The Revelation of Jesus Christ

which God gave unto him, to shew unto his servants things which must shortly come to pass; and he sent and signified it by his angel unto his servant John: Who bare record of the word of God, and of the testimony of Jesus Christ, and of all things that he saw. Blessed is he that readeth, and they that hear the words of this prophecy, and keep those things which are written therein: for the time is at hand.

Revelation 1:1-3 — A Complete, Verse-by-Verse Presentation

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Author: John Lobota

Research Assistant: Claude Cowork

papertiq@bellsouth.net

Table of Contents

The Purpose of This Study.....6

Nehemiah 8:5, 8, and the blessing of Revelation 1:3.

How to Read This Study.....6

How each chapter, section and verse is laid out.

The Book at a Glance.....8

The whole book, drawn as its own structure shows it.

Part One — Opening the Book.....9

Ten chapters to read before the first verse.

Chapter 1 — What the Book Is.....10

Its own title, its three characters, and its seven blessings.

Chapter 2 — Who Wrote It, Where, and When.....11

John; the isle of Patmos and Roman exile; the end of Domitian's reign.

Chapter 3 — To Whom It Was Written, and in Which Administration.....16

The chain of Revelation 1:1, the seven assemblies, and the Day of the Lord.

Chapter 4 — Why It Was Given.....19

To shew His servants; to bless the reader; to warn.

Chapter 5 — How It Speaks.....20

Signs, the symbols it explains itself, numbers, and the words of the Old Testament.

Chapter 6 — The Sermon from Heaven.....23

Revelation 2–3 set beside the sermons Christ spoke on earth.

Chapter 7 — The Scriptures That Point to Revelation.....25

The law, the prophets, the words of Christ, and the apostles.

Chapter 8 — How the Book Is Arranged.....28

Heaven and earth, the seven pairs, and the order of the visions.

Chapter 9 — How Revelation Completes the Scriptures.....31

Genesis answered, prophecy fulfilled, the threads drawn together, the Word closed.

Chapter 10 — The Text of Revelation.....33

What a King James reader should know about the Greek behind his Bible.

Part Two — The Revelation of Jesus Christ, Verse by Verse.....34

All 404 verses in seventeen sections.

Section A — 1:1–1:20. The Revelation Given, and the Son of Man Seen.....35

The Revelation given; the Son of man among the lampstands.

Section B — 2:1–3:22. The Sermon from Heaven: Seven Messages to Seven Assemblies.....61

The seven messages of the sermon from heaven.

Section C — 4:1–5:14. In Heaven: The Throne, the Book, and the Lamb.....111

The throne in heaven; the sealed book; the Lamb.

Section D — 6:1–7:8. On Earth: Six Seals Opened, and 144,000 Sealed.....138

Six seals; the four horsemen; the sealing of 144,000.

Section E — 7:9–8:6. In Heaven: The Great Multitude, and the Seventh Seal.....161

The great multitude; the seventh seal; the prayers of the saints.

Section F — 8:7–11:14. On Earth: Six Trumpets, the Little Book, and the Two Witnesses.....175

Six trumpets; the little book; the two witnesses.

Section G — 11:15–11:19. In Heaven: The Seventh Trumpet.....209

The kingdom proclaimed; the ark seen in heaven.

Section H — 12:1–12:12. In Heaven: The Woman, the Child, and the Dragon.....215

The woman, the man child, the dragon; war in heaven.

Section I — 12:13–13:18. On Earth: The Dragon and the Two Beasts.....228

The woman pursued; the beast from the sea; the beast from the earth.

Section J — 14:1–14:5. In Heaven: The Lamb and the 144,000.....244

The Lamb on mount Sion with the 144,000.

Section K — 14:6–14:20. On Earth: Six Angels and the Harvest of the Earth.....249

The everlasting gospel; Babylon's fall announced; the harvest and the vintage.

Section L — 15:1–15:8. In Heaven: The Seven Angels with the Seven Last Plagues.....260

The song of Moses and the Lamb; the seven vials given.

Section M — 16:1–18:24. On Earth: The Seven Vials, and the Fall of Babylon.....266

The seven vials; the great whore; the fall of Babylon.

Section N — 19:1–19:16. In Heaven: The Marriage of the Lamb, and the Rider on the White Horse...302

Alleluia; the marriage of the Lamb; the Rider on the white horse.

Section O — 19:17–20:15. On Earth: The Last Judgments, the Thousand Years, and the Great White Throne..... 312

The beast taken; the thousand years; the great white throne.

Section P — 21:1–22:5. The New Heaven, the New Earth, and the Holy City.....325

The new heaven and new earth; the holy city; the river and the tree of life.

Section Q — 22:6–22:21. The Conclusion: "Behold, I Come Quickly".....345

"Behold, I come quickly"; the last invitation; grace.

Part Three — Closing.....354

The conclusion, and a reference guide.

Chapter 11 — Conclusion: The Revelation of Jesus Christ.....355

What the book has revealed of Christ and of God's purpose.

Chapter 12 — What We Learned: A Reference Guide.....356

Ten headings, each point tied to its section and page.

Appendices.....360

The evidence behind the narrative's answers.

Appendix A — The Structure Tested.....360

Bullinger's structure checked against the text.

Appendix B — To Whom It Was Written: The Seven Assemblies.....362

The four readings, the evidence, and the answer.

Appendix C — The Contested Questions.....368

Nineteen questions, the readings, and this study's answers.

Appendix D — How Others Have Read Revelation.....384

The four schools, the date, other structures, the commentaries.

Appendix E — The Text of Revelation.....386

The manuscripts, Erasmus, and the readings noted.

Appendix F — The Old Testament in Revelation, Verse by Verse.....388

362 allusions on 244 verses.

Appendix G — Seals, Trumpets and Vials Side by Side, with the Plagues of Egypt.....409

The three series and the plagues of Egypt.

Appendix H — The Order of the Book and the Order of Events.....410

Where the book steps back, pauses, and looks ahead.

Appendix I — Symbols, Numbers, Heavenly Voices, and the Titles of Christ.....411

Symbols, numbers, songs, and titles of Christ.

Appendix J — The Claims of This Study, Their Weight, and What Would Change Its Mind.....416

The seven claims and their weight.

Appendix K — Glossary of Greek and Hebrew Words.....417

Greek and Hebrew words explained.

Sources Consulted.....418

The text, the commentaries, and other works.

Copyright.....419

Terms of distribution.

Scripture Index..... 419

Every Scripture quoted outside Revelation, with where it is quoted.

The Purpose of This Study

When Israel came back from Babylon, Ezra the scribe stood on a pulpit of wood before all the people, and opened the book of the law.

> **Nehemiah 8:5** *And Ezra opened the book in the sight of all the people; (for he was above all the people;) and when he opened it, all the people stood up:*
>
> **Nehemiah 8:8** *So they read in the book in the law of God distinctly, and gave the sense, and caused them to understand the reading.*

That is the purpose of this study, and the whole of it. Three things were done that day, and this study tries to do the same three things with the last book of the Bible:

- **They read in the book distinctly.** Every one of the 404 verses of Revelation is printed in full, in the King James Version, and read in its place.
- **They gave the sense.** Each verse is opened phrase by phrase: what each phrase says, what each new word means, and what the Scriptures it draws on say, quoted in full so the reader sees them for himself.
- **They caused them to understand the reading.** Then the questions a verse raises are answered plainly: who, where, when, and what its pictures mean by Scripture's own use of them, with its figures of speech named and how each verse fits the book as a whole.

Revelation is the one book of the Bible that promises a blessing simply for being read and heard and kept.

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

In short. Read it distinctly, give the sense, cause the reader to understand. That is all this study sets out to do.

How to Read This Study

The study has three parts.

- **Part One, Opening the Book,** is the ten chapters that follow. They tell the reader what Revelation is, who wrote it, to whom it was written, how it speaks, how it is arranged, and how it completes the Bible. They are short, and each states its findings plainly.
- **Part Two, The Revelation of Jesus Christ, Verse by Verse,** takes the whole book in seventeen sections, from A (chapter 1) to Q (the last sixteen verses).

- **Part Three** draws the study together in a conclusion, and then a reference guide, *What We Learned*, with every point tied to its section and page.

Each section of Part Two opens the same way. A small chart shows where the section stands in the whole book. A second chart shows the section's own structure, so the reader sees it from above before reading it. Then the whole section is printed straight through, to be read aloud if the reader wishes, as Revelation 1:3 invites. After that, each verse is taken in turn:

- **The text** of the verse, printed in full.
- **The commentary,** which opens by setting the scene, then takes the verse phrase by phrase. Each phrase of substance stands in bold at the head of its paragraph. Every new word is explained, with the Greek where it helps. Every Scripture the verse draws on is quoted or retold, not merely cited, so that the reader need not leave the page. The questions a verse raises (who, where, when, what a colour or number means) are answered plainly from the text.
- **Figures of speech,** where the verse uses one: the name E. W. Bullinger gives it, what it means, and what it does in the verse.
- **The number,** wherever a verse names a number: what is being counted, what the number means in Scripture, and why it is used there (Chapter 5 §D).
- **To whom,** wherever a verse uses words a believer today would naturally apply to himself or to the church of the present time: a short note on whom the verse concerns, and why (Chapter 3).

Where we are. Revelation moves between heaven and earth, and it does not always tell its visions in the order in which they will happen (Chapter 8). So at the start of each group of verses a shaded note headed *Where we are* tells the reader whether the scene is in heaven or on earth, which verses the group covers, and whether the book is moving forward in time, or has paused, stepped back, announced something ahead of time, or drawn close to look at something already mentioned.

Where readers divide. Some verses in Revelation have been read in very different ways. At those places this study gives its answer plainly, with the reason in a sentence, and points to the appendix where the other readings and the full evidence are set out (for example, "see Appendix C, Question 8"). The narrative stays clear; nothing is hidden.

God, and His Son Jesus Christ. Revelation speaks of two who are never confused in its own words: God, "him that sitteth upon the throne," and Jesus Christ, "the Lamb," to whom God gave the revelation (1:1). God is the Father of Jesus Christ and His God (1:6; 3:12); Jesus Christ is the Son of God, who was dead and is alive (2:8, 18), and whom God has set with Him in His throne (3:21). When the book gives the Son titles that the Old Testament gives to God, such as "the first and the last," it is because God has given them to Him, as a king gives his own authority to the son who rules in his name (John 5:22-23; Philippians 2:9-11). This study names which one is meant wherever a pronoun could be taken either way, so that the reader is never left to wonder whether a verse speaks of God or of His Son.

Pictures. Besides the map and charts, the study prints woodcuts from Albrecht Dürer's *Apocalypse* of 1498, which show how a believer of that day pictured each scene. Where an artist adds what the text does not say, the text, not the picture, is the guide.

The King James Version is the text throughout. Where the Greek behind it differs from other Greek texts in a way that matters, the study says so (Chapter 10).

In short. Part One opens the book, Part Two reads it verse by verse, Part Three draws it together. The evidence for every contested answer is in an appendix, named at the place it is needed.

The Book at a Glance

Revelation is built like a well-made house. Its first part answers its last, its second answers its second-to-last, and in the middle stand seven scenes in heaven, each followed by a scene on earth. This outline follows E. W. Bullinger's, tested against the text and adopted (Appendix A).

	Verses	Where	What John sees	Section
A	1:1–20	—	**Introduction:** the Revelation given; the Son of man seen	A
B	2:1–3:22	—	**The people on the earth:** the seven messages	B
1	4:1–5:14	Heaven	The throne, the book, and the Lamb	C
1	6:1–7:8	Earth	Six seals opened; 144,000 sealed	D
2	7:9–8:6	Heaven	The great multitude; the seventh seal	E
2	8:7–11:14	Earth	Six trumpets; the little book; the two witnesses	F
3	11:15–19	Heaven	The seventh trumpet	G
3	11:19 (last half)	Earth	Lightnings, voices, thunderings, an earthquake, great hail	G
4	12:1–12	Heaven	The woman, the child, and the dragon	H
4	12:13–13:18	Earth	The dragon and the two beasts	I
5	14:1–5	Heaven	The Lamb and the 144,000 on mount Sion	J
5	14:6–20	Earth	Six angels; the harvest and the vintage	K
6	15:1–8	Heaven	Seven angels with the seven last plagues	L
6	16:1–18:24	Earth	Seven vials; the fall of Babylon	M
7	19:1–16	Heaven	The marriage of the Lamb; the Rider on the white horse	N
7	19:17–20:15	Earth	The last judgments; the thousand years; the great white throne	O
B	21:1–22:5	—	**The people of the new earth:** the holy city	P
A	22:6–21	—	**Conclusion:** "Behold, I come quickly"	Q

Read it like this. The two A's match: the book opens and closes with the same words and promises (Chapter 8). The two B's match: the promises made to the overcomer in chapters 2–3 are kept in

chapters 21–22. Between them, every scene on earth is introduced and explained by the scene in heaven before it. In the third pair, the seventh trumpet sounds in heaven (11:15-19), and its effect on earth is told in the last half of a single verse (11:19).

In short. An introduction and a conclusion that match; the people on the earth and the people of the new earth; and between them seven scenes in heaven, each explaining a scene on earth.

Part One — Opening the Book

A reader who opens Revelation at its first verse is dropped into a world of lampstands and thrones, seals and trumpets, beasts and a bride. Part One is written so that he does not arrive there unprepared. It answers ten questions in ten short chapters: what the book is; who wrote it, where and when; to whom it was written, and in which administration; why it was given; how it speaks; what Christ said in it from heaven; which earlier Scriptures point to it; how it is arranged; how it completes the Bible; and what a King James reader should know about its text.

Chapter 1 — What the Book Is

A. Its own title

The book names itself in its first five words.

> **Revelation 1:1** *The Revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave unto him, to shew unto his servants things which must shortly come to pass; and he sent and signified it by his angel unto his servant John:*

The heading in most King James Bibles, "The Revelation of St. John the Divine," is not part of the text. It was added by later copyists and editors, and the old manuscripts carry many different headings. The title God gave it is the one in the first verse: **The Revelation of Jesus Christ.**

The title says two things at once.

1. **It is the revelation that belongs to Jesus Christ.** "God gave" it "unto him," and He in turn showed it to His servants. The order is plain: God, then Jesus Christ, then His angel, then John, then the servants. The book that most fully shows the glory of Jesus Christ begins by saying that what He shows, God gave Him.
2. **It is the revelation of Jesus Christ Himself.** He is its subject from first to last: the Son of man among the lampstands (1:13), the Lamb in the midst of the throne (5:6), the Rider on the white horse (19:11), the Bridegroom of the holy city (21:9). Revelation is about Him before it is about anything else.

B. An unveiling

"Revelation" translates the Greek *apokalupsis*, an uncovering or unveiling. It is the opening of something that was hidden. Paul uses the same word for "the revelation of the mystery, which was kept secret since the world began" (Romans 16:25). In Revelation, what is unveiled is the future: the things "which must shortly come to pass," and above all the coming of Jesus Christ Himself.

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

C. Three kinds of writing in one book

Revelation is three things at once, and the reader needs all three in mind.

1. **A vision.** John "saw." The word "saw" or "beheld" opens scene after scene. He is "in the Spirit" four times (1:10; 4:2; 17:3; 21:10), and each time he is shown something.
2. **A prophecy.** The book calls itself "this prophecy" (1:3) and "the prophecy of this book" (22:7, 10, 18, 19). It speaks of things to come, with the authority of God.

3. **A letter.** It opens like one of the apostles' letters, "John to the seven churches which are in Asia: Grace be unto you, and peace" (1:4), and it ends like one: "The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all. Amen" (22:21).

D. Seven blessings

Seven times the book says "Blessed." Together they read like a short sermon of their own.

	Verse	Blessed are they who
1	1:3	read, hear, and keep the words of this prophecy
2	14:13	die in the Lord from henceforth, for they rest from their labours
3	16:15	watch, and keep their garments
4	19:9	are called unto the marriage supper of the Lamb
5	20:6	have part in the first resurrection
6	22:7	keep the sayings of the prophecy of this book
7	22:14	do His commandments, that they may have right to the tree of life

The first and the sixth are nearly the same blessing, one at each end of the book. Revelation is meant to be kept, not only studied.

In short. Revelation is the unveiling that God gave to Jesus Christ, and that unveils Him. It is a vision, a prophecy and a letter, and it blesses those who read it, hear it and keep it.

Chapter 2 — Who Wrote It, Where, and When

A. John

The writer names himself four times: "his servant John" (1:1), "John to the seven churches" (1:4), "I John, who also am your brother" (1:9), and "I John saw these things, and heard them" (22:8). He calls himself a servant, a brother and a witness, and never an apostle. He does not need to; the churches of Asia knew who he was.

The earliest Christian writers who mention the book say who he was.

- **Justin Martyr,** writing about A.D. 155, speaks of "a certain man with us, whose name was John, one of the apostles of Christ, who prophesied, by a revelation that was made to him" (*Dialogue with Trypho* 81).
- **Irenaeus,** about A.D. 180, writes of "John also, the Lord's disciple" who "says in the Apocalypse" (*Against Heresies* 4.20.11). He identifies that John with the disciple "who also had leaned upon His breast" and wrote the Gospel (3.1.1).

- **Dionysius,** bishop of Alexandria about A.D. 250, accepted the book as the work of a John who "saw a revelation and received knowledge and prophecy," but doubted, because its Greek is rougher than the Gospel's, that he was "the apostle, the son of Zebedee" (in Eusebius, *Church History* 7.25).

This study takes the writer to be John the apostle, as the earliest witnesses say. Nothing in its reading of the book depends on it. What matters is what the book says of itself: it is "the Revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave unto him," and John bore record "of all things that he saw" (1:1-2).

B. Patmos

> **Revelation 1:9** *I John, who also am your brother, and companion in tribulation, and in the kingdom and patience of Jesus Christ, was in the isle that is called Patmos, for the word of God, and for the testimony of Jesus Christ.*

That is all John says of the place: one verse, and the reason he was there. But a great deal is known about the island, about Roman banishment, and about what the early church remembered of John's exile. It helps the reader to stand where John stood.

Patmos and the Seven Assemblies of Asia (Revelation 1:9-11)



Patmos and the seven cities of Asia. A messenger landing at Ephesus would carry the book north to Smyrna and Pergamos, then inland and south by Thyatira, Sardis and Philadelphia to Laodicea (1:11).

The island. Patmos is a small island in the Aegean Sea, among the group now called the Dodecanese. It lies about sixty miles (some 98 kilometres) south-west of Ephesus across open water, and about forty

miles from Miletus, the port that governed it. It is about eight miles from north to south and covers about thirteen square miles, a rugged, hilly ridge of old volcanic rock, almost cut into three pieces by two narrow necks of land; its highest hill stands less than nine hundred feet above the sea. Pliny the Elder, writing about A.D. 77, lists it among the islands of that sea and gives its circuit as thirty (Roman) miles (*Natural History* 4.12). It was not an empty rock. It belonged to the territory of Miletus, it had a good harbour on its eastern side (where the town of Skala stands today), a small fortified town on the hill above it, and a temple of the goddess Artemis, as an inscription found on the island records. The Greek historian Thucydides mentions it in passing, about 427 B.C., as a point to which an Athenian fleet gave chase (*History* 3.33). In John's day it was a quiet place on the sea-lanes between Rome and the cities of Asia, far enough from the mainland to keep a man out of the way.

Why John was there. John says he was there "for the word of God, and for the testimony of Jesus Christ." He does not say he went there to preach; he says he was there *because of* God's word and Christ's testimony, the two things he "bare record" of (1:2). The early church remembered it as banishment.

- **Irenaeus,** about A.D. 180, says the vision "was seen ... towards the end of Domitian's reign" (*Against Heresies* 5.30.3).
- **Clement of Alexandria,** about A.D. 200, tells a story of John "after the tyrant's death, when he returned from the isle of Patmos to Ephesus," going round the neighbouring districts to appoint elders (*Who Is the Rich Man That Shall Be Saved?* 42, quoted by Eusebius, *Church History* 3.23).
- **Tertullian,** about the same time, says that at Rome John "was first plunged, unhurt, into boiling oil, and thence remitted to his island-exile" (*Prescription Against Heretics* 36).
- **Victorinus,** in the oldest commentary on Revelation that survives (about A.D. 260), says that John "was in the island of Patmos, condemned to the labour of the mines by Caesar Domitian," and that when Domitian was killed "all his judgments were discharged" (on 10:11).
- **Eusebius,** about A.D. 325, writes that under Domitian "the apostle and evangelist John, who was still living, in consequence of his testimony to the divine word, was condemned to dwell on the island of Patmos" (*Church History* 3.18), and that when the senate cancelled Domitian's acts and recalled those he had unjustly banished, John "returned from his banishment in the island and took up his abode at Ephesus" (3.20).
- **Jerome,** about A.D. 392, adds that John was banished "in the fourteenth year" of Domitian (A.D. 94-95), and returned to Ephesus after the senate annulled Domitian's acts (*Lives of Illustrious Men* 9). (Jerome's text names the emperor of the return as Pertinax, a slip for Nerva, under whom Eusebius places it.)



Albrecht Dürer, The Apocalypse (woodcut, 1498), first leaf: John in the cauldron of boiling oil before the emperor, the story Tertullian tells. It is a tradition, not Scripture.

These witnesses agree on the main point: John was banished to Patmos for his witness, under Domitian, and came back to Ephesus when Domitian died in A.D. 96. The boiling oil and the mines are later details, not found in Scripture, and they cannot be checked; no mines are known on Patmos, and Victorinus may mean forced labour of some kind. The study gives them as what the church later told, not as part of the text. What the text itself says is enough: John was "companion in tribulation," a prisoner for the word of God.

What Roman banishment was. Roman law knew two ways of sending a man to an island. The harsher was *deportation* (*deportatio*): banishment for life, with loss of citizenship and of property, a sentence that in the usual practice of the time needed the emperor. The milder was *relegation* (*relegatio*): the man kept his citizenship and, as a rule, his property, but was confined to a place, sometimes for a set time; a governor of a province could impose it. Rome used the small islands of the Aegean for both. Tacitus tells how, under Tiberius, a certain Vibius Serenus was sent back to Amorgos, an island just west of Patmos, after the emperor refused to send him to Gyaros or Donusa, because they had no water: those to whom life was granted, he said, should be allowed the means of living (*Annals* 4.30). The satirist Juvenal, who lived under Domitian, mocked the ambitious man of his day: "Dare something worthy of little Gyara and of prison, if you want to be somebody" (*Satires* 1.73). Which kind of sentence John received is not known. Either way he could not leave, and he was cut off from the assemblies he cared for.

Domitian's last years were hard on anyone who would not honour the gods of Rome and its emperor. Suetonius says that he had his own letters begin, "Our Lord and God commands" (*Domitian* 13). At Ephesus a great temple to the emperors of his house had lately been built, with a colossal statue. The historian Cassius Dio records that in A.D. 95 Domitian put to death his own cousin, the consul Flavius Clemens, and banished Clemens's wife Flavia Domitilla to the island of Pandateria, "the charge brought against them both" being "that of atheism, a charge on which many others who drifted into Jewish ways were condemned" (*Roman History* 67.14). Eusebius, drawing on older writers, says a Flavia Domitilla was banished to the island of Pontia "for testimony to Christ" (*Church History* 3.18). Banishment to an island for refusing Rome's gods was the very thing that happened to believers in those years, and John was one of them.

A picture of exile: Ovid. No letter from John on Patmos survives besides this book. But one Roman who was relegated by an emperor wrote at length about what it was like, and his words help a reader feel what John does not stop to say. The poet Ovid was banished by Augustus in A.D. 8, not to Patmos but to Tomis on the Black Sea (today Constanța, in Romania), a frontier town at the edge of the empire. He never came home, and died there about A.D. 17. His poems from exile, the *Tristia* ("Sorrows") and the *Letters from the Black Sea*, are a window into a Roman banishment:

- He was careful to say what his sentence was: "in it I am called 'relegated,' not 'exile'" (*quippe relegatus, non exul, dicor in illo*, *Tristia* 2.137). The emperor, he says, "took from me neither life, nor wealth, nor the rights of a citizen" (*Tristia* 5.11).
- He could write home. His first poem from exile begins, "Little book, you will go to the city without me (I do not grudge it)" (*Tristia* 1.1.1). Like John, he sent his book where he could not go himself.
- He felt the loneliness of being among strangers: "Here I am the barbarian, because I am understood by no one" (*barbarus hic ego sum, quia non intellegor ulli*, *Tristia* 5.10.37).
- He described the hardship of the place: winters so cold that the wine froze and kept the shape of the jar when the jar was broken away (*Tristia* 3.10.23-24).

Ovid's poems are full of pleading with the emperor to let him come home. John's book is not. He writes to people who were suffering as he was, and the first words he hears from the Son of man are "Fear not" (1:17). Ovid died far from Rome. John came back to Ephesus.

The island today. On the hillside between the harbour of Skala and the hill town of Chora is a cave that tradition names as the place where John saw the vision: the Cave of the Apocalypse, now enclosed in a small chapel. Visitors are shown a split in the rock of the roof and a hollow in the rock wall where, they are told, the old man rested his head. On the summit above stands the fortress-like Monastery of St John the Theologian, founded in 1088 by the monk Christodoulos under a grant from the Byzantine emperor Alexius I Comnenus. The town, the monastery and the cave were named together a World Heritage Site in 1999. How old the cave tradition is cannot now be shown. A later book, the *Acts of John* that goes under the name of Prochorus (one of the seven of Acts 6:5), probably written in the fifth century, tells of John dictating the Gospel to Prochorus on the island; it is legend, not history. Scripture says only that John "was in the isle that is called Patmos."

After Patmos. When Domitian was murdered in September A.D. 96, the senate cancelled his acts, and the new emperor, Nerva, recalled those who had been banished. John went back to Ephesus. Irenaeus says he remained among the elders of Asia "up to the times of Trajan," who became emperor in A.D. 98 (*Against Heresies* 2.22.5; 3.3.4). Polycrates, bishop of Ephesus about A.D. 190, wrote that John "sleeps at Ephesus" (in Eusebius, *Church History* 3.31; 5.24). Jerome tells that when John was so old he had to be carried to the meetings, he would say only, "Little children, love one another," and when they asked why he always said the same thing, he answered that it was the Lord's command, and if this alone were done, it was enough (*Commentary on Galatians*, on 6:10). His tomb was shown on the hill of Ayasuluk above Ephesus (at Selçuk, in modern Turkey), where the emperor Justinian built a great church over it in the sixth century; its ruins still stand.

What it means for the reader. John writes as "your brother, and companion in tribulation" (1:9). He is not a teacher looking down on suffering from a safe distance; he writes from inside it, to people who are inside it too. On Patmos the sea was all around him, the barrier that kept him from his brethren. He heard it day and night, and when the Son of man spoke, "his voice as the sound of many waters" (1:15). It is worth noticing that when John sees the new heaven and the new earth at the end of the book, one of the first things he says is, "and there was no more sea" (21:1). The place of his exile became the place of his revelation, and the God who shut him away from men opened heaven to him.

C. When

Irenaeus says the vision "was seen no very long time since, but almost in our day, towards the end of Domitian's reign" (*Against Heresies* 5.30.3). Domitian was emperor from A.D. 81 to 96, so this places the book about A.D. 95. That is the date this study follows.

Some interpreters prefer an earlier date, before A.D. 70, in the reign of Nero. The question matters most to those who read the book as fulfilled in the fall of Jerusalem in A.D. 70. The evidence and the readings are given in Appendix D.

In short. The writer is John, the Lord's disciple and apostle, as the earliest witnesses say. He wrote in exile on Patmos, a small rocky island sixty miles from Ephesus, banished for his witness, about A.D. 95, near the end of Domitian's reign. He wrote as a brother to brothers in tribulation, and when Domitian died he returned to Ephesus.

Chapter 3 — To Whom It Was Written, and in Which Administration

A. The chain of 1:1

The first verse names five links in a chain: God gave it to Jesus Christ; He "sent and signified it by his angel"; the angel gave it to "his servant John"; and John wrote it for "his servants." The last verse but five closes the chain the same way.

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

B. The seven assemblies

The book was sent to seven assemblies in the Roman province of Asia, in what is now western Turkey.

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

(The word translated "church" is the Greek *ekklēsia*, an assembly of people called together. Stephen uses it of Israel in the wilderness, "the church in the wilderness," Acts 7:38. This study usually says "assembly," which leaves the word as open as the Greek leaves it.)

These were real assemblies in John's own day. The text shows it in five ways.

1. They existed when he wrote: "the seven churches which are in Asia" (1:4).
2. The book was to be sent to them (1:11).
3. John calls himself their "brother, and companion in tribulation" (1:9). He and they were suffering at the same time.
4. Christ reminds Pergamos of a martyr they all knew: "Antipas was my faithful martyr, who was slain among you" (2:13).
5. The seven cities are named in the order a messenger would travel them. Leaving Ephesus, he would go north to Smyrna and Pergamos, then southeast to Thyatira, Sardis, Philadelphia and Laodicea, along the great circular road of the province. (A map of the seven cities stands at the head of Section B.)

Some of these assemblies had been founded or taught by Paul. Ephesus heard him for two years, "so that all they which dwelt in Asia heard the word of the Lord Jesus" (Acts 19:10). Laodicea received a letter of his (Colossians 4:16).

There were other assemblies in Asia, and only seven were chosen. Colossae and Hierapolis were near Laodicea (Colossians 4:13), and there were disciples at Troas (Acts 20:5-7). So the seven were chosen for a purpose beyond the seven cities themselves. Every message ends, "He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches." Each assembly was to hear all seven messages, and so is every reader.

Other readings of the seven are set out, with the full evidence, in Appendix B. One of them, that the seven stand for seven ages of church history, is not supported by the text. Christ says of His judgment on one assembly that "all the churches shall know" (2:23), so the seven existed side by side, not one after another.

C. Which administration?

This is the question that matters most for understanding the book, and it must be answered plainly.

The Bible shows God dealing with mankind under different administrations, or arrangements, in different times. The church of the present time lives under the administration of grace, which Paul calls "the dispensation of the grace of God" (Ephesians 3:2). Under it, salvation is "by grace ... through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: Not of works" (Ephesians 2:8-9). It will end when the church is gathered to meet the Lord:

> **1 Thessalonians 4:17** *Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord.*

After that comes what the prophets call **the day of the LORD**, a time of wrath and judgment on the earth, followed by the reign of Christ. Paul tells the church of grace that God "hath not appointed us to wrath" (1 Thessalonians 5:9).

The answer of this study is this: Revelation was sent to real assemblies of John's day, but Christ spoke to them in the terms of the Day of the Lord, not in the terms of grace.

The terms of the messages are not the terms of grace.

- Seven times Christ says, "I know thy works."
- Seven times the promise is "to him that overcometh," and once more at the end of the book (21:7).
- He warns that a lampstand may be removed (2:5), and speaks of a name in the book of life (3:5).
- He holds His coming over the assemblies: "hold fast till I come" (2:25); "I will come on thee as a thief" (3:3); "Behold, I come quickly" (3:11).

Every promise in the messages is kept in the Day of the Lord and after it. The tree of life (2:7) is found in 22:2. The second death (2:11) appears in 20:6 and 21:8. The rod of iron (2:27) is wielded in 19:15. The new Jerusalem (3:12) comes down in 21:2. The throne (3:21) is shared in 20:4. Philadelphia is promised to be kept "from the hour of temptation, which shall come upon all the world, to try them that dwell upon the earth" (3:10). "Them that dwell upon the earth" is the book's own name for the people of the Day of the Lord (6:10; 11:10; 13:8, 14; 14:6; 17:8).

The call is the call of Christ's teaching to Israel. "He that hath an ear, let him hear" is a call Christ used in His earthly ministry to Israel (Matthew 11:15; 13:9, 43). It comes seven times in Revelation 2–3. It is never found in Paul's letters to the churches of grace.

What this means for the reader today. Revelation is written *for* us, as all Scripture is: "whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning" (Romans 15:4). It shows us what is coming, and who is coming. But its instructions to "overcome" and to "keep" are fitted to those who will live in the Day of the Lord. The instructions for the church of grace are in Paul's letters. This study reads Revelation in that light from the first verse to the last. The full evidence is in Appendix B.

In short. God gave it to Jesus Christ, who sent it by His angel to John, who wrote it for real assemblies in Asia in his own day. But Christ spoke to them in the terms of the coming Day of the Lord, not of grace. It is written for us, and it is about the day that follows the gathering of the church.

Chapter 4 — Why It Was Given

The book states its own purpose three ways: to show, to bless, and to warn.

A. To show His servants

> **Revelation 1:1** *The Revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave unto him, to shew unto his servants things which must shortly come to pass; and he sent and signified it by his angel unto his servant John:*

The same words close the book: "the Lord God of the holy prophets sent his angel to shew unto his servants the things which must shortly be done" (22:6). God does not leave His servants in the dark about what He will do. Amos had said it long before: "Surely the Lord GOD will do nothing, but he revealeth his secret unto his servants the prophets" (Amos 3:7). Revelation 10:7 takes up those words: "as he hath declared to his servants the prophets."

"Shortly" (Greek *en tachei*) can mean "soon" or "swiftly." The book uses it of what God will do and of how He will do it. Once the things it describes begin, they will come quickly, one upon another, and the Lord Himself says three times at the end, "I come quickly" (22:7, 12, 20).

B. To bless the reader

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

The blessing has three parts: to read, to hear, to keep. "He that readeth" is one person, reading aloud; "they that hear" are many, listening. That is how the book was first received: read aloud in the assembly. It is still the best way to begin with it, and why every section of Part Two prints its text in full before its verses are explained.

C. To warn

The book closes with the most solemn warning in the Bible.

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

Moses gave Israel the same charge: "Ye shall not add unto the word which I command you, neither shall ye diminish ought from it" (Deuteronomy 4:2). At the start of the written Word and at its end, God guards what He has said. That is a reason to read Revelation carefully, and not to add to it with guesses or take from it by explaining it away.

In short. Revelation was given to show God's servants what must come to pass, to bless all who read and hear and keep it, and to warn against adding to it or taking from it.

Chapter 5 — How It Speaks

A. By signs

The first verse says the angel "signified" the revelation to John. The Greek word is *sēmainō*, to make known by a sign. That word tells the reader how the book will speak: in signs. John sees a Lamb with seven horns and seven eyes, a woman clothed with the sun, a beast with seven heads. These are not riddles for guessing. They are pictures that stand for real persons and real events, and, as the next section shows, the book explains many of them itself.

John's own way of describing what he saw shows the same thing. He says "like" more than twenty times and "as it were" twelve times. "His feet like unto fine brass" (1:15); "as it were a sea of glass" (15:2). He is describing what he saw as nearly as words allow.

B. The symbols Revelation explains itself

The first rule of this study is that Scripture explains itself, first in the verse, then in its context, then in the rest of the Bible. Revelation does this openly. Again and again it stops to tell the reader what a sign means.

Revelation	The sign	What the book says it is
1:20	Seven stars	"the angels of the seven churches"
1:20	Seven golden candlesticks	"the seven churches"
4:5	Seven lamps of fire	"the seven Spirits of God"
5:6	Seven eyes of the Lamb	"the seven Spirits of God sent forth into all the earth"
5:8	Golden vials full of odours	"the prayers of saints"
12:9	The great dragon	"that old serpent, called the Devil, and Satan"
17:9	Seven heads of the beast	"seven mountains, on which the woman sitteth"
17:12	Ten horns	"ten kings"
17:15	The waters where the whore sitteth	"peoples, and multitudes, and nations, and tongues"
17:18	The woman	"that great city, which reigneth over the kings of the earth"
19:8	Fine linen, clean and white	"the righteousness of saints"
21:9-10	The bride, the Lamb's wife	shown as "that great city, the holy Jerusalem"

Where the book explains a sign, this study takes the book's explanation first, before any other. Where the book does not explain a sign, the study looks next to the rest of Scripture, and above all to the Old Testament, from which nearly all of Revelation's pictures come.

C. The words of the Old Testament

Revelation never quotes the Old Testament in the usual way. It never says "as it is written" or "that it might be fulfilled." Yet it is made almost entirely of Old Testament words and pictures. One careful count found references to the Hebrew Scriptures in 278 of its 404 verses. This study lists 362 clear or probable allusions on 244 verses (Appendix F).

The sources follow the subject:

- **The throne in heaven** (chapters 4–5): Isaiah 6 and Ezekiel 1.
- **The vision of Christ** (chapter 1): Daniel 7 and 10.
- **The trumpets and vials:** the plagues of Egypt.
- **The beast** (chapters 13 and 17): Daniel 7.
- **The fall of Babylon** (chapters 17–18): the prophecies against Babylon in Isaiah and Jeremiah, and the lament over Tyre in Ezekiel 26–27.
- **The new Jerusalem** (chapters 21–22): Isaiah 60 and 65, Ezekiel 40–48, and Genesis 2–3.

So a reader who knows the Old Testament already holds the key to most of Revelation's pictures. Where a picture first appears in Part Two, its Old Testament source is given beside it.

D. Numbers

Numbers in Revelation are counted, and they mean something. The book uses more numbers than any other book of the New Testament, and it uses them with care. "Seven" alone occurs fifty-four times in the King James text of Revelation, and "seventh" five times more.

What does each number mean? The surest guide is the way Scripture itself uses it, from Genesis on. E. W. Bullinger gathered that use in *Number in Scripture* (1894), and his findings are followed here wherever the Scriptures bear them out. He names four numbers that each mark a kind of completeness:

Number	What it marks	Scripture's own pattern
Three	Divine perfection: what is complete, solid, real and entire, belonging to God	Three dimensions make a solid; "Holy, holy, holy" (Isaiah 6:3; Revelation 4:8)
Seven	Spiritual perfection: what God does, made full and finished	God "ended his work" and rested on the seventh day (Genesis 2:2); the Hebrew *sheba* comes from a root meaning "to be full, satisfied"
Ten	Ordinal perfection: a full round, nothing missing	The ten commandments; ten plagues on Egypt; ten days of testing (Daniel 1:12)
Twelve	Governmental perfection: God's rule rightly ordered	Twelve tribes, twelve apostles, twelve gates and foundations (21:12-14)

So the two are rightly kept apart. Three is the number of *divine* completeness: God's own fulness, what is whole and real. Seven is the number of *spiritual* perfection: the completion of what God does, as on the seventh day. Both speak of completeness, but not of the same kind. (Bullinger himself joins three to the doctrine of the Trinity. Scripture does not make that link, and this study does not follow him there; the meaning of three as what is complete, solid and entire stands on Scripture's own use.)

