 (a loud and clear message)

Description of Jesus here similar to Daniel 7:9-10 The “Ancient of Days.” And Daniel 10:4-9.

Blazing eyes see everything very clearly. Nothing escapes his notice!

White hair, etc. purity

Bronze feet = strength

Double-edged sword coming from his mouth Literal? NO! = his absolute authority and power to judge by what he speaks (John 12:48 the very words I spoke will judge at the last day)

To sum up the image: Jesus is authoritative, holy, majestic, omniscient, powerful. He stands among the churches, he holds their fate in his hands. This should have been very reassuring.

Why? Because God’s purpose is to reassure the saints that God is in control.

Q: (in view of our typical picture of Jesus) How does this picture make you feel?

Note that in Revelation 1:17 (and Rev 22:13) Jesus calls himself the Alpha and Omega, whereas in Rev 1:8 and Isaiah 44:6 God uses this of himself. This is further proof (if we needed any) of the deity of Christ.

1:19-20 seven stars is the seven messengers symbolically is the perfect messengers

Seven golden lampstands is the seven churches. Symbolically, is the church in its perfection.

**Rev Chapters 2 & 3**

Pattern for letters to the churches

1. Greeting

2. A description of Jesus

3. A commendation (except Sardis and Laodicea)

4. A criticism (except Smyrna and Philadelphia)

5. An appeal and a warning

6. Exhortation and promise

Rev 2:1 Jesus has the seven stars (angels of the churches) in his hand. Q: What image? The churches are definitely not left as orphans. Despite all appearances, Jesus is totally caring for the churches like a bird cares for her chicks.

Jesus is walking among the seven golden lampstands (the seven churches) Q: What comes to mind? Jesus is totally aware of what is going on in his churches. Nothing misses his eye. Q: How might you behave if you understood this?

Remember in the following that this is the church John was the chief elder of!!!

Rev 2:2-3,6 What are they praised for?

* hard work
* perseverance
* staunch opposition to sin

These Christians were not slackers!!! They were fully convinced that they were doing awesome.

Aside: Nicolaitins = Nicholas of Antioch? Acts 6:5 a proselyte. Some scholars suggest these people were open to including pagan practices in the church.

Below we will learn that these people had lost their first love. Question: Can we “not grow weary” if we have lost our first love? Apparently, yes.

Q: How would you describe these Christians? They were in the habit of Christianity after many years of doing the right thing. They were good at it.

2:4 What had they lost? What was their Christian life like? They seem quite a bit like the audience of Hebrews. How might you be like this?

2:5 The solution:

* Remember Q: What?
* Repent Q: How? Can you repent of not having a particular feeling?

How? “Do what you did at first.” This is confusing, because they were doing all the right things.

Conclusion: Do it the WAY you did it at first. (not what you did, but how you did it)

They shared their faith zealously. They prayed eagerly, they gave money excitedly, they fellowshipped joyously, etc. Become like a child.

What is at stake? I… will remove your lampstand. They will not all fall away, but their church will languish and eventually die.

2:7 Who has an ear? If you listen, Rev 21,22 will be for you.

Rev 2:8-11 Smyrna Q: Why does Jesus only have good things to say about Smyrna? Is it because they have no problems?

The “Synagogue of Satan” is the Jews who are persecuting the church (implies after the Council of Jamnia AD 90)

Above the Synagogue, typically, was a sign: “Synagogue of the Lord”

So much for the idea that God has a special place still in his heart for the Jews (which is a premise of the premillennialists)

v. 9 The church was relatively poor. In what sense are they “rich”

Q: Do you feel rich? Do you feel poor? 1 Tim 6:6-10. Do you agree with this?

v. 10 They will be persecuted for 10 days. Perhaps not a literal ten days. Represents a definite period of time.

How faithful does Jesus want them to be? ‘”Be faithful even to the point of death.” And you will get a crown….. v. 12 you will be untouched by the second death (Rev. 20)

Rev 2:12-17 Pergamum. Pergamum was the former Roman capital and largest city in Asia, known for its out-of-control paganism.

“Throne of Satan” was a huge altar to Zeus on a hill 800 feet above Pergamum

Altars to Zeus, Augustus, Tiberius, Roma and many more.

Library in Pergamum was the second largest in the world. 200,000 volumes. When they tried to get the librarian of Alexandria to come to Pergamum, The Ptolemies cut off the supply of papyrus, and thus parchment (pergamena) was invented.

2:12 the one with the sharp, double-edged sword. Watch out!

Antipas “my faithful witness” (*martus*, martyr)

Their problem: **Some** hold to Balaam’s teaching. Many—probably most were faithful and did not hold to this teaching.

Balaam: Idol-worship (read this as offering incense to Roma/the emperor)

**Some** hold to the teachings of the teaching of the Nicolaitins.

Their problem: lack of church discipline. They were too tolerant of sin.

Q: Is tolerance a Christian virtue?

Q: Why doesn’t Jesus just take care of these folks?

v. 16 Does Jesus get angry?

Rev 2:17 Assurance: Hidden manna: I will meet your (spiritual) needs. White stone was used as a symbol of acquittal at a trial. It was also given to freed slaves as a token of their having been freed.

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Revelation 2:18-29 Thyatira.

A city with many trades, including dying of purple cloth (Lydia) and working in bronze. Trade-unions/guilds very important here. There was tremendous pressure for Christians to offer worship to idols as required to be part of a guild.

Description of Jesus: “feet of burnished bronze” (bronze a major industry in Thyatira)

Commendation: giving and serving (very brief) and even growing… This is a growing church. They are doing fairly well.

But… the seeds of total disaster have already been planted.

They tolerated Jezebel. Same general problem as Pergamum, but considerably worse.

Jezebel almost certainly not the actual name of the woman.

A prominent and charismatic woman.

Her sin: She encouraged taking part in idol-worship as part of trade guilds.

Those who “committed adultery” with her and “her children” are the ones who have fallen under her influence. Theirs is a spiritual adultery (Hosea)

Divisive spirit and undermining the leadership in the church is a very big issue.

God is going to come down on this woman big time. “I will deal with her.” He will not wait for the church to discipline her.

v. 24 “deep teaching” a probably reference to Gnosticism.

Assurance: Hang on to the end, and I will give you authority over nations! (1 Cor 6:2-4 We will judge angels)

Rev. 3:1-6 Sardis.

Capital of King Croesus: the fabled richest man in the world.

Croesus went to the Oracles of Delphi. Shall I attack King Cyrus. The answer: If you do, the result will be the destruction of a king.

The result: Cyrus conquered Sardis 549 BC.

Sardis on the side of an extremely steep hill. So steep it was thought impregnable.

Yet, it was conquered by Cyrus and by Antiochus III The Great (218 BC). It was a city that had a reputation for being great, but twice, it had been overconfident and was conquered easily.

Also, known for robbers, as they could easily escape to the city.

Sardis was living on past glory.

Rev 3:1 So did the church in Sardis! For Sardis, the reprimand comes first. Jesus is losing his patience with these pretenders.

They were living on reputation. They looked good, but they were dead, spiritually.

Q: What was this church like? Remembering the glory days. Not doing very much.

Jesus: Wake UP!!! (Hebrews 2:1) (Note: Cyrus conquered Sardis, literally, because the soldiers of Croesus went to sleep)

Imagine the scene when this letter was read to the church in Sardis! Do you think they repented?

Their problem was not sin, per se, but lack of action and growth.