The other numbers in the book follow the same pattern of Scripture's use:

- **One** is unity: the one God, beside whom there is no other (Deuteronomy 6:4).
- **Two** is witness, and also difference: "at the mouth of two witnesses … shall the matter be established" (Deuteronomy 19:15). So there are two witnesses (11:3).
- **Four** is the earth and all created things: four corners, four winds, four living creatures who lead creation's praise (4:6; 7:1).
- **Five** in Revelation is a measured, limited time: the five months of the locusts (9:5, 10), the same length as the flood prevailed upon the earth (Genesis 7:24).
- **Six** is man, made on the sixth day, falling short of seven: "the number of a man" (13:18).
- **Eight** is a new beginning: the eighth day begins a new week (17:11).
- **Twenty-four** is the ordered worship of heaven, of which David's twenty-four courses of priests and singers were the copy (4:4; 1 Chronicles 24–25).
- **A third,** a fourth and a tenth are measured parts, not the whole: God sets the limit of each judgment (6:8; 8:7-12; 11:13).
- **A thousand** is ten carried as far as it goes: a full and great number (5:11; 7:4; 20:2).

Many of the book's numbers are built from these. The 144,000 are twelve times twelve times a thousand (7:4). The holy city is twelve thousand furlongs in each of its three measures, a cube (21:16). The sevens divide into four and three: the first four seals are four horsemen, the first four trumpets and the first four vials strike the natural world, and the last three are of another kind (6:1; 8:6; 16:1). The seven messages divide the other way, three and four (Chapter 6 §C).

The times of the Day of the Lord are counted three ways, which all agree: forty-two months (11:2; 13:5), 1,260 days (11:3; 12:6), and "a time, and times, and half a time" (12:14). Three years and a half: half of seven, seven broken off, the half-week of Daniel 9:27. The book counts the time in months, then days, then years, and each count matches.

Every number in Part Two is explained where it stands. Whenever a verse names a number, the commentary says what is being counted, what the number means, and why it is used there, in a paragraph headed *The number*. The first time a number appears, its meaning is given in full; after that, the reader is reminded of it and pointed back.

Some numbers are given and not explained, above all the number of the beast (13:18). Where the book leaves a number unexplained, this study does not explain it either. It gives the proposals others have made in an appendix and adopts none (Appendix C, Question 12). The numbers are summed up in a table in Appendix I §B.

In short. Revelation speaks in signs, explains many of them itself, takes nearly all of its pictures from the Old Testament, and counts its numbers. This study lets the book explain itself first, the Old Testament second, and outside sources last.

Chapter 6 — The Sermon from Heaven

A. The sermons Christ spoke on earth

During His ministry on earth Jesus Christ preached sermons that are recorded at length:

Sermon	Where it is	To whom
The Sermon on the Mount	Matthew 5–7	His disciples, with the multitudes listening
The Sermon on the Plain	Luke 6:17-49	Disciples and a great multitude
The sending of the twelve	Matthew 10	The twelve: "Go not into the way of the Gentiles" (10:5)
The parables of the kingdom	Matthew 13	The multitudes, explained to the disciples
The Olivet discourse	Matthew 24–25; Mark 13; Luke 21	Four disciples on the mount of Olives
The upper room discourse	John 13–17	The eleven, the night before the cross

Every one of them was spoken on earth, before the cross, to Israel. He said of Himself, "I am not sent but unto the lost sheep of the house of Israel" (Matthew 15:24).

B. The sermon from heaven

Revelation 2–3 is different. It was spoken after the cross, after the resurrection and after the ascension, by Christ in heaven. It is the only long message the ascended Christ gives anywhere in Scripture. Every other word of His recorded after the ascension is a sentence or a short exchange: to Saul on the road to

Damascus (Acts 9:4-16), to Paul at Corinth (18:9-10) and Jerusalem (23:11), and "My grace is sufficient for thee" (2 Corinthians 12:9). Revelation 2–3 is a sermon in seven parts.

It has three marks that tie it to His earlier sermons.

1. The same call. Each of the seven messages ends with the same words.

> **Revelation 2:7** *He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches; To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the tree of life, which is in the midst of the paradise of God.*

"He that hath ears to hear, let him hear" is His call in the Gospels (Matthew 11:15; 13:9, 43). He uses it again, seven times, from heaven. It is not found in any of Paul's letters to the churches of grace.

2. The same kind of blessings. The Sermon on the Mount begins with blessings, and its promises are kept in Revelation.

Sermon on the Mount	Revelation
"they shall inherit the earth" (Matthew 5:5)	"He that overcometh shall inherit all things" (21:7)
"they shall see God" (Matthew 5:8)	"And they shall see his face" (22:4)
"they shall be called the children of God" (Matthew 5:9)	"I will be his God, and he shall be my son" (21:7)

3. The same King. In the Gospels He spoke as the King of Israel, on earth. In Revelation He speaks as the same King, now from His Father's throne: "even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father in his throne" (3:21).

C. The pattern of the seven messages

All seven messages are built the same way:

1. **The address:** "Unto the angel of the church of Ephesus write" (2:1).
2. **A title of Christ,** taken each time from the vision of chapter 1. To Smyrna He is "the first and the last, which was dead, and is alive" (2:8; compare 1:17-18).
3. **"I know thy works."**
4. **Praise, fault, and counsel.**
5. **The call to hear.**
6. **The promise to him that overcometh.**

What differs from message to message is the middle:

Assembly	Praised	Fault found
Ephesus	Yes	Yes: "thou hast left thy first love"
Smyrna	Yes	**None**
Pergamos	Yes	Yes
Thyatira	Yes	Yes
Sardis	A few names	Yes, and named first
Philadelphia	Yes	**None**
Laodicea	**None**	Yes

Three and four. In the first three messages the call to hear comes *before* the promise (2:7, 11, 17). In the last four it comes *after* it (2:29; 3:6, 13, 22). The text itself divides the seven into a group of three and a group of four, and Part Two draws them that way.

Every promise is kept. What Christ promises the overcomer in chapters 2–3, He gives in the rest of the book: the tree of life (2:7; 22:2), freedom from the second death (2:11; 20:6), the rod of iron (2:27; 19:15), the morning star (2:28; 22:16), white raiment (3:5; 19:8), the new Jerusalem (3:12; 21:2), and the throne (3:21; 20:4). The sermon from heaven and the rest of Revelation are one message.

In short. Christ's earlier sermons were spoken on earth to Israel. The sermon from heaven is His only long message after the ascension, with the same call, the same kind of blessings, and the same King, now speaking from the throne. Its seven parts fall into three and four, and every promise in them is kept in the rest of the book.

Chapter 7 — The Scriptures That Point to Revelation

Revelation is not a new story. It is the last chapter of a story the whole Bible has been telling. Long before John, the law, the prophets, Christ and the apostles had spoken of what Revelation shows. This chapter gathers the clearest of them, in four groups, so that the reader comes to the commentary already knowing what to look for.

A. The law and the Psalms

The first promise of a Redeemer is also the first prophecy of the conflict that Revelation brings to its end.

> **Genesis 3:15** *And I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel.*

Revelation 12 shows the woman, her child and the serpent, and Revelation 20 shows "that old serpent" cast into the lake of fire (20:2, 10).

- **Jacob** foretold the lion of the tribe of Judah and the sceptre that would not depart from him (Genesis 49:9-10). Revelation 5:5 names "the Lion of the tribe of Juda."
- **Balaam** saw "a Star out of Jacob" (Numbers 24:17). Christ calls Himself "the bright and morning star" (22:16).
- **At Sinai** God called Israel "a kingdom of priests" (Exodus 19:6). Revelation 1:6 and 5:10 take up the words.
- **The plagues on Egypt** (Exodus 7–10) return in the trumpets and vials: water turned to blood, hail and fire, locusts, darkness, sores.
- **The second Psalm** foretells the nations raging against the LORD and His anointed, and the King who will "break them with a rod of iron" (Psalm 2:1-2, 9). Revelation uses its words three times (2:27; 12:5; 19:15).

B. The prophets

The prophets spoke more of the Day of the Lord than of any other future thing. Their words fill Revelation.

> **Daniel 7:13** *I saw in the night visions, and, behold, one like the Son of man came with the clouds of heaven, and came to the Ancient of days, and they brought him near before him.*
>
> **Daniel 7:14** *And there was given him dominion, and glory, and a kingdom, that all people, nations, and languages, should serve him: his dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and his kingdom that which shall not be destroyed.*

Daniel 7 is the single chapter Revelation draws on most. It gives the Son of man coming with the clouds (1:7, 13; 14:14), the beast with ten horns and a mouth speaking great things (13:1-7; 17:12), the "time and times and the dividing of time" (12:14), the thrones and the judgment set (20:4, 12), and the kingdom given to the saints (22:5).

- **Isaiah** saw the throne and heard "Holy, holy, holy" (Isaiah 6:1-3; Revelation 4:8). He foretold the heavens "rolled together as a scroll" (34:4; Revelation 6:14), the winepress trodden alone (63:3; Revelation 19:15), and "new heavens and a new earth" (65:17; Revelation 21:1).
- **Ezekiel** saw the living creatures, the throne and the rainbow (Ezekiel 1; Revelation 4); the mark set on the foreheads (9:4; Revelation 7:3); the lament over Tyre (27; Revelation 18); Gog and Magog (38–39; Revelation 20:8); the measured temple, the river and the twelve gates (40–48; Revelation 11:1; 21–22).
- **Jeremiah** foretold the fall of Babylon, the stone cast into the river, and the call "go ye out of the midst of her" (Jeremiah 51:45, 63-64; Revelation 18:4, 21).
- **Joel** foretold the sun turned to darkness and the moon to blood "before the great and the terrible day of the LORD come" (Joel 2:31; Revelation 6:12), and the sickle put in "for the harvest is ripe" (3:13; Revelation 14:15).
- **Zechariah** saw the coloured horses (Zechariah 6; Revelation 6:1-8), the two olive trees (4:11-14; Revelation 11:4), and Him "whom they have pierced" (12:10; Revelation 1:7).

- **Malachi** promised "Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the LORD" (Malachi 4:5).

C. The words of Christ: the Olivet discourse

On the mount of Olives His disciples came to Him privately (Mark names four: Peter, James, John and Andrew, Mark 13:3) and asked Him, "what shall be the sign of thy coming, and of the end of the world?" (Matthew 24:3). His answer is the closest parallel to Revelation in the whole Bible. What He told them on the mount of Olives, He showed John from heaven, and in the same order.

Matthew 24	Revelation 6–7
"many shall come in my name, saying, I am Christ" (24:5)	The first seal: a rider on a white horse, going forth to conquer (6:2)
"wars and rumours of wars … nation shall rise against nation" (24:6-7)	The second seal: peace taken from the earth (6:4)
"famines" (24:7)	The third seal: wheat and barley sold by measure (6:6)
"pestilences" (24:7)	The fourth seal: death, "to kill with sword, and with hunger, and with death" (6:8)
"they shall … kill you … for my name's sake" (24:9)	The fifth seal: "the souls of them that were slain for the word of God" (6:9)
"the sun be darkened … the stars shall fall from heaven" (24:29)	The sixth seal: the sun black, the moon as blood, the stars fallen (6:12-13)
"then shall all the tribes of the earth mourn" (24:30)	The great men and the bondmen hide from "the wrath of the Lamb" (6:15-16)
"they shall gather together his elect from the four winds" (24:31)	Four angels hold "the four winds" until the servants of God are sealed (7:1-3)

The order matches step by step. The one difference is the earthquakes: Matthew lists them among the early signs (24:7), while in Revelation the great earthquake comes at the sixth seal (6:12).

Christ also spoke of the harvest "in the end of this world" (Matthew 13:39-43; Revelation 14:14-20), of the Son of man on "the throne of his glory" with all nations gathered before Him (Matthew 25:31-32; Revelation 20:11-12), and of "the resurrection of life" and "the resurrection of damnation" (John 5:29; Revelation 20:4-6, 12-13).

D. The apostles

- **Paul** foretold "that man of sin … the son of perdition; Who opposeth and exalteth himself above all that is called God" (2 Thessalonians 2:3-4). Revelation 13 shows him. Paul also wrote that the day of the Lord "so cometh as a thief in the night" (1 Thessalonians 5:2; Revelation 3:3; 16:15), and that "the creature itself also shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption" (Romans 8:21; Revelation 21–22).

- **Peter** foretold the heavens passing away with a great noise, and "new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness" (2 Peter 3:10, 13; Revelation 20:11; 21:1).
- **Jude** quoted Enoch: "Behold, the Lord cometh with ten thousands of his saints, To execute judgment upon all" (Jude 14-15; Revelation 19:14-15).
- **Paul** also wrote of the church being "caught up … to meet the Lord in the air" (1 Thessalonians 4:17). That gathering comes before the Day of the Lord (Chapter 3 §C), and so it stands before everything Revelation describes from chapter 4 onward.

In short. From Genesis 3:15 to Jude, the Bible points ahead to what Revelation shows. Daniel 7 and Matthew 24 point most directly, and the seals follow the Olivet discourse in order. A reader who knows these Scriptures is ready for the book.

Chapter 8 — How the Book Is Arranged

Revelation can seem like a storm of visions, one after another with no plan. It is not. It has a clear shape, and when the reader sees the shape, the visions fall into place. This chapter shows the shape (drawn on one page in *The Book at a Glance*), and then explains why the visions are not all told in the order in which they will happen.

A. The two ends match

The first chapter and the last sixteen verses are built on the same plan, and they say the same things.

The introduction	The conclusion
"things which must shortly come to pass" (1:1)	"the things which must shortly be done" (22:6)
"he sent and signified it by his angel" (1:1)	"I Jesus have sent mine angel" (22:16)
"Blessed is he that readeth" (1:3)	"blessed is he that keepeth the sayings of the prophecy of this book" (22:7)
"for the time is at hand" (1:3)	"for the time is at hand" (22:10)
"Behold, he cometh with clouds" (1:7)	"Behold, I come quickly" (22:7, 12)
"I am Alpha and Omega" (1:8)	"I am Alpha and Omega" (22:13)
"I John" (1:9)	"I John saw these things" (22:8)
"Grace be unto you, and peace" (1:4)	"The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all" (22:21)

B. The people on the earth, and the people of the new earth

Inside the two ends stand two more matching parts. Chapters 2–3 speak to the people on the earth: seven assemblies, each promised something "to him that overcometh." Chapters 21:1–22:5 show the people of the new earth, and there every promise is kept (Chapter 6 §C). The first speaks of what is promised; the second shows it given.

C. Seven scenes in heaven, each explaining a scene on earth

The great middle of the book, 4:1–20:15, is made of seven pairs. Each pair begins with a scene in heaven and goes on to a scene on earth. Bullinger put it in a sentence: "the scene 'in Heaven' is preliminary to, and explanatory of, the events which follow 'on Earth.'" Before the seals are opened on earth, John sees the Lamb take the book in heaven. Before the vials are poured out on earth, he sees the seven angels come out of the temple in heaven. Heaven explains earth.

Pair	In heaven	On earth
1	The throne, the book, and the Lamb (4–5)	Six seals; the sealing of the 144,000 (6:1–7:8)
2	The great multitude; the seventh seal (7:9–8:6)	Six trumpets (8:7–11:14)
3	The seventh trumpet (11:15-19)	Lightnings, voices, an earthquake, great hail (11:19)
4	The woman, the child, and the dragon (12:1-12)	The dragon and the two beasts (12:13–13:18)
5	The Lamb and the 144,000 (14:1-5)	Six angels; the harvest and the vintage (14:6-20)
6	Seven angels with the last plagues (15)	Seven vials; the fall of Babylon (16–18)
7	The marriage of the Lamb; the Rider (19:1-16)	The last judgments; the thousand years (19:17–20:15)

The pairs also balance each other around the centre. The second and sixth pairs, the trumpets and the vials, are the longest. The third and fifth are short. The fourth, chapters 12–13, stands in the middle, and it shows the conflict that lies behind everything else: the dragon against the woman and her child.

The book marks its own turns. Six times John begins a new sight with "After this" or "after these things" (4:1; 7:1, 9; 15:5; 18:1; 19:1). Four times he is "in the Spirit" (1:10; 4:2; 17:3; 21:10). Twice an angel says "Come hither," once to show the harlot city (17:1) and once to show the bride (21:9). These markers fit the structure. The last pair shows two great cities set against each other: Babylon, the city of man, and the new Jerusalem, the city of God. (How the structure was tested against the text is set out in Appendix A.)

D. The order of the visions

The three great series of judgments follow one another in time.

- **The seven seals** come first.
- **The seventh seal opens into the seven trumpets:** "And when he had opened the seventh seal … I saw the seven angels which stood before God; and to them were given seven trumpets" (8:1-2).
- **The seventh trumpet leads on to the seven vials,** which are "the seven last plagues; for in them is filled up the wrath of God" (15:1).

So the series are like a telescope: each seventh opens out into the next seven.

But the book does not tell everything in the order in which it will happen. It also steps aside, steps back, and looks closer. The oldest commentary on Revelation that survives, by Victorinus, warned its readers

that "not the order of the reading, but the order of the discourse, must be understood." There are five ways the book does this, and the reader will meet each of them.

1. **A pause before the seventh.** Between the sixth and the seventh seal, the action stops for the sealing of the 144,000 and the great multitude (chapter 7). Between the sixth and the seventh trumpet, it stops for the little book and the two witnesses (10:1–11:13). The pause is closed by the book itself: "The second woe is past; and, behold, the third woe cometh quickly" (11:14).
2. **Looking back.** Chapter 12 goes back to the birth of the man child, who "was caught up unto God, and to his throne" (12:5), to show the war behind the war.
3. **Announcing ahead.** "Babylon is fallen, is fallen" is cried out in 14:8, four chapters before her fall is described in chapter 18. "The kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of our Lord" is sung at the seventh trumpet (11:15), long before the King comes in chapter 19.
4. **A close-up.** The fall of Babylon is told in one verse under the seventh vial, "great Babylon came in remembrance before God" (16:19), and then in two whole chapters (17–18).
5. **Heaven before earth.** As above, each scene on earth is first explained by a scene in heaven.

The table below gathers every place where the book steps aside, steps back, announces ahead, or draws close, and names the verses. In Part Two each of these places is marked again at the point it begins, in a shaded note headed *Where we are*, so that the reader always knows whether the scene is in heaven or on earth, which verses are being read, and whether the book is moving on in time or has paused to look back, ahead, or closer.

Verses	Where	What the book does	How the reader can tell
7:1-8	Earth	**Pauses** between the sixth and seventh seals: the 144,000 sealed	The seventh seal is not opened until 8:1
7:9-17	Heaven	**Looks ahead**: the great multitude shown after the great tribulation	"These are they which came out of great tribulation" (7:14)
10:1–11:13	Earth	**Pauses** between the sixth and seventh trumpets: the little book; the two witnesses	Closed by "The second woe is past" (11:14)
11:2-3	Earth	**Looks ahead** across the whole time of trouble	Forty-two months; 1,260 days
11:15-18	Heaven	**Announces ahead**: the kingdom, the judgment of the dead, the rewards	Carried out in 19:11–20:15
12:1-5	Heaven	**Steps back** to the birth and ascension of the man child	"Her child was caught up unto God, and to his throne" (12:5)
12:6	Earth	**Announces ahead** the woman's flight	Told in full in 12:13-17
12:13-17	Earth	**Draws close** to what 12:6 told in a sentence	The same flight, the same time of 1,260 days
14:1-5	Heaven	**Looks ahead**: the 144,000 shown with the Lamb, their trial over	The same number as were sealed in 7:4
14:8	Earth	**Announces ahead**: "Babylon is fallen"	Her fall is carried out at 16:19 and told in 17–18

Verses	Where	What the book does	How the reader can tell
14:14-20	Earth	**Announces ahead**: the harvest and the vintage	The winepress is trodden at the King's coming (19:15)
15:2-4	Heaven	**Looks ahead**: the victors over the beast on the sea of glass	They have "gotten the victory over the beast" before the vials are poured
16:15	Earth	**Steps aside** for one verse: "Behold, I come as a thief"	A word spoken over the scene; 16:16 goes on with 16:14
17:1–18:24	Earth	**Draws close** to the fall of Babylon told in one clause at 16:19	"Come hither; I will shew unto thee" (17:1)
17:14	Earth	**Announces ahead**: the war of the Lamb	Carried out in 19:19-21
19:7-9	Heaven	**Announces ahead**: the marriage of the Lamb	The bride shown in full at 21:9–22:5
21:9–22:5	New earth	**Draws close** to the holy city of 21:2	"Come hither, I will shew thee the bride" (21:9)

The rest of the book moves forward in order: the seals (6:1-17; 8:1), the trumpets (8:7–9:21; 11:15), the vials (16:1-21), the coming of the King and the judgments that follow (19:11–20:15), and the new creation (21:1-8).

Appendix H sets the order of the book beside the order of events in a single chart.

In short. Revelation matches its ends, matches the people on the earth with the people of the new earth, and fills the middle with seven scenes in heaven, each explaining a scene on earth. The seals, trumpets and vials follow one another, each seventh opening into the next series. Around them the book pauses, looks back, announces ahead, and draws close, and the reader is told each time.

Chapter 9 — How Revelation Completes the Scriptures

Revelation is the last book of the Bible, and it reads like one. It answers the first book, fulfils what the prophets foretold, draws together threads that run through all of Scripture, and closes the written Word.

A. The end answers the beginning

What was lost in Genesis is restored in Revelation, often in the very same words.

Genesis	Revelation
"In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth" (1:1)	"I saw a new heaven and a new earth" (21:1)
"the darkness he called Night" (1:5)	"there shall be no night there" (21:25)
"the gathering together of the waters called he Seas" (1:10)	"and there was no more sea" (21:1)

Genesis	Revelation
"a river went out of Eden to water the garden" (2:10)	"a pure river of water of life … proceeding out of the throne" (22:1)
"the tree of life also in the midst of the garden" (2:9)	"In the midst of the street of it … was there the tree of life" (22:2)
"cursed is the ground for thy sake" (3:17)	"there shall be no more curse" (22:3)
"unto dust shalt thou return" (3:19)	"there shall be no more death" (21:4)
Cherubims and a flaming sword "to keep the way of the tree of life" (3:24)	"that they may have right to the tree of life" (22:14)
The serpent, and the promise that his head would be bruised (3:1, 15)	"that old serpent, which is the Devil, and Satan" bound, and cast into the lake of fire (20:2, 10)
Babel, where men built a city to make a name (11:4-9)	"Babylon the great is fallen, is fallen" (18:2)

In Genesis, man is driven out of the garden and away from the presence of God. In Revelation, God comes to dwell with men:

> **Revelation 21:3** *And I heard a great voice out of heaven saying, Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and he will dwell with them, and they shall be his people, and God himself shall be with them, and be their God.*

B. Prophecy fulfilled

The prophets foretold the Day of the Lord, the kingdom of the Son of man, and the new heavens and new earth. Revelation shows them happening (Chapter 7). Daniel was told to "shut up the words, and seal the book, even to the time of the end" (Daniel 12:4). John is told the opposite: "Seal not the sayings of the prophecy of this book: for the time is at hand" (22:10). What Daniel sealed, the Lamb opens.

C. The threads drawn together

Some threads run through the whole Bible and are tied off only in Revelation.

1. **The Lamb.** Isaac asked, "where is the lamb for a burnt offering?" and Abraham answered, "God will provide himself a lamb" (Genesis 22:7-8). Isaiah saw Him "brought as a lamb to the slaughter" (Isaiah 53:7). John the Baptist pointed to Him: "Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world" (John 1:29). In Revelation "the Lamb" is named twenty-eight times, from the Lamb "as it had been slain" in the midst of the throne (5:6) to "the throne of God and of the Lamb" in the holy city (22:3). The Lamb who died, rose and ascended is the Lamb who reigns.
2. **The tabernacle.** God told Moses, "let them make me a sanctuary; that I may dwell among them" (Exodus 25:8). In Revelation, "the tabernacle of God is with men" (21:3), and John "saw no temple therein: for the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are the temple of it" (21:22).
3. **The holy of holies.** In the tabernacle the most holy place was a cube, ten cubits each way; in Solomon's temple it was a perfect cube again, "twenty cubits in length, and twenty cubits in

breadth, and twenty cubits in the height thereof" (1 Kings 6:20). The holy city is a cube too: "The length and the breadth and the height of it are equal" (21:16). The whole city has become the most holy place, with no veil and no temple, "for the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are the temple of it" (21:22). (The cube, and what the study of Genesis 1:1 found in it, is drawn out at 21:16.)

4. **The kingdom.** From the promise to David, "thy throne shall be established for ever" (2 Samuel 7:16), to "The kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of our Lord, and of his Christ; and he shall reign for ever and ever" (11:15).

D. The Word closed

The warning of 22:18-19 stands at the end of the whole written Word, as Moses' warning (Deuteronomy 4:2) stood at the end of the law. The last words of the Bible are a promise and a prayer:

> **Revelation 22:20** *He which testifieth these things saith, Surely I come quickly. Amen. Even so, come, Lord Jesus.*

In short. Revelation answers Genesis point by point, fulfils what the prophets foretold, ties off the threads of the Lamb, the tabernacle and the kingdom, and closes the written Word with a promise and a prayer.

Chapter 10 — The Text of Revelation

This study uses the King James Version. A reader of it should know a few plain facts about the Greek behind it, so that nothing in Part Two takes him by surprise. None of them changes what Revelation teaches.

A. Fewer copies than the rest of the New Testament

The Gospels and Paul's letters survive in thousands of Greek manuscripts. Revelation survives in about three hundred. The most recent survey (G. V. Allen, 2020) counts 314 manuscripts containing all or part of it. In the early centuries some churches were slow to read it publicly, and fewer copies were made.

B. Erasmus and the last six verses

The Greek text behind the King James Version goes back, for Revelation, to the printed Greek New Testament of Erasmus (1516). Erasmus had only one Greek manuscript of Revelation, and its last leaf was missing. For the last verses, 22:16-21, he translated the Latin Vulgate back into Greek. That is why a few words at the end of the King James Revelation have no Greek manuscript behind them.

The best known is in 22:19, "God shall take away his part out of **the book of life**." The Greek manuscripts read "out of **the tree of life**." Both are true of the book's teaching: the tree of life is promised in 2:7 and 22:14, and the book of life is named in 3:5 and 20:12, 15. This study prints the King James reading and notes the other.

C. A few other readings

In a few other places the King James Greek text differs from the Greek texts most modern translations follow. Part Two notes each one where it occurs. Two are worth naming now.

- **5:9-10.** In the King James text the four beasts and the elders sing, "thou … hast redeemed **us** to God by thy blood … And hast made **us** unto our God kings and priests: and **we** shall reign on the earth." Many Greek texts have no "us" in verse 9, and in verse 10 read "made **them**" and "**they** shall reign." The difference bears on who the twenty-four elders are (Appendix C, Question 4).
- **1:11.** The words "which are in Asia" are lacking in many Greek texts. Nothing depends on it, since 1:4 has them in all texts.

D. How this study handles it

The rule is simple. The King James text is printed as it stands. Where another reading matters for understanding a verse, the commentary says so plainly, in a sentence, and the full detail is in Appendix E. Where it does not matter, it is left alone.

In short. Revelation survives in about three hundred Greek manuscripts. Its last six verses in the King James Version go back to Erasmus's translation from the Latin, which is why 22:19 reads "book of life" where the Greek reads "tree of life." A few other readings are noted where they occur. None changes the message of the book.

Part Two — The Revelation of Jesus Christ, Verse by Verse

Here the whole book is read, verse by verse, in seventeen sections that follow its own structure (*The Book at a Glance*). Each section opens with where it stands in the book, its own structure, and its full text, printed straight through so it can be read aloud. Then each verse is given in full, followed by the commentary: the verse taken phrase by phrase, its words explained, its Scriptures quoted, its figures of speech named, its questions answered, and, where needed, a note on whom it concerns. Each section closes with *In short*. Along the way, shaded notes headed *Where we are* keep the reader's place: in heaven or on earth, which verses, and whether the book is moving forward or has paused, stepped back, looked ahead or drawn close. Every number is explained where it stands, in a paragraph headed *The number*.

Section A — 1:1–1:20. The Revelation Given, and the Son of Man Seen

Where it stands

The first member of the book: the Introduction (A). Its partner is the Conclusion, 22:6-21 (Section Q), built on the same plan. Before any vision of heaven or earth, the reader is told what the book is, who sent it, to whom, and who it is that speaks in it: God, and His Son Jesus Christ, to whom God gave it. Then John is shown the Son of man Himself, standing among the seven lampstands, and is told to write. Everything that follows in the book flows from this first sight of Him.

Its structure

Four times the same two things alternate: someone testifies (E), and the Advent of the Lord is set before the reader (F). The Conclusion has the same four pairs.

	Verses	Who testifies, and what of the Advent
E1	1-2	The angel testifying; the things testified
F1	3	A blessing; "the time is at hand"
E2	4-5a	John testifying; the things testified
F2	5b-8	Praise "unto him"; "Behold, he cometh with clouds"
E3	9-11	John testifying; the things testified
F3	12-17a	The Coming One seen in vision; "Fear not"
E4	17b-19	Jesus testifying of Himself; the things testified
F4	20	The vision explained: the seven stars and the seven candlesticks

In the first two pairs the Advent is spoken of in words (1:3, 7). In the last two it is shown in vision (1:12-16, 20).

The text

Revelation 1. 1 The Revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave unto him, to shew unto his servants things which must shortly come to pass; and he sent and signified it by his angel unto his servant John: **2** Who bare record of the word of God, and of the testimony of Jesus Christ, and of all things that he saw. **3** Blessed is he that readeth, and they that hear the words of this prophecy, and keep those things which are written therein: for the time is at hand. **4** John to the seven churches which are in Asia: Grace be unto you, and peace, from him which is, and which was, and which is to come; and from the seven Spirits which are before his throne; **5** And from Jesus Christ, who is the faithful witness, and the first begotten of the dead, and the prince of the kings of the earth. Unto him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood, **6** And hath made us kings and priests unto God and his Father; to him be

glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen. **7** Behold, he cometh with clouds; and every eye shall see him, and they also which pierced him: and all kindreds of the earth shall wail because of him. Even so, Amen. **8** I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the ending, saith the Lord, which is, and which was, and which is to come, the Almighty. **9** I John, who also am your brother, and companion in tribulation, and in the kingdom and patience of Jesus Christ, was in the isle that is called Patmos, for the word of God, and for the testimony of Jesus Christ. **10** I was in the Spirit on the Lord's day, and heard behind me a great voice, as of a trumpet, **11** Saying, I am Alpha and Omega, the first and the last: and, What thou seest, write in a book, and send it unto the seven churches which are in Asia; unto Ephesus, and unto Smyrna, and unto Pergamos, and unto Thyatira, and unto Sardis, and unto Philadelphia, and unto Laodicea. **12** And I turned to see the voice that spake with me. And being turned, I saw seven golden candlesticks; **13** And in the midst of the seven candlesticks one like unto the Son of man, clothed with a garment down to the foot, and girt about the paps with a golden girdle. **14** His head and his hairs were white like wool, as white as snow; and his eyes were as a flame of fire; **15** And his feet like unto fine brass, as if they burned in a furnace; and his voice as the sound of many waters. **16** And he had in his right hand seven stars: and out of his mouth went a sharp twoedged sword: and his countenance was as the sun shineth in his strength. **17** And when I saw him, I fell at his feet as dead. And he laid his right hand upon me, saying unto me, Fear not; I am the first and the last: **18** I am he that liveth, and was dead; and, behold, I am alive for evermore, Amen; and have the keys of hell and of death. **19** Write the things which thou hast seen, and the things which are, and the things which shall be hereafter; **20** The mystery of the seven stars which thou sawest in my right hand, and the seven golden candlesticks. The seven stars are the angels of the seven churches: and the seven candlesticks which thou sawest are the seven churches.

Verse by verse

Where we are: on earth, with John on Patmos. Verses 1:1-8, the opening words. Nothing has yet been seen. John tells what the book is (1:1-3), greets the assemblies (1:4-6), and sets the coming of Christ before the reader (1:7-8). The visions of heaven and earth begin at 4:1.

> **Revelation 1:1** *The Revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave unto him, to shew unto his servants things which must shortly come to pass; and he sent and signified it by his angel unto his servant John:*

The book opens by naming itself. Before a single vision is described, the reader is told what he holds in his hands, where it came from, and how it reached him. Part One, Chapter 1 sets out the title at length; here we take the verse phrase by phrase.

"The Revelation." The Greek word is *apokalupsis* (Strong's G602), from *apo*, "away from," and *kaluptō*, "to cover." It is the taking away of a cover: an unveiling. Picture a sculpture standing under a cloth in a public square. Everyone knows something is there, but no one can see it. Then the cloth is drawn off, and the thing itself stands in full view. That is an *apokalupsis*. Paul uses the same word for "the revelation of the mystery, which was kept secret since the world began" (Romans 16:25). What had been hidden is now shown. This is why the book is so often called "the Apocalypse": that is simply the

Greek word brought into English. It does not mean "disaster," as it has come to mean in common speech; it means "unveiling."

"Of Jesus Christ." These words can be read two ways, and both are true. It is the revelation that *belongs* to Jesus Christ, given to Him and passed on by Him. And it is the revelation that *shows* Jesus Christ: He is its great subject. From the Son of man among the lampstands in this chapter to the Lamb on the throne and the Rider on the white horse, the book unveils Him (Part One, Chapter 1 §A).

"Which God gave unto him." Here is the first link in a chain. The revelation did not begin with Jesus Christ; God gave it to Him. This is exactly how Christ spoke of His own teaching when He was on the earth: "My doctrine is not mine, but his that sent me" (John 7:16). And again: "I have not spoken of myself; but the Father which sent me, he gave me a commandment, what I should say, and what I should speak" (John 12:49). Once, His disciples asked Him when the end would come, and He answered that "of that day and that hour knoweth no man, no, not the angels which are in heaven, neither the Son, but the Father" (Mark 13:32). Now, risen and ascended, He has received from God the things that are to come, and He makes them known. The book that shows the glory of Jesus Christ more fully than any other begins by saying that what He shows, God gave Him.

"To shew unto his servants." The purpose of the gift is that it should be shown. God does not reveal in order to hide again. "Servants" is *doulos* (Strong's G1401), a bondservant: one who belongs to his master and lives to do his will. It was the title of honour given to the prophets: "Surely the Lord GOD will do nothing, but he revealeth his secret unto his servants the prophets" (Amos 3:7). Who are "his servants" here? The book itself will answer. They are God's people in the time of which it speaks, the Day of the Lord: the "servants of our God" who are sealed in their foreheads (7:3), the servants whose blood is avenged on Babylon (19:2), the servants who "shall serve him" and see His face (22:3). John is one of them, and so is every reader who will hear.

"Things which must shortly come to pass." "Must" translates *dei*, "it is necessary." It is the word of what God has decreed, what cannot fail to happen. Christ used it on the mount of Olives: "for all these things must come to pass, but the end is not yet" (Matthew 24:6). The book will not tell of things that may happen, or might happen if men choose; it tells of what *must* happen, because God has said it.

"Shortly" is *en tachei*, "with speed," "swiftly." Christ used the same phrase of God's answer to His elect: "I tell you that he will avenge them speedily" (Luke 18:8). Two things are in the phrase. The events are near in God's reckoning, for "one day is with the Lord as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day" (2 Peter 3:8). And once they begin, they will come quickly, one hard upon another, as the book will show. The phrase looks back to Daniel. When Nebuchadnezzar dreamed of the great image, Daniel told him, "there is a God in heaven that revealeth secrets, and maketh known to the king Nebuchadnezzar what shall be in the latter days" (Daniel 2:28). What Daniel was shown "in the latter days," far off, John is shown as things that "must shortly come to pass." The time has drawn near.

"And he sent and signified it by his angel unto his servant John." Now the chain goes on: from God to Jesus Christ, from Jesus Christ to His angel, from the angel to John. "Angel" (*angelos*, Strong's G32) means "messenger." This angel appears again at the end of the book, when John falls at his feet and is

told, "See thou do it not: for I am thy fellowservant" (22:9), and Christ says, "I Jesus have sent mine angel to testify unto you these things in the churches" (22:16). God had used an angel in the same way with Daniel. "The man Gabriel" came to him, "and he informed me, and talked with me, and said, O Daniel, I am now come forth to give thee skill and understanding" (Daniel 9:21-22).

"Signified" is a key word. The Greek *sēmainō* (Strong's G4591) means "to show by a sign," from *sēma*, "a sign, a mark." John uses it in his Gospel when Christ said He would be "lifted up from the earth": "This he said, signifying what death he should die" (John 12:32-33). The words "lifted up" were a sign pointing to the cross. So the reader is told at the very start that this book will speak in signs and pictures: lampstands and stars, a lamb and a dragon, a woman and a beast. Many of the signs the book explains itself (Part One, Chapter 5). The reader is not left to guess; he is to watch for Scripture's own explanation.

"His servant John": John too is a *doulos*. He does not call himself an apostle, an elder, or a seer. He is a servant passing on what was given to him (Part One, Chapter 2 §A).

Figures of speech. "Signified" itself tells the reader that what follows is given "by signs." The signs are real things that John truly saw; they stand for other real things, and the book usually says what (Part One, Chapter 5).

To whom. "His servants" here are not named as the body of Christ, and the verse does not speak in the terms of Paul's letters. The things to be shown are the things of the Day of the Lord, and the servants who will live through them are God's servants in that day (7:3; 22:3). The reader today is given the book *for* his learning, as all Scripture is (Romans 15:4), but its first words already point to the time of which it speaks (Part One, Chapter 3 §C).

> **Revelation 1:2** *Who bare record of the word of God, and of the testimony of Jesus Christ, and of all things that he saw.*

Verse 1 named John; verse 2 tells what kind of man he is in this book. He is a witness.

"Who bare record." "Bare record" is old English for "testified, gave witness." The Greek is *martureō* (Strong's G3140), "to be a witness, to testify." From the same root comes *martus*, a witness, which in time came to mean one who witnesses unto death, a martyr. A witness does not invent. He tells what he has seen and heard, and nothing more. John had always written this way. Of the piercing of Christ's side at the cross he wrote, "And he that saw it bare record, and his record is true: and he knoweth that he saith true, that ye might believe" (John 19:35). In his first letter he began, "That which we have seen and heard declare we unto you" (1 John 1:3). He writes Revelation as he wrote the rest: as one who saw.

"Of the word of God." The first thing John testified to is "the word of God": what God said. This book is not John's opinion about the future. It is God's word, given to Jesus Christ and passed on (1:1).

"And of the testimony of Jesus Christ." The second thing is "the testimony of Jesus Christ": what Jesus Christ testified. Later an angel will tell John, "the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy" (19:10): the witness that Jesus bears is the very life and breath of prophecy. These two, God's word and Christ's

testimony, are joined again three times in the book. John is on Patmos "for the word of God, and for the testimony of Jesus Christ" (1:9). The souls under the altar were slain "for the word of God, and for the testimony which they held" (6:9). Those who reign with Christ were "beheaded for the witness of Jesus, and for the word of God" (20:4). To hold to these two is costly in the days the book describes.

"And of all things that he saw." The third phrase covers everything else: "all things that he saw." The rest of the book is the record of what John saw. Again and again he will write "I saw," "I beheld," "I looked." The reader is meant to stand beside him and see what he saw. Nothing is added; nothing is held back. At the close John will say it once more: "I John saw these things, and heard them" (22:8).

Figures of speech. The three things are joined by "and … and," the figure *Polysyndeton* ("many ands"), which makes each stand by itself as a distinct part of John's witness.

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

Before any vision begins, God pronounces a blessing. This is the first of seven blessings in the book (Part One, Chapter 1 §D), and it is the only book of the Bible that begins by promising a blessing to whoever reads it.

"Blessed." The Greek word is *makarios* (Strong's G3107), "happy, blessed, to be congratulated." It is the word Christ used in the sermon on the mount: "Blessed are the poor in spirit: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven" (Matthew 5:3). It does not mean a passing feeling of happiness, but the condition of one whom God favours.

"Is he that readeth." "He" is one person, and "readeth" means reading aloud. In John's day few people owned books. Scripture was read aloud in the assembly, while the people listened. This is how Christ read in the synagogue at Nazareth: He "stood up for to read," and was handed the book of Isaiah (Luke 4:16-17). This is how Paul's letters were read: "when this epistle is read among you, cause that it be read also in the church of the Laodiceans" (Colossians 4:16). The picture is of one reader standing before the assembly, the scroll open in his hands.

The great example of such reading in the Old Testament is the day Ezra read the law to the people who had come back from Babylon. That reading is the pattern this whole study follows (The Purpose of This Study):

> **Nehemiah 8:5** — *And Ezra opened the book in the sight of all the people; (for he was above all the people;) and when he opened it, all the people stood up:*
>
> **Nehemiah 8:8** — *So they read in the book in the law of God distinctly, and gave the sense, and caused them to understand the reading.*

"And they that hear the words of this prophecy." Now "they," many: the listeners. One reads; many hear. "This prophecy" is the book's own name for itself, and it will use it again at the end (22:7, 10, 18, 19). A prophecy is a word spoken from God. Much of it tells of things to come, but all of it is God's word for His people.

"And keep those things which are written therein." The blessing does not rest on hearing alone. It rests on hearing *and keeping*. "Keep" is *tēreō* (Strong's G5083), "to guard, to hold fast, to watch over." Mary "kept all these things, and pondered them in her heart" (Luke 2:19). Christ said, "blessed are they that hear the word of God, and keep it" (Luke 11:28). James warned, "be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves" (James 1:22). Revelation was not given to satisfy curiosity about the future. It was given to be held fast, to shape how its hearers live and what they hold to when the pressure comes. At the end of the book the blessing is given again in nearly the same words: "blessed is he that keepeth the sayings of the prophecy of this book" (22:7).

"For the time is at hand." "Time" here is *kairos* (Strong's G2540), not the ordinary word for time passing (*chronos*), but the word for a fixed season, an appointed time. God has set a time for the things in this book, and that time "is at hand": it is near. The same words come at the end of the book: "Seal not the sayings of the prophecy of this book: for the time is at hand" (22:10). Daniel had been told the opposite: "But thou, O Daniel, shut up the words, and seal the book, even to the time of the end" (Daniel 12:4). For Daniel the time was far off, and the book was sealed. For John the time is near, and the book is left open. From God's side the appointed time is always near, and the book was given so that every generation of its readers would live ready.

Figures of speech. The blessing rests on three things, reading, hearing and keeping, joined by "and." Here again is *Polysyndeton*: each part counts.

To whom. The blessing is for "he that readeth" and "they that hear," whoever they may be, and every reader of this book may take it. But "the time" that is "at hand" is the appointed time of the Day of the Lord (Part One, Chapter 3 §C), and the keeping that is blessed is the keeping of a prophecy about that day.

> **Revelation 1:4** *John to the seven churches which are in Asia: Grace be unto you, and peace, from him which is, and which was, and which is to come; and from the seven Spirits which are before his throne;*

With this verse the book takes the form of a letter, as the letters of the apostles did: the writer's name, the people he writes to, and a greeting (Part One, Chapter 1 §C).

"John to the seven churches which are in Asia." John names himself plainly; the assemblies knew him. "Churches" translates *ekklēsia* (Strong's G1577), "an assembly of people called out and gathered together." It is used of any gathering called together for a purpose. Stephen used it of Israel in the wilderness: "This is he, that was in the church in the wilderness with the angel which spake to him in the mount Sina" (Acts 7:38). This study usually says "assembly," which leaves the word as open as the Greek leaves it (Part One, Chapter 3 §B).

"Asia" is not the continent we call Asia. It was a Roman province in the west of what is now Turkey, along the coast of the Aegean Sea, with Ephesus as its chief city. These seven were real assemblies in real cities of that province in John's day. Verse 11 will name them, and Section B will take them one by one (Part One, Chapter 3; Appendix B). There were other assemblies in Asia, at Colossae, Hierapolis and

Troas, but these seven were chosen. Seven, in Scripture, is the number of spiritual perfection, of what God makes complete, and every one of the seven was to hear every message (2:7).

"Grace be unto you, and peace." This is the greeting of a letter, and it was the usual greeting among believers. Paul used it, and so did Peter: "Grace unto you, and peace, be multiplied" (1 Peter 1:2). "Grace" (*charis*, Strong's G5485) is favour freely given; "peace" (*eirēnē*, Strong's G1515) translates the Hebrew *shalom*, wholeness, well-being, all being well between a man and God. The greeting echoes the blessing God gave the priests to speak over Israel: "The LORD bless thee, and keep thee: The LORD make his face shine upon thee, and be gracious unto thee: The LORD lift up his countenance upon thee, and give thee peace" (Numbers 6:24-26).

"From him which is, and which was, and which is to come." Here is the first source of the grace and peace, and it is a name of God. When Moses asked God His name at the burning bush, "God said unto Moses, I AM THAT I AM: and he said, Thus shalt thou say unto the children of Israel, I AM hath sent me unto you" (Exodus 3:14). The name LORD (in Hebrew, Yahweh) comes from that same verb "to be." John unfolds it into three: He "is," He "was," He "is to come." He is the God who is always present, who has always been, and who is coming. That last is the striking part. We might expect "and which shall be." Instead we read "which is to come," because the whole book is about His coming. The same name returns in 1:8, in the song of the four beasts (4:8), and in the thanksgiving of the elders (11:17).

"And from the seven Spirits which are before his throne." Here is the second source named with God, and this phrase has puzzled many readers. Who or what are "the seven Spirits"? The book answers by showing them twice more. Before the throne John sees "seven lamps of fire burning before the throne, which are the seven Spirits of God" (4:5). And in the midst of the throne he sees the Lamb, "having seven horns and seven eyes, which are the seven Spirits of God sent forth into all the earth" (5:6). These pictures come from Zechariah. He saw a lampstand of gold with seven lamps, and the angel explained the meaning:

> **Zechariah 4:6** — *Not by might, nor by power, but by my spirit, saith the LORD of hosts.*

and of the seven lamps he was told, "those seven; they are the eyes of the LORD, which run to and fro through the whole earth" (Zechariah 4:10). The seven Spirits, then, are the full and complete working of God's spirit: His power and His all-seeing eyes going out through all the earth. Seven is the number of spiritual perfection, of what God makes complete, and nothing on earth is outside the reach of that working. They are "before his throne": ready, as servants stand before a king, to go wherever He sends.

The numbers. *Seven*, twice: seven assemblies, and seven Spirits. Seven is the number of spiritual perfection, of what God does, made full and complete. God rested on the seventh day when His work of creation was finished (Genesis 2:2), and the Hebrew word for seven (*sheba*) comes from a root meaning "to be full, to be satisfied." There were more than seven assemblies in the province of Asia (Colossae, and Hierapolis beside Laodicea, Colossians 4:13), but seven are chosen, so that the message to them is complete. The seven Spirits are the complete working of God's spirit (see above). Seven is the number that marks this whole book: seven assemblies, seals, trumpets, vials, and many more (Part One, Chapter 5 §D).

Figures of speech. "Which is, and which was, and which is to come" is a *Periphrasis*, a "speaking around": a name expressed by a description. It unfolds the meaning of God's own name, LORD, in three tenses.

To whom. "Grace" is the first word of the greeting, and a believer today may wonder whether that places the book under the administration of grace. It does not. "Grace ... and peace" was the common greeting among God's people (1 Peter 1:2). What is not common is the source named. In Paul's letters to the church of grace, grace and peace come "from God our Father, and the Lord Jesus Christ" (Romans 1:7). Here they come first from "him which is, and which was, and which is to come," God's covenant name as He revealed it to Israel at the bush (Exodus 3:14), and from the seven Spirits before His throne. The book speaks from the throne, in the terms of the Day of the Lord (Part One, Chapter 3 §C).

> **Revelation 1:5** *And from Jesus Christ, who is the faithful witness, and the first begotten of the dead, and the prince of the kings of the earth. Unto him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood,*

The greeting continues: grace and peace come also from Jesus Christ. John gives Him three titles, and then breaks into praise.

"And from Jesus Christ, who is the faithful witness." "Witness" is *martus* (Strong's G3144). Jesus Christ is the witness who never once failed to speak the truth of God. Before Pilate He said, "To this end was I born, and for this cause came I into the world, that I should bear witness unto the truth" (John 18:37). Paul recalled "Christ Jesus, who before Pontius Pilate witnessed a good confession" (1 Timothy 6:13). He witnessed faithfully all the way to death. At Laodicea He will name Himself again "the faithful and true witness" (3:14).

"And the first begotten of the dead." "First begotten" is *prōtotokos* (Strong's G4416), "firstborn." Others had been raised from death before Him: the widow's son, Jairus's daughter, Lazarus. But each of them died again. Jesus Christ was the first to be raised from the dead never to die again. "Christ being raised from the dead dieth no more; death hath no more dominion over him" (Romans 6:9). He is the first of a harvest: "But now is Christ risen from the dead, and become the firstfruits of them that slept" (1 Corinthians 15:20). The firstborn in Israel held the place of first honour and the double portion. Paul writes that He is "the firstborn from the dead; that in all things he might have the preeminence" (Colossians 1:18).

"And the prince of the kings of the earth." "Prince" is *archōn* (Strong's G758), "ruler, chief." In the second psalm "The kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers take counsel together, against the LORD, and against his anointed" (Psalm 2:2). In this book the kings of the earth will gather to make war against Him (19:19). But He is already their prince, and He will be shown at the end as "KING OF KINGS, AND LORD OF LORDS" (19:16).

All three titles come from one psalm. In Psalm 89 God speaks of the son of David whom He will raise up:

> **Psalm 89:27** — *Also I will make him my firstborn, higher than the kings of the earth.*

and of David's throne He says, "It shall be established for ever as the moon, and as a faithful witness in heaven" (Psalm 89:37). The faithful witness, the firstborn, higher than the kings of the earth: the promises God made to David are fulfilled in David's greater Son. From the first verse of the greeting the book is speaking the language of God's covenant with Israel and with David.

"Unto him that loved us." Now John cannot keep from praise. Having named Jesus Christ, he gives glory to Him. The Majority Greek text and the critical texts read "unto him that *loveth* us," a present tense: His love goes on. God had said to Israel long before, "Yea, I have loved thee with an everlasting love: therefore with lovingkindness have I drawn thee" (Jeremiah 31:3). The love that went to the cross is a love that still holds.

"And washed us from our sins in his own blood." "Washed" is the Greek *louō* (Strong's G3068), "to bathe, to wash the whole body." (The critical texts read a word that differs by one letter, *luō*, "to loose, to set free": "freed us from our sins." Both are true, and the sense is the same: He has delivered us from our sins.) David prayed, "Wash me throughly from mine iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin" (Psalm 51:2). Isaiah heard God's invitation: "though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow" (Isaiah 1:18).

"In his own blood." In the law, blood was the price of atonement, because blood is life poured out: "For the life of the flesh is in the blood: and I have given it to you upon the altar to make an atonement for your souls" (Leviticus 17:11). Every lamb slain at Israel's altar pointed to this. Christ's own life was poured out, and by His death, His resurrection, and His ascension He has done what no altar could do. Blood runs through Revelation: the Lamb's blood redeems men to God (5:9), it makes robes white (7:14), and by it the brethren overcome the accuser (12:11).

The number. *First* begotten: Christ is the first of all who will be raised from the dead to die no more, the first of a great company to follow. Paul called Him "the firstfruits of them that slept" (1 Corinthians 15:20). "First" here is not only first in time but first in rank: the one who leads all the rest.

Figures of speech. "Blood" here is the figure Bullinger calls *Metalepsis*, a double exchange: "blood" is put for death, and death is put for all that Christ's death has done. The sins are not removed by the liquid itself, but by the life He gave. The three titles stand side by side without "and" between the first two in the Greek, each a full name of honour.

To whom. "Us" is John and the assemblies he writes to. A believer of the present time will find himself in these words, and rightly, for Christ loves all who are His, and it is by His blood that any are redeemed. But John speaks here in the terms of God's covenant with Israel and David (Psalm 89), and the words "washed us from our sins" echo the promise to Israel, "he shall redeem Israel from all his iniquities" (Psalm 130:8), and the angel's word to Joseph, "he shall save his people from their sins" (Matthew 1:21). The next verse makes the point plain.

> **Revelation 1:6** *And hath made us kings and priests unto God and his Father; to him be glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen.*

John's praise goes on. Having said what Christ has done *for* His people, he says what Christ has made them.

"And hath made us kings and priests." These words are drawn straight from what God said to Israel at Sinai, when He had brought them out of Egypt and was about to give them the law:

> **Exodus 19:5-6** — *Now therefore, if ye will obey my voice indeed, and keep my covenant, then ye shall be a peculiar treasure unto me above all people: for all the earth is mine: And ye shall be unto me a kingdom of priests, and an holy nation. These are the words which thou shalt speak unto the children of Israel.*

Israel was to be a nation of priests, standing between God and the nations, bringing the knowledge of God to the world. Through her unbelief that calling was never fulfilled. Isaiah foresaw the day when it would be: "But ye shall be named the Priests of the LORD: men shall call you the Ministers of our God" (Isaiah 61:6). Peter, writing to "the strangers scattered throughout Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia" (1 Peter 1:1), used the same words: "ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation" (1 Peter 2:9). Revelation will show the calling fulfilled. The redeemed are "made … unto our God kings and priests: and we shall reign on the earth" (5:10), and those who share in the first resurrection "shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with him a thousand years" (20:6).

A note on the text: the Majority Greek text and the critical texts read "a kingdom, priests," not "kings and priests." The meaning is the same, and it is even closer to Exodus 19:6, "a kingdom of priests" (Appendix E).

"Unto God and his Father." That is, to God, who is His Father. The order of the first verse is kept: God gave the revelation to Jesus Christ, and the kingdom of priests is made "unto God." The risen Christ spoke the same way to Mary at the tomb: "I ascend unto my Father, and your Father; and to my God, and your God" (John 20:17). Jesus Christ calls God His Father and His God. Everything the Son does is done to the glory of the Father. At the end of the messages He will say of Himself, "I also overcame, and am set down with my Father in his throne" (3:21).

"To him be glory and dominion for ever and ever." "Glory" (*doxa*) is honour, splendour, the shining-out of what someone is. "Dominion" (*kratos*) is ruling strength, power that prevails. "For ever and ever" is literally "unto the ages of the ages": without end. The book will be full of such ascriptions of praise, each one longer than the last: to the Lamb in 5:12 seven things are ascribed, "power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory, and blessing."

"Amen." A Hebrew word meaning "so it is, it is firm, it is true." To say "Amen" is to set one's seal on what has been said. Israel was told to answer "Amen" to the words of the law (Deuteronomy 27:15).

Figures of speech. Bullinger names "a kingdom, priests" the figure *Hendiadys*, "one by means of two": two nouns are used, but one thing is meant, the second qualifying the first. The sense is "a kingdom of priests," or "royal priests," exactly as in Exodus 19:6 and 1 Peter 2:9.

To whom. Many readers apply "kings and priests" to the church of today. But the words are Israel's calling from Sinai, and they are fulfilled in this book when the redeemed "reign on the earth" (5:10) and are "priests of God and of Christ" in the first resurrection (20:6). In Paul's letters to the church of grace the believers are never called priests, and they are not told that they will reign on the earth as a kingdom of priests. They are members of one body, of which Christ is the head (Ephesians 1:22-23). Here John speaks, as one of Israel, of what God promised Israel (Part One, Chapter 3 §C).

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

Now comes the key-note of the whole book. Everything in Revelation moves toward this one event: the coming of Jesus Christ.

"Behold." The Greek *idou* is a call to look: "See! Look!" Bullinger names this the figure *Asterismos* ("marking with a star"), because it does in speech what an asterisk does on a page: it marks what follows as something to be noticed. It is found twenty-six times in the book.

"He cometh with clouds." "Cometh" is in the present tense. His coming is so sure that it is spoken of as already under way. "With clouds" (in Greek, "with the clouds") draws on Daniel's great vision of the Son of man:

> **Daniel 7:13-14** — *I saw in the night visions, and, behold, one like the Son of man came with the clouds of heaven, and came to the Ancient of days, and they brought him near before him. And there was given him dominion, and glory, and a kingdom, that all people, nations, and languages, should serve him: his dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and his kingdom that which shall not be destroyed.*

Clouds in Scripture are the dress of God's glory. When God came down on Sinai, He said to Moses, "Lo, I come unto thee in a thick cloud" (Exodus 19:9). The psalmist says of Him, "who maketh the clouds his chariot" (Psalm 104:3). When Jesus Christ ascended from the mount of Olives, "a cloud received him out of their sight," and two men in white told the watching disciples:

> **Acts 1:11** — *Ye men of Galilee, why stand ye gazing up into heaven? this same Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen him go into heaven.*

He went in a cloud; He comes again with the clouds. This verse is the fulfilment of that promise.

"And every eye shall see him." This coming is not secret, and it is not hidden. "Every eye" will see Him: the whole world will look on Him at once. Christ said of this very day, "For as the lightning cometh out of the east, and shineth even unto the west; so shall also the coming of the Son of man be" (Matthew 24:27).

"And they also which pierced him." These words come from Zechariah. Speaking of the day when He will defend Jerusalem, the LORD says:

> **Zechariah 12:10** — *And I will pour upon the house of David, and upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the spirit of grace and of supplications: and they shall look upon me whom they have pierced, and*

> *they shall mourn for him, as one mourneth for his only son, and shall be in bitterness for him, as one that is in bitterness for his firstborn.*

John himself had stood at the cross and watched the soldier's spear go into Jesus' side. He wrote in his Gospel that this was done "that the scripture should be fulfilled," and quoted, "They shall look on him whom they pierced" (John 19:36-37). Now, so many years later, he hears that the rest of the prophecy will be fulfilled too. Those who pierced Him, His own people, will see Him, and mourn.

"And all kindreds of the earth shall wail because of him." "Kindreds" is *phulai*, "tribes," the same word used of the twelve tribes of Israel (7:4-8; 21:12), and "earth" (*gē*) can also mean "land," as it often does of the land of Israel. Christ used the same words on the mount of Olives: "And then shall appear the sign of the Son of man in heaven: and then shall all the tribes of the earth mourn, and they shall see the Son of man coming in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory" (Matthew 24:30). Zechariah goes on to describe that mourning: "And the land shall mourn, every family apart" (Zechariah 12:12). "Wail" is *koptō* (Strong's G2875), literally "to strike, to beat," and so to beat the breast in grief. It is the mourning of a people who see at last whom they rejected. For Israel it is the mourning of repentance, which leads to her cleansing: "In that day there shall be a fountain opened to the house of David and to the inhabitants of Jerusalem for sin and for uncleanness" (Zechariah 13:1).

"Even so, Amen." John answers the prophecy with two words of assent. "Even so" is the Greek *nai*, "yes"; "Amen" is the Hebrew "so be it." He says it in both languages: Yes! So be it! The same answer closes the book: "Surely I come quickly. Amen. Even so, come, Lord Jesus" (22:20).

Figures of speech. *Asterismos* in "Behold," noted above. "Every eye" is a *Synecdoche*, the part put for the whole: the eye is put for the whole person who sees. "Even so, Amen" is the figure Bullinger calls *Synonymia*: two words of the same meaning set together to make the statement doubly sure.

To whom. This is the coming of Christ to the earth, seen by every eye and met with mourning. It is not the gathering of the church of grace, of which Paul wrote, "Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air" (1 Thessalonians 4:17). That gathering is the church's hope and comfort: "Wherefore comfort one another with these words" (1 Thessalonians 4:18). The church of grace did not pierce Him, and it does not wail at His coming; "God hath not appointed us to wrath" (1 Thessalonians 5:9). This verse is His coming in the Day of the Lord, and the tribes who mourn are the tribes of the land (Part One, Chapter 3 §C; Chapter 7 §C).

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

John has spoken of the coming of Jesus Christ. Now God Himself speaks, and sets His seal on it.

"I am Alpha and Omega." Alpha and Omega are the first and last letters of the Greek alphabet, as if we said in English, "I am A and Z." To be the first and the last letter is to be the whole of everything that can be written or said, from beginning to end. The Jewish teachers of that time used the same kind of saying with the Hebrew alphabet: to do something "from Aleph to Tau" meant to do it completely. God is

before all things, and He will bring all things to their end. Through Isaiah He had said, "I the LORD, the first, and with the last; I am he" (Isaiah 41:4).

"The beginning and the ending." This phrase explains what "Alpha and Omega" means. (These words are in the Received Text but are lacking in most Greek manuscripts here; they are found in the same title in 21:6 and 22:13, so their meaning is not in doubt.)

"Saith the Lord." It is the Lord who speaks: the critical texts and the Majority text read "saith the Lord God." This is the voice of God Himself.

"Which is, and which was, and which is to come." The same name as in verse 4: the LORD, who was, who is, and who is coming. The one who speaks here is the one from whom grace and peace were sent (1:4).

"The Almighty." The Greek *pantokratōr* (Strong's G3841) is made of *pas*, "all," and *kratos*, "power, rule": the one who holds sway over all. In the Greek Old Testament it is the word used for "the LORD of hosts," the LORD of the armies of heaven. It appears nine times in Revelation, and only once anywhere else in the New Testament, where Paul quotes the prophets: "saith the Lord Almighty" (2 Corinthians 6:18). God first made Himself known by this kind of name to Abraham: "I am the Almighty God; walk before me, and be thou perfect" (Genesis 17:1).

Why does God speak at this point? John has just announced the coming of Christ in judgment. Who can guarantee it? God answers: I am the beginning and the end; I am He who is, who was, and who is coming; I am the Almighty. What He has begun, He will finish. Nothing can stand in His way. The title will be given again from the throne at the end of the book, when all things are made new: "It is done. I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end" (21:6). And God has given His Son to share it: at the close of the book the Son, who sits with His Father in His throne (3:21), will say, "I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end, the first and the last" (22:13), for God has made Him the beginning and the end of His purpose (see 1:17).

Figures of speech. "Alpha and Omega" names the first and the last letters to mean everything between them. Bullinger notes that this was "a Hebraism, in common use among the Ancient Jewish Commentators to designate the whole of anything from the beginning to the end." No figure of comparison is needed: the words themselves say that God is the whole, from first to last.

Where we are: on earth, on Patmos. Verses 1:9-20, the first vision. John tells where he was and why (1:9), and how the vision began (1:10-11). Then he turns and sees the Son of man standing among the seven lampstands (1:12-16), falls at His feet, and is raised up and told what to write (1:17-20). The vision is of the risen Christ as He stands toward the assemblies on the earth; John has not yet been taken up into heaven.

> **Revelation 1:9** *I John, who also am your brother, and companion in tribulation, and in the kingdom and patience of Jesus Christ, was in the isle that is called Patmos, for the word of God, and for the testimony of Jesus Christ.*

Here the scene changes. John stops speaking of the book and begins to tell how it was given to him. He starts with himself: who he is, where he was, and why.

"I John." Daniel, the prophet whose visions are nearest to Revelation, wrote in the same way: "I Daniel was grieved in my spirit" (Daniel 7:15); "I Daniel understood by books" (Daniel 9:2). John names himself four times in the book (1:1, 4, 9; 22:8).

"Who also am your brother." John does not set himself above the assemblies. He is their "brother." "Brother" (*adelphos*) means one born of the same parents; among God's people it means one of the same family of faith.

"And companion in tribulation." "Companion" is *sunkoinōnos*, "one who shares in common with": a fellow-sharer. John is suffering what they are suffering. "Tribulation" is *thlipsis* (Strong's G2347), from *thlibō*, "to press, to squeeze": the pressure that crushes, as grapes are crushed in a winepress. It is a word that will come back again and again in this book, to Smyrna (2:9-10), to Thyatira (2:22), and of the "great tribulation" out of which the great multitude come (7:14).

"And in the kingdom and patience of Jesus Christ." Three things are shared: tribulation, kingdom, patience. The order is the order of the book. Tribulation comes first; the kingdom follows; patient endurance carries God's people from the one to the other. Paul and Barnabas told the disciples of Asia Minor the same truth, "that we must through much tribulation enter into the kingdom of God" (Acts 14:22). "Patience" is *hupomonē* (Strong's G5281), from *hupo*, "under," and *menō*, "to remain": to remain under a load without giving way. It is not passive waiting; it is enduring, standing firm. Christ had said, "In your patience possess ye your souls" (Luke 21:19), and "he that shall endure unto the end, the same shall be saved" (Matthew 24:13). The word will be heard again and again in this book: "Here is the patience and the faith of the saints" (13:10).

"Was in the isle that is called Patmos." Patmos is a small, rocky island in the Aegean Sea, off the western coast of the province of Asia, south-west of Ephesus (Part One, Chapter 2 §B). "Was" is the Greek *egenomēn*, "I came to be," "I found myself": John is telling how he came to be there.

"For the word of God, and for the testimony of Jesus Christ." This is why he was there: on account of God's word and Christ's testimony, the very two things he "bare record" of (1:2). The early church remembered that John had been banished to Patmos under the emperor Domitian for his witness (Eusebius records it, *Church History* 3.18), and this study follows that reading (Part One, Chapter 2 §B). He was not on Patmos for a holiday or a mission. He was a prisoner of Rome, cut off from the assemblies he loved, because he would not stop speaking of Jesus Christ. And there, in exile, God opened heaven to him. The place of his suffering became the place of his revelation.

Figures of speech. Bullinger names "tribulation, and … kingdom and patience" the figure *Hendiatris*, "one by means of three": three words are used, but one thing is meant. The one thing is the tribulation; the other two words describe what kind of tribulation it is: the tribulation that leads to the kingdom, and that calls for patient endurance. The Companion Bible notes the same figure here.

To whom. John calls the assemblies his brothers and companions in "tribulation" and "the kingdom." A believer today does suffer, and Paul himself spoke of tribulation. But "the kingdom" of which this book speaks is the kingdom that comes when "The kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of our Lord, and of his Christ" (11:15), and the tribulation that leads to it is the tribulation of the Day of the Lord. John writes as one who shares their calling and their trial (Part One, Chapter 3 §C).

> **Revelation 1:10** *I was in the Spirit on the Lord's day, and heard behind me a great voice, as of a trumpet,*

John now tells how the vision began. He was taken out of himself, and he heard a voice.

"I was in the Spirit." Again "I was" is *egenomēn*, "I came to be." John came to be "in the Spirit": taken up by the power of God's spirit into a state in which he could see and hear what no natural eye or ear can. This is how the prophets were shown their visions. Ezekiel wrote, "So the spirit lifted me up, and took me away" (Ezekiel 3:14), and again, "the spirit lifted me up between the earth and the heaven, and brought me in the visions of God to Jerusalem" (Ezekiel 8:3). The phrase "in the Spirit" comes four times in Revelation, and each time it opens a great vision: here, the vision of the Son of man; at 4:2, the throne in heaven; at 17:3, the woman on the scarlet beast; at 21:10, the holy city. (In the King James Version "Spirit" is printed with a capital letter. It means God's spirit, the power by which God took John up into the vision.)

"On the Lord's day." John was carried in spirit into "the Lord's day": the day that belongs to the Lord, the day of the Lord the prophets foretold, which is the subject of this whole book. The Greek is an adjective, "the day belonging to the Lord" (*kuriakē hēmera*); the same adjective is found in one other place in the New Testament, "the Lord's supper" (1 Corinthians 11:20). Many have taken the phrase to mean the first day of the week, because they believed it was the day Christ rose. But Scripture never calls the first day "the Lord's day"; it always calls it "the first day of the week." And Christ did not rise on Sunday morning: He was three days and three nights in the grave, as He said (Matthew 12:40), and rose late on the weekly sabbath, before sunset, so that the tomb was already empty when the women came at dawn on the first day. So the reading rests on the text: John was taken in the Spirit into the day of the Lord, and what he saw from chapter 4 onward is that day, "the great day of his wrath" (6:17). The prophets spoke of it again and again: "Alas for the day! for the day of the LORD is at hand, and as a destruction from the Almighty shall it come" (Joel 1:15). (The evidence is set out in Appendix C, Question 1.)

"And heard behind me a great voice." The voice came from behind John, so that he had to turn to see who was speaking (1:12). "Great" means loud, strong. It is like the voice Ezekiel heard: "Then the spirit took me up, and I heard behind me a voice of a great rushing" (Ezekiel 3:12).

"As of a trumpet." The voice was as loud and as clear as a trumpet. In Israel the trumpet called the people together, sounded the alarm of war, and announced the feasts. At Sinai, before God spoke the law, "the voice of the trumpet exceeding loud; so that all the people that was in the camp trembled" (Exodus 19:16). The prophets joined the trumpet to the Day of the Lord: "Blow ye the trumpet in Zion, and sound an alarm in my holy mountain: let all the inhabitants of the land tremble: for the day of the

LORD cometh, for it is nigh at hand" (Joel 2:1); "A day of the trumpet and alarm against the fenced cities" (Zephaniah 1:16). A voice like a trumpet is a voice that announces the Lord, and the coming of His day. This same voice will call John up to heaven in 4:1.

Figures of speech. "As of a trumpet" is a *Simile*, a comparison using "as" or "like." The voice was not a trumpet; it was like one in its loudness and clarity. Similes fill this chapter (verses 14-16), and the reader should notice them: John is describing what he saw by the nearest things he knew.

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

The voice speaks, and gives John his commission.

"Saying, I am Alpha and Omega, the first and the last." These words are in the Received Text, but they are lacking in the Majority Greek text and in most manuscripts (Part One, Chapter 10; Appendix E). The speaker in this verse is the one John is about to see when he turns (1:12-13), and "the first and the last" is His own title, as He will say in 1:17 and again to Smyrna in 2:8.

"What thou seest, write in a book." The command is to write. "Seest" is the present tense: "what you are seeing." It takes in all that John is about to see, from this chapter to the last. "A book" (*biblion*) here is a scroll, a long strip of papyrus or parchment rolled up. The command is not to write seven separate letters, but one book, to be sent to all seven assemblies. God had given the prophets the same command. To Jeremiah: "Write thee all the words that I have spoken unto thee in a book" (Jeremiah 30:2). To Habakkuk:

> **Habakkuk 2:2-3** — *And the LORD answered me, and said, Write the vision, and make it plain upon tables, that he may run that readeth it. For the vision is yet for an appointed time, but at the end it shall speak, and not lie: though it tarry, wait for it; because it will surely come, it will not tarry.*

What God shows, He has written down, so that it cannot be forgotten or changed, and so that those who come after may read it.

"And send it unto the seven churches which are in Asia." (The words "which are in Asia" stand in 1:4 in all Greek texts; here they are lacking in many.) The book was to be sent to these assemblies as a whole. Every message was for every assembly.

"Unto Ephesus, and unto Smyrna, and unto Pergamos, and unto Thyatira, and unto Sardis, and unto Philadelphia, and unto Laodicea." The seven cities are named in the order a messenger would travel them. He would land at Ephesus, the chief port and city of the province, nearest to Patmos. From there he would go north up the coast to Smyrna, and on north to Pergamos. Then he would turn inland, south-east, to Thyatira, Sardis, Philadelphia, and last Laodicea, following the great road that circled the province (Part One, Chapter 3 §B). Ramsay, who travelled these roads, argued that the seven cities lay at the head of this circuit, each a natural centre from which the message could go out to the towns around it. A map of the seven cities stands at the head of Section B.

Two of the seven stand out to a reader who knows the book of Acts and Paul's letters. Ephesus heard Paul's teaching for two years, "so that all they which dwelt in Asia heard the word of the Lord Jesus" (Acts 19:10), and received his letter to the Ephesians. Laodicea was in Paul's thoughts and prayers: he wrote of his great conflict "for you, and for them at Laodicea" (Colossians 2:1), and asked that his letter be read there (Colossians 4:16).

The numbers. *The first and the last* (see 1:17). *Seven* assemblies, now named one by one: seven, the number of spiritual perfection (see 1:4). Seven named cities stand for a message complete in itself, sent to real assemblies.

Figures of speech. The seven names are joined by seven "ands" (*kai*), the figure *Polysyndeton*: each city is named separately and deliberately, so that none is lost among the others.

To whom. Because Ephesus and Laodicea were assemblies that Paul had taught, a reader may think that these messages are spoken to the church of grace. But some forty years had passed since Paul taught there, and Christ does not speak to them in the terms of Paul's letters. The book was sent to real assemblies of John's day, but the messages are spoken in the terms of the Day of the Lord (Part One, Chapter 3 §C; Appendix B). This will be seen in each message as we come to it.



Albrecht Dürer, The Apocalypse (woodcut, 1498): John sees the seven golden candlesticks and the Son of man among them (1:12-16).

> **Revelation 1:12** *And I turned to see the voice that spake with me. And being turned, I saw seven golden candlesticks;*

John turns, and the first thing he sees is light.

"And I turned to see the voice that spake with me." What a natural, human moment this is. An old man, alone on a rocky island, hears a loud voice behind him, and turns around to see who is speaking. He says he turned "to see the voice," and the words are worth noticing: one cannot see a voice. He means he turned to see the one whose voice it was.

"And being turned, I saw seven golden candlesticks." "Candlesticks" is *luchnia* (Strong's G3087), a lampstand. It did not hold a wax candle, as we picture today, but an oil lamp. These were lampstands of gold. The first thing John sees, before he sees the speaker, is seven lights burning around him.

The reader of the Old Testament would think at once of the tabernacle. God commanded Moses to make "a candlestick of pure gold" (Exodus 25:31) with seven lamps, to stand in the holy place, and "they shall light the lamps thereof, that they may give light over against it" (Exodus 25:37). Every evening the priests trimmed and lit its lamps, and it burned "from the evening unto the morning before the LORD" (Leviticus 24:3). Zechariah saw "a candlestick all of gold, with a bowl upon the top of it, and his seven lamps thereon" (Zechariah 4:2). But there the lampstand was one, with seven lamps. Here there are seven lampstands, standing apart. Verse 20 will explain them: "the seven candlesticks which thou sawest are the seven churches." Each assembly stands on its own, and each was set to give light.

A lampstand exists for one reason: to hold up a light where it can be seen. Christ had said, "Neither do men light a candle, and put it under a bushel, but on a candlestick; and it giveth light unto all that are in the house" (Matthew 5:15). The assemblies were set to hold up God's light in a dark world.

The number. *Seven* golden candlesticks: one for each of the seven assemblies (1:20). The tabernacle had one golden lampstand with seven lamps (Exodus 25:31-37). Here there are seven separate lampstands, and the Son of man walks among them. Seven, the number of spiritual perfection (see 1:4), shows that the whole of what He has to say to the assemblies is set before Him.

Figures of speech. Bullinger notes two figures in "to see the voice." The voice is put for the one who speaks, the figure *Metonymy* (one thing named for another that it is closely connected with). And because a voice cannot be seen, the joining of "see" and "voice" is the figure *Catachresis*, an "incongruity" of words that makes the reader stop and think. The sense is, "I turned to see Him who spoke with me."

> **Revelation 1:13** *And in the midst of the seven candlesticks one like unto the Son of man, clothed with a garment down to the foot, and girt about the paps with a golden girdle.*

Now John sees the speaker, standing among the lampstands.

"And in the midst of the seven candlesticks." He is not far off, looking down on the lampstands from a distance. He is "in the midst" of them, among them. He sees each one, and He knows each one. To

Ephesus He will be "he ... who walketh in the midst of the seven golden candlesticks" (2:1). Every message He will speak begins with the same words, "I know thy works."

"One like unto the Son of man." This is Daniel's phrase: "one like the Son of man came with the clouds of heaven" (Daniel 7:13). "Son of man" is a Hebrew way of saying "a man," a human being. God called Ezekiel "son of man" over ninety times, reminding the prophet that he was a mere man before the glory of God (Ezekiel 2:1). But in Daniel the one "like the Son of man" is a man who comes with the clouds of heaven and receives from God an everlasting kingdom. When Jesus was on the earth, "the Son of man" was His favourite name for Himself. It is the title of Christ as Man: the heir of the earth, to whom God has given rule and judgment. Christ said, "And hath given him authority to execute judgment also, because he is the Son of man" (John 5:27). Outside the Gospels the title "the Son of man" is used only by Stephen as he died, "Behold, I see the heavens opened, and the Son of man standing on the right hand of God" (Acts 7:56), and here and at 14:14. (Hebrews 2:6 quotes Psalm 8:4, "the son of man, that thou visitest him.") It is never used in Paul's letters. It is the title of Christ in relation to the earth and to Israel's hope, and it is the title in which He appears in this book.

John says "one like unto." He does not doubt who it is. But what he saw was so far beyond anything he had seen before that he could only describe it by likeness. This was the same Jesus he had walked with in Galilee, now risen and glorified, and the sight of Him was overwhelming.