Solution: Rev 3:3 Remember, obey and repent.

Jesus: I will come like a thief (kind of like the thieves in Sardis).

v. 4-5 “Yet, you have a few people…” We should remember that even if God judges the church and if the church is dead, some will be faithful. Judging a church and judging an individual are two different things.

v. 5 He who overcomes (any individual Christian) will, like the faithful Sardinian, be dressed in white.

The faithful will not be “blotted out” of the book of life. So much for “once saved, always saved.”

Rev 3:7-13 Philadelphia

Description of Jesus: Holds the Key of David. The Messiah. The true Jewish king.

A clear reference to Isaiah 22:21-22.

Context: They had been heavily persecuted by Jews in the city.

The church in Philadelphia was small and weak, but they were doing really great, especially considering the persecution. In fact, that is why they were being persecuted! Result: Jesus has only good to say to them.

Synagogue of Satan. The true Jews/Israelites were the Christians. (Gal 3:29, Gal 6:16, Romans 9:6-9 not all Israel are Israel).

I will make them come and worship at your feet. Wow!!! (Isaiah 60:14, v. 12 you will be the city of God)

Encouragement:

v. 10 You will not experience the worst of the coming persecution. I am coming soon.

I will make him a pillar (Philadephia was famous for erecting pillars for famous people). Never will he have to leave the city (they had a massive earthquake in AD 17 and people still lived outside the city. There is more encouragement for this church than any other. I will give you a new name (Philadelphia had recently been given a new name: Neocaesarea when Tiberius helped to rebuild the city.)

Rev 3:14-22 Laodicea

A center of banking, black wool and school of medicine (famous for its eye salve)

Laodicea: No commendation. Their sin? Spiritual lukewarmness. Hypocrisy

Wouldn’t it be better to be lukewarm (a little Christian) than ice cold (an enemy of Christianity or a blatant pagan)? NO!!!!

They made Jesus sick to his “stomach.”

3:17 How had they become lukewarm? By relying on self rather than God. By relying on the things the world has to offer for fulfillment. Self-sufficient. They believed in the prosperity gospel.

You say you are rich. (Deut 8: God gives us the ability to create wealth)

You say you do not need a thing. (1 Cor 4:7 What do you have that you did not receive?)

Reality check: You are wretched, pitiful, poor, blind and naked.

Q: Who is wretched, pitiful, poor, blind and naked? All of us!!!!

3:18 Fortunately, it is not too late from them. They can “buy from me gold, refined by fire.” They can begin to put their treasures in heaven again. …and white clothes to wear. They can return to relying on Jesus, not on the world for salvation. They will still be wretched, pitiful, poor, blind and naked, but the white clothes will “cover” the nakedness.

I will put on the true salve for your eyes so that you can see spiritually (a reference to the famous Laodicean eye salve) John 9:41 those who claim to see are blind.

Q: Do you need some of this eye-salve? Where is your spiritual discernment, especially when it comes to finding fulfillment in the things of the world?

How will you get this “salve”? by rebuke and discipline (v. 19)

v. 20-21 If we are lukewarm, we keep Jesus at a distance. But, we can repent and re-establish that close relationship.

Note: The is the most commonly used scripture to support the “pray Jesus into your heart” doctrine. Q: Who is Jesus speaking to? Lukewarm Christians who need to repent.

**Revelation Ch 4** Now, the revelations/visions begin. Let’s let our imagination engage what we are about to read. Let us look at the big picture and not get caught up in the meaning of small details. Remember the message: Jesus is on the throne. Stay faithful to the end and, no matter the trial, no matter the persecution, you will wear a crown and you will enter into the New Jerusalem.

4:1 Now, John looks into heaven and the movie begins. “a door standing open in heaven.” A literal door?

4:1b “what must take place after this” ie what will happen soon.

How does the movie open? With God on the throne, naturally.

Ch 4 Believe in God

Ch 5 Believe also in me (Jn 14:1)

Ch 4-5 (especially Ch 4) set up the rest of the book. It is the scene we are to remember as we look in horror at the judgments to be poured out.

Message: When we are persecuted, when we suffer in many ways, when we are admonished and rebuked as the churches were, we need to look to God on the throne!!!!

4:2 a throne in heaven. Throne 38 times in the book. 17 times in Ch. 4-5 Do you get the idea?

Jasper (white) holiness of God

Carnelian (red) justice, righteousness

Rainbow. God’s promise/covenant Genesis 9:12-17 “like an emerald” Green the dominant color in this rainbow (life, living hope?)

Rev 4:4 24 elders on 24 thrones = 12 apostles + 12 patriarchs of Israel? (= the priesthood of all God’s people?)

Jesus said this would happen to the twelve (Matthew 19:28, Luke 22:30)

Dressed in white with golden crowns. (purity, ruling with God)

These 24 elders represent, in a sense, us!

This is a picture of the heavenly tabernacle, with close resemblance to the Jewish tabernacle. Four creatures = four cherubim in the Holy of Holies over which God rested. Seven lamps = the seven lamps in the Holy Place. The 24 elders represent the 24 courses of the priests who served in the temple/tabernacle. (1 Chron 24:3-19)

The picture is of power and authority and suggests security for those loved by God.

4:5 Now the judging power of God is presented as well. “lightning, and rumblings of thunder” The Jews would be made to think of Exodus 19:16. Notice that they trembled.

4:5b seven lamps/seven spirits The Holy Spirit shedding light and revelation.

4:6 Around the throne a sea of crystal. Representing the perfection of God because of which we cannot approach the throne. It represents separation from God. Note that this sea has been removed in heaven Revelation 21:1 “there was no longer any [crystal] sea. (note: even John was separated from the church he oversaw by the sea while on Patmos)

4:6b-8 Four living creatures around the throne, covered with eyes on every side.

These are the four who defend God’s holiness. Eyes all over ever watchful to worship God.

Might they be the four seraphim of Isaiah 6:2? Similar to the four creatures in Ezek 1:5-14 which includes the man, lion, ox, and eagle. Four Cherubim. (four instead of six wings) Also Ezekiel 10

These are the four who kept Adam and Eve from the garden. They were stitched into the curtain in the temple to keep people out of the Holy of Holy.

Their beastliness represents their fierceness in defending the honor of God. King of predators: lion, powerful bull and cunning human and eagle.

Q: What impression are you given of God in Rev 4:8-11? Worship #1.

Holy, Holy, Holy!!! (Like Isaiah 6) Casting crowns Rev 4:10

**Revelation Chapter 5**

Enter: Jesus Christ, the lion and the lamb!

A scroll (written on both sides… a complete message Ezek 2:9) with seven (perfect) seals. These perfect seals require someone perfect to open them.

5:2-3 No one was worthy (Rom 3:10 No one is righteous, not even one, Mark 10:18 no one is good but God alone)

No one can open up the scroll. The view of heaven is, in a sense, closed.

5:5-6 Enter Jesus

Jesus is a lion (a powerful ruler) Gen 49:8-12 the lion of Judah-of God’s people

Jesus is the Root of David (Messiah) Isaiah 11:1-10

Jesus is triumphant

Jesus is a Lamb

Q: In what sense is Jesus a lion? A lion to his enemies

Q: In what sense is Jesus a lamb? A lamb to those who follow him

Q: what would a lamb “as it were slain” look like?

Note: The view of Jesus is quite different from Rev 1:12-17 because his sacrifice is in view.