"Clothed with a garment down to the foot." The Greek word is *podērēs* (Strong's G4158), "reaching to the feet." The Greek Old Testament uses this very word for the robe of the high priest: "And these are the garments which they shall make; a breastplate, and an ephod, and a robe, and a broidered coat, a mitre, and a girdle" (Exodus 28:4). Daniel saw a man "clothed in linen" (Daniel 10:5). A long robe was the dress of a priest, a judge, a man of rank. Jesus Christ stands here in the dress of His high office.

"And girt about the paps with a golden girdle." "Paps" is old English for "breasts"; a "girdle" is a belt or sash. A working man in Israel tied his belt around his waist, to tuck up his robe for labour or a journey. Here the golden sash is tied high, across the chest. This is generally explained as the dress of dignity and rest rather than of labour: the work is done, and He stands in majesty. The girdle is gold, the metal of kings and of the holy things of the sanctuary. Daniel saw a man whose loins were "girded with fine gold of Uphaz" (Daniel 10:5). Isaiah foretold of the Branch of David, "And righteousness shall be the girdle of his loins, and faithfulness the girdle of his reins" (Isaiah 11:5).

The number. *Seven* candlesticks again (see 1:12). Christ stands "in the midst" of all seven: He is present with every one of them, not with some only.

Figures of speech. "Like unto the Son of man" is a *Simile*. John is describing what he saw by likeness, because it was beyond plain description.

To whom. The Son of man, standing among the assemblies in the dress of priest and judge, is Christ as He is related to the earth and to Israel's kingdom (Daniel 7:13-14). This is the title in which He comes to judge. To the church of grace Paul speaks of Him as "the head over all things to the church, Which is his

body" (Ephesians 1:22-23); the title "Son of man" never appears there. The vision itself tells the reader what kind of book this is.

> **Revelation 1:14** *His head and his hairs were white like wool, as white as snow; and his eyes were as a flame of fire;*

John's eye now moves upward from the robe to the head and eyes of the one before him.

"His head and his hairs were white like wool, as white as snow." In Daniel's vision of God's judgment seat, the Ancient of days sat on His throne, "whose garment was white as snow, and the hair of his head like the pure wool" (Daniel 7:9). Now the Son of man bears the same marks. White hair speaks of age and wisdom: "The hoary head is a crown of glory, if it be found in the way of righteousness" (Proverbs 16:31). It also speaks of purity. When God called Israel to cleansing, He said, "though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool" (Isaiah 1:18). The Son of man who will judge the earth is wholly pure, and He bears the very marks of the Ancient of days who sent Him. He is not the Ancient of days: in Daniel's vision the two are distinct, for "one like the Son of man ... came to the Ancient of days, and they brought him near before him. And there was given him dominion" (Daniel 7:13-14). He bears God's marks because God has given Him God's work of judgment. As Christ said, "the Father ... hath committed all judgment unto the Son" (John 5:22).

John uses two comparisons, wool and snow, one after the other, as if one picture were not enough to describe the dazzling whiteness he saw.

"And his eyes were as a flame of fire." Fire burns through everything; nothing is hidden from it. Daniel saw the man in linen with "his eyes as lamps of fire" (Daniel 10:6). These are eyes that see straight through to the heart. "Neither is there any creature that is not manifest in his sight: but all things are naked and opened unto the eyes of him with whom we have to do" (Hebrews 4:13). The same eyes are named again at Thyatira, where He says, "I am he which searcheth the reins and hearts" (2:18, 23), and they are seen on the Rider on the white horse: "His eyes were as a flame of fire" (19:12). The eyes that once looked on the weeping widow of Nain with compassion now look on the assemblies, and on the earth, as the eyes of the judge.

Figures of speech. Three *Similes*: "like wool," "as white as snow," "as a flame of fire." Each takes something every reader knows and uses it to show what cannot be fully described.

> **Revelation 1:15** *And his feet like unto fine brass, as if they burned in a furnace; and his voice as the sound of many waters.*

From head and eyes, John's gaze falls to the feet; and then he hears the voice again.

"And his feet like unto fine brass." "Fine brass" translates a Greek word found only here and at 2:18, *chalkolibanon* (Strong's G5474). It is made from *chalkos*, "bronze, brass," and is generally explained as a fine, bright bronze, perhaps an alloy of copper with a precious metal. Exactly what metal it was is no longer known. What is clear is the picture: feet of gleaming, burnished bronze. Ezekiel saw the

cherubim, "and they sparkled like the colour of burnished brass" (Ezekiel 1:7). Daniel saw the man in linen with "his arms and his feet like in colour to polished brass" (Daniel 10:6).

In the tabernacle, brass belonged to the place of judgment on sin. The altar where the sacrifices were burned was overlaid with brass (Exodus 27:1-2), and the serpent Moses lifted up in the wilderness was "a serpent of brass" (Numbers 21:9). Feet of brass are feet that tread down. They are the feet of the one who will tread "the winepress of the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God" (19:15).

"As if they burned in a furnace." The bronze was not dull, but glowing, as metal glows white-hot in a furnace. Nebuchadnezzar commanded "that they should heat the furnace one seven times more than it was wont to be heated" (Daniel 3:19), and Daniel's three friends were thrown into it, and the Son of God walked with them in the fire. Here the one who walked in the fire with His servants stands with feet that themselves glow like fire.

"And his voice as the sound of many waters." John was on an island. All day and all night he would have heard the sea breaking on the rocks of Patmos. Now he hears a voice like that: deep, vast, overwhelming, like the roar of great waters. Ezekiel heard the same thing when "the glory of the God of Israel came from the way of the east: and his voice was like a noise of many waters: and the earth shined with his glory" (Ezekiel 43:2). The psalmist wrote, "The LORD on high is mightier than the noise of many waters, yea, than the mighty waves of the sea" (Psalm 93:4). In verse 10 the voice was like a trumpet: loud and clear. Here it is like the sea: deep and all-surrounding. No other voice can be heard over it.

Figures of speech. Three more *Similes*: "like unto fine brass," "as if they burned in a furnace," "as the sound of many waters." Bullinger calls the last "a common Old Testament simile": the comparison is to the noise of the waves of the sea upon the shore.

> **Revelation 1:16** *And he had in his right hand seven stars: and out of his mouth went a sharp twoedged sword: and his countenance was as the sun shineth in his strength.*

John's eyes go to the right hand, the mouth, and the face of the one before him.

"And he had in his right hand seven stars." The right hand is the hand of strength and of authority. Moses sang, "Thy right hand, O LORD, is become glorious in power: thy right hand, O LORD, hath dashed in pieces the enemy" (Exodus 15:6). The seven stars are explained in verse 20: "The seven stars are the angels of the seven churches." They are held in His right hand: under His power, and in His keeping. Christ had said of His sheep, "neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand" (John 10:28). To Ephesus He will be "he that holdeth the seven stars in his right hand" (2:1), and to Sardis, "he that hath the seven Spirits of God, and the seven stars" (3:1).

"And out of his mouth went a sharp twoedged sword." "Sword" here is *rhomphaia* (Strong's G4501), the long, broad sword, not the short dagger-sword (*machaira*). It is "twoedged," cutting both ways, and "sharp." It comes out of His mouth: it is His word. Isaiah wrote of the Servant of the LORD, "he hath made my mouth like a sharp sword" (Isaiah 49:2), and of the Branch of David:

> **Isaiah 11:4** — *But with righteousness shall he judge the poor, and reprove with equity for the meek of the earth: and he shall smite the earth with the rod of his mouth, and with the breath of his lips shall he slay the wicked.*

The writer to the Hebrews said, "For the word of God is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any twoedged sword" (Hebrews 4:12). Christ will use this sword against those in Pergamos who will not repent: "I ... will fight against them with the sword of my mouth" (2:16). And at His coming He will use it against the nations: "out of his mouth goeth a sharp sword, that with it he should smite the nations" (19:15). He needs no other weapon. He speaks, and it is done.

"And his countenance was as the sun shineth in his strength." "Countenance" is "face" or "appearance." It shone like the sun at noon, when no one can look at it. Deborah ended her song with the prayer, "let them that love him be as the sun when he goeth forth in his might" (Judges 5:31). John had seen this face once before. On the mount of transfiguration, Jesus "was transfigured before them: and his face did shine as the sun, and his raiment was white as the light" (Matthew 17:2). John was one of the three disciples on that mountain. Now, sixty years and more later, he sees the same face, shining with the same glory. Malachi had foretold, "But unto you that fear my name shall the Sun of righteousness arise with healing in his wings" (Malachi 4:2).

The numbers. *Seven* stars, which are the seven angels of the assemblies (1:20): seven, the number of spiritual perfection (see 1:4), all of them held in one right hand. The *two*-edged sword: two is the number of witness and of difference, and a sword with two edges cuts both ways and divides cleanly, as God's word divides "asunder of soul and spirit" (Hebrews 4:12).

Figures of speech. The "sharp twoedged sword" going out of His mouth is a *Hypocatastasis*, a picture that stands for something without saying so: the sword stands for His word of judgment, and the book's own use of it (2:16; 19:15, 21) shows what it means. Bullinger notes that the same figure is used of men's words in the Psalms (Psalm 57:4; 59:7). "As the sun shineth in his strength" is a *Simile*.

> **Revelation 1:17** *And when I saw him, I fell at his feet as dead. And he laid his right hand upon me, saying unto me, Fear not; I am the first and the last:*

The vision is over; and the man who saw it is lying on the ground.

"And when I saw him, I fell at his feet as dead." This is one of the most moving moments in the book. John was the disciple "whom Jesus loved." At the last supper he had leaned on His breast: "Now there was leaning on Jesus' bosom one of his disciples, whom Jesus loved" (John 13:23). He had known Him as a friend. But when he sees Him now in His glory, he cannot stand. He falls at His feet "as dead": without strength, without breath, without movement.

The prophets had fallen the same way before the glory of God. When Isaiah saw the LORD on His throne, he cried, "Woe is me! for I am undone" (Isaiah 6:5). Ezekiel, seeing "the likeness of the glory of the LORD," fell upon his face (Ezekiel 1:28). Daniel, seeing the man in linen, wrote:

> **Daniel 10:8-9** — *Therefore I was left alone, and saw this great vision, and there remained no strength in me: for my comeliness was turned in me into corruption, and I retained no strength. Yet*

> *heard I the voice of his words: and when I heard the voice of his words, then was I in a deep sleep on my face, and my face toward the ground.*

No man can stand before such glory in his own strength.

"And he laid his right hand upon me." But He does not leave John on the ground. He lays His right hand on him: the same right hand that holds the seven stars. The hand of power is a hand of tenderness. John had felt that touch before. On the mount of transfiguration, when the voice came out of the cloud, the disciples "fell on their face, and were sore afraid. And Jesus came and touched them, and said, Arise, and be not afraid" (Matthew 17:6-7). Daniel too was touched: "And, behold, an hand touched me, which set me upon my knees and upon the palms of my hands" (Daniel 10:10).

"Saying unto me, Fear not." The first words the glorified Christ speaks to John are words of comfort. "Fear not" is a word God has spoken to His servants from the beginning. To Abram: "Fear not, Abram: I am thy shield, and thy exceeding great reward" (Genesis 15:1). To Israel: "Fear thou not; for I am with thee: be not dismayed; for I am thy God" (Isaiah 41:10). To Daniel: "Fear not, Daniel: for from the first day that thou didst set thine heart to understand ... thy words were heard" (Daniel 10:12). John is about to see the most terrible things ever shown to a man: wrath, war, plague, the fall of a great city, the lake of fire. But before he sees any of them, the one who will bring them about lays His hand on him and says, "Do not be afraid."

"I am the first and the last." Here is the reason not to fear. In Isaiah this is the LORD's own title: "Thus saith the LORD the King of Israel, and his redeemer the LORD of hosts; I am the first, and I am the last; and beside me there is no God" (Isaiah 44:6). God has given it to His Son. Isaiah's words are spoken by "the LORD the King of Israel"; Christ speaks them as the one to whom that King has given His own authority (Matthew 28:18). He is the first: first in God's purpose, "foreordained before the foundation of the world" (1 Peter 1:20), and "the first begotten of the dead" (1:5), the beginning of God's new creation. He is the last: the final word on all things, the one in whom God will bring all history to its end. Whatever John is about to see, it lies between that first and that last. Nothing he will see is outside Christ's hand.

The number. *The first and the last*. These are counting words, used as a title. First and last take in everything that can be counted between them. Applied to Christ, they say that He is first in God's purpose and last in its fulfilment: nothing in God's plan comes before Him, and nothing is left over after Him (see the note above, and 2:8; 22:13).

Figures of speech. "As dead" is a *Simile*: John was not dead, but lay like a dead man. "Fear not" is spoken with a negative command, but its force is wholly comfort.

> **Revelation 1:18** *I am he that liveth, and was dead; and, behold, I am alive for evermore, Amen; and have the keys of hell and of death.*

The Son of man goes on to tell John who He is. Each phrase is a reason for John not to be afraid.

"I am he that liveth." In Greek this is "and the Living One" (*ho zōn*). The God of Israel is "the living God" (Joshua 3:10), in contrast to the dead idols of the nations. Now the Son of man calls Himself "the Living One." He is not a memory, not a teacher who once lived. He lives.

"And was dead." Literally, "and I became dead." He who lives died. He did not only seem to die; He truly died, and was buried. John had seen it. He had stood at the cross and watched Him give up His life.

"And, behold, I am alive for evermore." "Behold": look at this! The figure *Asterismos* again, marking the wonder. He died, and now He lives "for evermore," literally "unto the ages of the ages." He was raised from the dead and will never die again: "death hath no more dominion over him" (Romans 6:9). By His death, His resurrection and His ascension to God's right hand He has done what no other could do. "This Jesus hath God raised up, whereof we all are witnesses. Therefore being by the right hand of God exalted ..." (Acts 2:32-33).

"Amen." The word of certainty, "so it is." (It stands in the Received Text and the Majority text; the critical texts lack it.)

"And have the keys of hell and of death." A key opens and shuts. Whoever holds the keys of a house has authority over who goes in and who comes out. In the time of King Hezekiah, God said of the faithful steward Eliakim, "And the key of the house of David will I lay upon his shoulder; so he shall open, and none shall shut; and he shall shut, and none shall open" (Isaiah 22:22). Christ will use those words of Himself to Philadelphia (3:7).

"Hell" here is not the place of fire. The Greek is *hadēs* (Strong's G86), the word the Greek Old Testament uses for the Hebrew *sheol*, the grave, the state of the dead. When Peter quoted David's words about Christ, "thou wilt not leave my soul in hell, neither wilt thou suffer thine Holy One to see corruption" (Acts 2:27, quoting Psalm 16:10), he meant that Christ would not be left in the grave. The King James Version itself renders the word "grave" in 1 Corinthians 15:55: "O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory?" The fire, the lake of fire, is a different thing, and it comes at the end of the book (20:14).

So "the keys of hell and of death" are the keys of the grave and of death. Death holds men; the grave keeps them. But Christ holds the keys to both. He went into death and came out of it, and now He has authority to open the graves of all who are in them. He said on earth, "the hour is coming, in the which all that are in the graves shall hear his voice, And shall come forth" (John 5:28-29). Hosea foretold it: "I will ransom them from the power of the grave; I will redeem them from death: O death, I will be thy plagues; O grave, I will be thy destruction" (Hosea 13:14). At the end of this book "death and hell delivered up the dead which were in them" (20:13), and then death and the grave themselves are cast into the lake of fire (20:14). The one who stands before John holds that future in His hand.

This is why John need not fear. The one before him has been where every man fears to go, and has come back with the keys.

Figures of speech. *Asterismos* in "behold," noted above. "Keys" is a *Metonymy*: the key is put for the authority it gives, the power to open and to shut. "Death and hell" (death and the grave) are spoken of as if they were places with doors, the figure *Prosopopoeia* (personification), which the book will carry further in 6:8 and 20:13-14.

> **Revelation 1:19** *Write the things which thou hast seen, and the things which are, and the things which shall be hereafter;*

Now the command of verse 11 is repeated, with the reason for it.

"Write." The command is renewed. John, lying on the ground a moment before, now has his task. "Therefore" stands in the Greek text (Majority and critical texts read "Write therefore"): because the Living One holds the keys, and because John has seen Him, he is to write.

"The things which thou hast seen." That is, what John had already seen: the vision of the Son of man (1:12-16), and everything else he would see.

"And the things which are." These words can be read in two ways. They can mean "the things that exist now," the present. Or they can mean "what they are," that is, what the things he saw *mean*. The same Greek verb (*eisin*, "they are") is used twice in the very next verse in exactly this sense: "The seven stars *are* the angels of the seven churches: and the seven candlesticks which thou sawest *are* the seven churches" (1:20). There "are" means "mean," "stand for." Bullinger and others take it this way here: write what you saw, and what it means.

"And the things which shall be hereafter." "Hereafter" is *meta tauta*, "after these things." The same words open chapter 4: "After this I looked ... Come up hither, and I will shew thee things which must be hereafter" (4:1). The phrase is the book's own signpost to what comes next.

Many interpreters divide the whole book by this verse: what John had seen (chapter 1), "the things which are" (chapters 2 and 3), and the things "hereafter" (chapters 4 to 22). But the book never calls chapters 2 and 3 "the things which are," and the phrase can just as well mean "what they signify." The verse is better read as what it plainly is: a command to write everything, the vision and its meaning together, and what follows after (Appendix A).

Figures of speech. The three parts of the command are joined by "and ... and," the figure *Polysyndeton*: each part of John's task is to be done fully.

> **Revelation 1:20** *The mystery of the seven stars which thou sawest in my right hand, and the seven golden candlesticks. The seven stars are the angels of the seven churches: and the seven candlesticks which thou sawest are the seven churches.*

The vision closes with an explanation. The first two signs of the book are explained at once, as an example of how the book will speak.

"The mystery of the seven stars which thou sawest in my right hand." "Mystery" is *mustērion* (Strong's G3466). In English the word suggests something puzzling or unknowable. In Scripture it means a secret:

something hidden that God now makes known. Daniel told Nebuchadnezzar, "there is a God in heaven that revealeth secrets" (Daniel 2:28). A mystery in this sense is not meant to stay a mystery; it is meant to be revealed. And here it is revealed at once. The stars John saw in the right hand of Christ have a hidden meaning, and Christ Himself tells it.

"And the seven golden candlesticks." The second sign. Both are explained in the rest of the verse.

"The seven stars are the angels of the seven churches." "Are" means "represent, signify." "Angel" (*angelos*) means "messenger," and the word is used both of heavenly beings and, a few times in the New Testament, of human messengers (as of John the Baptist, "Behold, I send my messenger before thy face," Matthew 11:10). Who, then, are "the angels of the seven churches"? Each message is addressed to one of them: "Unto the angel of the church of Ephesus write" (2:1).

The text does not explain it, and readers have long been divided. Some take the angels as men, the leaders or messengers of each assembly. But no church officer is anywhere in Scripture called an "angel," and in every other one of its many uses in Revelation the word means a heavenly messenger. Scripture also shows that God sets His angels over peoples. Daniel was told of "Michael, one of the chief princes" (Daniel 10:13), "Michael your prince" (Daniel 10:21), "the great prince which standeth for the children of thy people" (Daniel 12:1). Christ said of His little ones, "in heaven their angels do always behold the face of my Father which is in heaven" (Matthew 18:10). This study therefore takes "the angels of the seven churches" in the book's own sense of the word: heavenly messengers charged with each assembly, held in the right hand of Christ. But what matters most in the verse is not who the angels are, but where they are: every one of them is in His hand, and every message passes through them to the assembly itself, for each closes, "hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches."

"And the seven candlesticks which thou sawest are the seven churches." The lampstands are the assemblies. They exist to give light. Christ stands among them, sees each one, and speaks to each. Some of them still shine brightly; some are growing dim; one is in danger of having its lampstand taken away altogether (2:5). In the next two chapters He will tell each one what He sees.

The number. *Seven*, six times in one verse: seven stars, seven candlesticks, seven angels, seven churches, all named twice. The repetition fixes the number in the reader's mind before the seven messages begin. Seven is the number of spiritual perfection (see 1:4): seven messages make one complete message from heaven to the assemblies of the earth.

Figures of speech. "The seven stars are the angels," "the seven candlesticks ... are the seven churches": the figure *Metaphor*, in which one thing is said to *be* another because it stands for it. Bullinger notes that this is always the meaning of the Metaphor: "are" means "signify, represent." The book itself gives the key, so the reader does not need to guess.

To whom. "Churches" here are the seven assemblies of Asia, real assemblies of John's day (1:4, 11). The church of grace is called in Paul's letters "the church, Which is his body" (Ephesians 1:22-23); it is never called a lampstand, and its members are never said to be held as stars in Christ's right hand. The seven

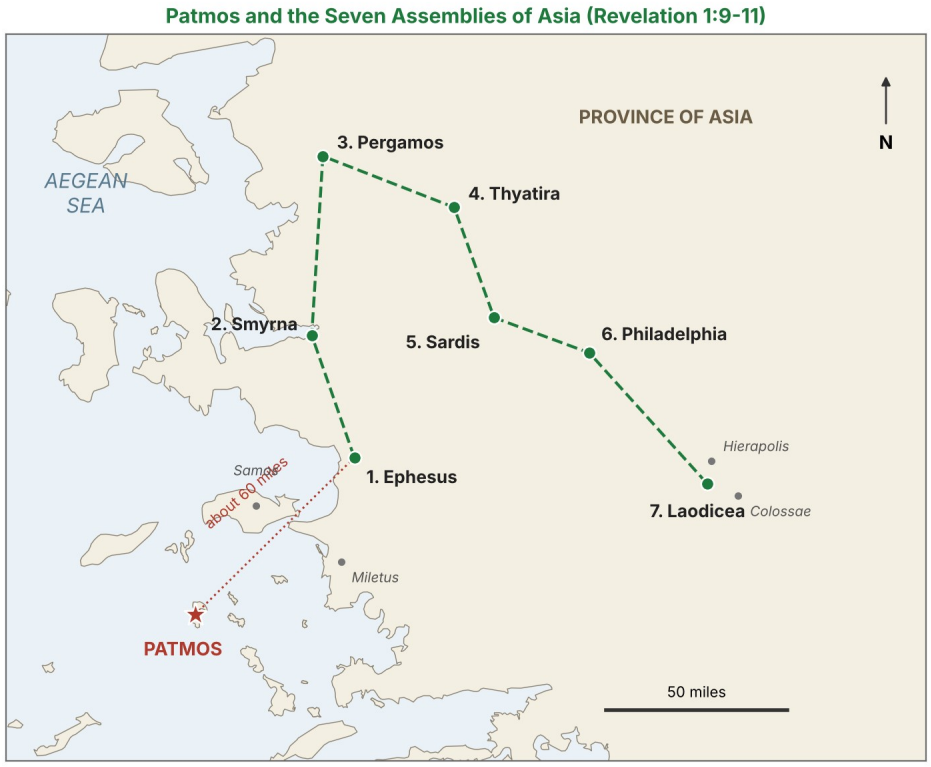
lampstands are the assemblies to which this book was sent, and they are about to hear Christ's word to them in the terms of the Day of the Lord (Part One, Chapter 3 §C; Appendix B).

In short. God gave Jesus Christ this revelation for His servants, and it begins with a blessing on all who read, hear and keep it, for the appointed time is near. John greets the seven assemblies of Asia with grace and peace from the LORD who is, was and is to come, from the seven Spirits before His throne, and from Jesus Christ, the faithful witness, the firstborn from the dead and the prince of the kings of the earth, who loves His people, washed them from their sins in His own blood, and has made them a kingdom of priests to God, as was promised to Israel. He is coming with the clouds; every eye will see Him, and the tribes of the land will mourn. John, a fellow-sufferer in exile on Patmos for his witness, is taken up in the Spirit, hears a voice like a trumpet, and turns to see the Son of man among the seven golden lampstands: robed as priest and judge, white as wool and snow, eyes of fire, feet of glowing bronze, voice like the sea, holding seven stars, the sword of His word in His mouth, His face like the sun. John falls as dead; Christ lays His hand on him and says, "Fear not." He who was dead and is alive for evermore holds the keys of death and the grave, and He tells John to write everything, beginning with the meaning of the stars and the lampstands.

Section B — 2:1–3:22. The Sermon from Heaven: Seven Messages to Seven Assemblies

Where it stands

The second member of the book: the people on the earth (B). Its partner is 21:1–22:5, the people of the new earth (Section P), where every promise made in these two chapters is kept. This is the sermon from heaven (Part One, Chapter 6). The Son of man whom John saw among the lampstands (1:12-20) now speaks to each assembly in turn. He tells each one what He sees, what He praises, what He holds against it, what it must do, and what He will give to the one who overcomes.



The seven cities of Asia, in the order the book names them (1:11), and the isle of Patmos.

Its structure

Seven messages, divided three and four by their own wording: in the first three the call to hear comes before the promise; in the last four, after it.

	Assembly	Verses	Christ's title (from chapter 1)	The promise to the overcomer
1	Ephesus	2:1-7	Holds the seven stars; walks among the lampstands	The tree of life
2	Smyrna	2:8-11	The first and the last, dead and alive	Not hurt of the second death
3	Pergamos	2:12-17	The sharp sword with two edges	Hidden manna; a white stone; a new name
4	Thyatira	2:18-29	Son of God; eyes of fire; feet of brass	Power over the nations; the morning star
5	Sardis	3:1-6	The seven Spirits and the seven stars	White raiment; name kept in the book of life
6	Philadelphia	3:7-13	Holy, true; the key of David	A pillar in the temple; three names
7	Laodicea	3:14-22	The Amen, the faithful and true witness	To sit with Him in His throne

Each message: the command to write; Christ's title; "I know thy works"; praise and fault; counsel; the call to hear; the promise. Smyrna and Philadelphia receive no fault; Laodicea no praise.

The text

Revelation 2. 1 Unto the angel of the church of Ephesus write; These things saith he that holdeth the seven stars in his right hand, who walketh in the midst of the seven golden candlesticks; **2** I know thy works, and thy labour, and thy patience, and how thou canst not bear them which are evil: and thou hast tried them which say they are apostles, and are not, and hast found them liars: **3** And hast borne, and hast patience, and for my name's sake hast laboured, and hast not fainted. **4** Nevertheless I have somewhat against thee, because thou hast left thy first love. **5** Remember therefore from whence thou art fallen, and repent, and do the first works; or else I will come unto thee quickly, and will remove thy candlestick out of his place, except thou repent. **6** But this thou hast, that thou hatest the deeds of the Nicolaitanes, which I also hate. **7** He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches; To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the tree of life, which is in the midst of the paradise of God. **8** And unto the angel of the church in Smyrna write; These things saith the first and the last, which was dead, and is alive; **9** I know thy works, and tribulation, and poverty, (but thou art rich) and I know the blasphemy of them which say they are Jews, and are not, but are the synagogue of Satan. **10** Fear none of those things which thou shalt suffer: behold, the devil shall cast some of you into prison, that ye may be tried; and ye shall have tribulation ten days: be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life. **11** He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches; He that overcometh shall not be hurt of the second death. **12** And to the angel of the church in Pergamos write; These things saith he which hath the sharp sword with two edges; **13** I know thy works, and where thou dwellest, even where Satan's seat is: and thou holdest fast my name, and hast not denied my faith, even in those days wherein Antipas was my faithful martyr, who was slain among you, where Satan dwelleth. **14** But I have a few things against thee, because thou hast there them that hold the doctrine of Balaam, who taught Balac to cast a stumblingblock before the children of Israel, to eat things sacrificed unto idols, and to commit fornication. **15** So hast thou also them that hold the doctrine of the Nicolaitanes, which thing I hate. **16** Repent; or else I will come unto thee quickly, and will fight against them with the sword of my mouth. **17** He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches; To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the hidden manna, and will give him a white stone, and in the stone a new name written, which no man knoweth saving he that receiveth it. **18** And unto the angel of the church in Thyatira write; These things saith the Son of God, who hath his eyes like unto a flame of fire, and his feet are like fine brass; **19** I know thy works, and charity, and service, and faith, and thy patience, and thy works; and the last to be more than the first. **20** Notwithstanding I have a few things against thee, because thou sufferest that woman Jezebel, which calleth herself a prophetess, to teach and to seduce my servants to commit fornication, and to eat things sacrificed unto idols. **21** And I gave her space to repent of her fornication; and she repented not. **22** Behold, I will cast her into a bed, and them that commit adultery with her into great tribulation, except they repent of their deeds. **23** And I will kill her children with death; and all the churches shall know that I am he which searcheth the reins and hearts: and I will give unto every one of you according to your works. **24** But

unto you I say, and unto the rest in Thyatira, as many as have not this doctrine, and which have not known the depths of Satan, as they speak; I will put upon you none other burden. **25** But that which ye have already hold fast till I come. **26** And he that overcometh, and keepeth my works unto the end, to him will I give power over the nations: **27** And he shall rule them with a rod of iron; as the vessels of a potter shall they be broken to shivers: even as I received of my Father. **28** And I will give him the morning star. **29** He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches.

Revelation 3. 1 And unto the angel of the church in Sardis write; These things saith he that hath the seven Spirits of God, and the seven stars; I know thy works, that thou hast a name that thou livest, and art dead. **2** Be watchful, and strengthen the things which remain, that are ready to die: for I have not found thy works perfect before God. **3** Remember therefore how thou hast received and heard, and hold fast, and repent. If therefore thou shalt not watch, I will come on thee as a thief, and thou shalt not know what hour I will come upon thee. **4** Thou hast a few names even in Sardis which have not defiled their garments; and they shall walk with me in white: for they are worthy. **5** He that overcometh, the same shall be clothed in white raiment; and I will not blot out his name out of the book of life, but I will confess his name before my Father, and before his angels. **6** He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches. **7** And to the angel of the church in Philadelphia write; These things saith he that is holy, he that is true, he that hath the key of David, he that openeth, and no man shutteth; and shutteth, and no man openeth; **8** I know thy works: behold, I have set before thee an open door, and no man can shut it: for thou hast a little strength, and hast kept my word, and hast not denied my name. **9** Behold, I will make them of the synagogue of Satan, which say they are Jews, and are not, but do lie; behold, I will make them to come and worship before thy feet, and to know that I have loved thee. **10** Because thou hast kept the word of my patience, I also will keep thee from the hour of temptation, which shall come upon all the world, to try them that dwell upon the earth. **11** Behold, I come quickly: hold that fast which thou hast, that no man take thy crown. **12** Him that overcometh will I make a pillar in the temple of my God, and he shall go no more out: and I will write upon him the name of my God, and the name of the city of my God, which is new Jerusalem, which cometh down out of heaven from my God: and I will write upon him my new name. **13** He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches. **14** And unto the angel of the church of the Laodiceans write; These things saith the Amen, the faithful and true witness, the beginning of the creation of God; **15** I know thy works, that thou art neither cold nor hot: I would thou wert cold or hot. **16** So then because thou art lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will spue thee out of my mouth. **17** Because thou sayest, I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing; and knowest not that thou art wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked: **18** I counsel thee to buy of me gold tried in the fire, that thou mayest be rich; and white raiment, that thou mayest be clothed, and that the shame of thy nakedness do not appear; and anoint thine eyes with eyesalve, that thou mayest see. **19** As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten: be zealous therefore, and repent. **20** Behold, I stand at the door, and knock: if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me. **21** To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me in my throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father in his throne. **22** He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches.

The map. The seven cities lie on the great circular road of the province of Asia, in the order of 1:11: from Ephesus north to Smyrna and Pergamos, then south-east to Thyatira, Sardis, Philadelphia and Laodicea. *(Map to be drawn for the final edition.)*

Before reading the messages. Three things from Part One will help the reader through these two chapters. First, these were real assemblies in real cities of John's day, and some details of each message fit the history of its city. Second, Christ speaks to them not in the terms of Paul's letters to the church of grace, but in the terms of the Day of the Lord: works, repentance, overcoming, and His coming (Part One, Chapter 3 §C). Third, every message was for every assembly, and for every hearer: "He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches."

Verse by verse

Where we are: on earth. Verses 2:1–3:22, the seven messages. The risen Christ, whom John has just seen (1:12-20), speaks to seven real assemblies of John's day, one after another, in the order a messenger would carry the book round the province of Asia. John is still on Patmos. Messages one to three (2:1-17) put the call to hear before the promise; messages four to seven (2:18–3:22) put it after.

> **Revelation 2:1** *Unto the angel of the church of Ephesus write; These things saith he that holdeth the seven stars in his right hand, who walketh in the midst of the seven golden candlesticks;*

The first message goes to Ephesus, the city nearest Patmos and the chief city of the province.

"Unto the angel of the church of Ephesus write." Each message begins the same way. "The angel" is one of the seven stars that John saw in Christ's right hand, "the angels of the seven churches" (1:20): the heavenly messenger charged with this assembly (see 1:20). Through him the message passes to the assembly itself, and through the assembly to all seven ("what the Spirit saith unto the churches," 2:7).

Ephesus was the greatest city of the province of Asia: a seaport at the mouth of the river Cayster, the seat of the Roman governor, and the home of the great temple of the goddess Artemis, whom the Romans called Diana, one of the wonders of the ancient world. Its people were proud to call their city her "temple-keeper." When Paul's preaching began to hurt the trade in silver shrines, the whole city filled with the shout, "Great is Diana of the Ephesians" (Acts 19:34).

The word of God had a long history in Ephesus. Paul taught there for three years. He said to its elders, "by the space of three years I ceased not to warn every one night and day with tears" (Acts 20:31). The silversmiths complained that "not alone at Ephesus, but almost throughout all Asia, this Paul hath persuaded and turned away much people" (Acts 19:26). Paul left Timothy there to guard the teaching (1 Timothy 1:3). And the early church remembered that John himself lived in Ephesus in his old age.

"These things saith he that holdeth the seven stars in his right hand." Each message begins with a title of the speaker, drawn from the vision of chapter 1. Here the title comes from 1:16 and 1:20. In chapter 1 John saw that He "had" the seven stars; here He "holdeth" them, *kratōn* (Strong's G2902), "holding fast, gripping firmly." The word is stronger. Not one of them can slip from His grasp.

"Who walketh in the midst of the seven golden candlesticks." In chapter 1 He stood "in the midst of the seven candlesticks" (1:13). Here He "walketh" among them. He moves from one to another, as the priest in the tabernacle went to each lamp to trim it and see that it burned (Exodus 30:7-8). He sees each assembly up close. Ephesus, with all its history and all its gifts, is about to learn that nothing about it has escaped His eye.

The numbers. *Seven* stars and *seven* golden candlesticks (see 1:20). Ephesus is addressed first, and the title Christ takes for it names all seven: what He says to one, He says in the sight of all.

Figures of speech. "These things saith he" is a formula, repeated at the head of all seven messages, which marks each as the very word of the risen Christ. The prophets used the same form: "Thus saith the LORD." The stars and the lampstands are *Metaphors*, already explained (1:20).

> **Revelation 2:2** *I know thy works, and thy labour, and thy patience, and how thou canst not bear them which are evil: and thou hast tried them which say they are apostles, and are not, and hast found them liars:*

Christ begins with what He can praise. Before He says anything against Ephesus, He tells it what He has seen that is good.

"I know thy works." "Know" is *oida* (Strong's G1492), "to know by seeing, to know fully." It is not "I have heard about," but "I have seen, and I know." Every message to the seven assemblies begins with these words. To some it is a comfort; to others it is a warning. Nothing is hidden. "Works" (*erga*) means deeds, what a man does. Christ judges an assembly first by what it does.

"And thy labour." "Labour" is *kopos* (Strong's G2873), not simply work but toil to the point of weariness: the labour that leaves a man exhausted at the end of the day. Ephesus worked hard. Paul used the same word of his own ministry, "in labours more abundant" (2 Corinthians 11:23).

"And thy patience." "Patience" is *hupomonē* (Strong's G5281), "remaining under": steadfast endurance under pressure, without giving way (see 1:9). Ephesus had not given up.

"And how thou canst not bear them which are evil." "Bear" is *bastazō*, "to carry, to put up with." Ephesus could not put up with evil men in its midst. It would not let them stay.

"And thou hast tried them which say they are apostles, and are not." "Tried" is *peirazō*, "to test, to put to the proof." An "apostle" (*apostolos*) is "one sent," a messenger sent with authority. Men had come to Ephesus claiming to be sent by Christ, and the assembly did not simply take their word for it. It tested them. Paul had warned the elders of Ephesus that this would happen:

> **Acts 20:29-30** — *For I know this, that after my departing shall grievous wolves enter in among you, not sparing the flock. Also of your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them.*

Paul wrote of such men to the Corinthians: "For such are false apostles, deceitful workers, transforming themselves into the apostles of Christ" (2 Corinthians 11:13). And John himself had written, "Beloved,

believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God: because many false prophets are gone out into the world" (1 John 4:1). How do you test a man who claims to speak for God? By the word God has already given. Moses told Israel, "When a prophet speaketh in the name of the LORD, if the thing follow not, nor come to pass, that is the thing which the LORD hath not spoken" (Deuteronomy 18:22). Isaiah said, "To the law and to the testimony: if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them" (Isaiah 8:20).

"And hast found them liars." Ephesus did the testing, and reached a verdict. These men were "liars": their claim was false. Christ commends them for it.

Figures of speech. The praise is built of a long string of "ands," "thy works, and thy labour, and thy patience, and how thou canst not bear ... and thou hast tried ... and hast found," the figure *Polysyndeton* ("many ands"). Each thing Christ praises is set out by itself, so that Ephesus may see that He has noticed every one. Verses 2 and 3 are also built as a mirror: works, labour, patience, cannot bear evil (verse 2); then hast borne, patience, laboured, not fainted (verse 3).

To whom. "I know thy works" will open every one of the seven messages. Under grace Paul wrote that salvation is "Not of works, lest any man should boast" (Ephesians 2:9). Here, in a message given in the terms of the Day of the Lord, works are the first thing Christ looks at, as He said of that time: "For the Son of man shall come in the glory of his Father with his angels; and then he shall reward every man according to his works" (Matthew 16:27). The assembly is judged by what it does (Part One, Chapter 3 §C).

> **Revelation 2:3** *And hast borne, and hast patience, and for my name's sake hast laboured, and hast not fainted.*

Verse 3 repeats the praise of verse 2 in reverse order, as if Christ were going back over each point to be sure Ephesus heard it.

"And hast borne." In verse 2 Ephesus "canst not bear" evil men. Here it "hast borne": the same verb, *bastazō*. There was a burden Ephesus would not carry, and a burden it did carry. It would not carry evil men; it did carry hardship, opposition and labour for Christ's sake. Paul told the Galatians, "Bear ye one another's burdens" (Galatians 6:2), using the same word.