A lamb with seven horns (power) and seven eyes (omniscient). Bizarre. Not literal.

v. 6 7 horns = perfect in his power

7 eyes = perfect in his knowledge (by the Holy Spirit)

Where is Jesus? Right in the center of the throne (v. 6). That is where our high priest is!

Jesus confidently takes the scroll, which is the message of Revelation to the saints.

Then the most amazing worship service in history broke out!!!

Jesus is God! He is a lamb, a lion, the triumphant one. Jesus is worshipped

Rev 5:8 The four creatures (cherubim) and the 24 elders (the saved) begin to worship. Harp = singing bowl of incense = prayer

(Note: Angels never have harps in the Bible, but the elder (representing us) do.

We are praying and singing glory to the Lamb!!!

Rev 5:9-14 A New Song. A reference to the song of Moses Exodus 15 (Rev 15:3, when the former dragon, Egypt, had been slain)?

What are we singing? You are worthy

Why is Jesus worthy?

v. 9 Because he gave his life to purchase (redeem) every tribe, language, people and nation in order to make them a kingdom of priests. Finally, Exodus 19:6 is being fulfilled. Finally there is a kingdom of people with an intimate relationship with God.

v. 11 Not only us, but hundreds of millions of angels

v. 13 In fact, all creation is worshipping God, as it should be.

Along with cherubim. What a glorious picture!!!!

Remember: This is intended to set the stage for the rest of Revelation.

**Revelation 6: Opening of the seals.** Seal = something not yet revealed.

Structure of Rev 6-16:

Seven seals Ch 6-7

Seven trumpets Ch 8-9

Seven symbolic creatures Ch 10-15

Seven bowls Ch 16-17

All have to do with the judgment of God

Rev 6: Seal #1-6

Rev 7 Seal #7 which contains

Rev 8-9 the seven trumpets trumpet #7 reveals

Rev 15-16 seven bowls

Rev 6:1 Come! Come see the vision. Imagine the scene!!! The sound of hoof-beats and enter a White Horse! The main action begins.

Horses are used by God in Zechariah Zech 1:8-11 Zech 6:1-8

6:2 First seal opened. What is revealed first? Jesus a triumphant conqueror on a white horse. Jesus comes first? (maybe) Through him, we are more than conquerors (Rom 8:37). We will not be harmed by the seven seals, trumpets and bowls.

The picture of a warrior on a white horse with a golden crown and a bow = Parthian warrior/king. They are the only ones in memory who defeated Rome (Carrhae 53 BC)

6:3-4 What comes after Jesus? A red horse. This horse represents war which will come to the earth. …given the power to take peace from the earth and to make men slay one another. A large sword. It probably symbolizes persecution which accompanies those who preach the gospel.

Will this impact God’s people? Yes!

6:5-6 The third seal. A black horse. Famine. Scale for measuring food. Whole day’s wage just to buy sufficient wheat to stay alive. Note, oil and wine are still flowing, so the wealthy are not hurt by this famine. It probably represents the financial hardship that came on the Church because of persecution.

6:7-8 The fourth seal. A pale (yellow-green) horse. Death (with Hades right behind) The power to kill ¼ of humanity by the four (partial) judgments: war, famine, disease and wild beasts. (parallel Ezek 14:12-20).

Message: Judgment is coming on Rome. It may represent martyrdoms which are coming on the Church as well.

Q: How do you feel about the prospect of persecution which might include financial hardship and even death?

6:9-11 The fifth seal. Reveals the souls of those killed because of the word of God and their testimony (original witnesses of Jesus?). Martyrs.

Martyrs are “under the altar” (v. 9) This represents the blood of a life which is shed on an altar which pours down “under the altar.” The martyrs are a sacrifice for God.

How long…. Before God judges the wicked. Retribution, not vindictiveness, is a good thing. Right now, I cannot relate to this sentiment, but I believe we will when we reach heaven. We will agree with these martyrs that God’s judgment on those who oppose Jesus is a good thing. This sentiment—asking God to come in judgment on God’s enemies—is a common theme in Psalms (Psalm 94:1-3) and is in common in Revelation (Rev 11:7-18 Rev 16:5-6)

Answer: not yet. Wait a little longer (v. 11) until the ones to be killed in the persecution prophesied by Revelation is complete. God will judge Rome but Rome has some more persecuting to do first. (Isaiah 33:1 when Assyria is done destroying, I will destroy her Daniel 11:36, 45 Also about Rome, her abominations and her eventual judgment.

6:12-17 The sixth seal. Earthquake, sun turns black, moon turns red, stars fall from the sky, the sky recedes like a scroll and the mountains removed. Everyone hides in caves and among the rocks. This is classic apocalyptic. Judgment is coming. The Day of the Lord is here. (Isaiah 2:10-21 for example. Also Joel 2:10, 31 Isaiah 34:4 Nahum 1:5 for sun, stars, etc. ). This is not literal, of course, but it is real. From the OT examples, we know that this is about the fall of a nation, not the end of the world.

An ironic description: v. 16 the wrath of the lamb.

The wrath of Jesus is coming on the Roman persecutor.

“Fall on us, Hide us” Utter terror.

Rev 6:17 Rhetorical Question: Who can stand under this terrible tribulation? Answer: Revelation Chapter 7.

**Rev Chapter 7** An encouraging interlude (because we need one)

v. 2 An angel comes “from the East” (where the sun rises). Four angels hold back the coming winds (4 = whole earth) winds = God’s activity. (Note Daniel 7:1 the four winds act on the sea, and bring up the four beasts, which means it was the work of God which raised up Babylon, Persia, Greece and Rome)

God’s people are sealed (protected Ezek 9:1-6) (seal = ownership) from the coming wrath (destructive winds). 144,000 or them (all of all of all of God’s people God’s people)

Are the 144,000 Jewish Christians and the “great multitude that no one could count” Gentile Christians? Almost certainly not. (Besides, in Rev 22:4 all believers are marked in this way)

Why 12,000 from Judah, 12,000 from Reuben, etc.? To emphasize that ALL Christians are sealed and under this protection.

Note: The list is not that given in Genesis. It includes Levi and Joseph but not Dan, Ephraim (centers of calf-worship).

Q: Does this sealing mean that the Christians will escape physical suffering in the coming tribulation? Answer: No! In Ezekiel 9:1-6, the righteous are sealed from judgment, but definitely not from the destruction about to come on Jerusalem (Ezek 21:3,4).

The “Great multitude” is all the redeemed, but more particularly, the early Christians who were to be protected when God judges Rome.

White robes purity

palm branches generally a symbol of joy (Jesus entering Jerusalem) more broadly a reference to the Feast of Tabernacles, when the Jews built booths of palm branches to celebrate having a relationship with God. A celebration of salvation.

The point for the Christians: No matter what is coming up, no one and no thing will be able to steal your joy.

A third worship service, like Rev 5. (read v. 10-12)

(v. 13) An elder: Who are these people a (symbol of)? Are you getting this, John?

Apparently a rhetorical question (v. 14)

These are those who survive the coming tribulation and overcome by the blood of the Lamb. What a great assurance.

v. 15 God spreads his tabernacle over them. They are in his tent. He will dwell with them.

**Revelation Chapters 8 & 9**

Rev 8:1 The seventh seal contains the seven trumpets.

In Israel, a trumpet is a warning of impending judgment.

The Feast of Trumpets (Rosh Hashannah Yom Teruah) was a celebration of the New Year, but, more importantly, it was a foreshadowing of the coming of God in Judgment. The Rabbis advised the Jews to stay up all night because you did not know the hour. It was a time of repentance in preparation for the coming of God.

Numbers 10:5 tells us trumpets were used to sound the alarm and prepare for battle.

Matthew 25:30-31 1 Thess 4:13-14 trumpet call.

All this applies to Revelation 8 & 9

These trumpets are reminiscent of the plagues in Egypt. No accident. It is judgment on the one who is preventing God’s people from worshipping him.

8:1 Silence in heaven for ½ hour. ½ = limited. This represents a limited period of time God waits before his judgment comes. Like a drum roll. Something big is coming.

God is slow and hesitant to judge, but do not interpret his slowness wrongly! (2 Pet 3:9 Ezek 33:11)

An angel with 7 trumpets.

v. 3-5 Prayers of the saints are rising up. What are they praying for? Rev 6:10 How long… until you judge the inhabitants of the earth and avenge our blood. They are praying for God to begin his judgment.

[aside: the “fire from the altar in v. 5 is from the brazen altar, not from the altar of incense, as coals from the brazen altar were used to light incense on the altar of incense]

This is God’s call to action. Do not go after God’s saints. A big mistake!

v. 5 thunder, rumblings, lightning and an earthquake. Judgment is coming!

Trumpet #1-4 are judgments/trials to come through nature. In ancient times, they divided “nature” into land, sea, fresh water and the “heavens.” These correspond to the first four trumpets.

Rev 8:7 Trumpet #1 hail, fire and blood (reminiscent of Egyptian **plague #7**) God goes after crops. Woe on the land

Affects 1/3 of the earth. A limited effect. Affects a large portion but definitely not all

Rev 8:8-9 Trumpet #2 sea turned into blood. (**plague #1**) Woe on the water. God goes after commerce (ships destroyed) A mountain is ablaze and thrown into the sea is probably a reference to Rome (A mountain is a worldly or spiritual national power: Jeremiah 51:25, Amos 4:1, Isaiah 2:2). They might have been made to think of Mt. Vesuvius (AD 79).

Rev 8:10-11 Trumpet #3 water becomes bitter and many die. Woe on the fresh water. (Wormwood: Jeremiah 9:15)

Rev 8:12 Trumpet #4 heavenly objects are struck as well. (**Plague #9**) Woe on the heavens. 1/3 a partial judging. (reminiscent of Isaiah 34:4-5 concerning destruction of Edom. Also Joel 2:10) None of this is literal, of course, but the judgment is real.

v. 13 An eagle says (a bird of ill omen): It is going to get worse!

Trumpet #1-4 judgment on nature. Trumpet #5,6 judgment on man.

Rev 9:1-12 The fifth trumpet. Locusts (Egypt **plague #8**) The first of three “woes” (8:13)

v. 4 Not a judgment on nature (not to harm the grass…). Unusual for locusts not to go after plants!

A “fallen star” = Satan who controls the Abyss (Hell) He is the king of the locusts Rev 9:11. Locusts come from the Abyss. Demons that torment those who do not worship God (9:4 do not have the seal of God on their foreheads. See Rev 7).

A Christian cannot be “possessed” by a demon (but perhaps they can be influenced by one if they are willing)

The sin inspired by the demons will cause the people to loathe themselves v. 5-6.

Very bizarre locusts!!! 9:7-10.

The main point: 9:11 Satan is their king. Abaddon Apollyon = Destroyer. Satan is the king of the air and the prince of this world. Ephesians 2:2 “the ruler of the kingdom of the air—the spirit who is now at work in those who are disobedient.” Jn 14:30 The prince of this world.

Satan is at work in and through the corruption and decadence of Rome. Note that the locusts come from within the earth (9:3). They are coming from within Rome. Summers: “The locusts represent the hellish rottenness, the internal decadence in the Roman Empire.”

Rev 9:13-21 The sixth trumpet. The second woe is about to come. A great cavalry ready to attack Rome. Almost certainly this represents Parthia as the enemy of Rome “bound at the great river Euphrates. Judgment by external invasion of Rome.

The two hundred million soldiers are clearly symbolic. A lot of soldiers.

Very scary soldiers! (lion’s head, fire smoke and blazing sulphur, poisonous snake for a tail.

Did the Christians suffer in the wars between Rome and Parthia? Definitely! But they were not being judged. Rome was. Trial, not judgment.

v. 20-21. Still, Rome did not repent.

**Revelation 10:1-11:14** A second encouraging interlude between the sixth and the seventh trumpet (before the third woe).

A mighty angel with a little scroll. Standing with one foot on the land and one foot in the water. This message is for all everywhere.

Seven thunders speak, but John is told not to write down what they said. “Seal up what the seven thunders have said.”

Why not? Because judgment will no longer be delayed (because Rome had refused to repent 9:20). No more warnings! A solemn promise! Rev 10:6.

10:9-11 Eat the scroll (the message of the rest of Revelation—especially the 7th trumpet and the seven bowls). Assimilate the message and thoroughly embrace it. It tastes sweet, but makes him sick to his stomach. God’s word is always sweet, but sometimes the message is hard to receive. This is not pleasant stuff! v. 11 It is about things to happen to peoples and nations and kings. It will be a judgment on God’s enemies and a trial for God’s people.

Rev 11:1-13 This may seem terrible, but, believe it or not, it is part of an encouraging interlude.

Rev 11:1-6 God measures the Temple. God will protect his people (who are the temple, by the way. 1 Cor 3:16-17, Eph 2:21) Measured = protected. Zech 2:1-5 very similar.

But the outer court—the court of the Gentiles (Herod’s temple) will not be measured (ie the Gentiles will persecute the church—will trample on her v. 2--but God will protect the heart of the church, which will be protected from the coming wrath).

The outer courts will be trampled for 42 months (3-1/2 years). There will be a limited period of judgment (as described in the rest of Revelation) but the Church will be protected from that judgment and will not be destroyed.

42 months = 1260 days = time, times and half a time

1. The period the church will be persecuted Rev 11:2

2. The period during which the two witnesses testify Rev 11:3

3. The period over which the Woman is nourished in the wilderness Rev 12:6,14

4. The period of the Beast’s authority Rev 13:5

5. The period the little horn persecutes the saints Daniel 7:25

6. The period of the abomination of desolation by Antiochus Ephiphanes Dan 12:11 (1290 days for some reason)

11:3-6 The two witnesses. These represent the Christian witness which will still shine during the time of great trial. (“The witnesses represent the militant spirit of true Christians and their testimony” Summers) Two Olive trees = the priestly and the kingly power (Zech 4:12-14 These are the two who are anointed to serve the Lord of all the earth ie Zerubbabel (civil, royal) and Joshua (priestly) Two lampstands = Church. By the power of the Holy Spirit (Zech 4:4-6), disciples—priests of the living God—will testify about God in troubled times.

Why two witnesses? To represent their power.

v. 5-6 And they (we!) are powerful!! Fire from mouth, shut up heavens, water to blood.

11:7-12 The Roman persecutor (the beast… the first of the seven mystical creatures) will attack the witnesses—the Church.

Some will even die (their bodies will lie in the street of the Great City = Babylon = Sodom = Egypt = Rome—a city ruled by Satan Rev 13:7). The world will gloat over the persecuted church. But God will raise them up (both *temporally*, as the Church will survive the persecution and grow even more and *spiritually*, as the martyrs will be raised from the dead). The intense persecution will only last 3-1/2 DAYS (not years).