"And hast patience." The second mention of *hupomonē* in two verses. Their endurance was not a single act but a settled habit: they "have" it.

"And for my name's sake hast laboured." Here is the motive. They had laboured "for my name's sake": because of Christ's name, for His honour. In Scripture a name stands for the person himself and all that he is. Christ had told His disciples, "ye shall be hated of all men for my name's sake: but he that endureth to the end shall be saved" (Matthew 10:22). Ephesus had borne the cost of His name.

"And hast not fainted." "Fainted" means "grown weary, given up." In the Greek there is a play on words with verse 2. There Christ praised their "labour" (*kopos*); here He says they have "not grown weary" (*ou kekopiakes*, from *kopiaō*, the verb of the same word). They had laboured to exhaustion, and yet had not

given in to exhaustion. They toiled, and did not tire of toiling. Isaiah wrote, "they that wait upon the LORD shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run, and not be weary; and they shall walk, and not faint" (Isaiah 40:31).

Here is an assembly any of us would admire: hard-working, patient, sound in doctrine, intolerant of evil, loyal to Christ's name, and still going after many years. And yet the next verse brings a charge that outweighs all of it.

Figures of speech. The play on "labour" (verse 2) and "not grown weary" (verse 3), two forms from one root, is the figure *Paronomasia* ("a play on words"), which makes the reader notice the link: they laboured, yet did not let the labour wear them out. The repetition of "borne" in reverse ("canst not bear" ... "hast borne") sets two kinds of bearing side by side.

> **Revelation 2:4** *Nevertheless I have somewhat against thee, because thou hast left thy first love.*

After all that praise, one sentence of charge. It is short, and it is devastating.

"Nevertheless I have somewhat against thee." "Nevertheless" is the Greek *alla*, "but." The word "somewhat" is in italics in the King James Version, because it is not in the Greek. The Greek says simply, "But I have against thee." What Christ holds against them is not "somewhat," a small thing; it is the next phrase, and it is everything.

"Because thou hast left thy first love." "Left" is *aphēkas*, from *aphiēmi* (Strong's G863), "to send away, to let go, to abandon." It is the word used when the disciples "left their nets, and followed him" (Matthew 4:20). Ephesus had let go of its first love, as a man lets go of something he once held tight. It did not lose it by accident; it let it go.

"First love" is the love they had at the beginning: the love with which they first turned to God and to Christ, and loved one another. The word is *agapē* (Strong's G26), the love that gives itself for another. "First" can mean first in time, the love they had when they first believed, and first in rank, the chief love, the love that should come before all else. Both are true here. When the word of the Lord first came to Ephesus, many who practised magic burned their books in public, books worth "fifty thousand pieces of silver. So mightily grew the word of God and prevailed" (Acts 19:19-20). That was first love: glad, costly, whole-hearted. Now the work went on, the doctrine was guarded, the labour continued; but the love that had first moved it had gone cold.

Christ had foretold this very thing of the last days: "And because iniquity shall abound, the love of many shall wax cold. But he that shall endure unto the end, the same shall be saved" (Matthew 24:12-13). Jeremiah had spoken the same reproach to Israel, reminding her of the love of her youth, when she followed God through the wilderness (Jeremiah 2:2, quoted at the next verse). And Christ had said what the greatest commandment is:

> **Matthew 22:37-38** — *Jesus said unto him, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. This is the first and great commandment.*

Paul wrote that without love, everything else is nothing: "though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, and though I give my body to be burned, and have not charity, it profiteth me nothing" (1 Corinthians 13:3). Ephesus had all the works, and was losing the one thing that gives them worth.

Figures of speech. The charge is set against the long praise of verses 2-3 without softening, a sharp turn by contrast. The italic "somewhat" added by the translators weakens it; without it the sentence stands bare: "But I have against thee, that thou hast left thy first love."

> **Revelation 2:5** *Remember therefore from whence thou art fallen, and repent, and do the first works; or else I will come unto thee quickly, and will remove thy candlestick out of his place, except thou repent.*

Verse 4 laid the charge: "thou hast left thy first love." Verse 5 gives the cure. It comes as three commands, remember, repent, and do, followed by a warning, and the verse ends where its commands began, with repentance.

"Remember therefore." The little word "therefore" ties this verse to the charge before it: *because* you have left your first love, remember. The Greek verb (*mnēmoneue*, Strong's G3421) is in the present tense, which means "keep on remembering." It does not ask for one glance back; it asks Ephesus to hold its past before its eyes and keep it there. There was a great deal to remember. When the word of the Lord first came to Ephesus, those who had practised magic "brought their books together, and burned them before all men: and they counted the price of them, and found it fifty thousand pieces of silver. So mightily grew the word of God and prevailed" (Acts 19:19-20). That was first love: a whole-hearted turning, costly and glad. God has always called His people home by their memories. Moses told Israel, "thou shalt remember all the way which the LORD thy God led thee these forty years in the wilderness" (Deuteronomy 8:2). Through Jeremiah God reminded Israel of its own first love:

> **Jeremiah 2:2** — *Go and cry in the ears of Jerusalem, saying, Thus saith the LORD; I remember thee, the kindness of thy youth, the love of thine espousals, when thou wentest after me in the wilderness, in a land that was not sown.*

Remembering is the first step back, because it shows how far one has drifted.

"From whence thou art fallen." Christ does not say "how far" but "from whence": from what height. Ephesus had stood high, and it had fallen. The verb (*peptōkas*, from *piptō*, Strong's G4098, "to fall") is in the Greek perfect tense: a fall that took place in the past and still stands as their present condition. This is the sobering lesson of the verse. Ephesus was still busy, still patient, still sound in doctrine (2:2-3), and yet Christ calls it fallen. An assembly can be full of good works and correct teaching and still have fallen, because the love that once moved the works has gone out of them.

"And repent." Here the word "repent" appears for the first time in Revelation. It will be heard twelve times in the book, eight of them in these seven messages. The Greek word is *metanoeō* (Strong's G3340), made from *meta*, which here marks a change, and *noeō*, "to think, to perceive." To repent is to change the mind: to think again about what one has been doing, and so to turn from it. Repentance is not the same as feeling sorry. Sorrow may lead to it, as Paul wrote, "godly sorrow worketh repentance"

(2 Corinthians 7:10), but repentance itself is the change of mind, and a changed mind shows itself in a changed life. John the Baptist told those who came to him, "Bring forth therefore fruits meet for repentance" (Matthew 3:8). Here the fruit is named at once.

"And do the first works." Not new works, but the first ones: the works their first love had once produced. The command in Greek (*poiēson*) is a single, decisive act: do them, now. Love and works belong together. Christ told His disciples, "If ye love me, keep my commandments" (John 14:15). Ephesus still worked (2:2), but its works were no longer "first works," done out of love; they had become labour carried on after the love had cooled.

"Or else I will come unto thee quickly." "Or else" is, in Greek, "but if not." This coming is a coming in judgment on one assembly. It is not the Lord's coming at the end of the age, which no one's repentance could prevent; this coming concerns Ephesus alone, and Ephesus could prevent it by repenting (Part One, Chapter 3 §C). "Quickly" means without delay: the same word is in the Lord's last promise, "Surely I come quickly" (22:20).

"And will remove thy candlestick out of his place." The candlestick, or lampstand, was explained in the vision of chapter 1: "the seven candlesticks which thou sawest are the seven churches" (1:20). Christ "walketh in the midst of the seven golden candlesticks" (2:1). A lampstand has one purpose: to hold up a light. In the tabernacle the lampstand was kept burning "before the LORD" from evening to morning (Exodus 27:21). To "remove" it (*kinēsō*, Strong's G2795, "to move, to shift out of place") is to take away the assembly's place as a light-bearer before Him. The people might go on meeting; but they would no longer stand in His presence as His lampstand, giving His light.

"Except thou repent." The verse ends as its commands began, with repentance. Everything hangs on it: if they repent, the lampstand stays.

Figures of speech. "Repent" is said twice in one verse, first as a command ("and repent") and then as a condition ("except thou repent"). In Greek these are two forms of the same verb, the figure Bullinger calls *Polyptoton* ("many inflections"): one word repeated in different forms, so that the reader cannot miss it. Scripture uses doubling to make a matter sure. Joseph told Pharaoh, "for that the dream was doubled unto Pharaoh twice; it is because the thing is established by God" (Genesis 41:32), and the law required that "at the mouth of two witnesses, or at the mouth of three witnesses, shall the matter be established" (Deuteronomy 19:15). Christ's double "repent" establishes the matter: there is no other way back. The commands are also joined by a string of "ands" ("Remember ... and repent, and do"), the figure *Polysyndeton* ("many ands"), which makes each step stand by itself and count. "Candlestick" is a *Metaphor*: Christ has already said that the candlesticks *are* the assemblies (1:20).

To whom. Ephesus is the assembly to which Paul's letter to the Ephesians was sent, and a reader may well ask how the same believers could be warned that their lampstand would be removed. Paul had written to them as people "sealed with that holy Spirit of promise" (Ephesians 1:13), saved "by grace ... through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: Not of works" (Ephesians 2:8-9). Nothing given in grace is taken back for failing to do "the first works." The answer is that this message was sent to the assembly in Ephesus in John's day, but Christ does not speak to it in the terms of Paul's letter. He

speaks of works, of repentance as the condition of keeping one's place, and of His coming in judgment: the terms of the Day of the Lord, not of grace (Part One, Chapter 3 §C). The believer today learns from this verse what Christ values, love that shows in works, but he is not to read it as a threat against his own standing in grace.

> **Revelation 2:6** *But this thou hast, that thou hatest the deeds of the Nicolaitanes, which I also hate.*

"But this thou hast." After the rebuke of verses 4 and 5, Christ turns back to praise. Bullinger names this turn the figure *Palinodia* ("singing again"): a word of approval spoken after a reproof. He notes it here and again at Sardis (3:4-5). Christ does not leave a faithful assembly with rebuke alone. Having shown them their fall, He reminds them of one thing they still hold rightly.

"That thou hatest the deeds of the Nicolaitans." The King James Version spells the name "Nicolaitanes." They are named twice in Scripture: here, and in the message to Pergamos (2:15). Scripture does not say who founded them or when, and the reader should not need history to understand them. Christ meant to be understood by the assemblies who heard Him, and the name itself, which every Greek-speaking hearer would understand at once, tells what they were.

The name is made of two Greek words. The first is *nikaō* (Strong's G3528), "to conquer, to prevail over." The second is *laos* (Strong's G2992), "the people." A Nicolaitan is "one who conquers the people," one who prevails over them and lords it over them. It is striking that the first half of the name is the very word Christ uses in the next verse for His promise: "To him that overcometh" (*nikaō*, 2:7). Christ calls His people to overcome; the Nicolaitans overcame God's people.

The message to Pergamos confirms this reading by the company in which it sets them:

> **Revelation 2:14-15** — *But I have a few things against thee, because thou hast there them that hold the doctrine of Balaam, who taught Balac to cast a stumblingblock before the children of Israel, to eat things sacrificed unto idols, and to commit fornication. So hast thou also them that hold the doctrine of the Nicolaitanes, which thing I hate.*

"So hast thou also": the two teachings are set side by side as the same kind of thing. Balaam was the prophet hired by Balak, king of Moab, to curse Israel (Numbers 22–24). When God would not let him curse them, he showed Balak how to make Israel bring a curse on itself: "these caused the children of Israel, through the counsel of Balaam, to commit trespass against the LORD in the matter of Peor" (Numbers 31:16). Peter describes him as one "who loved the wages of unrighteousness" (2 Peter 2:15). His Hebrew name, *Bil'am*, is generally explained from *bala'*, "to swallow up, destroy," and *'am*, "people": "destroyer of the people." So the Hebrew name and the Greek name say much the same thing. Balaam in the Old Testament, and the Nicolaitans in the New, are those who make themselves masters of God's people for their own gain, and lead them astray.

Scripture shows plainly what God thinks of such men. Through Ezekiel He spoke against the shepherds of Israel:

> **Ezekiel 34:2-4** — *Son of man, prophesy against the shepherds of Israel, prophesy, and say unto them, Thus saith the Lord GOD unto the shepherds; Woe be to the shepherds of Israel that do feed*

> *themselves! should not the shepherds feed the flocks? Ye eat the fat, and ye clothe you with the wool, ye kill them that are fed: but ye feed not the flock. The diseased have ye not strengthened, neither have ye healed that which was sick, neither have ye bound up that which was broken, neither have ye brought again that which was driven away, neither have ye sought that which was lost; but with force and with cruelty have ye ruled them.*

Christ forbade His own disciples to rule this way: "Ye know that the princes of the Gentiles exercise dominion over them, and they that are great exercise authority upon them. But it shall not be so among you" (Matthew 20:25-26). Peter told the elders to feed the flock of God, "Neither as being lords over God's heritage, but being ensamples to the flock" (1 Peter 5:3). John himself had met such a man: "Diotrephes, who loveth to have the preeminence among them, receiveth us not" (3 John 9).

Notice, too, the difference between the two messages. In Ephesus there are "deeds" of the Nicolaitans, and Ephesus hates them. In Pergamos there is a "doctrine" of the Nicolaitans, and some there "hold" it (2:15). What begins as a practice, men lording it over the people, becomes in time a teaching that is held and defended.

(An early tradition connects the name with Nicolas of Antioch, one of the seven chosen in Acts 6:5; the evidence for it is set out in Appendix C, Question 19. The text itself makes no such connection, and the meaning of the name does not depend on it.)

"Which I also hate." This is strong language from the lips of Christ, and it is a key to the verse. He does not say He hates the Nicolaitans; He hates their *deeds*. God hates what destroys His people. "These six things doth the LORD hate," wrote Solomon, and among them is "he that soweth discord among brethren" (Proverbs 6:16, 19). To those who love Him He says, "Ye that love the LORD, hate evil" (Psalm 97:10). Ephesus had left its first love, but it had not lost this: it still hated what Christ hates. The word "also" joins them: "thou hatest ... which I also hate." In this one thing, at least, their heart still beat with His.

Figures of speech. *Palinodia* (approval after reproof), noted above. The name "Nicolaitans" is not a figure, but a plain Greek compound whose meaning lay open to every hearer.

To whom. Christ commends Ephesus for hating what He hates. Under grace Paul also warned the elders of this same Ephesus of men who would "draw away disciples after them" (Acts 20:30). The danger of men who make themselves masters of God's people is the same in every age; what differs is the setting. Here it is part of a message given in the terms of the Day of the Lord, and its answer is Christ's own judgment on such deeds (2:16).

> **Revelation 2:7** *He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches; To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the tree of life, which is in the midst of the paradise of God.*

Each of the seven messages closes with a call to hear and a promise. In the first three the call comes first; in the last four it comes after the promise (Part One, Chapter 6 §C).

"He that hath an ear, let him hear." Christ had used these words on earth. After His parable of the sower He said, "Who hath ears to hear, let him hear" (Matthew 13:9), and after explaining the harvest at

the end of the age, "Then shall the righteous shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father. Who hath ears to hear, let him hear" (Matthew 13:43). The same call is found in Matthew 11:15, Mark 4:9 and 23, Luke 8:8 and 14:35. It is always spoken in His teaching to Israel about the kingdom, and it is never found in Paul's letters (Part One, Chapter 6 §A).

Everyone has ears, but not everyone hears. God told Isaiah to say to Israel, "Hear ye indeed, but understand not" (Isaiah 6:9), and Christ quoted those words of the crowds who heard His parables and did not understand them (Matthew 13:13-15). To "hear" in the Bible's language is more than to catch the sound of words. Israel's great confession begins, "Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God is one LORD" (Deuteronomy 6:4): to hear is to listen, to understand, and to obey.

In the Gospels Christ said "ears"; here He says "an ear." The call is to each one alone. Whatever the assembly as a whole may do, the single hearer is responsible for what he hears.

"What the Spirit saith unto the churches." Each message opens with "These things saith he" (2:1), followed by a title of the risen Christ, and each closes with "what the Spirit saith." What Christ says, the Spirit says. Is the Spirit, then, God? The answer is in the first verse of the book: this is the revelation "which God gave unto him" (1:1). The words come from God, who "is a Spirit" (John 4:24), and are given through His Son. Christ said of His words on earth, "the words that I speak unto you, they are spirit, and they are life" (John 6:63), and "the Father which sent me, he gave me a commandment, what I should say" (John 12:49). Later in the book an angel tells John, "the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy" (19:10). So "the Spirit" who speaks to the assemblies is God Himself, speaking by revelation through His Son. It is not a second speaker beside Christ, nor a third beside the Father and the Son.

"Unto the churches" is plural. The message is addressed to Ephesus, but it is for all seven. Every assembly was to hear every message.

"To him that overcometh." "Overcometh" is *nikaō* (Strong's G3528), "to conquer, to prevail." It is in the present tense: the one who goes on overcoming. Overcome what? For Ephesus, the cooling of its first love. Throughout the book, overcoming means holding fast to Christ against every pressure to let go. The overcomers of chapter 12 "overcame him by the blood of the Lamb, and by the word of their testimony; and they loved not their lives unto the death" (12:11). Christ Himself is the first overcomer: "even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father in his throne" (3:21).

"Will I give to eat of the tree of life." The tree of life first appears in the garden: "And out of the ground made the LORD God to grow every tree that is pleasant to the sight, and good for food; the tree of life also in the midst of the garden" (Genesis 2:9). When man sinned, the way to it was shut:

> **Genesis 3:22-24** — *And the LORD God said, Behold, the man is become as one of us, to know good and evil: and now, lest he put forth his hand, and take also of the tree of life, and eat, and live for ever: Therefore the LORD God sent him forth from the garden of Eden, to till the ground from whence he was taken. So he drove out the man; and he placed at the east of the garden of Eden Cherubims, and a flaming sword which turned every way, to keep the way of the tree of life.*

To eat of it is to "live for ever." What Adam lost, Christ promises to give back. And He Himself will give it: "will I give."

"Which is in the midst of the paradise of God." "Paradise" (*paradeisos*, Strong's G3857) is a word borrowed from the Persian, meaning an enclosed garden or park. The Greek translation of the Old Testament used it for the garden of Eden ("the LORD God planted a garden eastward in Eden," Genesis 2:8). It is found only three times in the New Testament. The dying thief asked, "Lord, remember me when thou comest into thy kingdom" (Luke 23:42), and was promised a place with Him in paradise (Luke 23:43). Paul was "caught up into paradise" in "visions and revelations of the Lord" (2 Corinthians 12:1, 4). And here.

Where, then, is paradise, and when? Not in the past, for Eden was closed. Not a place to which the dead go now, for the thief asked to be remembered when Christ *comes* into His kingdom. Revelation itself shows where it is. At the end of the book, after the new heaven and the new earth, John sees the holy city, and "In the midst of the street of it, and on either side of the river, was there the tree of life" (22:2). The paradise of God is the garden restored, in the city of God, on the new earth. The prophets had looked for it: "he will make her wilderness like Eden, and her desert like the garden of the LORD" (Isaiah 51:3). Christ's promise to Ephesus will be kept there (22:14).

Figures of speech. "He that hath an ear, let him hear" closes all seven messages. Bullinger names the phrase a *Polyptoton* (in Greek the same root is repeated in two forms) and its sevenfold repetition the figure *Amoebaeon*, a solemn refrain, like the chorus of a psalm, repeated at the end of each part so that it cannot be overlooked.

To whom. The call "He that hath an ear" belongs to Christ's teaching to Israel about the kingdom, and the promise "To him that overcometh" is a reward held out for enduring to the end: "he that shall endure unto the end, the same shall be saved" (Matthew 24:13). Under grace, Paul writes to believers that they *are* already "more than conquerors through him that loved us" (Romans 8:37), and their hope is the gift of God, not a reward for overcoming. These are the terms of the Day of the Lord (Part One, Chapter 3 §C).

> **Revelation 2:8** *And unto the angel of the church in Smyrna write; These things saith the first and the last, which was dead, and is alive;*

The second message goes north along the coast to Smyrna, about forty miles from Ephesus.

"And unto the angel of the church in Smyrna write." The same opening as before. Smyrna was a beautiful and wealthy seaport, with a fine harbour, proud of its loyalty to Rome. It had built a temple to the emperor Tiberius in A.D. 26, after winning the honour against the other cities of Asia. Its name is the Greek word for myrrh, the fragrant gum used in embalming the dead. Myrrh was among the gifts the wise men brought to the young child (Matthew 2:11), and Nicodemus brought "a mixture of myrrh and aloes" to wrap the body of Jesus for burial (John 19:39). Myrrh gives off its fragrance when it is crushed. The assembly in Smyrna was about to be crushed.

"These things saith the first and the last." The title comes from 1:17. To an assembly facing suffering and death, Christ says first: I stand at the beginning of God's purpose and at its end; whatever happens to you lies between, and none of it is outside My hand. In Isaiah this is the LORD's own name: "I am the first, and I am the last; and beside me there is no God" (Isaiah 44:6). God has given it to His Son (see 1:17).

"Which was dead, and is alive." The title comes from 1:18. In Greek it is "who became dead, and lived": He went into death, and came out of it alive. To a suffering assembly no title could mean more. They may have to die; He has died, and lives. Whatever they face, He has gone through it before them, and has come out the other side.

The words fitted the city itself. Smyrna had been destroyed by the Lydians about six hundred years before Christ, and for three centuries there was no city there, only scattered villages. Then it was built again, more splendid than before. Ramsay writes that the city, like the One who addressed its assembly, "was dead and lived." The believers in Smyrna, who knew their city's story, would have heard the title with special force.

The number. *The first and the last* (see 1:17). To an assembly about to be crushed, the title says that their suffering does not come first and does not have the last word: Christ was there before it, as the first of God's purpose, and will stand after it.

Figures of speech. "Was dead, and is alive" sets two opposites side by side, death and life, the figure *Antithesis* ("setting against"), so that the reader sees the whole victory of Christ in four words.

> **Revelation 2:9** *I know thy works, and tribulation, and poverty, (but thou art rich) and I know the blasphemy of them which say they are Jews, and are not, but are the synagogue of Satan.*

"I know thy works, and tribulation, and poverty." To Smyrna, as to every assembly, Christ begins, "I know." Nothing they suffered was hidden from Him. Three things are joined by "and ... and," the figure *Polysyndeton*, so that each stands out by itself.

"Tribulation" is *thlipsis* (Strong's G2347), from *thlibō*, "to press, to squeeze." It is the pressure that crushes, as grapes are crushed in a press. Christ had told His disciples, "In the world ye shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world" (John 16:33).

"Poverty" is *ptōcheia* (Strong's G4432). Greek had two words for "poor." One (*penēs*) described a man who works for his living and has little to spare; this one describes the man who has nothing at all and must beg. The assembly in Smyrna was destitute, very likely because their persecutors had stripped them of their goods.

"(But thou art rich)." In the middle of the sentence Christ stops to say this. The parenthesis is itself a figure (Bullinger's *Parenthesis*): an insertion that interrupts the sentence to put a thought exactly where it is needed. Poor in goods, they were rich toward God. "Hath not God chosen the poor of this world rich in faith, and heirs of the kingdom which he hath promised to them that love him?" (James 2:5). Christ had taught, "lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt"

(Matthew 6:20). Smyrna is the opposite of Laodicea, which said, "I am rich," and did not know that it was "poor, and blind, and naked" (3:17).

"And I know the blasphemy of them which say they are Jews, and are not." "Blasphemy" (*blasphēmia*, Strong's G988) means evil-speaking: slander, reviling, words that injure. It is used of speech against God, but also of slander against men, and here it is the slander that Smyrna suffered from its enemies. The book of Acts shows this happening wherever the word went out: at Antioch in Pisidia "the Jews … spake against those things which were spoken by Paul, contradicting and blaspheming" (Acts 13:45). Some decades after John wrote, when Polycarp, the elder of Smyrna, was burned (about A.D. 155), the account of his death records that the Jews of the city joined the heathen crowd in crying for it (*Martyrdom of Polycarp* 12–13).

"Which say they are Jews, and are not." They claimed the name of God's people, and Christ denies their claim. The name "Jew" comes from Judah, and Judah means "praise": when he was born, Leah said, "Now will I praise the LORD: therefore she called his name Judah" (Genesis 29:35). Paul used that meaning:

> **Romans 2:28-29** — *For he is not a Jew, which is one outwardly; neither is that circumcision, which is outward in the flesh: But he is a Jew, which is one inwardly; and circumcision is that of the heart, in the spirit, and not in the letter; whose praise is not of men, but of God.*

A true Jew is one whose praise is from God. Christ had said the same to those who claimed Abraham as their father and sought to kill Him: "If ye were Abraham's children, ye would do the works of Abraham" (John 8:39). "For they are not all Israel, which are of Israel" (Romans 9:6).

"But are the synagogue of Satan." Here is a new term, and a terrible one. "Synagogue" (*synagōgē*, Strong's G4864) means "a gathering together," from *syn*, "together," and *agō*, "to bring." It was the usual name for a Jewish assembly and its meeting place; Christ "went into the synagogue on the sabbath day" at Nazareth (Luke 4:16). "Satan" is a Hebrew word meaning "adversary," the one who opposes. He is named here for the first time in Revelation; chapter 12 gives all his names: "that old serpent, called the Devil, and Satan, which deceiveth the whole world" (12:9).

So "the synagogue of Satan" is a gathering that bears the name of God's people but serves God's adversary. Christ said to those who opposed Him, "Ye are of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father ye will do" (John 8:44). The Psalmist had spoken of "the congregation of evil doers" (Psalm 26:5). The point is not their race, but whose work they do. They called themselves the assembly of God; Christ names whose assembly they really are. The same words are spoken to Philadelphia, with a promise: "I will make them to come and worship before thy feet, and to know that I have loved thee" (3:9).

Figures of speech. *Polysyndeton* ("and tribulation, and poverty"), and the *Parenthesis* "(but thou art rich)," both noted above.

To whom. Who is a true Jew, and who only claims the name, is a question that matters greatly in this message, and it shows the administration the message belongs to. Under grace Paul wrote, "There is neither Jew nor Greek … for ye are all one in Christ Jesus" (Galatians 3:28). In the Day of the Lord, God

deals again with Israel as a nation, as Paul foretold: "blindness in part is happened to Israel, until the fulness of the Gentiles be come in. And so all Israel shall be saved" (Romans 11:25-26). Then the difference between the true Jew and the false will be at the centre of events (7:4-8; 11:1-2; 12:1-17).

> **Revelation 2:10** *Fear none of those things which thou shalt suffer: behold, the devil shall cast some of you into prison, that ye may be tried; and ye shall have tribulation ten days: be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life.*

Smyrna is not rebuked. Christ has no charge against it. Instead, He prepares it for what is coming.

"Fear none of those things which thou shalt suffer." Christ does not promise that they will not suffer. He tells them plainly that they will: "which thou shalt suffer." What He forbids is fear. The Greek is emphatic: "Fear nothing of what you are about to suffer." He had said to John, "Fear not" (1:17); now He says it to Smyrna. He had told His disciples on earth, "fear not them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul" (Matthew 10:28).

"Behold, the devil shall cast some of you into prison." "Behold": look, mark this. "The devil" is *diabolos* (Strong's G1228), "the slanderer, the accuser," from *diaballō*, "to throw across, to accuse." It is a name of Satan (12:9). Men would throw the believers into prison, but Christ shows who stands behind the men: the devil himself. The "blasphemy" of the false synagogue (2:9) would lead to arrest. Prison in the ancient world was usually not a punishment in itself; it was the place where the accused waited for trial, and often for death.

"That ye may be tried." "Tried" is *peirazō*, "to test, to prove." The devil means it for their harm; God allows it for their proving. Peter wrote of the same kind of trial: "That the trial of your faith, being much more precious than of gold that perisheth, though it be tried with fire, might be found unto praise and honour and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ" (1 Peter 1:7). Gold is put in the fire not to destroy it but to show that it is gold.

"And ye shall have tribulation ten days." "Tribulation" again is *thlipsis*, pressing, crushing (see 1:9 and 2:9). "Ten days": the trial has a set length. Christ names it in advance, and it will not run one day longer. Ten days is a short time, fixed and known to Him. When Daniel and his three friends were tested in Babylon, Daniel asked, "Prove thy servants, I beseech thee, ten days" (Daniel 1:12), and at the end of the ten days they were found fairer and fatter than all the rest. Ten in Scripture is often the number of a complete measure of testing: Israel tempted God "these ten times" in the wilderness (Numbers 14:22). The plain sense is that the persecution would last a real, limited time, appointed by Christ, and that it would end.

"Be thou faithful unto death." "Unto death" does not mean "until you die of old age." It means "even to the point of death": be faithful even if it costs your life. "Faithful" is *pistos*, "trustworthy, true, loyal." Christ Himself is "the faithful witness" (1:5), who was faithful to the death of the cross. Antipas at Pergamos was "my faithful martyr" (2:13). Smyrna is called to the same faithfulness. Some decades later Polycarp, the elder of the assembly at Smyrna, was burned in that city (about A.D. 155). When he was told to curse Christ to save his life, the account of his death records his answer: he had served Christ

eighty-six years and Christ had done him no wrong; how could he blaspheme his King who saved him? (*Martyrdom of Polycarp* 9).

"And I will give thee a crown of life." "Crown" is *stephanos* (Strong's G4735), not the king's crown (*diadēma*) but the victor's wreath: the garland of leaves given to the winner of a race or a contest. Smyrna was famous for its "crown": Ramsay notes that the circle of fine buildings on the hill above the city was called "the crown of Smyrna," and that the city's games were known through the province. To this assembly Christ promises a better crown: not a wreath of leaves that withers, but "the crown of life." The life itself is the crown. They may lose their lives in this world; He will give them life. James wrote, "Blessed is the man that endureth temptation: for when he is tried, he shall receive the crown of life, which the Lord hath promised to them that love him" (James 1:12).

The number. *Ten* days. Ten is the number of ordinal perfection: a full round, with nothing missing, as the ten commandments are the whole law in one round. It is also the number of a complete time of testing. Israel tempted God "these ten times" in the wilderness (Numbers 14:22), and Daniel asked the steward, "Prove thy servants, I beseech thee, ten days" (Daniel 1:12). So here: the trial at Smyrna will be real and full, "that ye may be tried," but it is counted and it has an end. God sets the limit.

Figures of speech. "Behold" is *Asterismos*, calling attention to what follows. "Crown of life" is a *Metaphor*: life is the crown, the prize of the contest. "Unto death" is spoken with deliberate understatement, the figure *Tapeinosis*: Christ says little, "faithful unto death," and means everything, faithful though it costs all.

To whom. A believer under grace may be told to be faithful, and he may suffer for Christ. But he is not told that he will receive life as a crown for faithfulness unto death; he has "eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord" as "the gift of God" (Romans 6:23). The crown of life for enduring the tribulation belongs to those of whom Christ said, "he that shall endure unto the end, the same shall be saved" (Matthew 24:13): God's people in the Day of the Lord (Part One, Chapter 3 §C).

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

The message to Smyrna closes, as the first did, with the call to hear and then the promise.

"He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches." The call is the same as at Ephesus: Christ's call in His teaching to Israel, spoken to each single hearer, and the word of God, who is Spirit, speaking by revelation through His Son (see 2:7). Every assembly was to hear what was said to Smyrna.

"He that overcometh." The one who goes on conquering (*nikaō*, see 2:7). For Smyrna, overcoming meant being faithful unto death (2:10).

"Shall not be hurt of the second death." "Hurt" is *adikeō* (Strong's G91), "to do wrong to, to harm, to injure." The Greek says this very strongly: "shall by no means be harmed" (*ou mē*, a double negative, the strongest way of saying "never" in Greek).

What is "the second death"? This is the first time the phrase appears, and the book itself explains it near the end:

> **Revelation 20:14-15** — *And death and hell were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death. And whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire.*

And again: "But the fearful, and unbelieving ... shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone: which is the second death" (21:8). The first death is the death every man dies; after it comes the resurrection and the judgment. The second death is the final death of those who are judged and condemned, from which there is no resurrection.

The promise fits Smyrna exactly. Some of them would suffer the first death for Christ's name. But the first death is not the end. Christ, who "was dead, and is alive" (2:8), promises that the second death will have no power over them. Of those who share in the first resurrection, the book says, "on such the second death hath no power" (20:6). Christ had said on earth, "And fear not them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul: but rather fear him which is able to destroy both soul and body in hell" (Matthew 10:28). Men could take their lives; no one could take their life from God.

The number. *The second death.* "Second" sets this death apart from the first. Every man dies once (Hebrews 9:27); the second death is the lake of fire (20:14; 21:8). Two is the number of difference: the first death ends this life, the second is the end from which there is no return. The overcomer may suffer the first; the second will not touch him.

Figures of speech. "Shall not be hurt" is spoken with a negative, but it means much more than it says: not merely "not hurt" but kept wholly safe, given life. This is the figure *Tapeinosis* ("demeaning"), a statement made smaller than the truth so that the reader feels the greater truth behind it. The call to hear is the refrain (*Amoebaeon*) of all seven messages (see 2:7).

> **Revelation 2:12** *And to the angel of the church in Pergamos write; These things saith he which hath the sharp sword with two edges;*

The third message goes north to Pergamos.

"And to the angel of the church in Pergamos write." Pergamos (also spelled Pergamum) stood on a great hill rising high above the plain, about seventy miles north of Smyrna. It was the old royal capital of the kingdom of Pergamum, whose last king left it to Rome in his will, and it remained an official centre of the province. Its kings had built a famous library, and the word "parchment" comes from the city's name: the fine writing-skins made there were called *pergamēnē*. Above all, Pergamos was a city of temples. On its hill stood a great altar to Zeus; its god Asklepios, the god of healing, was called "the Saviour," and his symbol was a serpent; and it was the first city in Asia to build a temple for the worship of the Roman emperor, Augustus, in the years before Christ was born. Here a man could be asked to burn incense to Caesar as a god.

"These things saith he which hath the sharp sword with two edges." The title comes from 1:16, the "sharp twoedged sword" that went out of His mouth (see 1:16). The sword is His word, which judges. To this assembly Christ comes as the one with the sword, because there are men in Pergamos against

whom He will use it (2:16). In a city where the Roman governor held "the power of the sword," the right to put men to death, Christ reminds His people who holds the true sword.

The number. *Two* edges (see 1:16). The sword that divides now turns toward Pergamos: it will divide the faithful from those who hold the doctrine of Balaam.

Figures of speech. The sword stands for His word of judgment, a *Hypocatastasis* (see 1:16). The book itself shows what the sword means: "I ... will fight against them with the sword of my mouth" (2:16).

> **Revelation 2:13** *I know thy works, and where thou dwellest, even where Satan's seat is: and thou holdest fast my name, and hast not denied my faith, even in those days wherein Antipas was my faithful martyr, who was slain among you, where Satan dwelleth.*

Again Christ begins with praise. Pergamos had held firm in the hardest place of all.

"I know thy works." The same words as to Ephesus and Smyrna: He has seen all they have done.

"And where thou dwellest, even where Satan's seat is." Christ knows not only what they do, but where they live, and how hard it is to live there. "Seat" is *thronos* (Strong's G2362), a throne. Satan's throne was in Pergamos. The text does not say why, and readers have pointed to many things: the great altar of Zeus on the hill; the worship of Asklepios, whose sign was a serpent, the very name of Satan in this book (12:9); and the worship of the emperor, for which Pergamos was the first centre in Asia. The last fits the book best. Later the dragon gives the beast "his power, and his seat, and great authority" (13:2), and the beast demands that all the earth worship him (13:8, 15). Wherever men are made to bow to a man as a god, there is Satan's throne. Pergamos was a place where the enemy ruled openly.

"And thou holdest fast my name." "Holdest fast" is *krateis*, the same word used in 2:1 for Christ's firm grip on the seven stars. As Christ holds them fast, so they hold fast His name. In a city where men confessed "Caesar is Lord," they confessed the name of Jesus Christ, and would not let it go.

"And hast not denied my faith." "Denied" is *arneomai*, "to say no to, to disown." Peter had once denied Christ three times (Matthew 26:69-75). These believers, under pressure, had not denied "my faith." Bullinger explains "my faith" as the faith concerning Christ: what is believed about Him, the truth of who He is.

"Even in those days wherein Antipas was my faithful martyr, who was slain among you." Here is a name, and a memory. Antipas is mentioned nowhere else in Scripture. All we know of him is what Christ says here: he was killed in Pergamos, among them, for his witness, and Christ calls him by His own titles: "my faithful martyr" is, in Greek, "my witness, my faithful one" (*ho martus mou ho pistos*), the very words used of Christ Himself, "the faithful witness" (1:5). Christ gives His own name of honour to the man who died for Him. "Martyr" is *martus*, "witness"; it was through men like Antipas that the word came to mean one who bears witness by dying. The assembly in Pergamos had watched one of its own die, and still had not denied the faith. (Later tradition tells how Antipas died, but Scripture does not, and this study does not repeat it.)

"Where Satan dwelleth." The verse ends where it began. Twice in one verse Christ says that Satan is there: his throne is there, and he lives there. Pergamos was not a place Satan visited; it was his home.

Figures of speech. "Where Satan's seat is" and "where Satan dwelleth" begin and end the verse with the same thought, the figure *Epanadiplosis* ("encircling"), which wraps everything in between, their faithfulness and the death of Antipas, inside the fact of where they lived. "My faith" is a *Metonymy*: Bullinger notes that "faith" here is put for "the doctrine believed concerning me."

> **Revelation 2:14** *But I have a few things against thee, because thou hast there them that hold the doctrine of Balaam, who taught Balac to cast a stumblingblock before the children of Israel, to eat things sacrificed unto idols, and to commit fornication.*

After the praise, the charge. Pergamos had held fast under persecution, but it had let something else in.

"But I have a few things against thee." "A few things": not many, but enough. The danger at Pergamos was not from outside, from the persecutors, but from inside, from teachers in the assembly.

"Because thou hast there them that hold the doctrine of Balaam." "Doctrine" is *didachē* (Strong's G1322), "teaching." Some in Pergamos held to the teaching of Balaam. Who was Balaam, and what did he teach?

His story is told in Numbers 22 to 25. When Israel came out of Egypt and camped on the plains of Moab, Balak, king of Moab, was afraid of them. He sent for Balaam, a famous prophet from the east, and offered him great rewards to come and curse Israel. Balaam wanted the money, but God would not let him curse the people. Three times Balak took him to a high place, and three times, instead of cursing, Balaam blessed Israel (Numbers 23–24). In the last of his prophecies he even foretold, "there shall come a Star out of Jacob, and a Sceptre shall rise out of Israel" (Numbers 24:17). Balaam went home without the money. But before he went, he showed Balak another way.