Q: Do you feel like you “torment” non-Christians some times? (11:10).

v. 11 They will come back (breath will enter them, Cross-reference Ezekiel 37. The Valley of Dry Bones.

11:13 Finally, even Rome acknowledged the Church and gave glory to God in heaven. Well…. This is what happened historically.

11:14 No more delay!

Rev 11:15-19 The seventh trumpet. Before the implications of this are observed, another worship—a fourth one—breaks out in heaven. (4:8-11, 5:9-14, 7:10-17 and 11:15-18).

11:19 A different view of the throne room. The ark, with God over the ark, and flashes of lightning, thunder, earthquake and hailstorm. God has not forgotten his covenant.

This is the end of Act 1 Act 2 is about to start.

**Revelation Part II Ch 12-22**

Rev 1-11 What is going on up front.

Rev 12-22 What is going on behind the scenes. The heavenly battle which underlies the outward battle.

**Revelation 12 The Woman and the Beast.**

Rev 12:1 A great and wondrous sign: The woman is Israel, who is about to give birth to a son (Jesus). This part is a flashback.

The woman in Rev 12:

She is Israel

She is the Church

She is God’s kingdom in any of its aspects.

Scene reminiscent of Genesis 3. A woman, a serpent, a man-child and the seed of the woman all in view.

12:3 Another great and wondrous sign: an enormous red dragon. Satan

7 heads (great wisdom)

10 horns (very powerful)

7 crowns (great authority (on the earth at least))

A seven-headed beast [not dragon] will, in another context (Rev 17, Rev 13), be Rome.

12:4 apocalyptic imagery. Satan tries to prevent the birth.

…or kill the baby when he is born (Herod tries to kill Jesus, but fails)

1/3 of stars cast down. Some of God’s people are taken out by Satan/Rome? (Daniel 12, for example) (maybe)

12:5 But Jesus (who will rule all the nations with an iron scepter) is born, despite his efforts. God takes him to his side where Satan cannot get him.

12:6 The imagery changes. After Jesus’ ministry the true Israel is the church, so now the woman who goes out into the desert is the church. Either way, whether Israel or the church, the true Israel is the Kingdom.

Goes out into the desert. Israel/The church is being persecuted, but protected by God for an unspecified limited time of persecution. Imagery being taken from Elijah and the 3-1/2 year drought during which he was taken care of (1 Kings 19:1-18)

Rev 12:7-12 The scene shifts to heaven. War in heaven.

Try to imagine what this “war” is like. Battle scenes: Luke 4:1-13, Matt 26:36-46.

Satan is defeated and cast down. What, exactly, does this mean? Is he now less powerful? Probably not.

Satan is a 3-time loser. He lost his battle to kill the child. He pursued the “child” to heaven and was soundly defeated. He then went after the children of the woman (the Church) and was defeated in that as well.

Implication for the church: You will undergo some vicious persecutions for a time! But the final result is assured.

Satan the deceiver (12:9) and Satan the accuser (12:10)

Which means is Satan most likely to use on you? Are you the accused or the deceived type?

How do we defeat the Dragon: his lies and accusations? 12:11

1. By the blood of Jesus

2. By our testimony (remember the two witnesses in Rev 11). Sharing our faith is essential to overcoming the lies and the accusations.

3. By our willingness to sacrifice our lives rather than do the bidding of the dragon. Can you say this to God? They “loved not their lives” What about you? Galatians 2:20

12:12 Bad news for us. Satan is ticked of and he is coming after us!

12:14-15 The woman taken care of for a time, times and half a time. (1 Kings 19:1-18 Elijah parallel)

12:15 Satan thinks he can use water to keep God’s people in his possession. He fails again, like he did with the Red Sea. Like Israel and Egypt. The earth swallow up the water and God’s people go free.

12:16-17 Satan goes after the Christians “her offspring.” Who are her offspring?   
“Those who obey God’s commandments and hold to the testimony of Jesus (in the face of the upcoming persecution)”

Satan is thrice defeated! This is the message of Revelation. But…. Tribulation still awaits.

**Revelation Chapter 13 The Dragon and the Two Beasts.**

An ominous verse: And the dragon stood on the shore of the sea. Satan is looking out over the nations.

In Revelation “seas” or “the sea” is the restless nations.

Rev 17:15 “waters” = nations and peoples. Isaiah 57:20 agrees, Daniel 7:2 The four world empires come up out of the sea.

Rev 13:1 ten horns and seven heads. On each head a blasphemous name. For Domitian this was “Our Lord and God Domitian.” The Roman emperors were deified.

13:2 A beast comes “out of the sea” to help the Serpent. This beast is Rome!

A very fierce beast. Each head has a blasphemous name. Leopard coloring, bear paws and lion mouth. (Note Daniel 7: lion, bear, leopard are the three other beasts—the three other powers which came before Rome: Babylon, Persia/Media, Greece. All these nations are of the same sort, in the end. In a sense, Rome is the personification of all four.)

The ten horns are the client-kings who help the beast (Rome) control the empire. Rev 17:12ff supports this. “The ten horns you saw are ten kings who have not yet received a kingdom, but who for one hour will receive authority as kings along with the beast…. They will make war against the Lamb, but the Lamb will overcome them.”

Alternatively (but less likely) they could be Augustus, Tiberius, Caligula, Claudius, Nero, Galba, Otho, Vitellius, Vespasian and Titus—the ten kings of Daniel 7.

The seven heads are Augustus, Tiberius, Caligula, Claudius, Nero, Vespasian and Titus.

In Revelation 17:9,10 they are the seven hills of Rome and the seven kings.

Galba, Otho and Vitellius all ruled for only a few months. All claimed the Roman power, but it is debatable whether they were Roman Emperors (heads). See Suetonius.

v. 2 Where did the Beast from the sea (Rome) get its power? From the Serpent (Satan)

v. 3 One of the heads had a fatal wound. Nero who, when he died, ended the Claudian dynasty. But the head (and its persecuting nature) had been revived in the Flavian Dyasty. (“the fatal wound has been healed”)

Rev 17:11 The beast who once was (Nero), and now is not is an eighth king (Domitian).

v. 5 Given temporary power to rule to the beast (Rome) (42 months). (given by the serpent, but allowed by God)

v. 7 Domitian is given temporary power to make war against the Saints and to (appear to) defeat them. Q: Who gave him this power? Satan did, but God allowed it.

v. 8 Everyone (except the Saints) will worship the beast. This was literally true, as all Romans were allowed to worship pretty much whoever or whatever they liked, as long as they also worshiped Roma—the God of Rome.

Assurance. Those who do not worship the beast have their names written in the Lamb’s book—the Lamb slain **from the creation of the world.** What an amazing teaching!!! (1 Pet 2:20 He was chosen before the creation of the world, but was revealed in these last times for your sake)

v. 10 Reality check: Some of you will be put in prison. Some of you will be martyred.

“This calls for patient endurance.” I would say so.

Q: What would you do if you got a letter informing you of this!!!!

Rev 13:11-18 The Beast out of the Earth: Domitian. The eleventh horn of Daniel 7—the one who uprooted three of the horns/kings, which explains why he is the eighth in Rev. 17 and why there are seven heads in Rev 13. The eighth king of Rev 17:11 He exercised all the authority of the first beast (Rome)

It may also represent the religious authorities within Rome which promoted Caesar worship. The Concillia or Commune, who were known for tricks like ventriloquism to make statues speak (v. 15).

v. 11 this beast looks like a lamb, but speaks like a dragon. Looks harmless, but watch out. It is “religious Rome”

13:14 is a rather straightforward reference to Domitian (and Galerian and Decius and Diocletian for that matter)

13:15 He gave breath to the first beast (Nero). He revived the persecution begun by Nero.

This beast is “the lawless one” of 2 Thess 2:3-4

13:17 There may not have been a literal “mark” on people’s forehead, but there was an official document declaring that the holder had made obeisance to Domitian.

The “mark” of the beast might be coins with the head of Domitian, declaring him to be Lord and God. There is some evidence that the early church refused to use these coins in commerce, as did the Jews, who refused to use them in the temple.

Domitian’s number is 666 He is totally Satan’s man (as will be Galerian, Diocletian and Decius).

Is 666 the antichrist? Probably no, as there is literally zero indication in the Bible that they are one and the same. Antichrist is not found in Revelation (1 John 2:22) .

“On his right hand or on his forehead” Deut 11:18 You shall put these words of mine in your heart and soul, and you shall bind them as a sign (mark) on your hand and fix them as an emblem on your forehead.

Ex 13:9,16 It shall serve for you as a sign (mark) on your hand and as a reminder (mark) on your foreheads, so that the teaching of the Lord may be on your lips.

Rev 13:18 Your opponent is evil and he is human. Domitian.

**Revelation 14 The Wine of God’s Wrath.**

After this view of the two beasts and their persecutions, the disciples need some encouragement!

Rev 14:1-5 The Lamb on Mt. Zion and the 144,000. We are singing a New Song in the presence of God and of the four living creatures and of the 24 elders. Only the saved can sing this song, as spiritual things are spiritually discerned.

v. 4 “Not defiled themselves with women” is probably about spiritual purity. 2 Cor 11:2. Not defiled themselves with idol-worship.

v. 4 They follow the lamb wherever he goes. If only we would do this. Jesus goes to help the poor, he goes to spread the gospel. He goes to prison and to the cross.

We are frst fruits to God and the Lamb. 1 Cor 15:20,23 The first and best of the harvest. Ex 34:26, 23:19, Deut 26:9-11.

Rev 14:6-12 The absolute last call to repentance. Babylon (Rome, the beast) has fallen!!!! Their fate is sealed. And as for those to take the mark of the beast, their place will be in hell for eternity. The smoke of their torment will rise forever and forever. Q: Will they be tormented forever and forever, or will the smoke of that torment rise forever and forever?

By contrast, the smoke of the martyrs burned at the stake lasted for a few hours and their joy in heaven will be eternal. Early Christians would have associated “the smoke of their torment” with martyrdom.

v. 10 Those who drink the adulterous wine of the worldliness of Rome will drink the wine of the wrath of God’s fury without dilution—pure and unadulterated.

v. 13 One of the beatitudes. But those who die in the Lord…. Will rest from their labor and their [good] deeds will follow them.

Rev 14:14-20 The wheat and the wine harvest. v. 15 Jesus with a sickle. Judgment is coming.

v. 17 another angel with a sickle. v. 20 a lot of blood. The wine of God’s wrath on the Beast and her supporters will be very intense.

Some interpret the wheat to be the harvest of Christians and the grapes to be the harvest of those who worship the Beast. This is more than likely correct, but open to interpretation. In the end, the overall message is not affected by this.

**Rev. Ch 15 Seven Plagues. Preparing for the Seven Bowls.**

15:1 Seven angels These are the ones who hold the seven bowls. These are the ones which will complete the wrath of God on the Romans (for now).

15:2 The sea of glass is still there, reflecting red from the judgments of God on the beast. Those who have overcome—who were martyred are standing on the glass. They are coming close to the throne of God, and are singing and playing harps—they are worshipping. This is a last encouragement to the saints before the fearful seven bowls are described.

Lesson: Through suffering we come closer to God. Coll 1:24. Phil 2:10.

The sea of glass is Revelation’s antitype to the laver (the bronze sea of Solomon). The laver was used for purification before one can enter the Holy Place, as the crystal sea represents God’s separation from things unholy.

It is also symbolic of the Red Sea, which separated Israel from being in a relationship with God. They had to pass through the Sea and be purified “Baptized into Moses” 1 Cor 10:1.

15:2-4 Worship breaks out again!!! A fifth worship.

Now the seven angels with the seven bowls come out from the presence of God. The previous outpourings of judgment were incomplete (6 seals, 6 trumpets, but 7 bowls)

Very dramatic. Imagine one coming out at a time and all standing together in front of the tabernacle/throne. Tabernacle filled with smoke—the presence of God 2 Chron 5:13-14 when the priests came running out of the temple.

**Rev Ch 16 The Seven Bowls**

The seven trumpets were partial judgment with the intention of bringing about repentance. These bowls are not intended as discipline to cause repentance. They are punishment. They were partial (1/3) These are total.

As with the trumpets, the first four are on physical things—the earth, whereas #5,6 falls on people.

16:1 God says (15:8) GO!

First bowl 16:1-2 “On the land” painful sores These nature judgments are falling on people who worshipped Rome as well. (plague #6)

Second bowl 16:3 On sea. Dead man’s blood. (Egypt plague #1) Every living thing in the sea died (not literally)

Third bowl 16:4-7 On fresh water

v. 6 Justice. They shed innocent blood, and will now drink blood, as they deserve.

Justice cries out against the drunkards, the sexually immoral, the thieves, the rapists, the drug dealers, the abusers,…

Fourth bowl 16:8-9 On the heavenly objects. Rather than repent, they cursed God.

As with the trumpets, judgment on the land, sea, rivers and the heavens.

Fifth bowl 16:10-11 On the beast (Rome). Darkness (plague #9) Intense agony. Still, they refuse to repent. Amazing!

Sixth bowl 16:12 dries up the Euphrates—opening the way for military conquest. “Kings from the East” where Assyria and Babylon came from.

Remember that the Parthians were on the other side of the Euphrates. The allusion is to an actual military attack on Rome, but Rev 19:11-21 sees it as being a spiritual battle between the Beast, the False Prophet, the Serpant and Jesus and the righteous and his angels. Might we, then, be the kings from the East?

16:13 “evil spirits that look like frogs” coming from the dragon, the beast and the false prophet. (Satan, Rome [civil Rome] and the Concilia [religious Rome]) These are lying, deceiving demonic spirits (2 Thess 2:9-12, the lawless one)

Context: 1 Kings 22:19-23 Lying prophets speak to Ahab.

I believe in demons.

What do these lying demons do? They convince Rome to make war on the saints. Notice that God is allowing this to happen. That it happens is not a sign of God’s weakness.

16:15 Behold: I come like a thief. Keep your spiritual clothes on. Matthew 22:11-13. We need to have spiritual clothes on to eat at the banquet. Gal 3:26-27 We are clothed with Christ. Let’s keep these clothes on!!! Message to Christians: Be ready at any time for the spiritual battle.

16:16-21 The seventh (and last) bowl. The final judgment on Rome. (v 17 It is done!) This judgment is on the air (on Satan, who is the king of the air. Eph 2:2) Armageddon.

16:16 A (spiritual) war is about to be fought at Har Megiddo Armageddon. The Mountain or the city of Megiddo Five wars, at least happened there.