"Who taught Balac to cast a stumblingblock before the children of Israel." A "stumblingblock" (*skandalon*, Strong's G4625) was originally the trigger of a trap, the stick that springs the snare when an animal touches it; then anything that makes a man trip and fall. Balaam could not curse Israel, so he taught Balak how to make Israel bring God's curse upon itself. The next chapter of Numbers tells what happened:

> **Numbers 25:1-3** — *And Israel abode in Shittim, and the people began to commit whoredom with the daughters of Moab. And they called the people unto the sacrifices of their gods: and the people did eat, and bowed down to their gods. And Israel joined himself unto Baalpeor: and the anger of the LORD was kindled against Israel.*

And Moses later said plainly whose idea it was: "Behold, these caused the children of Israel, through the counsel of Balaam, to commit trespass against the LORD in the matter of Peor, and there was a plague among the congregation of the LORD" (Numbers 31:16). Twenty-four thousand died in that plague (Numbers 25:9).

"To eat things sacrificed unto idols." In a city like Pergamos, meat sold in the market and served at feasts had often first been offered to an idol. The trade-guilds held their feasts in the temples, in honour of their gods. To refuse to eat could mean losing one's trade, one's friends, one's place in the city. The teaching of Balaam said: go along; join in; it does no harm.

"And to commit fornication." "Fornication" is *porneuō* (Strong's G4203), sexual immorality. In the heathen temples, feasting and immorality went together, as they did at Peor. And in the prophets, fornication is also the picture of Israel's unfaithfulness to God by going after other gods: "thou hast played the harlot with many lovers; yet return again to me, saith the LORD" (Jeremiah 3:1). At Pergamos both were present: the real immorality of the idol-feasts, and the spiritual unfaithfulness it meant.

The teaching of Balaam was this: you cannot be cursed by the enemy from outside; but you can be drawn into sin from within, by mixing with the world's worship and the world's pleasures. Peter and Jude both warn of men who follow "the way of Balaam the son of Bosor, who loved the wages of unrighteousness" (2 Peter 2:15; compare Jude 11).

Figures of speech. "Stumblingblock" is a *Metaphor*: the trap-stick put for anything that makes a man fall into sin. "Fornication" in the prophets is often used by *Metaphor* for idolatry; here it is both literal and figurative together, as it was at Peor.

To whom. The charge at Pergamos is drawn from Israel's own history: Balaam, Balak, "the children of Israel." The assembly is warned in the terms of Israel's sin and God's judgment on it. The question of meat offered to idols was also faced under grace, and Paul answered it in his letters (1 Corinthians 8 and 10), but his answer was given in the terms of the believer's liberty and his care for a weaker brother. Here it is given in the terms of judgment and repentance (2:16), the terms of the Day of the Lord (Part One, Chapter 3 §C).

> **Revelation 2:15** *So hast thou also them that hold the doctrine of the Nicolaitanes, which thing I hate.*

"So hast thou also them that hold the doctrine of the Nicolaitanes." "So ... also": in the same way, side by side with the followers of Balaam, Pergamos has people who hold another teaching of the same kind. The Nicolaitans were met first at Ephesus (2:6). Their name is made of two Greek words, *nikaō*, "to conquer," and *laos*, "the people": "conquerors of the people." They are men who make themselves lords over God's people and lead them astray for their own gain. Balaam, whose Hebrew name is generally explained as "destroyer of the people," did the same thing in Israel (see 2:6, where the meaning of the name and the evidence are set out). The two names say much the same thing, and Christ sets the two teachings together.

Notice the change from Ephesus. At Ephesus there were "deeds" of the Nicolaitans, and Ephesus hated them (2:6). At Pergamos there is a "doctrine" of the Nicolaitans, and some "hold" it. What began as a practice had become a teaching, held and defended. At Ephesus the assembly hated what Christ hates; at Pergamos it allowed among its members those who held it.

"Which thing I hate." The same strong word as at Ephesus: "which I also hate" (2:6). Christ does not hate the people; He hates the teaching and the deeds that destroy His people. (The Majority Greek text reads "likewise" at the end of the verse instead of "which thing I hate"; the sense of the verse is the same: they hold the Nicolaitans' doctrine, as others hold Balaam's.)

Figures of speech. "So ... also" joins the two teachings by comparison, so that each explains the other: the Nicolaitans are understood through Balaam, and Balaam through the Nicolaitans.

> **Revelation 2:16** *Repent; or else I will come unto thee quickly, and will fight against them with the sword of my mouth.*

Now the counsel and the warning.

"Repent." The same word as at Ephesus (*metanoeō*, to change the mind and so turn; see 2:5). The command is to the whole assembly, not only to the false teachers. The assembly's fault was that it had let them stay. Ephesus "canst not bear them which are evil" (2:2); Pergamos bore them. The assembly must change its mind about them.

"Or else I will come unto thee quickly." "Or else": if not. As at Ephesus, this is a coming in judgment on one assembly, which repentance could prevent (see 2:5). "Quickly": without delay.

"And will fight against them with the sword of my mouth." Notice the change of words: "I will come unto *thee*" (the assembly), but "will fight against *them*" (the false teachers). If the assembly would not deal with them, Christ Himself would. "Fight" is *polemeō* (Strong's G4170), "to make war." The sword is the sword of His mouth, His word of judgment (1:16).

There is a terrible fitness here. Balaam himself died by the sword. When Israel made war on Midian after Peor, "Balaam also the son of Beor they slew with the sword" (Numbers 31:8). The man who had tried to destroy God's people by his counsel was destroyed by the sword in the end. So would it be with those who held his teaching in Pergamos. And at the end of the book the same sword goes out against all the enemies of God: "And the remnant were slain with the sword of him that sat upon the horse, which sword proceeded out of his mouth" (19:21).

Figures of speech. "The sword of my mouth" is a *Hypocatastasis*: the sword stands for His word of judgment, which needs no other weapon (see 1:16).

To whom. "I will come unto thee quickly" is spoken as a threat to an assembly that will not repent. Under grace the coming of the Lord is the believer's "blessed hope" (Titus 2:13), and believers are told to "wait for his Son from heaven ... which delivered us from the wrath to come" (1 Thessalonians 1:10). Here His coming is held over the assembly as judgment: the terms of the Day of the Lord (Part One, Chapter 3 §C).

> **Revelation 2:17** *He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches; To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the hidden manna, and will give him a white stone, and in the stone a new name written, which no man knoweth saving he that receiveth it.*

The call to hear, and then a threefold promise.

"He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches." The third time the call has come, and the last time it comes before the promise (see 2:7). From the fourth message onward, the promise will come first and the call after.

"To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the hidden manna." Those who would not eat "things sacrificed unto idols" (2:14) will eat a better food. Manna was the bread God gave Israel in the wilderness, falling with the dew every morning for forty years (Exodus 16). Its name comes from the people's question when they first saw it: "they said one to another, It is manna: for they wist not what it was" (Exodus 16:15); *man hu* in Hebrew means "What is it?" The psalmist called it "the corn of heaven" and "angels' food" (Psalm 78:24-25). Christ called Himself the true manna: "I am that bread of life. Your fathers did eat manna in the wilderness, and are dead" (John 6:48-49), and "I am the living bread which came down from heaven: if any man eat of this bread, he shall live for ever" (John 6:51).

Why "hidden" manna? Because some of the manna was hidden away. God told Moses to keep a pot of it before the LORD:

> **Exodus 16:33** — *And Moses said unto Aaron, Take a pot, and put an omer full of manna therein, and lay it up before the LORD, to be kept for your generations.*

That pot was laid up in the ark of the covenant, in the holy of holies, hidden from every eye (Hebrews 9:4). What God has kept hidden, He will give to the overcomer. The one who refused the world's feasts will eat the bread of heaven, kept for him by God Himself.

"And will give him a white stone." "Stone" here is *psēphos* (Strong's G5586), a small, smooth pebble. The text does not explain what a white stone meant, and it is the only place it is mentioned. The book itself gives the colour its meaning: white in Revelation is the colour of purity, victory, and acceptance, the white robes (3:4-5; 7:9), the white horse of the Victor (19:11), the white throne (20:11). Readers in Pergamos would have known several uses of small stones. In the law courts of that day a juror voted with a pebble: a white one to acquit, a black one to condemn (Paul uses this word when he says, "I gave my voice against them," Acts 26:10). A white stone was also used as a token of admission to a feast. Either way, the white stone means acceptance: acquitted, welcomed, received. In a city where the believers had been condemned by men, Christ promises them a white stone from His own hand.

"And in the stone a new name written." God has always given new names when He gives a new standing. Abram became Abraham (Genesis 17:5); Jacob became Israel (Genesis 32:28). God promised Zion:

> **Isaiah 62:2** — *And the Gentiles shall see thy righteousness, and all kings thy glory: and thou shalt be called by a new name, which the mouth of the LORD shall name.*

To the overcomer at Philadelphia Christ will promise, "I will write upon him my new name" (3:12).

"Which no man knoweth saving he that receiveth it." The name is written for one person, and known to him alone, and to the Lord who gave it. It is a private word between the Lord and His servant: a name

that tells who that one is to Him. In Pergamos, where Christ's name had cost Antipas his life, the overcomer receives a name of his own from Christ, which no one can take away.

Figures of speech. The promise has three parts joined by "and … and," the figure *Polysyndeton*: manna, stone, name, each a gift by itself. The "hidden manna" is a *Metaphor* drawn from the pot of manna laid up in the ark.

To whom. Manna, the ark, the new name of Zion: all of this is the language of Israel's history and of God's promises to Israel. The promise is to "him that overcometh," the reward of the Day of the Lord (Part One, Chapter 3 §C).

Still on earth. Verses 2:18–3:22, the last four messages. From here the wording changes: in each of the last four messages the promise to the overcomer comes first, and the call "He that hath an ear" comes after it.

> **Revelation 2:18** *And unto the angel of the church in Thyatira write; These things saith the Son of God, who hath his eyes like unto a flame of fire, and his feet are like fine brass;*

The fourth message, the longest of the seven, goes inland to Thyatira.

"And unto the angel of the church in Thyatira write." Thyatira lay on the road south-east from Pergamos, in a broad valley. It was the smallest and least famous of the seven cities, with no great temple to the emperor and no proud history. But it was a busy city of trade. Ramsay notes that more trade-guilds are known from inscriptions at Thyatira than from any other city of Asia: wool-workers, linen-workers, makers of garments, dyers, leather-workers, tanners, potters, bakers, slave-dealers and bronze-smiths. The city was known for its purple dye. Lydia, the first believer Paul met in Europe, was from here: "a seller of purple, of the city of Thyatira, which worshipped God" (Acts 16:14).

The trade-guilds matter for understanding this message. A man who worked at a trade in Thyatira belonged to its guild. The guilds held regular feasts in honour of their patron gods, with meat offered to idols, and often with drunkenness and immorality. A believer who refused to go might lose his living. That is the pressure behind the teaching of "that woman Jezebel" (2:20).

"These things saith the Son of God." Here, and nowhere else in the book, Christ calls Himself "the Son of God." It is not one of the titles from the vision of chapter 1, where He was "one like unto the Son of man" (1:13). Why here? Because the promise at the end of this message is drawn from the second psalm, where God says to His King:

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

"Thou art my Son": God's anointed King is His Son, and God gives Him the nations. Christ quotes the rest of that psalm in 2:26-27. He speaks to Thyatira as the Son to whom God has given authority over the nations; and He will share that authority with the overcomer.

"Who hath his eyes like unto a flame of fire." From 1:14. Eyes that burn through every pretence and see into the heart. This assembly is about to be told, "I am he which searcheth the reins and hearts" (2:23).

"And his feet are like fine brass." From 1:15. Feet of glowing bronze, which tread down. In a city of bronze-smiths, where the guild of bronze-workers would have known the finest metal of the furnace, Christ comes with feet like the finest bronze, to tread down what is evil among His people.

Figures of speech. "Like unto a flame of fire," "like fine brass": *Similes*, as in 1:14-15.

> **Revelation 2:19** *I know thy works, and charity, and service, and faith, and thy patience, and thy works; and the last to be more than the first.*

Thyatira receives the warmest praise of all seven, and then the longest rebuke.

"I know thy works." The opening words of every message.

"And charity, and service, and faith, and thy patience." Four things follow. "Charity" is the old English word for love, *agapē*, the same love Ephesus had left (2:4). Thyatira had it. "Service" is *diakonia* (Strong's G1248), practical ministry to others: the word used of the care of widows in Jerusalem, "the daily ministration" (Acts 6:1). "Faith" is *pistis*, which here also carries the sense of faithfulness, trustworthiness. "Patience" is *hupomonē*, steadfast endurance (1:9; 2:2). Love that shows itself in service; faith that shows itself in patient endurance: this is an assembly that is alive. (The Majority Greek text and the critical texts give the order "love, and faith, and service, and patience.")

"And thy works; and the last to be more than the first." Here is the striking praise. Ephesus had to be told, "do the first works" (2:5): it had fallen away from where it began. Thyatira was the opposite. Its "last" works, its works now, were more than its "first." It was growing, not shrinking; giving more, not less. The psalmist wrote of the righteous, "They shall still bring forth fruit in old age; they shall be fat and flourishing" (Psalm 92:14). The proverb says, "the path of the just is as the shining light, that shineth more and more unto the perfect day" (Proverbs 4:18).

Figures of speech. Once more a chain of "ands," *Polysyndeton*: love, and service, and faith, and patience, and works. Christ names each one separately; He has not missed any of them.

> **Revelation 2:20** *Notwithstanding I have a few things against thee, because thou sufferest that woman Jezebel, which calleth herself a prophetess, to teach and to seduce my servants to commit fornication, and to eat things sacrificed unto idols.*

And yet, in an assembly so full of love and growing works, something was being allowed that Christ would not allow.

"Notwithstanding I have a few things against thee." "Notwithstanding" means "but, in spite of all that." "A few things," as at Pergamos (2:14). The words "a few things" are in italics here in the King James Version, since the Greek says simply, "But I have against thee."

"Because thou sufferest that woman Jezebel." "Sufferest" is old English for "allowest, permittest." The Greek *apheis* is from *aphiēmi*, the same verb used of Ephesus "leaving" its first love (2:4): Thyatira "lets alone" this woman, lets her go on. Thyatira was strong in love, but its love had become tolerance of evil. Ephesus could not bear evil men (2:2); Thyatira bore an evil woman.

Who was she? She was a real woman in the assembly at Thyatira, who claimed to be a prophetess and taught there. Christ calls her "Jezebel." That was almost certainly not her own name; it is the name of the most wicked queen in Israel's history, and Christ gives it to her because she was doing what that queen did.

The first Jezebel was the daughter of the king of the Sidonians, a worshipper of Baal, whom king Ahab of Israel married:

> **1 Kings 16:31** — *And it came to pass, as if it had been a light thing for him to walk in the sins of Jeroboam the son of Nebat, that he took to wife Jezebel the daughter of Ethbaal king of the Zidonians, and went and served Baal, and worshipped him.*

She brought the worship of Baal into Israel, fed four hundred and fifty prophets of Baal and four hundred prophets of the groves at her own table (1 Kings 18:19), killed the prophets of the LORD (1 Kings 18:4), and hunted Elijah to kill him (1 Kings 19:2). When Joram asked Jehu, "Is it peace, Jehu?" he answered, "What peace, so long as the whoredoms of thy mother Jezebel and her witchcrafts are so many?" (2 Kings 9:22). She led a whole nation, from the king down, into idolatry and the immorality that went with it. The woman at Thyatira was doing the same, inside the assembly.

(Some Greek copies, including the Majority text, read "thy wife Jezebel," which would make her the wife of the angel, or of a leader, of the assembly. The King James Version follows the copies that read "that woman." The study does not build anything on the difference; either way she was a woman in the assembly who was allowed to teach. Appendix E.)

"Which calleth herself a prophetess." She "calleth herself" one. No one else gave her the title; she claimed it. A prophet speaks for God. To claim to speak for God, and then to lead God's people into sin, was a double evil. Moses had warned Israel against such a prophet: even if his sign came to pass, if he said "Let us go after other gods … thou shalt not hearken unto the words of that prophet" (Deuteronomy 13:2-3).

"To teach and to seduce my servants." "Seduce" is *planaō* (Strong's G4105), "to lead astray, to cause to wander," the word used of Satan, "which deceiveth the whole world" (12:9). She taught, and her teaching led Christ's servants astray. Notice the words "my servants": they belonged to Christ, and she was leading them away from Him.

"To commit fornication, and to eat things sacrificed unto idols." The same two things Balaam taught (2:14). In Thyatira they came through the guild-feasts: eat the meat offered to the guild's god; join in what goes with the feast. Her "prophecy" doubtless gave reasons why a believer could do so and come to no harm.

Figures of speech. "Jezebel" is the figure Bullinger calls *Antonomasia* ("a name instead"): a well-known name used for someone who is like its bearer. Just as we might call a traitor "a Judas," Christ calls this woman "Jezebel."

To whom. Christ's people at Thyatira are called "my servants," and the woman who leads them astray is named from Israel's history. The assembly is judged by whether it allowed evil to remain, and threatened with judgment if it did not repent: the terms of the Day of the Lord (Part One, Chapter 3 §C).

> **Revelation 2:21** *And I gave her space to repent of her fornication; and she repented not.*

"And I gave her space to repent of her fornication." "Space" means time. "I gave her time to repent." Christ had already called this woman to change her mind and turn. We are not told how: perhaps by the warnings of faithful members of the assembly, perhaps by some earlier word of prophecy. But she had been given time, and opportunity. The Lord is patient. Peter wrote, "The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance" (2 Peter 3:9). Even to the first Jezebel God had given years. Even Ahab, when he humbled himself, received mercy: "because he humbleth himself before me, I will not bring the evil in his days" (1 Kings 21:29).

"And she repented not." In Greek, "and she does not will to repent" (*ou thelei*): she will not. It was not that she could not; she would not. The time of patience had been offered and refused. Here is the saddest kind of person in Scripture: not the one who has never heard, but the one who has heard, and has been given time, and has said no.

Figures of speech. "Fornication" here is both literal and spiritual, as at Pergamos (2:14): real immorality, and unfaithfulness to God.

> **Revelation 2:22** *Behold, I will cast her into a bed, and them that commit adultery with her into great tribulation, except they repent of their deeds.*

"Behold, I will cast her into a bed." "Behold": mark this. She had used a bed for sin; Christ will cast her onto a bed of a different kind, a sickbed, a bed of suffering. The punishment fits the sin. The bed where she sinned becomes the bed where she suffers. God had said through the prophets that He would answer His people according to their deeds: "I will recompense their way upon their head" (Ezekiel 9:10).

"And them that commit adultery with her into great tribulation." Those who joined her are said to "commit adultery with her." For a believer, to go after other gods is adultery against the Lord, to whom he belongs. God said of Israel, "with their idols have they committed adultery" (Ezekiel 23:37). Those who follow her teaching share in her sin, and so they will share in her suffering: "great tribulation." It is the same phrase used later of the time out of which the great multitude come: "These are they which came out of great tribulation" (7:14). Christ said of that time, "For then shall be great tribulation, such as was not since the beginning of the world to this time, no, nor ever shall be" (Matthew 24:21).

"Except they repent of their deeds." Even now the door stands open. "Except they repent": if they repent, the tribulation will not come on them. (The Majority Greek text and the critical texts read "her

deeds": they are to repent of *her* works, which they had made their own.) Christ's judgment is never His first word. Repentance comes first, offered and offered again, before the bed and the tribulation.

Figures of speech. "Behold" is *Asterismos*. "Commit adultery" is used here with both its literal and its figurative sense, the figure Bullinger lists as *Metaphor*: unfaithfulness to God pictured as unfaithfulness in marriage.

> **Revelation 2:23** *And I will kill her children with death; and all the churches shall know that I am he which searcheth the reins and hearts: and I will give unto every one of you according to your works.*

"And I will kill her children with death." "Her children" are those who had come to belong to her, her followers, born, so to speak, of her teaching. They are distinguished from those "that commit adultery with her" (2:22), who were perhaps believers drawn in for a time; her "children" are those who had wholly taken on her ways. "Kill ... with death" is a Hebrew way of speaking that makes the statement certain and complete: they will surely die. It may also mean "with pestilence," for the word "death" (*thanatos*) is used for pestilence in the Greek Old Testament, and in 6:8 "death" stands beside sword and hunger in the same sense. Either way the judgment is final.

"And all the churches shall know." Here is a word that tells us much about the seven assemblies. When judgment came on Thyatira, "all the churches" would know about it. This shows that the seven assemblies existed side by side, at the same time, and that each would see what happened to another. They were not seven ages of church history following one after another, for then the others would not have been there to see (Part One, Chapter 3 §B; Appendix B). What Christ did at Thyatira would be a lesson to all of them, as His judgment on Ananias and Sapphira was a lesson to all in Jerusalem: "And great fear came upon all the church, and upon as many as heard these things" (Acts 5:11).

"That I am he which searcheth the reins and hearts." "Searcheth" is *ereunaō* (Strong's G2045), "to search out, to examine closely." The "reins" are the kidneys, which in Hebrew speech stood for the inmost feelings and thoughts, as the heart stood for the mind and will. To search the reins and hearts is to know a man completely, from the inside. In the Old Testament this is God's own work:

> **Jeremiah 17:10** — *I the LORD search the heart, I try the reins, even to give every man according to his ways, and according to the fruit of his doings.*

God has given this work to His Son, who has "eyes like unto a flame of fire" (2:18). The woman at Thyatira may have fooled the assembly with her claims to prophecy. She did not fool Him.

"And I will give unto every one of you according to your works." This is the rule of God's judgment throughout Scripture. "Also unto thee, O Lord, belongeth mercy: for thou renderest to every man according to his work" (Psalm 62:12). At the great white throne "the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works" (20:12). Notice "every one of you": each person, not the assembly as a whole. Each would receive what was due for what he had done.

Figures of speech. "Reins and hearts": Bullinger lists this as *Metonymy*, the reins (kidneys) and heart put for the thoughts and feelings that were thought to dwell in them. "Kill ... with death" is a Hebrew idiom

of emphasis, the figure *Polyptoton* in English (one root repeated in two forms: kill, death), used to make the judgment certain.

To whom. "I will give unto every one of you according to your works." Under grace Paul wrote that God "hath saved us, and called us with an holy calling, not according to our works, but according to his own purpose and grace" (2 Timothy 1:9). The rule of this verse is the rule of judgment for the Day of the Lord and the great white throne (20:12), and the threat to "kill her children with death" is spoken in those terms (Part One, Chapter 3 §C).

> **Revelation 2:24** *But unto you I say, and unto the rest in Thyatira, as many as have not this doctrine, and which have not known the depths of Satan, as they speak; I will put upon you none other burden.*

Now Christ turns to the faithful in Thyatira, those who had not followed the woman.

"But unto you I say, and unto the rest in Thyatira." The best Greek texts read simply "But unto you I say, the rest in Thyatira": "you who are the rest." Not everyone had followed her. There was a faithful part, and Christ speaks to them directly.

"As many as have not this doctrine." "This doctrine": the teaching of the woman, that a believer could join in the idol-feasts and their immorality and come to no harm.

"And which have not known the depths of Satan, as they speak." Here is a cutting phrase. Her followers boasted that they knew "the depths," deep secrets that ordinary believers did not understand. Perhaps they claimed that a truly spiritual man could go into the heathen feasts, even into sin, and not be touched by it, because he knew the depths. Christ takes their boast and finishes it: yes, you know "the depths" — the depths *of Satan*. "As they speak" means "as they call them." The faithful in Thyatira "have not known" these depths: they had no experience of them, no part in them. Bullinger notes that "know" is often used in Scripture of experience and approval, not mere awareness. Paul wrote, "the Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God" (1 Corinthians 2:10). There are deep things of God, and there are deep things of Satan. The faithful in Thyatira had chosen the one and refused the other.

"I will put upon you none other burden." "Burden" is *baros*, "weight, load." Christ lays nothing more on them. What they are already carrying, faithfulness in a hard place, under pressure from the guilds and from the false prophetess in their own assembly, is enough. These words echo the letter of the apostles and elders at Jerusalem to the believers among the nations: "it seemed good to the Holy Ghost, and to us, to lay upon you no greater burden than these necessary things; That ye abstain from meats offered to idols, and from blood, and from things strangled, and from fornication" (Acts 15:28-29). The faithful at Thyatira already kept those very things. Nothing more was asked.

Figures of speech. "The depths of Satan" is the figure Bullinger calls *Antiphrasis* or irony: the false teachers' own boast ("the depths") is turned back on them and given its true name. "Known" is used, as Bullinger notes, by *Metonymy* for experience: to know by having been part of something.

> **Revelation 2:25** *But that which ye have already hold fast till I come.*

"But that which ye have already hold fast till I come." "Hold fast" is *kratēsate*, "grip it, hold it firmly." It is the same verb as in 2:1 (Christ "holdeth" the seven stars) and 2:13 ("thou holdest fast my name"). What they had, the truth, their faithfulness, their love and service, they were to hold, and not loosen their grip. Christ adds nothing new; He asks only that they keep what they already have.

"Till I come." Here the coming of the Lord is held before the faithful as the end of their waiting, not as a threat. They are to hold on until He comes. The waiting will not go on for ever. Christ said on earth, "Blessed is that servant, whom his lord when he cometh shall find so doing" (Matthew 24:46).

To whom. "Hold fast till I come": for the faithful at Thyatira, His coming would end their trial and bring their reward (2:26-28). This is His coming in the Day of the Lord, to rule the nations with a rod of iron (2:27; 19:15).

> **Revelation 2:26** *And he that overcometh, and keepeth my works unto the end, to him will I give power over the nations:*

From this message onward, the promise comes before the call to hear (Part One, Chapter 6 §C).

"And he that overcometh." The one who goes on conquering (see 2:7). At Thyatira, overcoming meant refusing Jezebel's teaching and holding fast till He came.

"And keepeth my works unto the end." The overcomer is one who keeps "my works," Christ's works, not his own. The woman's followers were to repent of "her deeds" (2:22); the overcomer keeps Christ's. "Unto the end" is the language of Christ on the mount of Olives: "But he that shall endure unto the end, the same shall be saved" (Matthew 24:13).

"To him will I give power over the nations." "Power" is *exousia* (Strong's G1849), "authority, the right to rule." "Nations" is *ethnē*, the peoples of the world, the Gentiles. This is the promise of the second psalm: "Ask of me, and I shall give thee the heathen for thine inheritance" (Psalm 2:8). God gave the nations to His Son; His Son shares that authority with the overcomer. Christ had told the twelve, "ye which have followed me, in the regeneration when the Son of man shall sit in the throne of his glory, ye also shall sit upon twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel" (Matthew 19:28). Daniel saw the same: "And the kingdom and dominion, and the greatness of the kingdom under the whole heaven, shall be given to the people of the saints of the most High" (Daniel 7:27).

The promise fits Thyatira. These believers were small, poor, under the pressure of the guilds, unable to take part in the city's life without betraying Christ. They were promised authority over the nations.

To whom. "Power over the nations" is the promise of Psalm 2 and Daniel 7, made to the saints of the Most High, God's people in the Day of the Lord. It is fulfilled when Christ comes to rule the nations (19:15) and those who overcome reign with Him (20:4). It is not one of the promises Paul gives to the church of grace, whose members are "blessed … with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ" (Ephesians 1:3) (Part One, Chapter 3 §C).

> **Revelation 2:27** *And he shall rule them with a rod of iron; as the vessels of a potter shall they be broken to shivers: even as I received of my Father.*

The promise continues with the words of Psalm 2.

"And he shall rule them with a rod of iron." "Rule" here is *poimainō* (Strong's G4165), "to shepherd." It is the word for what a shepherd does: to lead, feed and guard the flock. A shepherd's rod was used to guide the sheep and to beat off the wolves. "A rod of iron" is a rod that cannot be broken. The ruling is a shepherding, but a shepherding with absolute authority: the sheep are guarded, and every enemy is struck down. The same words are used of Christ Himself twice more in this book: the man child "was to rule all nations with a rod of iron" (12:5), and the Rider on the white horse "shall rule them with a rod of iron" (19:15).

"As the vessels of a potter shall they be broken to shivers." "Shivers" is old English for "fragments, splinters." A potter's clay vessel, once fired, cannot be mended if it is smashed; it breaks into pieces that can never be put together again. Psalm 2:9 says, "thou shalt dash them in pieces like a potter's vessel." God had shown Jeremiah the same picture: He told him to break a potter's bottle before the elders of Jerusalem and say, "Even so will I break this people and this city, as one breaketh a potter's vessel, that cannot be made whole again" (Jeremiah 19:11). The rule of the overcomer over the nations that oppose God will be final.

"Even as I received of my Father." The authority is not the overcomer's own, and it is not even Christ's own in the first place. Christ "received" it from His Father. He said after His resurrection, "All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth" (Matthew 28:18). What the Father gave the Son, the Son gives the overcomer. The chain of 1:1, "which God gave unto him," runs through the promises too.

Figures of speech. "As the vessels of a potter" is a *Simile*. "Rule ... with a rod of iron" is a *Metaphor* drawn from the shepherd's work: to shepherd with an iron rod.

> **Revelation 2:28** *And I will give him the morning star.*

"And I will give him the morning star." The morning star is the bright star that shines low in the east just before dawn, the last star to fade and the first sign that the night is ending and the day is about to break. What is "the morning star"? The book itself answers. At its close Christ says: "I Jesus have sent mine angel to testify unto you these things in the churches. I am the root and the offspring of David, and the bright and morning star" (22:16). Christ Himself is the morning star. Balaam, of all people, had foretold Him: "there shall come a Star out of Jacob, and a Sceptre shall rise out of Israel" (Numbers 24:17). Notice that the Star and the Sceptre come together: the same prophecy that gives the rod of rule gives the Star. Christ gives the overcomer the rule over the nations (2:26-27), and then He gives him Himself.

The night of the Day of the Lord will be very dark. To the one who holds fast through it, Christ promises the star that tells the dawn has come: Himself, and the new day of His kingdom. Peter wrote of the prophetic word, "whereunto ye do well that ye take heed, as unto a light that shineth in a dark place, until the day dawn, and the day star arise in your hearts" (2 Peter 1:19).

Figures of speech. "The morning star" is a *Metaphor* for Christ Himself, as 22:16 explains.

> **Revelation 2:29** *He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches.*

"He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches." For the first time the call to hear comes after the promise, and it will do so in the three messages that remain (Part One, Chapter 6 §C). The order marks the division of the seven messages into three and four. The call is the same: Christ's call to Israel to hear and obey (Matthew 13:9), spoken to each single hearer, and the voice of God, who is Spirit, speaking through His Son (see 2:7). What was said to Thyatira, the message about Jezebel, the depths of Satan, and the rod of iron, was for every assembly to hear.

Figures of speech. The refrain closing each of the seven messages, *Amoebaeon* (see 2:7).

> **Revelation 3:1** *And unto the angel of the church in Sardis write; These things saith he that hath the seven Spirits of God, and the seven stars; I know thy works, that thou hast a name that thou livest, and art dead.*

The fifth message goes south from Thyatira to Sardis.

"And unto the angel of the church in Sardis write." Sardis had once been one of the great cities of the world. It was the capital of the ancient kingdom of Lydia, and its most famous king was Croesus, whose wealth became a proverb ("as rich as Croesus"). Gold was washed from the river that ran through the city. The old city stood on a high, steep hill, with cliffs on almost every side, and its people believed it could never be taken. Yet it was taken twice by surprise, because no one was watching. In the sixth century before Christ the army of Cyrus the Persian found a way up the cliff where no guard was posted, and the citadel fell in a night. Some three hundred years later the same thing happened again, when a soldier of Antiochus the Great climbed the unwatched cliff with a few men. In John's day Sardis was still wealthy, but its glory was in the past. An earthquake had ruined it in A.D. 17, and it had been rebuilt with help from the emperor Tiberius. It was a city living on its name.

"These things saith he that hath the seven Spirits of God." The title joins 1:4 and 1:16. "The seven Spirits of God" are the complete working of God's spirit, His life and power going out through all the earth (see 1:4; Zechariah 4:6, 10). To an assembly that was dead, Christ comes as the one who holds the fulness of God's life-giving spirit. Only He could give life to Sardis.

"And the seven stars." From 1:16, 20: the angels of the seven assemblies, held in His hand.

"I know thy works, that thou hast a name that thou livest." "A name" is a reputation. Sardis was known as a living assembly. People spoke well of it. Perhaps it was busy, well-ordered, respected. It had everything except life.

"And art dead." Here the message begins with rebuke, the only message to do so. There is no word of praise before the charge, as there was at Ephesus, Pergamos and Thyatira. There is no false teacher named, no persecution, no Jezebel. There is simply death. Sardis was like the city it lived in: a great name, and the life gone out of it.

Christ had spoken to the religious leaders of His day in the same terms: "ye are like unto whited sepulchres, which indeed appear beautiful outward, but are within full of dead men's bones" (Matthew 23:27). Isaiah heard God say of Israel, "this people draw near me with their mouth, and with their lips do honour me, but have removed their heart far from me" (Isaiah 29:13). An assembly can keep the form of worship long after the life has left it.

The numbers. *Seven* Spirits and *seven* stars (see 1:4, 20). To a dead assembly Christ is the one who holds the complete life-giving working of God's spirit, and every one of the seven messengers.

Figures of speech. "Thou livest, and art dead": the figure *Antithesis*, two opposites set side by side, so that the contrast between the name and the reality strikes the reader. "Dead" is a *Metaphor*: the assembly was not literally dead, but without the life of God.

> **Revelation 3:2** *Be watchful, and strengthen the things which remain, that are ready to die: for I have not found thy works perfect before God.*

Sardis is not wholly past hope. Christ gives five commands in two verses.

"Be watchful." The Greek is "become watching" (*ginou grēgorōn*): wake up, and stay awake. For the people of Sardis these words would have stung. Twice their proud city had fallen because no one was watching the cliff. Now Christ tells the assembly that the same thing is happening to it. Christ had said on the mount of Olives, "Watch therefore: for ye know not what hour your Lord doth come" (Matthew 24:42).

"And strengthen the things which remain, that are ready to die." Not everything was dead. Some things "remain," but they are near death, flickering like a lamp about to go out. "Strengthen" is *stērizō* (Strong's G4741), "to make firm, to set fast." What is left must be made firm before it too dies. Isaiah foretold of the Servant of the LORD, "A bruised reed shall he not break, and the smoking flax shall he not quench" (Isaiah 42:3). Christ does not throw away what is nearly gone; He calls for it to be strengthened.

"For I have not found thy works perfect before God." "Perfect" is *peplērōmena*, "fulfilled, completed, filled up." Their works had been begun, but not finished; they looked complete before men, but were not complete "before God." (The Majority Greek text and the critical texts read "before my God," as Christ also says four times in 3:12.) Men saw the name; God saw the works, and they were empty.

Figures of speech. "Ready to die" uses death as a *Metaphor* for spiritual decline, carrying on the picture of verse 1.

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

"Remember therefore how thou hast received and heard." "Remember" is the same command as to Ephesus (2:5): keep on remembering. "How thou hast received and heard": not only *what* they had received, but *how*, with what joy and eagerness they had first heard and received the word. The Greek tenses are telling: "received" is perfect tense, something they had received and still possessed; "heard"

is aorist, a hearing in the past. They still had the truth; what they had lost was the way they once welcomed it.

"And hold fast." In Greek, "and keep" (*tērei*), present tense: keep on keeping it. It is the word of the blessing of 1:3, "keep those things which are written therein."

"And repent." Change the mind, and turn (see 2:5). Remember, keep, repent: the way back for Sardis.

"If therefore thou shalt not watch, I will come on thee as a thief." A thief comes when no one is looking, without warning. If Sardis would not wake up, Christ would come upon it as Cyrus came upon the unwatched citadel. This is the picture Christ used on earth:

> **Matthew 24:43-44** — *But know this, that if the goodman of the house had known in what watch the thief would come, he would have watched, and would not have suffered his house to be broken up. Therefore be ye also ready: for in such an hour as ye think not the Son of man cometh.*

Paul wrote of the day of the Lord in the same words: "the day of the Lord so cometh as a thief in the night" (1 Thessalonians 5:2). And the same words are spoken again in this book, in the middle of the vials of wrath: "Behold, I come as a thief. Blessed is he that watcheth, and keepeth his garments" (16:15).

"And thou shalt not know what hour I will come upon thee." The Greek uses the strong double negative (*ou mē*): "thou shalt by no means know." The one who does not watch will have no warning at all.

Figures of speech. "As a thief" is a *Simile*: Christ is not like a thief in any other way than this, that He comes unexpected. The comparison is in the manner of His coming, not in His character.

To whom. Paul wrote to the church of grace, "But ye, brethren, are not in darkness, that that day should overtake you as a thief" (1 Thessalonians 5:4). The believer under grace is told plainly that the day of the Lord will not come on him as a thief. Here Christ warns an assembly that He *will* come on it as a thief if it does not watch. These are the terms of the Day of the Lord, and the warning is repeated word for word in that day (16:15) (Part One, Chapter 3 §C).

> **Revelation 3:4** *Thou hast a few names even in Sardis which have not defiled their garments; and they shall walk with me in white: for they are worthy.*

Even in Sardis, a few were faithful.

"Thou hast a few names even in Sardis." "Names" here means persons. Bullinger lists this as the figure *Metonymy*: the name is put for the person who bears it. God knows His own by name. When the Lord said to Moses, "thou hast found grace in my sight, and I know thee by name" (Exodus 33:17), He meant that He knew Moses himself. "Even in Sardis": even in a dead assembly, in a city living on its past, there were a few. In the days of Elijah, when he thought he was the only faithful man left in Israel, God said, "Yet I have left me seven thousand in Israel, all the knees which have not bowed unto Baal" (1 Kings 19:18).

"Which have not defiled their garments." "Defiled" is *molunō* (Strong's G3435), "to stain, to soil." Clothes in Scripture often picture a man's conduct, what others see of his life. The few in Sardis had kept themselves clean. In the vision of Zechariah, Joshua the high priest stood before the angel "clothed with filthy garments," and the angel said, "Take away the filthy garments from him ... Behold, I have caused thine iniquity to pass from thee, and I will clothe thee with change of raiment" (Zechariah 3:3-4). Jude wrote of "hating even the garment spotted by the flesh" (Jude 23).