1. Israel defeated Jabin Judges Ch 4,5 (after which there was peace for 40 years)

2. Gideon defeated the Midianites. 300 soldiers versus a vast army.

3. Saul defeated by the Philistines.

4. Ahaziah defeated by Hazael and killed by Jehu.

5. Necho slew Josiah (as ordained by God) (2 Chron 35:20-25) Necho warned Josiah that he was on a mission for Jehovah.

Armageddon is the perfect symbol of the great spiritual battle between Jesus and Rome.

Premillenialists have a literal battle with a literal 200,000,000 troops from the East (China? Russia?) battling against a literal Roman confederation? This valley is not big enough for such a battle. Quite silly to literalize this battle. Every generation since the time of Jesus has been sure that current events were the fulfillment of Rev 16,19. Let us ignore such nonsense.

v. 19 The great city (Rome) split into three parts by a great earthquake. This is not literal! All this eventually did in fact happen to Rome. The entire system of cities collapsed and Babylon the Great (Rome) was judged.

Islands flee, mountains disappear and 100 pound hailstones (plague #7) fall. This, of course, is symbolic and not literal.

**Revelation 17 The Woman and the Beast**

**Rev 17-19 The victory of the lion/lamb.** This is the working out of the seventh bowl.

17:1-6 Come, I will show you the destruction of the “great prostitute”. This is Rome, probably emphasizing her financial/business empire. The rise of the Prostitute is foretold in Daniel 11:36-39.

17:3 A woman sitting on a scarlet beast. This is Rome the persecutor and the murderer of God’s people. This beast has seven heads and ten horns. These are the same seven and ten of Revelation 13. Political Rome (the beast) made materialistic Rome (the Prostitute) possible.

Purple = corrupt greedy political power

Scarlet = blood.

A golden cup filled with abominations and adultery

The abominations the Prostitute has for sale are very attractive (v. 4). Jeremiah 51:7

v. 6 Who is this woman? “drunk with the blood of the saints.” There is no possible doubt. This is Rome.

Rev 17:7-11

Who is this woman? v. 8, 10 It is the Roman persecutor who once was (Nero) now is not (a period of relative peace for the church during the reigns of Vespasian and Titus, and perhaps even the early reign of Domitian), but is “yet to come” (v. 8b, 10).

17:8b and will come up out of the Abyss and go to his destruction. This is Domitian (and the later Roman persecutors he represents ,such as Galerian, Decius and Diocletian)

To the saints: This terrible news calls for a mind with wisdom.

In case you do not get it, it is made perfectly clear!!! v. 9 The seven heads are seven hills on which the woman sits. There is no question at all that this is Rome, the city on seven hills. (the Palatine, Aventine, Capitoline, Caelian, Esquiline, Quirinal, Viminal)

17:10 The seven heads are also seven kings. Five have fallen (Augustus, Tiberius, Caligula, Claudius, Nero) One is (Vespasian)

Rev 17:10 The beast “is not” Implies that Vespasian is ruling when John wrote. This may be possible. Either that or it is a slight flashback.

The other has not yet come, but will remain for a little while (Titus, who ruled for less than two years).

17:11 Nero is about to be resurrected as an eighth king. Domitian.

In Rev 17 Domitian is a kind of resurrection of Nero. He is the eighth king and eight represents resurrection (Cyprian called Sunday the first day and the eighth day). The Sibylline Oracles call Jesus 888—the resurrected one.

Tertullian: Domitian is a “limb of the bloody Nero.”

In case the Church and the disciples are fearful, they should remember that “He is going to his destruction” (v. 11)

17:12-18 The ten horns are ten kings who will be given their authority along with/by the beast. These are the client kings of Rome, such as Armenia, Cappadocia, Galatia and Commagene and, of course, Herod. (Alternately, they could be future emperors who, like Domitian, will persecute the church. The problem with this is that it is hard to see how they could come to hate the woman. On the positive side for this view, future persecuting emperors “have not yet received a kingdom” (v. 12), on the other hand, their authority is “along with the beast.”)

17:13 The eighth head and the ten horns will make war against the Lamb. How? By persecuting and even killing his saints.

Bad news, right? But the Lamb will overcome them because he is King of Kings. (v. 14)

This is reminiscent of Daniel 7:23-28, where the eighth king is an eleventh king (because it does not ignore Galba, Otho and Vitellius). A king who will attack the saints for “time, times and half-a-time” but whose power will be taken away forever!!!

The beast and the ten horns will hate the woman. The Roman empire and the client kings will hate the central authority of Rome and will eventually destroy her.

v. 18 The woman is the great city. Rome.

**Revelation 18 Babylon (the woman/Great Prostitute) has fallen!!!**

Rev 18: The Great Prostitute is judged and destroyed.

Rev 19 The Beast and the False Prophet are judged and destroyed.

Rev 20 The Serpent/Satan judged and destroyed.

Rev 18:1-8 Fallen is Babylon the Great.

Babylon/The Great Prostitute is “the world.” It is the materialistic aspect of Rome. Babylon is the woman of Rev. 17 and Babylon is the Great Prostitute.

Much of the language of the entire chapter comes from OT prophecies of the destruction of Babylon (Is 13:20-22, Jer 50:39, 51:37)

v.3 The kings of the earth have committed adultery with her means they have agreed to worship the beast in order to obtain power and material gain.

What is God’s advice about the world? V. 4 Come out from her! 1 John 2:15-17 Why is the world so enticing?

What will happen to the world? V. 6-8 Our job is to make sure this does not apply to us! 1 Cor 11:32 God disciplines us so that we are not condemned with the world.

18:9 people are crying over the destruction of Rome. Why? v. 11-13 Greed. This is no tears because of love.

Rev 18:15-16 Why were they sad? Because they lost money!

Rev 18:17-24 This is literally what happened to Rome. A population of about one million, by AD 800 was reduced to 15,000 and abject poverty.

**Revelation 19 The Fall of the Beast and the False Prophet (the beast from the earth)**

Rev 19:1-5 What are they cheering about?

They are cheering about God’s justice and their vindication. Can you relate?

Hallelujah only found in Rev. 19! Literally, praise God.

Rejoicing over the triumph of righteousness and truth over corruption and lies.

Notice especially v. 3-4. Rejoicing over the smoke rising forever and ever.

Rev. 19:6-9 Now, what are they cheering about? We are getting married to Christ!

Now we are engaged to Christ (2 Cor 11:2). Later we will be married to him.

v. 7 How do we make ourselves ready for the marriage feast? Wear the linen. Do righteous acts. This is the beautiful clothing we will wear for our groom.

v. 9 Who is invited? (so, technically, the marriage is not consummated yet)

Matthew 22:1-14 They had on the wrong clothes. 25:1-13 Galatians 3:26-27.

Rev 19:10 An angel refuses worship. Jesus definitely does not refuse worship!!! (Rev 5:9-14 for example. Also Heb 1:6, John 20:28, etc.)

Rev 19:11-16 Jesus on a white horse!!! Up until now, Jesus has been a lion and a lamb, but now he is a warrior! White horse = purity and victory.

v. 11-13 like Rev. 1

v. 14 Who are in these armies, also riding on white horses? Us! (Rev. 16:12 “Kings from the East). This is us.

Rev 19:6-9 One kind of banquet. The banquet of the Lamb.

Rev 19:17-21 Another kind of banquet. The banquet of the vultures.

The beast and false prophet are thrown into the fiery lake of burning sulfur. This happens when Rome was judged. The Serpent will not be given final judgment yet.

v. 21 The rest of them… Who? Those who had allied themselves to the Beast.

**Revelation 20:1-10. Satan/The Serpent in judged.**

Rev 20 What is the thousand year reign?

Well, what is it not?

1. No mention of the second coming of Christ.

2. No mention of Jesus being on the earth.

3. No mention of a bodily resurrection.

4. No mention of a rapture.

5. No mention of people living in modern times—only mention of those in the early church who are persecuted (“beheaded because of their testimony”). Paul, for example.

Is there room for a literal 1000 year physical reign of Jesus on a physical throne in Jerusalem here? A reestablishment of Jewish sacrifices and the building of a temple? Of an actual person known as the Antichrist and another as the False Prophet? Is it even remotely suggested? No!

This undercuts the entire premillennial doctrine, with its 1000 year reign of Jesus on the earth, in Jerusalem, and its pre-rapture and Tribulation, none of which are even suggested in Revelation 20.

What the 1000 year reign is:

It is a period during which the power of Satan to attack God’s people is significantly reduced which will last for an unknown but relatively long period of time, which began at a time near when John wrote Revelation.

Rev 20:1 Satan is bound for a complete and long period of time (1000 years). In what sense was Satan bound? In the sense that he no longer had the Beast, the Prostitute and the False Prophet working on his side. This is, in fact, historically, exactly what happened after AD 325.

Was he entirely bound? Obviously not! Like a chained dog.

Might demons have less power to possess people? Maybe.

How long chained? For 1000 years (a long time). Longer than he persecuted the church! Jude 6 a parallel passage.

v. 3 After that he will be set free for a short time. What does that mean? See v. 7-10.

v. 4 Martyrs killed by Domitian (and others?)given authority to judge (because they had most at stake in retribution of God’s enemies). Martyred because they did not make sacrifice to the beast.

Q: Has there been a “first resurrection.”/Is this literal? (v. 5). Maybe. If so, the rest of us will be resurrected (soon) after the end of the 1000 years (v. 6).

Is Rev 11:11 a literal resurrection? Probably not, so is Rev 20:4 a literal resurrection? Maybe not. So this “resurrection” may be symbolic. It may be that their cause is resurrected, while the cause of the pagan world/opponent to the church would remain dormant for “1000 years” For what it is worth, this is, in essence, what happened historically after AD 325. Note that Ezek 37:1-13 (the Valley of Dry Bones) is symbolic of a national revival, which supports this interpretation. Ezek 37:12 “This is what the Sovereign Lord says: O my people, I am going to open your graves and bring you up from them; I will bring you back to the land of Israel. They you, my people, will know that I am the Lord, when I open your graves and bring you up from them.”

The “second resurrection” (implied) is the one when both good and evil will rise and be judged (Daniel 12:2f)

The point: Satan is bound and the martyrs are free! The earthly kings are in the lake of fire and the martyrs are reigning on thrones. This is the reality behind the scenes. The saints are on thrones, judging their persecutors. Daniel 7 “The Saints will possess the kingdom forever and ever. The martyrs are no longer crying or vengeance: they are on thrones.

20:6 Blessed are those who have a part in the “first resurrection” as the second death (see v. 14) has no power over them.

Q: When does the fast-forward to end-times happen? At 20:7 or at 20:11? I think it may well be at 20:7.

20:7-10 If so, then at the very end of time, when Christianity has spread over the whole earth, a second major persecution will break out against the Church. He will gather Gog and Magog (the people (Gog) and nations (Magog) in the world committed to Satan) and fight against the church. (v. 9). (See Ezek 38,38 where Gog and Magog are probably Antiochus Epiphanes and his empire)

But, as a result, Satan, like the Beast, the Great Prostitute, and the False Prophet, will be defeated, judged and sent to hell. A final judgment (day and night forever and ever).

Rev 20:11-15 Judgment Day (parallel: Daniel 12:1-4)

Both great and small. There will be no favoritism on Judgment Day. 1 Pet1:17 “Since you call on a Father who judges each man’s work impartially, live your lives as strangers here in reverent fear.”

Two books:

A “works” book

A grace book.

Death and Hades (the good and bad side of Hades?) were destroyed.

Questions:

v. 15 Those not found written in the book of life were thrown into the lake of fire—the second death. Q: What happens to them there? Will they, like the Serpent, be tormented forever and ever?

Those not in the Lamb’s (Rev 21:27) book of life, will any of them make it? David? John the Baptist, Elijah, Moses, Abraham?

Or might the Book of Life be the only book that matters?

Might the Great White Throne judgment be a different from the sheep and goat judgment in Matthew? Extremely doubtful, but does it really matter?

We do not know absolutely for sure because we do not need to know absolutely for sure.

Who will suffer the second death? Rev 21:8 gives us a partial list (note the interesting insertion of cowardice in the list, and its appropriateness to the Roman persecution), as does 21:27, 22:15.

**Revelation 21-22 The New Jerusalem**

Rev 21:1-8 Fellowship with God.

Rev 21:9-26 Protection by God.

Rev 22:1-5 Provisions with God.

Rev 21:1-8 Perfect Fellowship. The imagery here is principally from the Tabernacle. Heaven is the redeemed living in the Holy of Holies with God.

21:1 No more sea. No more separation. We are totally in! For John on Patmos the sea was what separated him from all he loved. This must have been particularly poignant for him.

21:3 The dwelling (Tabernacle) of God is with men, and he will live with them.

21:4 Tears wiped away. No more death or crying.

Q: How can this be? Can there be joy without suffering? Apparently so.

21:6 I am the alpha and the omega. You can count on it!

21:7 He who overcomes (who does not worship the beast) will inherit all this. This is true for all of us, but it is particularly addressed to the Christians in the early church.

Isaiah 65:17 Behold, I will create new heavens and a new earth. The former things will not be remembered, nor will they come to mind. Maybe that is why there are no more tears in heaven.

Rev 21:9-26 Perfect Protection.

21:15 Measuring = protecting. High and think walls. Symbols, obviously.

12,000 stadia. Very big…. God’s people. 12x12 (200 feet) cubits thick!!! Perfect protection.

21:21 Pearly gates. Literal? Pearl the only jewel produced by suffering.

v. 22 No temple, no sun. Not needed.

v. 25 Gate never shut. Again…. Safety.

22:1-6 Perfect Provision. Garden metaphor. The Bible begins and ends with a garden. How fitting. What do we need? Water, food and health. All are given in this garden. Crystal clear water, fruit, leaves for healing (v. 3)

Parallel to Ezekiel 47:3-12 and Zechariah 14:8-11.

We will have everything we could ever want or need. We will have fellowship, protection, provision, and an opportunity to serve our God.

What will we “do” in heaven? 22:3 We will serve God. 22:4 We will see God.

22:7-21 Epilogue.

v. 7 I am coming soon (in judgment on Rome)

John testifies to the reality of what he is writing down. V. 10 do not seal it up. In other words, publish this book for the disciples.

22:11 a bit odd. Parallel Daniel 12:10.

22:12 I am coming soon—the things written in this book will happen soon.

22:13 You can count on it.

22:17 Come!!! This is your evangelism passage. Like Daniel 12:3. If you come, you will receive the water of life (the Holy Spirit).

22:18-19 Relevant for the immediate recipients. Do not dare to add to or subtract from this book! (This was commonplace in apocalyptic literature).

Amen, come Lord Jesus.

End of class:

At the end of Revelation, what do we know? Summers: “Come what may, Christ is supreme and no power can take from him the victory that is rightfully his.”