"And they shall walk with me in white." Those who kept their garments clean will be given white garments, and will walk beside Christ. White is the colour of purity and of victory: the great multitude stand before the throne "clothed with white robes" (7:9), robes they "washed ... and made ... white in the blood of the Lamb" (7:14). The bride is clothed "in fine linen, clean and white: for the fine linen is the righteousness of saints" (19:8). To "walk with" Christ is to be in His company, as Enoch "walked with God" (Genesis 5:24).

"For they are worthy." "Worthy" is *axios* (Strong's G514), "of matching weight, deserving." Their walk matched their calling. Christ Himself will say who is worthy. The same word is used of the Lamb in heaven: "Thou art worthy to take the book" (5:9).

Figures of speech. "Names" put for persons, *Metonymy* (Bullinger). "Defiled their garments" is a *Metaphor* for a defiled life. This verse and the next, coming after the rebuke of verses 1-3, are the figure Bullinger calls *Palinodia*: approval after reproof. He names it here and at Ephesus (2:6).

> **Revelation 3:5** *He that overcometh, the same shall be clothed in white raiment; and I will not blot out his name out of the book of life, but I will confess his name before my Father, and before his angels.*

"He that overcometh, the same shall be clothed in white raiment." "Raiment" is clothing. The overcomer is promised what the few already had: white garments. "The same" is emphatic in Greek, "this one": this is the one who will be so clothed.

"And I will not blot out his name out of the book of life." "Blot out" is *exaleiphō* (Strong's G1813), "to wipe out, to erase," as writing was wiped off a wax tablet or washed off a parchment. The Greek uses the strong double negative (*ou mē*): "I will by no means blot out his name."

What is "the book of life"? It is the book in which God writes the names of those who belong to Him and will live. It is first spoken of by Moses. When Israel had sinned with the golden calf, Moses prayed for them:

> **Exodus 32:32-33** — *Yet now, if thou wilt forgive their sin--; and if not, blot me, I pray thee, out of thy book which thou hast written. And the LORD said unto Moses, Whosoever hath sinned against me, him will I blot out of my book.*

David prayed of his enemies, "Let them be blotted out of the book of the living, and not be written with the righteous" (Psalm 69:28). Daniel was told that in the time of trouble at the end "thy people shall be delivered, every one that shall be found written in the book" (Daniel 12:1). In Revelation the book of life is named again and again: those who worship the beast are those "whose names are not written in the

book of life of the Lamb" (13:8; 17:8); at the white throne "whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire" (20:15); and only "they which are written in the Lamb's book of life" enter the holy city (21:27).

Sardis was a dead assembly with "a name that thou livest" (3:1). The overcomer is promised a name that will not be erased from the book of *life*: a name that lives indeed.

"But I will confess his name before my Father, and before his angels." "Confess" is *homologeō* (Strong's G3670), "to say the same thing, to acknowledge openly." Christ will stand before His Father and say, "This one is mine." These are His own words from His ministry on earth:

> **Matthew 10:32-33** — *Whosoever therefore shall confess me before men, him will I confess also before my Father which is in heaven. But whosoever shall deny me before men, him will I also deny before my Father which is in heaven.*

And Luke records, "Also I say unto you, Whosoever shall confess me before men, him shall the Son of man also confess before the angels of God" (Luke 12:8). Here both are joined: "before my Father, and before his angels."

Figures of speech. "The book of life" is the figure Bullinger calls *Anthropopatheia*: God is spoken of as keeping a book, as a man would, to show in human terms that He knows and records exactly who are His. Bullinger lists this verse under that figure.

To whom. "I will not blot out his name out of the book of life" implies that a name could be blotted out, and the warning is spoken to an assembly in the terms of the Day of the Lord, as God spoke to Moses ("him will I blot out of my book," Exodus 32:33). Under grace the believer is "sealed with that holy Spirit of promise, Which is the earnest of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession" (Ephesians 1:13-14); "ye are sealed unto the day of redemption" (Ephesians 4:30). The warning of this verse is not spoken to him (Part One, Chapter 3 §C).

> **Revelation 3:6** *He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches.*

"He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches." The fifth call to hear, after the promise as in the last four messages (see 2:7, 29). What was said to Sardis was said to all: the danger of a name without life, and the call to wake up and watch, was a warning every assembly needed. In the days the book describes, Christ will say it again: "Blessed is he that watcheth" (16:15).

Figures of speech. The refrain of the seven messages, *Amoebaeon* (see 2:7).

> **Revelation 3:7** *And to the angel of the church in Philadelphia write; These things saith he that is holy, he that is true, he that hath the key of David, he that openeth, and no man shutteth; and shutteth, and no man openeth;*

The sixth message goes east along the road to Philadelphia.

"And to the angel of the church in Philadelphia write." Philadelphia was the youngest of the seven cities. It was founded about two hundred years before Christ by Attalus II, king of Pergamum, whose

loyalty to his brother Eumenes won him the name *Philadelphus*, "lover of his brother." The city was named after him; its name means "brotherly love." It stood where the road from the coast climbed up into the high plateau of Phrygia, a gateway city, set on the edge of a great region into which it was meant to carry Greek language and ways.

Philadelphia lay in a land of earthquakes. The great earthquake of A.D. 17 that ruined Sardis struck Philadelphia too, and for years afterward the shocks went on. Ramsay records that many of its citizens lived outside the city, in huts in the country, afraid to stay inside the walls; those who stayed went out into the open at every tremor. The city received help from the emperor Tiberius, and in gratitude it took a new name, Neokaisareia, "the New Caesar's city," for a time.

Philadelphia and Smyrna are the two assemblies that receive no word of rebuke at all.

"These things saith he that is holy, he that is true." These titles are not taken from the vision of chapter 1; they are new. "Holy" (*hagios*, Strong's G40) means set apart, wholly separate from all evil. In the Old Testament "the Holy One of Israel" is God's own name (Isaiah 43:3). The demons in the synagogue at Capernaum knew Jesus by this title: "I know thee who thou art, the Holy One of God" (Mark 1:24). "True" (*alēthinos*, Strong's G228) means not only truthful but genuine, real, the true one as opposed to every counterfeit. Christ called Himself "the true vine" (John 15:1) and "the true bread from heaven" (John 6:32). To an assembly opposed by those who "say they are Jews, and are not, but do lie" (3:9), Christ speaks as the one who is holy, and true.

"He that hath the key of David." These words come from Isaiah. In the days of king Hezekiah, the king's chief steward Shebna was proud and faithless. God said He would remove him and give his office to a faithful man, Eliakim:

> **Isaiah 22:22** — *And the key of the house of David will I lay upon his shoulder; so he shall open, and none shall shut; and he shall shut, and none shall open.*

The steward who held the key of the king's house had the authority to decide who came in to the king and who was kept out. Eliakim was a faithful servant, and he held the key in his day. Christ holds it now, and holds it for ever. "The key of David" is the authority over David's house and David's kingdom: who enters it, and who is shut out. In 1:18 He holds "the keys of hell and of death"; here He holds the key of the kingdom.

"He that openeth, and no man shutteth; and shutteth, and no man openeth." What He opens, stays open. What He shuts, stays shut. No one can overrule Him. The assembly at Philadelphia had been shut out of the synagogue by those who claimed to be the true Jews (3:9). Christ answers: I hold the key, and I decide.

Figures of speech. Bullinger notes that these titles are set out without "and" between them, the figure *Asyndeton* ("no-ands"): "He that is holy, he that is true, he that hath the key of David, he that openeth." This hurries the reader on to the point, "I know thy works." He contrasts this with the many "ands" of verses 8, 12, 17 and 18. "The key of David" is a *Metonymy*: Bullinger writes, "The key is put for governmental authority, of which it is the sign."

> **Revelation 3:8** *I know thy works: behold, I have set before thee an open door, and no man can shut it: for thou hast a little strength, and hast kept my word, and hast not denied my name.*

"I know thy works." The opening words of every message. Here they are words of comfort.

"Behold, I have set before thee an open door." "Behold": mark this. "Set" is literally "given": "I have given before thee a door standing open." What is the door? The verse itself and its context give the answer. Christ has just said that He holds the key of David's house and opens what no man can shut (3:7). The door He has opened before them is the door into that house: into His kingdom, into His presence, into fellowship with Him. Those who claimed to be Jews had shut the believers out of the synagogue; Christ has opened a door that no one can shut. (Paul spoke of a door opened for the word to go out, "a great door and effectual is opened unto me" (1 Corinthians 16:9), and Ramsay thought the gateway city of Philadelphia had such a door before it into Phrygia. But here the door follows the key of David, and the next verse speaks of those shut out who will come and bow. The door is the open way into the King's house.)

"And no man can shut it." Whatever men do, the door stays open.

"For thou hast a little strength." "Little strength" (*mikran dunamin*, "small power") means they were few, poor, without influence in their city. This is not a rebuke; it is part of the reason for the open door. Christ does not ask for great strength. The apostle wrote of God's way: "God hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty" (1 Corinthians 1:27). Gideon was told to send most of his army home, "lest Israel vaunt themselves against me, saying, Mine own hand hath saved me" (Judges 7:2).

"And hast kept my word, and hast not denied my name." With their little strength they did two things: they kept His word, and they did not deny His name. This is all Christ asks. "If a man love me, he will keep my words" (John 14:23). As at Pergamos (2:13), there had been pressure to deny Him, and they had stood.

Figures of speech. "Behold" is *Asterismos*. The "open door" is a *Metaphor* for the way of entry Christ has given them. The many "ands" of this verse, "and no man can shut it ... and hast kept ... and hast not denied," are the figure *Polysyndeton*, as Bullinger notes, in contrast to the *Asyndeton* of verse 7.

> **Revelation 3:9** *Behold, I will make them of the synagogue of Satan, which say they are Jews, and are not, but do lie; behold, I will make them to come and worship before thy feet, and to know that I have loved thee.*

"Behold, I will make them of the synagogue of Satan." "Behold" again. "The synagogue of Satan" was named first at Smyrna (2:9): a gathering that bore the name of God's people but served God's adversary (see 2:9, where the words are explained in full). At Philadelphia, as at Smyrna, the opposition came from those who claimed to be the true Israel.

"Which say they are Jews, and are not, but do lie." Christ adds two words to what He said at Smyrna: "but do lie." Their claim is not only mistaken; it is a lie. The name "Jew" means one whose praise is from God (Romans 2:28-29; see 2:9); these had the name but not the praise.

"Behold, I will make them to come and worship before thy feet." Here is a remarkable reversal. The prophets had promised that the nations who oppressed Israel would one day bow before her:

> **Isaiah 60:14** — *The sons also of them that afflicted thee shall come bending unto thee; and all they that despised thee shall bow themselves down at the soles of thy feet; and they shall call thee, The city of the LORD, The Zion of the Holy One of Israel.*

Those who claimed to be the true Israel expected that promise to be kept to them. Christ turns it around: they will come and bow before *the faithful assembly*, and know that it is the faithful, not they, who are God's true people. "Worship" here is *proskuneō* (Strong's G4352), which means to bow down, to do reverence by bowing to the ground. It is used of worship given to God, but also of the honour of bowing before a person of rank (as Joseph's brothers "bowed down themselves before him with their faces to the earth," Genesis 42:6, where the Greek Old Testament uses the same verb). They will not worship the believers as gods; they will bow before them, acknowledging that they were wrong.

"And to know that I have loved thee." This is the heart of it. They will come to know that Christ has loved the very people they despised. Through Isaiah God said to Israel, "Since thou wast precious in my sight, thou hast been honourable, and I have loved thee" (Isaiah 43:4). Those who shut the believers out will see that Christ had taken them in.

Figures of speech. "Behold" twice, *Asterismos*, marking the wonder of what will happen. "Synagogue of Satan" is a *Metaphor* (see 2:9).

To whom. The whole verse is cast in the terms of Israel: who is a true Jew, and who is not; the promise of Isaiah 60 that oppressors will bow before God's people. Under grace "there is neither Jew nor Greek" in the body of Christ (Galatians 3:28). In the Day of the Lord the question of who is truly Israel will again be at the centre (7:4-8; 12:17) (Part One, Chapter 3 §C).

> **Revelation 3:10** *Because thou hast kept the word of my patience, I also will keep thee from the hour of temptation, which shall come upon all the world, to try them that dwell upon the earth.*

This verse has been read in many ways, and it must be read with care.

"Because thou hast kept the word of my patience." "The word of my patience": Bullinger explains it as "My word, which enjoins a patient waiting." Christ had told His people to wait patiently and endure (Luke 21:19; Matthew 24:13), and Philadelphia had kept that word. "Patience" is *hupomonē*, steadfast endurance (see 1:9). They had endured, as He told them to.

"I also will keep thee." There is a play on words. "Thou hast kept" (*etērēsas*) ... "I also will keep" (*tērēsō*): the same verb. You kept My word; I will keep you. Christ answers their faithfulness with His faithfulness.

"From the hour of temptation." "Temptation" here is *peirasmos* (Strong's G3986), which means trial, testing, not only temptation to sin. It is the trial that proves what men are. "The hour" is a set time. What is this hour of trial?

"Which shall come upon all the world." It is not a local persecution, like the ten days of Smyrna (2:10). It is coming "upon all the world," the whole inhabited earth (*oikoumenē*, Strong's G3625).

"To try them that dwell upon the earth." Here the book gives the key. "Them that dwell upon the earth" is the book's own name for the people of the Day of the Lord, the earth-dwellers who will face God's judgments. The souls under the altar cry for vengeance "on them that dwell on the earth" (6:10). Over the two witnesses "they that dwell upon the earth shall rejoice" (11:10). "All that dwell upon the earth shall worship him," the beast (13:8). The second beast "deceiveth them that dwell on the earth" (13:14). So "the hour of temptation, which shall come upon all the world, to try them that dwell upon the earth" is the Day of the Lord itself, the time of trial that the rest of this book describes (Part One, Chapter 3 §C).

To Philadelphia, which had kept His word, Christ promises: "I will keep thee from" that hour. The Greek preposition is *ek*, "out of." How He will keep them is not said here. The book shows God keeping His own in that time in more than one way: the 144,000 are sealed so that no harm can come to them (7:3-4; 9:4); the woman is given wings "that she might fly into the wilderness, into her place, where she is nourished for a time, and times, and half a time, from the face of the serpent" (12:14). Christ had prayed for His disciples, "I pray not that thou shouldest take them out of the world, but that thou shouldest keep them from the evil" (John 17:15), using the same verb and preposition (*tērēsēs … ek*).

Figures of speech. "Thou hast kept … I also will keep" is the figure *Polyptoton*, the same verb in two forms, so that Christ's faithfulness answers theirs word for word. "The hour" is a *Synecdoche*, a part put for the whole: one hour put for a whole season of time.

To whom. Many readers take this verse as a promise that the church of grace will be taken out of the world before the tribulation. The church of grace will indeed be gathered to the Lord before the Day of the Lord: Paul wrote that we "shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air" (1 Thessalonians 4:17), and "God hath not appointed us to wrath" (1 Thessalonians 5:9). But that hope rests on Paul's letters, not on this verse. This verse is a promise to an assembly of the Day of the Lord, given because it "kept the word of my patience," endurance, as a reward for faithfulness. The church of grace is not gathered as a reward for its endurance, but by the grace of God. This verse describes how God will keep His faithful ones in the Day of the Lord (Part One, Chapter 3 §C; Appendix C, Question 3).

> **Revelation 3:11** *Behold, I come quickly: hold that fast which thou hast, that no man take thy crown.*

"Behold, I come quickly." "Behold": mark it. "I come quickly": He is coming soon, and without delay. To Ephesus and Pergamos the same words were a warning (2:5, 16); to Philadelphia they are encouragement. The faithful do not fear His coming; they long for it. The same words close the book: "Behold, I come quickly: blessed is he that keepeth the sayings of the prophecy of this book" (22:7); "Surely I come quickly. Amen. Even so, come, Lord Jesus" (22:20). (The Majority Greek text and the critical texts lack "Behold" here.)

"Hold that fast which thou hast." The same command as to the faithful at Thyatira (2:25): hold fast, grip firmly. They have the word and the name (3:8). Hold on to them.

"That no man take thy crown." The "crown" is the victor's wreath (*stephanos*, see 2:10), the reward of the one who finishes the race. "That no man take" it: no one can take it from them by force, but they could let it go by not holding fast. Paul used the same picture of himself: "Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day" (2 Timothy 4:8). An athlete who stops running before the line loses the wreath he was about to win.

Figures of speech. "Behold" is *Asterismos*. "Crown" is a *Metaphor* for the reward of the faithful.

> **Revelation 3:12** *Him that overcometh will I make a pillar in the temple of my God, and he shall go no more out: and I will write upon him the name of my God, and the name of the city of my God, which is new Jerusalem, which cometh down out of heaven from my God: and I will write upon him my new name.*

The promise to the overcomer at Philadelphia is rich, and fits the city closely.

"Him that overcometh will I make a pillar in the temple of my God." "Temple" is *naos* (Strong's G3485), the inner sanctuary, the dwelling of God. A pillar is part of the building. It is fixed, permanent, holding up the house. In Solomon's temple two great pillars stood at the porch, named Jachin and Boaz (1 Kings 7:21). To be made a pillar in God's temple is to have a fixed and lasting place in God's house, and to be part of what holds it up.

For people who lived in a city of earthquakes, where walls fell and pillars cracked and people fled the buildings at every tremor, this promise had great force. In God's temple, the pillar does not fall.

"And he shall go no more out." In Philadelphia many had gone out of the city and lived in huts in the fields, afraid to stay inside its walls. The overcomer "shall go no more out" of God's house. The Greek uses the strong double negative (*ou mē ... eti*): he shall never, ever go out again. He will dwell in the house of God for ever. David longed for this: "One thing have I desired of the LORD, that will I seek after; that I may dwell in the house of the LORD all the days of my life" (Psalm 27:4).

"And I will write upon him the name of my God." A name written on someone marks him as belonging to the one named. The high priest wore a gold plate on his forehead engraved "HOLINESS TO THE LORD" (Exodus 28:36). In the holy city, God's servants "shall see his face; and his name shall be in their foreheads" (22:4). The 144,000 have "his Father's name written in their foreheads" (14:1).

"And the name of the city of my God, which is new Jerusalem, which cometh down out of heaven from my God." The overcomer will also bear the name of God's city: he will be a citizen of it. Here the new Jerusalem is named for the first time in the book. John will see it at the end: "And I John saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband" (21:2). It does not stay in heaven; it "cometh down." The prophets had said that the city of God would be given a new name: "and the name of the city from that day shall be, The LORD is there" (Ezekiel 48:35).

"And I will write upon him my new name." Third, Christ's own new name. At His coming the Rider on the white horse "had a name written, that no man knew, but he himself" (19:12). The overcomer will bear that name.

Philadelphia had once taken a new name for an earthly emperor, "the New Caesar's city," and later let it fall out of use. Those names pass. The names written on the overcomer, God's, the city's, and Christ's, will never be erased.

Notice that four times in this verse Christ says "my God": "the temple of my God," "the name of my God," "the city of my God," "from my God." The risen and glorified Christ speaks of God as His God, as He did to Mary at the tomb: "I ascend unto my Father, and your Father; and to my God, and your God" (John 20:17). God is His Father and His God.

Figures of speech. "A pillar" is a *Metaphor*: the overcomer will not be a stone column, but will have the permanence and place of one. The verse is full of "ands," "and he shall go ... and I will write ... and the name ... and I will write," the figure *Polysyndeton*, as Bullinger notes: each gift stands by itself. "My God" four times is the figure *Epistrophe* in effect, a phrase repeated so that it cannot be missed.

To whom. "The temple of my God," "the city of my God, which is new Jerusalem": the promise is given in the terms of Israel's temple and Israel's city, fulfilled in the holy city of chapters 21–22. It is a reward "to him that overcometh," in the terms of the Day of the Lord (Part One, Chapter 3 §C).

> **Revelation 3:13** *He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches.*

"He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches." The sixth call to hear (see 2:7, 29). What was said to Philadelphia, the open door, the promise to be kept from the hour of trial, the pillar that stands for ever, was for every assembly to hear and to take to heart.

Figures of speech. The refrain of the seven messages, *Amoebaeon* (see 2:7).

> **Revelation 3:14** *And unto the angel of the church of the Laodiceans write; These things saith the Amen, the faithful and true witness, the beginning of the creation of God;*

The seventh and last message goes to Laodicea.

"And unto the angel of the church of the Laodiceans write." Notice the wording: "the church *of the Laodiceans*," not "the church in Laodicea." It is the only message worded this way, and some have seen in it a hint that the assembly had become more the Laodiceans' than the Lord's. The text does not say so; but the message that follows fits the thought.

Laodicea lay in the valley of the river Lycus, near two other cities: Hierapolis, six miles to the north, and Colossae, ten miles to the east. It was a rich city of banking and trade, standing where great roads met. Its wealth was so great that when an earthquake struck it in the reign of Nero, about A.D. 60, it rebuilt itself from its own resources without asking help from Rome, as the Roman historian Tacitus records. Ramsay notes that it was famous for a fine, glossy black wool, and that it had a well-known school of

medicine, connected with which was an ointment called "Phrygian powder," used for the eyes. All three facts bear on this message (3:17-18).

Laodicea also has a history in Paul's letters. Epaphras, who had brought the word to Colossae, laboured for "them that are in Laodicea, and them in Hierapolis" (Colossians 4:13). Paul wrote that he had "great conflict ... for you, and for them at Laodicea" (Colossians 2:1), and asked:

> **Colossians 4:16** — *And when this epistle is read among you, cause that it be read also in the church of the Laodiceans; and that ye likewise read the epistle from Laodicea.*

"These things saith the Amen." "Amen" is a Hebrew word meaning "firm, sure, true" (see 1:6). Christ calls Himself by it as a name: "the Amen." He is God's "so be it": the one in whom every promise of God is made sure. Paul wrote, "For all the promises of God in him are yea, and in him Amen" (2 Corinthians 1:20). Isaiah twice speaks of God as "the God of truth," which in Hebrew is the God of *Amen* (Isaiah 65:16). To an assembly that was neither one thing nor the other, Christ speaks as the one who is wholly sure and true.

"The faithful and true witness." From 1:5, with "true" added: He is the witness who is faithful (He never fails to speak) and true (what He says is so). What He is about to say to Laodicea about its true condition is not exaggeration or guesswork. It is the testimony of the faithful and true witness.

"The beginning of the creation of God." "Beginning" is *archē* (Strong's G746), which can mean "first in time" and also "origin, source, ruler," the one from whom something begins and who stands at its head. These words do not say that Christ was the first thing God created. They say He is the beginning of the creation of God: the head and the first of the new creation God is making. Paul wrote of Him to the Colossians, Laodicea's neighbours, in the same terms: "who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead; that in all things he might have the preeminence" (Colossians 1:18). As "the first begotten of the dead" (1:5), He is the first of the new creation, the beginning of the life that will fill the new heaven and the new earth, when God says, "Behold, I make all things new" (21:5).

Figures of speech. "The Amen" is used as a name, the figure Bullinger calls *Antonomasia* (a title put in place of a name). The three titles are set side by side, each saying in a new way that what He speaks is sure.

To whom. Laodicea was an assembly Paul had laboured and prayed for, and a reader may well ask whether this message is spoken to a church of grace. Forty years had passed since Paul's letter to Colossae. The message is spoken to the assembly of John's day, but in the terms of the Day of the Lord: "I will spue thee out of my mouth" (3:16), "repent" (3:19), and "To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me in my throne" (3:21). These are not the terms in which Paul wrote to "the saints and faithful brethren in Christ which are at Colosse" (Colossians 1:2) (Part One, Chapter 3 §C).

> **Revelation 3:15** *I know thy works, that thou art neither cold nor hot: I would thou wert cold or hot.*

"I know thy works." The words that opened every message. At Laodicea no praise follows. It is the only message in which Christ finds nothing at all to commend.

"That thou art neither cold nor hot." "Cold" (*psuchros*) and "hot" (*zestos*, from *zeō*, "to boil") describe water, and the people of Laodicea knew all about water. Their city had no good water of its own; it was brought in by an aqueduct from springs some distance away. Their neighbours had better. Hierapolis, six miles north, was famous for its hot springs, whose waters were valued for healing. Colossae, ten miles east, had cold, fresh water. Laodicea's water, carried across the plain, is generally explained as arriving neither hot nor cold. Hot water heals; cold water refreshes. Laodicea's water did neither.

So the assembly at Laodicea was neither hot nor cold. It was not burning with zeal for God, and it was not openly cold and hostile either. It was in between, comfortable, half-hearted, self-satisfied.

"I would thou wert cold or hot." This is a startling wish. Christ would rather they were cold than as they are. Why? Because the cold know they are cold. The openly unbelieving may one day be brought to see their need; the lukewarm think they have no need (3:17). The one who has a little religion and thinks it enough is harder to reach than the one who has none. Elijah said to Israel on mount Carmel, "How long halt ye between two opinions? if the LORD be God, follow him: but if Baal, then follow him" (1 Kings 18:21).

Figures of speech. "Cold" and "hot" are *Metaphors* drawn from water, describing the heart of the assembly. Set together they make an *Antithesis*.

> **Revelation 3:16** *So then because thou art lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will spue thee out of my mouth.*

"So then because thou art lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot." "Lukewarm" is *chliaros* (Strong's G5513), "tepid," found only here in Scripture. It is the temperature of water left standing: neither refreshing nor healing.

"I will spue thee out of my mouth." "Spue" is old English for "spew, vomit." The Greek *emeō* means to vomit. It is the strongest word of rejection in the seven messages. Lukewarm water in the mouth makes a man want to spit it out. Christ is sickened by an assembly that is neither one thing nor the other.

The Greek says "I am about to" (*mellō*): "I am on the point of spewing you out." It is not yet done. The next verses show that there is still time to repent (3:19-20).

The law had used the same picture of the land of Canaan. God warned Israel not to defile itself with the sins of the nations before them, "That the land spue not you out also, when ye defile it, as it spued out the nations that were before you" (Leviticus 18:28).

Figures of speech. "I will spue thee out of my mouth" is the figure Bullinger calls *Anthropopatheia* ("ascribing human feelings"): Christ's utter rejection of the lukewarm is expressed in the most physical of human terms, so that the reader may feel how hateful half-heartedness is to Him.

To whom. "I will spue thee out" is a threat of rejection. Under grace Christ said, "him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out" (John 6:37), and Paul wrote that nothing "shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord" (Romans 8:39). The threat to spew out an assembly

belongs to the terms of the Day of the Lord, as the land of Canaan was warned it would spew out Israel (Part One, Chapter 3 §C).

> **Revelation 3:17** *Because thou sayest, I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing; and knowest not that thou art wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked:*

"Because thou sayest, I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing." Here is the root of the trouble: what Laodicea said about itself. "I am rich": they had money. "And increased with goods": they had grown richer still. "And have need of nothing": they were sufficient in themselves. It was the very boast of their city, which had rebuilt itself after the earthquake without help from Rome. The assembly had taken on the spirit of the city.

The prophet Hosea had heard the same boast from Israel's northern kingdom:

> **Hosea 12:8** — *And Ephraim said, Yet I am become rich, I have found me out substance: in all my labours they shall find none iniquity in me that were sin.*

Christ had told of the rich man who said to his soul, "Soul, thou hast much goods laid up for many years; take thine ease, eat, drink, and be merry. But God said unto him, Thou fool, this night thy soul shall be required of thee" (Luke 12:19-20).

"And knowest not." This is the tragedy. Not that they were poor, but that they did not know it. They could not see themselves.

"That thou art wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked." Five words, each the opposite of what they believed. "Wretched" (*talaipōros*) means "afflicted, in distress"; Paul used it of himself in his struggle with sin, "O wretched man that I am!" (Romans 7:24). "Miserable" (*eleeinos*) means "pitiable, to be pitied." "Poor" (*ptōchos*) is the word for the beggar who has nothing at all, the word used of Smyrna's poverty (2:9). Smyrna was poor and Christ said it was rich; Laodicea was rich and Christ says it is poor. "Blind": in a city famous for its eye-medicine, they could not see. "Naked": in a city famous for its fine black wool and its garments, they had nothing to cover themselves.

Figures of speech. The five words are joined by "and ... and ... and," the figure *Polysyndeton*. Bullinger lists this verse under it and says, "the figure is used to bring out the Laodicean condition of soul." Each word falls on them separately, like a blow. In Greek one article ("the") stands before the first two, "the wretched one and miserable," as though Christ said, "*you* are the one who is wretched."

> **Revelation 3:18** *I counsel thee to buy of me gold tried in the fire, that thou mayest be rich; and white raiment, that thou mayest be clothed, and that the shame of thy nakedness do not appear; and anoint thine eyes with eyesalve, that thou mayest see.*

After the diagnosis, the remedy. Each part of the remedy answers one of their needs.

"I counsel thee." Christ does not command here; He counsels, as one gives advice to a friend. "Counsel" is *sumbouleuō*, "to advise." He speaks to the rich, self-sufficient Laodiceans as a merchant might speak to a customer, but the goods He offers are found nowhere else.

"To buy of me gold tried in the fire, that thou mayest be rich." They thought they were rich; they were poor. Christ offers "gold tried in the fire," gold refined in the furnace until the dross is burned away. Peter wrote of "the trial of your faith, being much more precious than of gold that perisheth, though it be tried with fire" (1 Peter 1:7). The gold Christ offers is the true riches that only He can give. "Buy of me": not from the bankers of Laodicea. How can the poor buy? Isaiah had given the answer long before:

> **Isaiah 55:1** — *Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters, and he that hath no money; come ye, buy, and eat; yea, come, buy wine and milk without money and without price.*

To "buy" from Christ is to come to Him, give up what one has trusted in, and receive what He gives.

"And white raiment, that thou mayest be clothed, and that the shame of thy nakedness do not appear." They were naked; Christ offers white clothing. The city was proud of its glossy black wool; Christ offers white. White garments are the clothing of the faithful (3:4-5) and of the redeemed who "washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb" (7:14). Nakedness in Scripture is shame. When Adam and Eve sinned, "they knew that they were naked" (Genesis 3:7), and God Himself clothed them with coats of skins (Genesis 3:21). The covering for their shame must come from Him.

"And anoint thine eyes with eyesalve, that thou mayest see." They were blind; Christ offers eyesalve. "Eyesalve" is *kollourion* (Strong's G2854), a soothing ointment for the eyes, made up into a paste. Laodicea's medical school was known for such a remedy. But no ointment of Laodicea could cure the blindness Christ meant. Only He can open blind eyes. When He healed the man born blind, He said, "For judgment I am come into this world, that they which see not might see; and that they which see might be made blind" (John 9:39). The Pharisees answered, "Are we blind also?" and He said, "If ye were blind, ye should have no sin: but now ye say, We see; therefore your sin remaineth" (John 9:40-41). Laodicea said, "We see," and so remained blind.

Figures of speech. Gold, white raiment and eyesalve are *Metaphors*, drawn from the very things Laodicea prided itself on: its banks, its cloth, its medicine. Each one stands for what only Christ can give. The many "ands" are *Polysyndeton*, which Bullinger notes here.

> **Revelation 3:19** *As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten: be zealous therefore, and repent.*

After such a severe message, a word of love.

"As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten." "Love" here is *phileō* (Strong's G5368), the word of warm, personal affection, not *agapē*. After all He has said, Christ tells this lukewarm assembly that He loves them, with a tender, personal love. That is *why* He rebukes them.

"Rebuke" is *elenchō* (Strong's G1651), "to expose, to bring to light, to convict": to show someone his fault so that he cannot deny it. "Chasten" is *paideuō* (Strong's G3811), from *pais*, "a child": to train a child, to correct and discipline him. A father who did not care would not bother. These words echo the proverb:

> **Proverbs 3:11-12** — *My son, despise not the chastening of the LORD; neither be weary of his correction: For whom the LORD loveth he correcteth; even as a father the son in whom he delighteth.*

The whole hard message to Laodicea is proof of His love. He would not rebuke them if He did not care what became of them.

"Be zealous therefore, and repent." "Be zealous" is *zēleuō*, from the same root as *zeō*, "to boil," which gave the word "hot" (*zestos*) in 3:15. Christ is saying, in effect: become hot! Boil! The lukewarm are told to burn with zeal. "And repent": change your mind, and turn (see 2:5). The Greek tenses are telling: "be zealous" is present, "keep on being zealous"; "repent" is aorist, a single, decisive act. Repent once, and then keep on burning.

Figures of speech. Bullinger lists this verse with Proverbs 3:12, a proverb taken up and applied (the figure *Paroemia*, "a proverb"). "Be zealous" plays on the word "hot" of 3:15, the figure *Paronomasia*.

> **Revelation 3:20** *Behold, I stand at the door, and knock: if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me.*

This verse is one of the best-known in the book. It must be read in its place: in the message to Laodicea.

"Behold." Mark this; see this.

"I stand at the door, and knock." Where is Christ in this verse? Outside. The Lord of the assembly is standing outside the door of the assembly, knocking to be let in. The assembly that said it had "need of nothing" (3:17) had shut out the one it needed most. "I stand" is perfect tense in Greek, "I have taken my stand, and am standing": He has been there for some time, waiting. "Knock" is present: He keeps on knocking.

This is a picture from the Song of Solomon, where the beloved comes to the door at night:

> **Song of Solomon 5:2** — *I sleep, but my heart waketh: it is the voice of my beloved that knocketh, saying, Open to me, my sister, my love, my dove, my undefiled: for my head is filled with dew, and my locks with the drops of the night.*

In the Song, the bride was slow to rise, and when she opened, "my beloved had withdrawn himself, and was gone" (Song of Solomon 5:6). Christ's knocking is patient, but the door should not be left shut.

"If any man hear my voice, and open the door." The call goes now to each one: "if any man." Even if the assembly as a whole does not open, any single person in it may. "Hear my voice": the same call as "He that hath an ear, let him hear." Christ said of His sheep, "My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me" (John 10:27).

"I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me." "Sup" is old English for "eat supper": the evening meal, the chief meal of the day, eaten at leisure with family and friends. To eat together in the East was a sign of fellowship and friendship. Christ promises to come in and share the meal: "I with him, and he with me." This is the fellowship Laodicea had lost. It also looks forward to the great supper of the

book: "Blessed are they which are called unto the marriage supper of the Lamb" (19:9). Christ had said at the last supper, "I appoint unto you a kingdom, as my Father hath appointed unto me; That ye may eat and drink at my table in my kingdom" (Luke 22:29-30).

Figures of speech. "Behold" is *Asterismos*. The door, the knocking, and the supper are a picture that stands for something without saying so: the figure *Hypocatastasis*. The door is the heart of the assembly and of each member; the knocking is Christ's call; the supper is fellowship with Him. "And will sup with him, and he with me" is the figure *Polysyndeton* again, and in the reversal "with him, and he with me" the fellowship is shown to go both ways.

To whom. This verse is often used today as an invitation to unbelievers to receive Christ. Its first meaning is plainer. Christ is speaking to an assembly that bore His name but had shut Him out, and He calls on each one in it to open the door. The call is in the terms of hearing and opening, and the reward is fellowship at His table in His kingdom (Luke 22:29-30; 19:9), the terms of the Day of the Lord (Part One, Chapter 3 §C). Under grace the believer is not outside with Christ knocking; he is "in Christ," and Christ is in him, "the hope of glory" (Colossians 1:27).

> **Revelation 3:21** *To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me in my throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father in his throne.*

The last and greatest promise is given to the worst of the seven assemblies.

"To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me in my throne." "Grant" is "give." The overcomer at Laodicea, which had nothing to commend, is promised more than any other: to sit with Christ on His throne. Christ had promised the twelve, "ye also shall sit upon twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel" (Matthew 19:28). Daniel saw thrones set (Daniel 7:9), and then "judgment was given to the saints of the most High; and the time came that the saints possessed the kingdom" (Daniel 7:22). The book shows this promise fulfilled: "And I saw thrones, and they sat upon them, and judgment was given unto them ... and they lived and reigned with Christ a thousand years" (20:4).

"Even as I also overcame." Christ Himself is the first overcomer. He was tempted in all things, suffered, died, and rose again. On the night before He died He said, "be of good cheer; I have overcome the world" (John 16:33). The overcomer follows where He went.

"And am set down with my Father in his throne." Here Christ distinguishes two thrones. There is "my throne," which the overcomer will share; and there is "his throne," His Father's throne, where Christ sits now. After His resurrection and ascension, God raised Him and set Him at His own right hand. The psalm said, "The LORD said unto my Lord, Sit thou at my right hand, until I make thine enemies thy footstool" (Psalm 110:1), and the writer to the Hebrews says that Jesus, "for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God" (Hebrews 12:2). Christ's own throne is the throne of David, which God promised Him: "the Lord God shall give unto him the throne of his father David" (Luke 1:32). He sits now on His Father's throne; when He comes, He will sit on His own, and the overcomer will sit with Him.

Figures of speech. "Throne" is used by *Metonymy* for the rule and authority of the one who sits on it. Bullinger lists Christ's throne under *Anthropopatheia* as well: God's rule is pictured as a king seated on a throne. "Even as I also overcame" sets the overcomer's victory beside Christ's, a *Simile* of comparison.

To whom. To sit with Christ on His throne and reign is the promise of Daniel 7 and Matthew 19, fulfilled in 20:4. It is a reward for overcoming, given in the terms of the Day of the Lord. The church of grace is spoken of in Paul's letters as already seated "together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus" (Ephesians 2:6), by grace, not as a reward for overcoming (Part One, Chapter 3 §C).

> **Revelation 3:22** *He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches.*

"He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches." The seventh and last call to hear. It closes the sermon from heaven as it closed each message. Every assembly was to hear every message, the warnings to Ephesus and Laodicea, the comfort to Smyrna and Philadelphia, the judgment on Jezebel, the call to Sardis to wake up. And every reader of this book is called to hear them still (Part One, Chapter 6).

The seven messages are finished. Christ has walked among the lampstands and spoken to each. In the very next verse the scene changes: a door is opened in heaven, and the voice like a trumpet calls John to "Come up hither" (4:1). The assemblies have heard what Christ says to them on earth; now John is shown the throne in heaven from which all that is coming will be ordered.

Figures of speech. The refrain of the seven messages, said for the seventh time: *Amoebaeon* (see 2:7). Bullinger also notes its form, a *Polyptoton* ("ear ... hear," two words from related roots in the Greek), which makes the call impossible to miss.

In short. Seven messages from the risen Christ to seven real assemblies of Asia, each opening with a title from the vision of chapter 1, each saying "I know thy works," each with praise or fault or both, counsel, a call to hear, and a promise to the overcomer. Ephesus worked hard and kept sound doctrine, but had left its first love; Smyrna was poor and persecuted but rich, and was told to be faithful unto death; Pergamos held fast where Satan's throne was, but allowed the teaching of Balaam and the Nicolaitans; Thyatira grew in love and works, but allowed "Jezebel" to lead Christ's servants into idolatry; Sardis had a name to live but was dead, all but a few; Philadelphia had little strength, kept His word, and was given an open door and the promise to be kept from the hour of trial; Laodicea was rich and blind, lukewarm, and found Christ outside its door knocking. The messages are spoken in the terms of the Day of the Lord: works, repentance, His coming, and rewards for overcoming. Every promise, the tree of life, the crown of life, the hidden manna, the rod of iron and the morning star, white raiment and the book of life, the pillar and the new Jerusalem, and a seat on Christ's throne, is kept in the closing chapters of the book.

Section C — 4:1–5:14. In Heaven: The Throne, the Book, and the Lamb

Where it stands

The first of the seven pairs: the first scene in heaven (1H). It explains the first scene on earth, the six seals (Section D). Before any judgment falls on earth, John is taken up to see the throne from which it comes, and the Lamb who alone is worthy to open the sealed book. The messages to the assemblies are finished; now the door of heaven stands open, and the reader is shown who rules over everything that is about to happen.

Its structure

Two scenes, each followed by worship. The first worship is for creation; the second, for redemption.

	Verses	Content
A	4:1-8a	The throne: the One on it; round it, a rainbow and twenty-four thrones; out of it, lightnings; before it, seven lamps and a sea of glass; round it, four living creatures
B	4:8b-11	Worship for creation: "Holy, holy, holy" and "thou hast created all things"
A	5:1-7	The book and the Lamb: the right hand; a book; the Lion; the Lamb; the book; the right hand
B	5:8-14	Worship for redemption: the new song, "thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us," then the angels, then every creature

The text

Revelation 4. 1 After this I looked, and, behold, a door was opened in heaven: and the first voice which I heard was as it were of a trumpet talking with me; which said, Come up hither, and I will shew thee things which must be hereafter. **2** And immediately I was in the spirit: and, behold, a throne was set in heaven, and one sat on the throne. **3** And he that sat was to look upon like a jasper and a sardine stone: and there was a rainbow round about the throne, in sight like unto an emerald. **4** And round about the throne were four and twenty seats: and upon the seats I saw four and twenty elders sitting, clothed in white raiment; and they had on their heads crowns of gold. **5** And out of the throne proceeded lightnings and thunderings and voices: and there were seven lamps of fire burning before the throne, which are the seven Spirits of God. **6** And before the throne there was a sea of glass like unto crystal: and in the midst of the throne, and round about the throne, were four beasts full of eyes before and behind. **7** And the first beast was like a lion, and the second beast like a calf, and the third beast had a face as a man, and the fourth beast was like a flying eagle. **8** And the four beasts had each of them six wings about him; and they were full of eyes within: and they rest not day and night, saying, Holy, holy, holy, LORD God Almighty, which was, and is, and is to come. **9** And when those beasts give glory and honour and thanks to him that sat on the throne, who liveth for ever and ever, **10** The four and twenty elders fall down before him that sat on the throne, and worship him that liveth for ever and ever, and

cast their crowns before the throne, saying, **11** Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honour and power: for thou hast created all things, and for thy pleasure they are and were created.

Revelation 5. 1 And I saw in the right hand of him that sat on the throne a book written within and on the backside, sealed with seven seals. **2** And I saw a strong angel proclaiming with a loud voice, Who is worthy to open the book, and to loose the seals thereof? **3** And no man in heaven, nor in earth, neither under the earth, was able to open the book, neither to look thereon. **4** And I wept much, because no man was found worthy to open and to read the book, neither to look thereon. **5** And one of the elders saith unto me, Weep not: behold, the Lion of the tribe of Juda, the Root of David, hath prevailed to open the book, and to loose the seven seals thereof. **6** And I beheld, and, lo, in the midst of the throne and of the four beasts, and in the midst of the elders, stood a Lamb as it had been slain, having seven horns and seven eyes, which are the seven Spirits of God sent forth into all the earth. **7** And he came and took the book out of the right hand of him that sat upon the throne. **8** And when he had taken the book, the four beasts and four and twenty elders fell down before the Lamb, having every one of them harps, and golden vials full of odours, which are the prayers of saints. **9** And they sung a new song, saying, Thou art worthy to take the book, and to open the seals thereof: for thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation; **10** And hast made us unto our God kings and priests: and we shall reign on the earth. **11** And I beheld, and I heard the voice of many angels round about the throne and the beasts and the elders: and the number of them was ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousands of thousands; **12** Saying with a loud voice, Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory, and blessing. **13** 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, heard I saying, Blessing, and honour, and glory, and power, be unto him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb for ever and ever. **14** And the four beasts said, Amen. And the four and twenty elders fell down and worshipped him that liveth for ever and ever.

Verse by verse

Where we are: in heaven. Verses 4:1-11, the throne. This is the first scene in heaven (pair 1, Part One, Chapter 8 §C). John is called up through an open door and sees the throne of God and all that is round it. Nothing happens yet on the earth. Heaven is shown first, because what heaven decides, the earth will feel (Section D).

> **Revelation 4:1** *After this I looked, and, behold, a door was opened in heaven: and the first voice which I heard was as it were of a trumpet talking with me; which said, Come up hither, and I will shew thee things which must be hereafter.*

With this verse the scene changes from earth to heaven. Chapters 2 and 3 were spoken to the assemblies on the earth; now John is called up to see the throne from which all that follows will be ordered.

"After this I looked." In Greek, "After these things I saw" (*meta tauta eidon*). The phrase marks a new sight, and it is one of the signposts of the book. It opens a new vision six times (4:1; 7:1; 7:9; 15:5; 18:1; 19:1), and three of those six open a new scene in heaven (Appendix A §C).

"And, behold." Yes, this is an exclamation. The Greek word *idou* is a call to look: "Look! See!" Bullinger names the use of such a word the figure *Asterismos* ("marking with a star"), because it does in speech what an asterisk does on a page. He observes that "behold" is not a mere interjection but "really a verb, telling us actually to look and see, and observe and note attentively." John is moved, and he wants the reader to look with him.

"A door was opened in heaven." The Greek says "a door standing open" (*ēneōgmenē*, a perfect participle): John did not see it being opened; he saw it already open. No man opened it. God opened it, and through it a man on earth is allowed to see into heaven. The same thing had happened to the prophets. "The heavens were opened, and I saw visions of God," wrote Ezekiel (Ezekiel 1:1). Jacob, waking from his dream of the ladder, said, "this is none other but the house of God, and this is the gate of heaven" (Genesis 28:17). Amos tells why God opens such doors: "Surely the Lord GOD will do nothing, but he revealeth his secret unto his servants the prophets" (Amos 3:7).

There is a progression of doors in these chapters. To Philadelphia Christ said, "I have set before thee an open door, and no man can shut it" (3:8). To Laodicea, "Behold, I stand at the door, and knock" (3:20). Now the door is in heaven itself, and it stands open for John to see what God is about to do.

"And the first voice which I heard was as it were of a trumpet talking with me." "The first voice" is the voice John had heard at the beginning: "I was in the Spirit on the Lord's day, and heard behind me a great voice, as of a trumpet" (1:10). When he turned to see it, he saw the Son of man (1:12-13). So the voice that now calls him is Christ's own voice.

Why "as it were of a trumpet"? In Israel the trumpet was the instrument that summoned. God told Moses to make two silver trumpets, "that thou mayest use them for the calling of the assembly, and for the journeying of the camps" (Numbers 10:2). At Sinai, when God came down to speak to Israel, "the voice of the trumpet exceeding loud" sounded, "so that all the people that was in the camp trembled" (Exodus 19:16). A trumpet is loud, clear, and cannot be mistaken; it calls men to gather, to march, or to battle. And the trumpet announced the Day of the Lord: "Blow ye the trumpet in Zion, and sound an alarm in my holy mountain: let all the inhabitants of the land tremble: for the day of the LORD cometh" (Joel 2:1). The voice like a trumpet calls John to see that day, in which seven trumpets will sound (8:2).

"Which said, Come up hither." "Hither" means "here, to this place": up, through the open door, into heaven. How did John go? The next verse answers: "immediately I was in the spirit" (4:2). He was taken up in vision, as Ezekiel was: "the spirit lifted me up between the earth and the heaven, and brought me in the visions of God to Jerusalem" (Ezekiel 8:3). His body did not leave Patmos. Moses was called in much the same words to receive the law: "Come up to me into the mount, and be there" (Exodus 24:12). The prophets were said to stand "in the counsel of the LORD" (Jeremiah 23:18), and that is where John is now taken.

The call is to John alone: the voice is "talking with me," and the promise is "I will shew thee." This study does not take this verse as the gathering of the church to the Lord; it is John's call to see (Appendix C, Question 3). The same words, "Come up hither," are spoken later to the two witnesses, who do go up bodily, "in a cloud" (11:12).

"And I will shew thee things which must be hereafter." "Shew" is the purpose word of the whole book: "to shew unto his servants things which must shortly come to pass" (1:1). "Must" (*dei*) is the language of God's purpose: these things will happen because God has determined them. Daniel used the same thought when he told Nebuchadnezzar that "there is a God in heaven that revealeth secrets, and maketh known to the king Nebuchadnezzar what shall be in the latter days" (Daniel 2:28).

"Hereafter" is, in Greek, the same phrase that opened the verse: *meta tauta*, "after these things." When? After the things that "are." Christ divided the book in 1:19: "Write the things which thou hast seen, and the things which are, and the things which shall be hereafter" (*meta tauta*). The things which "are" were the assemblies of chapters 2 and 3. The things "hereafter" begin now: the events of the Day of the Lord.

Figures of speech. *Asterismos* ("behold"). The voice "as it were of a trumpet" is a *Simile*, a stated comparison. And the verse is framed in Greek by the same phrase at its beginning and end, "After these things I saw ... the things which must be after these things." Bullinger calls such framing *Epanadiplosis* ("encircling"): the repeated phrase closes the sentence like a ring and binds its parts together. The English hides it by translating the phrase two ways, "After this" and "hereafter."

To whom. A door into heaven, a trumpet, and the words "Come up hither" lead many readers to see here the gathering of the church of grace, when "the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God" (1 Thessalonians 4:16). But nothing here is said to the church. The call is to one man, to see, and he goes in spirit and writes what he sees (Appendix C, Question 3).



Albrecht Dürer, The Apocalypse (woodcut, 1498): John called up through the door in heaven, before the throne and the twenty-four elders (4:1-5:14). Dürer gives the One on the throne a human form; John does not describe His form (see 4:2).

> **Revelation 4:2** *And immediately I was in the spirit: and, behold, a throne was set in heaven, and one sat on the throne.*

John has heard the call, "Come up hither" (4:1). In this verse he goes, and the first thing he sees is a throne.

"And immediately I was in the spirit." "Immediately" (*eutheōs*): at once, without delay. As soon as the voice called, John was taken up "in the spirit," carried by the power of God's spirit into a vision of heaven. This is the second of the four times he is "in the spirit" in this book (1:10; 4:2; 17:3; 21:10), and each time a great vision opens (see 1:10). His body stayed on Patmos; what he saw, he saw in vision, as the prophets did.

"And, behold, a throne was set in heaven." "Behold": look! (*Asterismos*, see 4:1). "Was set" (*ekeito*) means "was standing there, was placed": it was already in its place. A throne is the seat of a king, the place from which he rules and judges. It is the first thing John sees in heaven, and it is the centre of everything that follows. The Greek word *thronos* is found forty-seven times in Revelation, most of its uses in the whole New Testament. Chapter 4 alone names it fourteen times. Every judgment that falls on the earth in this book comes from this throne. Whatever storms rage below, the throne in heaven is not shaken.

The prophets had seen it before. In the days of king Ahab, the prophet Micaiah said:

> **1 Kings 22:19** — *And he said, Hear thou therefore the word of the LORD: I saw the LORD sitting on his throne, and all the host of heaven standing by him on his right hand and on his left.*

Isaiah wrote, "In the year that king Uzziah died I saw also the Lord sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up, and his train filled the temple" (Isaiah 6:1). Ezekiel saw "the likeness of a throne, as the appearance of a sapphire stone" (Ezekiel 1:26). The psalmist sang, "The LORD hath prepared his throne in the heavens; and his kingdom ruleth over all" (Psalm 103:19).

"And one sat on the throne." John does not name Him, and he does not describe His form. He simply says, "one sat." The one on the throne is God Himself, "him that sat on the throne, who liveth for ever and ever" (4:9). He is sitting: His rule is settled and at rest. He does not need to rise to deal with what is coming. Throughout the book He is called by this title, "him that sitteth upon the throne" (5:13; see also 5:1, 7; 6:16; 7:10, 15; 19:4; 21:5).

Figures of speech. *Asterismos* ("behold"). The throne is God's throne, real in the vision John saw; it is also the sign of His rule. Bullinger lists God's throne under the figure *Anthropopatheia*: God, who is Spirit, is spoken of as sitting on a throne, as a king would, so that men can grasp His sovereign rule.

> **Revelation 4:3** *And he that sat was to look upon like a jasper and a sardine stone: and there was a rainbow round about the throne, in sight like unto an emerald.*

John tries to describe the one on the throne, and can only do it by comparing Him to precious stones and light.

"And he that sat was to look upon like a jasper and a sardine stone." "To look upon" means "in appearance": John saw not a form but a brilliance. He uses two stones to describe it. The jasper (*iaspis*) of the ancient world is not certainly the stone we call jasper today. The book describes it later: the holy city had "the glory of God: and her light was like unto a stone most precious, even like a jasper stone, clear as crystal" (21:11). So the jasper John means was clear and brilliant, shining with light. The "sardine stone" (*sardion*, the sardius) was a deep red stone, a carnelian, named after the city of Sardis. A clear, dazzling brilliance, and a fiery red: that is how the glory of God appeared to John.

These two stones were both set in the breastplate of Israel's high priest, which bore twelve stones engraved with the names of the twelve tribes. The sardius was the first stone: "the first row shall be a sardius, a topaz, and a carbuncle" (Exodus 28:17). The jasper was the last: "And the fourth row a beryl, and an onyx, and a jasper" (Exodus 28:20). The first and the last of the stones that bore Israel's names over the high priest's heart are the stones by which John describes the glory on the throne.

"And there was a rainbow round about the throne." A rainbow circles the throne. The rainbow is the sign of God's covenant with the earth after the flood:

> **Genesis 9:13-15** — *I do set my bow in the cloud, and it shall be for a token of a covenant between me and the earth. And it shall come to pass, when I bring a cloud over the earth, that the bow shall*

> *be seen in the cloud: And I will remember my covenant, which is between me and you and every living creature of all flesh; and the waters shall no more become a flood to destroy all flesh.*

Ezekiel saw the same bow about the throne of God: "As the appearance of the bow that is in the cloud in the day of rain, so was the appearance of the brightness round about. This was the appearance of the likeness of the glory of the LORD" (Ezekiel 1:28).

Why does the rainbow surround the throne just before the judgments begin? Because God's judgments do not cancel His promises. He is about to judge the earth, but He remembers His covenant. Judgment will fall, but the earth will not be lost; it will be made new. The bow around the throne tells John, before a single seal is opened, that the God who judges is the God who keeps His word.

"In sight like unto an emerald." The rainbow was green, like an emerald. A rainbow in the sky has many colours; this one shone with the soft green of the emerald, the colour of growing things, of life. Around the fiery brightness of the throne is a circle of green.

Figures of speech. "Like a jasper and a sardine stone," "like unto an emerald": *Similes*. John is not saying that God is a stone; he is saying that the glory he saw shone like these stones. When men are shown the glory of God, they can only describe it by likeness, as Ezekiel did with his repeated "the appearance of the likeness" (Ezekiel 1:28).

> **Revelation 4:4** *And round about the throne were four and twenty seats: and upon the seats I saw four and twenty elders sitting, clothed in white raiment; and they had on their heads crowns of gold.*

Around the throne John now sees a ring of other thrones, and on them twenty-four elders. Everything about them is described in terms of rule and worship.

"And round about the throne were four and twenty seats." "Seats" here is the same Greek word as "throne" (*thronos*, Strong's G2362); the King James Version renders it "seats" to keep them distinct from the one throne at the centre. They are thrones nonetheless: seats of rule. God's throne is the centre, and these thrones are "round about" it, as a court gathered about its king. The prophets saw such a court. Micaiah said, "I saw the LORD sitting on his throne, and all the host of heaven standing by him on his right hand and on his left" (1 Kings 22:19). Daniel saw "the thrones ... cast down," that is, set in place, "and the Ancient of days did sit" (Daniel 7:9). Paul names "thrones" among the ranks of beings God created in heaven: "by him were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers" (Colossians 1:16).

"And upon the seats I saw four and twenty elders sitting." "Elders" (*presbyteroi*, Strong's G4245) means "the older ones." In Israel the elders were the senior men who ruled and judged among the people. Isaiah foretold a day when "the LORD of hosts shall reign in mount Zion, and in Jerusalem, and before his ancients gloriously" (Isaiah 24:23). "Ancients" is the Hebrew word for elders: when God reigns, His elders are before Him.

Why twenty-four? It is twice twelve. Twelve is the number of God's ordered government among His people (twelve tribes, twelve apostles). And twenty-four is the number David used when he ordered the

worship of the temple. He divided the priests into twenty-four courses (1 Chronicles 24:1-19) and the singers into twenty-four courses (1 Chronicles 25:9-31). These elders do both kinds of work: they hold harps and sing, like the singers, and they hold golden vials of incense, like the priests (5:8). David did not invent that order. He gave Solomon "the pattern of all that he had by the spirit" (1 Chronicles 28:12), and the tabernacle before it was made as "the example and shadow of heavenly things" (Hebrews 8:5). The twenty-four courses on earth were a copy; here John sees what they copied. Bullinger, in his *Number in Scripture*, draws the same conclusion: twenty-four "is the number associated with the heavenly government and worship, of which the earthly form in Israel was only a copy."

"Clothed in white raiment." In Scripture white clothing belongs to heaven and to purity. The angel at the tomb wore raiment "white as snow" (Matthew 28:3), and at the ascension "two men stood by them in white apparel" (Acts 1:10). Daniel saw the Ancient of days, "whose garment was white as snow" (Daniel 7:9). The book itself explains white linen as "the righteousness of saints" (19:8). The elders are clean, holy, fit to stand in God's presence.

"And they had on their heads crowns of gold." The word for these crowns is *stephanos* (Strong's G4735): the wreath given to a victor or the crown of honour, not the *diadēma*, the royal headband worn by a king. Gold, in the tabernacle and temple, was the metal of the holy places and of everything nearest to God: the ark, the mercy seat, the lampstand and the altar of incense were overlaid with it or made of it (Exodus 25:10-11, 17, 31; 30:1-3). Their crowns are crowns of honour, given to them by God. In verse 10 they cast them before His throne, confessing that their honour is His gift.

Who are the elders? This is the question the reader is left with, and it should be answered here. Three things settle it.

1. *They are not risen saints.* The resurrection of the just has not yet taken place. The book places the first resurrection after the time of the beast: "they lived and reigned with Christ a thousand years ... This is the first resurrection" (20:4-5). Nor has the great tribulation yet begun; it is still ahead (7:14). So the elders cannot be believers of the Day of the Lord, already raised and crowned, before that day has even begun.
2. *The book never says that they stand for the redeemed.* When Revelation uses a figure, it usually explains it: the candlesticks "are" the assemblies (1:20), the lamps "are" the seven Spirits (4:5), the odours "are" the prayers of saints (5:8). Nowhere does it say that the elders "are" the redeemed.
3. *They speak of the redeemed as others.* One of them asks John about the great multitude: "What are these which are arrayed in white robes? and whence came they?" and answers, "These are they which came out of great tribulation" (7:13-14). He speaks of them as "these" and "they," not "we." The song of 5:9-10 is the one place where the King James text has them say "redeemed us"; there, as Section C explains, the singers are the four beasts as well as the elders, and nearly all Greek copies read "them ... they" in verse 10.

So the elders are what the text calls them: elders of heaven, enthroned and crowned, who sit about the throne of God and lead the worship of heaven, the heavenly order after which David patterned the

twenty-four courses of the priests and singers. (The other readings are set out in Appendix C, Question 4.)

What the text says of them, they do: they sit on thrones (4:4), fall down and worship (4:10; 5:14), cast their crowns before the throne (4:10), sing (5:9), comfort and explain (5:5; 7:13-14).

The numbers. *Twenty-four* thrones and *twenty-four* elders. Twenty-four is twelve twice. Twelve is the number of governmental perfection: of God's rule rightly ordered (twelve tribes, twelve apostles). Twenty-four is the number of the ordered worship of the temple: David divided the priests into twenty-four courses (1 Chronicles 24:1-19) and the singers into twenty-four courses (1 Chronicles 25:9-31), and he did it after the pattern God showed him (1 Chronicles 28:12, 19). So the number itself says what the elders are: the ordered rule and worship of heaven, of which David's courses were a copy (Part One, Chapter 5 §D).

Figures of speech. None needs to be supposed. The thrones, the white raiment and the crowns are described as John saw them, and they are taken as they read.

> **Revelation 4:5** *And out of the throne proceeded lightnings and thunderings and voices: and there were seven lamps of fire burning before the throne, which are the seven Spirits of God.*

"And out of the throne proceeded lightnings and thunderings and voices." These came "out of the throne": from God Himself, as signs of His presence and His power. This is how God showed Himself at Sinai:

> **Exodus 19:16** — *And it came to pass on the third day in the morning, that there were thunders and lightnings, and a thick cloud upon the mount, and the voice of the trumpet exceeding loud; so that all the people that was in the camp trembled.*

"And all the people saw the thunderings, and the lightnings, and the noise of the trumpet, and the mountain smoking: and when the people saw it, they removed, and stood afar off" (Exodus 20:18). What they meant at Sinai, they mean here: the holy God is present, and He is about to speak and to act. David sang, "The LORD also thundered in the heavens, and the Highest gave his voice" (Psalm 18:13); "The voice of the LORD is upon the waters: the God of glory thundereth" (Psalm 29:3).

And the voices? "Voices" (*phōnai*) are sounds and utterances of every kind. In Hebrew the word for "thunders" at Sinai is the plural of "voice" (*qolot*): thunder was heard as God's voice. Here thunders and voices are named side by side. The throne is not silent. Judgment is gathering, and heaven sounds with it.

These same signs come from heaven again at the close of each of the three series of judgments, and each time they grow. When the seventh seal is opened and fire is cast to the earth, "there were voices, and thunderings, and lightnings, and an earthquake" (8:5). When the seventh trumpet sounds, "there were lightnings, and voices, and thunderings, and an earthquake, and great hail" (11:19). When the seventh vial is poured out, "there were voices, and thunders, and lightnings; and there was a great earthquake, such as was not since men were upon the earth" (16:18). What begins here at the throne as

a warning ends on the earth as judgment. Before a single seal is opened, John is shown where all the judgments come from.

"And there were seven lamps of fire burning before the throne." "Lamps" (*lampades*) are torches, flames burning in the open. They stand "before the throne," in God's presence. Ezekiel saw something like them among the living creatures: "their appearance was like burning coals of fire, and like the appearance of lamps" (Ezekiel 1:13).

"Which are the seven Spirits of God." The book explains its own picture. "The seven Spirits" were named in the greeting at the beginning: "Grace be unto you, and peace, from him which is, and which was, and which is to come; and from the seven Spirits which are before his throne" (1:4). They appear once more as the seven eyes of the Lamb, "which are the seven Spirits of God sent forth into all the earth" (5:6). Zechariah had seen a golden candlestick with seven lamps, and was told what they meant: "those seven; they are the eyes of the LORD, which run to and fro through the whole earth" (Zechariah 4:10). Seven is the number of spiritual perfection: what God does, made complete. The seven Spirits are the complete working of God's spirit: His power and His knowledge going out into all the earth, seeing everything and missing nothing. Isaiah described the spirit that would rest on the Messiah in a sevenfold way: "the spirit of the LORD shall rest upon him, the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of counsel and might, the spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the LORD" (Isaiah 11:2).

Why are they shown as fire? "For our God is a consuming fire" (Hebrews 12:29). The lamps burn before the throne just before the book of judgment is opened. Nothing on the earth will be hidden from Him, and nothing will escape His fire.

The number. *Seven* lamps, which are the seven Spirits of God (see 1:4). In the tabernacle seven lamps burned before the LORD (Exodus 25:37); here seven lamps burn before the throne. Seven, spiritual perfection: the complete working of God's spirit.

Figures of speech. "Lightnings and thunderings and voices" is *Polysyndeton* ("many ands"): each sign stands out separately. "Seven lamps ... which are the seven Spirits of God" is a *Metaphor*, which the text itself explains.

> **Revelation 4:6** *And before the throne there was a sea of glass like unto crystal: and in the midst of the throne, and round about the throne, were four beasts full of eyes before and behind.*

John's eyes go to what lies before the throne, and then to the living creatures around it.

"And before the throne there was a sea of glass like unto crystal." Before the throne, between it and John, lay what looked like a great sea, still and clear as glass, glittering like crystal. ("Glass" in the ancient world was often cloudy; "like unto crystal" means perfectly clear.) There is no wind on it and no wave. Around the throne all is calm.

What is it? The book does not explain it here, but Scripture gives two pictures that help. When Moses and the elders of Israel went up the mountain at Sinai, "they saw the God of Israel: and there was under his feet as it were a paved work of a sapphire stone, and as it were the body of heaven in his clearness"

(Exodus 24:10). Ezekiel saw over the heads of the living creatures "the firmament ... as the colour of the terrible crystal" (Ezekiel 1:22). And in the courts of Solomon's temple stood a great basin of bronze, called "a molten sea" (1 Kings 7:23), where the priests washed before they ministered (2 Chronicles 4:6). The sea before God's throne is perfectly still and perfectly clear: no stain, no storm, nothing hidden. It shows the holiness of the place where God sits. The sea appears again in 15:2, "mingled with fire," with the victors over the beast standing on it, singing.

"And in the midst of the throne, and round about the throne, were four beasts." "Beasts" is a poor word here. The Greek is *zōa* (Strong's G2226), "living ones, living creatures," from *zaō*, "to live." It is a different word from the "beast" of chapter 13 (*thērion*, "a wild beast"). These are not animals but living beings of heaven. They are "in the midst of the throne, and round about the throne": close about it on every side, as guards and attendants of the throne itself.

Who are they? Ezekiel saw them by the river Chebar, and called them by the same name, "living creatures": "Also out of the midst thereof came the likeness of four living creatures" (Ezekiel 1:5). Later, seeing them again at the temple, he says plainly what they are: "This is the living creature that I saw under the God of Israel by the river of Chebar; and I knew that they were the cherubims" (Ezekiel 10:20). The four living creatures are cherubim (Appendix C, Question 5).

The cherubim appear throughout Scripture beside the throne and presence of God. When man was driven out of Eden, God "placed at the east of the garden of Eden Cherubims, and a flaming sword which turned every way, to keep the way of the tree of life" (Genesis 3:24). Two cherubim of gold covered the mercy seat on the ark, and God said, "there I will meet with thee, and I will commune with thee from above the mercy seat, from between the two cherubims" (Exodus 25:22). The psalmist addressed God as "thou that dwellest between the cherubims" (Psalm 80:1). They guarded the way to the tree of life when it was closed; they stand about the throne now, as the way to the tree of life is about to be opened again (2:7; 22:2).

"Full of eyes before and behind." They see everything, in every direction, without turning. Ezekiel saw the same: "their rings were full of eyes round about them four" (Ezekiel 1:18). Nothing escapes their sight. As the guardians of God's throne and holiness, they watch over all.

The number. *Four* beasts, or living creatures. Four is the number of the earth and of all created things: the four corners of the earth, the four winds, the four seasons. These four stand round the throne as the representatives of all living creation (see 4:7), and in 5:13 every creature joins their praise.

Figures of speech. "A sea of glass like unto crystal" is a *Simile*: it was like a sea, and like crystal. "Full of eyes" is to be taken as John saw it; Ezekiel saw the same.

> **Revelation 4:7** *And the first beast was like a lion, and the second beast like a calf, and the third beast had a face as a man, and the fourth beast was like a flying eagle.*

Now John describes each of the four living creatures.

"And the first beast was like a lion." The lion is the king of the wild beasts, the strongest, which "turneth not away for any" (Proverbs 30:30).

"And the second beast like a calf." "Calf" (*moschos*) means a young bull, an ox. The ox is the strongest of the tame beasts, the animal of patient labour and of sacrifice.

"And the third beast had a face as a man." Man was made in God's image, and given rule over the creatures (Genesis 1:26-28). He is the head of all living things on earth.

"And the fourth beast was like a flying eagle." The eagle is the greatest of the birds, soaring higher than all. "Doth the eagle mount up at thy command, and make her nest on high?" God asked Job (Job 39:27).

Ezekiel's cherubim had all four faces each: "As for the likeness of their faces, they four had the face of a man, and the face of a lion, on the right side: and they four had the face of an ox on the left side; they four also had the face of an eagle" (Ezekiel 1:10). Here each of the four has one. They are generally explained as standing for the whole of living creation under God's throne: the lion for the wild beasts, the ox for the tame, the eagle for the birds, and man over all. The cherubim stand about the throne as the living creation's representatives, and in the next verses they lead all creation in the worship of its Creator (4:8-11; 5:13-14).

Notice too that the cherubim were last seen in Eden, guarding the way to the tree of life, when creation fell under the curse. Here they are at the throne as the judgment begins that will end in "no more curse" (22:3).

The numbers. *First*, *second*, *third*, *fourth*: the four living creatures counted one by one, each with its own face, lion, calf, man, eagle. Four is the number of creation (see 4:6), and here are four heads of the living world: the wild beasts, the tame, mankind, and the birds.

Figures of speech. "Like a lion," "like a calf," "like a flying eagle," "as a man": *Similes*, describing what John saw by likeness.

> **Revelation 4:8** *And the four beasts had each of them six wings about him; and they were full of eyes within: and they rest not day and night, saying, Holy, holy, holy, LORD God Almighty, which was, and is, and is to come.*

The living creatures do not only watch; they worship.

"And the four beasts had each of them six wings about him." Ezekiel's cherubim had four wings each (Ezekiel 1:6). These have six, like the seraphim Isaiah saw: "Above it stood the seraphims: each one had six wings; with twain he covered his face, and with twain he covered his feet, and with twain he did fly" (Isaiah 6:2). The living creatures John sees bring together what Ezekiel and Isaiah saw.

"And they were full of eyes within." Eyes on every side and within, under and around their wings: total watchfulness (see 4:6).

"And they rest not day and night." "Rest" is *anapausis*, a pause, a stop. They never stop. Day and night, without ceasing, they worship. (The same words are used of the worshippers of the beast in 14:11, "they have no rest day nor night," but there it means torment without relief. Here it is worship without end.)

"Saying, Holy, holy, holy." "Holy" (*hagios*) means set apart, wholly other, perfectly pure. It is said three times. The seraphim in Isaiah's vision cried the same: "And one cried unto another, and said, Holy, holy, holy, is the LORD of hosts: the whole earth is full of his glory" (Isaiah 6:3). Hebrew uses repetition to make the strongest possible statement; to say "holy" three times is to say that God is holy beyond all measure. Of all the things the living creatures could say of God, the one thing they say without ceasing is that He is holy. The judgments that follow flow from this: because God is holy, evil cannot stand before Him.

"Lord God Almighty." In Isaiah 6:3 the seraphim say "the LORD of hosts." The Greek Old Testament renders "LORD of hosts" as "Lord Almighty" (*pantokratōr*, see 1:8). The living creatures are praising the same God Isaiah saw.

"Which was, and is, and is to come." The name of 1:4 and 1:8, God's own name (Exodus 3:14), but in a different order. In 1:4 it began "which is"; here it begins "which was." Bullinger notes the difference: here the emphasis falls on the eternal past. The living creatures were created by Him, and they praise Him as the one who was before all creation, and who is, and who is coming to judge it.

The numbers. *Four* beasts, each with *six* wings. The seraphim Isaiah saw also had six wings: "with twain he covered his face, and with twain he covered his feet, and with twain he did fly" (Isaiah 6:2). Six wings in three pairs: the number belongs to the pattern of the heavenly creatures before the throne, and in Isaiah each pair has its use, reverence, humility and service. The cry "Holy, holy, holy" is *three*-fold, as in Isaiah 6:3. Three is the number of divine perfection: what is complete, solid and entire, belonging to God. To say "holy" three times is to say that God is holy in the fullest and most complete degree.

Figures of speech. "Holy, holy, holy" is the figure *Epizeuxis* ("fastening together"): the same word repeated in succession, for the greatest emphasis. "Rest not day and night" names the two halves of time for the whole, a *Synecdoche*: always.

> **Revelation 4:9** *And when those beasts give glory and honour and thanks to him that sat on the throne, who liveth for ever and ever,*

Verses 9 and 10 belong together: whenever the living creatures worship, the elders join them.

"And when those beasts give glory and honour and thanks." "When," or "whenever": every time they do it. Three things are given. "Glory" (*doxa*) is the praise of what God is, His shining splendour. "Honour" (*timē*) is the esteem due to Him, the weight of worth. "Thanks" (*eucharistia*) is gratitude for what He has done. The living creatures praise God for who He is and for what He has done.

"To him that sat on the throne, who liveth for ever and ever." The title "who liveth for ever and ever" is used of God in 4:9, 4:10, 10:6 and 15:7 (and, in the Received Text, at 5:14). It is the God of Daniel. When Nebuchadnezzar's madness ended and his reason returned, he said:

> **Daniel 4:34** — *And at the end of the days I Nebuchadnezzar lifted up mine eyes unto heaven, and mine understanding returned unto me, and I blessed the most High, and I praised and honoured him that liveth for ever, whose dominion is an everlasting dominion, and his kingdom is from generation to generation:*

The king of Babylon, humbled, praised the God who lives for ever. In heaven that praise never stops. The kings of the earth come and go, and Babylon itself will fall (18:2); the one on the throne lives for ever.

Figures of speech. "Glory and honour and thanks" is *Polysyndeton*: each part of the praise is given separately and in full.

> **Revelation 4:10** *The four and twenty elders fall down before him that sat on the throne, and worship him that liveth for ever and ever, and cast their crowns before the throne, saying,*

"The four and twenty elders fall down before him that sat on the throne." Whenever the living creatures give praise, the elders "fall down": they throw themselves to the ground on their faces. They sit on thrones (4:4), but they do not stay on them when God is praised. The highest beings in heaven bow lowest before Him.

"And worship him that liveth for ever and ever." "Worship" is *proskuneō* (Strong's G4352), "to bow down to, to do reverence," literally to kiss toward, as one kissed the hand or the feet of a king. It is the bowing of the whole person in submission and adoration.

"And cast their crowns before the throne." Here is the most striking act. The elders take off the golden crowns God gave them (4:4) and throw them down before His throne. They say, in effect, "Whatever honour we have, it is Yours. We hold it only from You, and we give it back to You." It is what every true servant of God does in the end. David prayed, "Thine, O LORD, is the greatness, and the power, and the glory, and the victory, and the majesty: for all that is in the heaven and in the earth is thine" (1 Chronicles 29:11). Paul asked, "what hast thou that thou didst not receive?" (1 Corinthians 4:7).

"Saying." They do not only act; they speak. Their words follow in verse 11.

The numbers. *Twenty-four* elders (see 4:4) and the *four* beasts (see 4:6), all worshipping together.

Figures of speech. Three acts joined by "and": fall down, and worship, and cast their crowns, the figure *Polysyndeton*, so that each act of humility stands by itself.

> **Revelation 4:11** *Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honour and power: for thou hast created all things, and for thy pleasure they are and were created.*

The elders' song is the first song of the book. It praises God as Creator.

"Thou art worthy, O Lord." "Worthy" is *axios* (Strong's G514), "of equal weight, deserving." God's worth matches the praise given Him; He deserves it all. (The Majority Greek text and the critical texts read "Thou art worthy, O Lord and our God," and the Majority text adds "the Holy One.")

"To receive glory and honour and power." The living creatures gave three things, glory, honour and thanks (4:9). The elders say God is worthy to receive three: glory, honour and power. "Power" (*dunamis*)

is might, the ability to do what He wills. The elders, who have just laid down their crowns, ascribe all power to Him.

"For thou hast created all things." Here is the reason. God is worthy because He made everything. "Created" is *ktizō*, the word for God's act of creation. Nothing exists that He did not make. The Bible's first words say it: "In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth" (Genesis 1:1). The Levites prayed in Nehemiah's day:

> **Nehemiah 9:6** — *Thou, even thou, art LORD alone; thou hast made heaven, the heaven of heavens, with all their host, the earth, and all things that are therein, the seas, and all that is therein, and thou preservest them all; and the host of heaven worshippeth thee.*

"And for thy pleasure they are and were created." "For thy pleasure" is, in Greek, "because of thy will" (*dia to thelēma sou*). All things exist because God willed them to exist. They "are," they go on existing, and they "were created," they came into being, by His will alone. "For he spake, and it was done; he commanded, and it stood fast" (Psalm 33:9).

Why does heaven praise God as Creator at this moment? Because He is about to judge the earth, and heaven declares His right to do it. The one who made all things has the right to judge all things, and to make all things new. The earth is His. Men will soon act as though it were theirs, and the beast will claim it; but before any of that happens, heaven settles the question: "thou hast created all things." The angel who later proclaims the everlasting gospel calls men to "worship him that made heaven, and earth, and the sea, and the fountains of waters" (14:7).

Figures of speech. "Glory and honour and power" is *Polysyndeton*. "They are and were created" sets the continuing existence of all things beside their first creation, and both are by His will.

Still in heaven. Verses 5:1-14, the book and the Lamb. The same scene goes on. John sees a sealed book in the right hand of God, weeps that no one is worthy to open it, and then sees the Lamb take it. Heaven and all creation praise God and the Lamb (5:8-14). The seals the Lamb is about to open bring the first judgments on the earth (Section D).

> **Revelation 5:1** *And I saw in the right hand of him that sat on the throne a book written within and on the backside, sealed with seven seals.*

Chapter 5 continues the same scene. John is still looking at the throne, and now he notices what is in God's hand.

"And I saw in the right hand of him that sat on the throne a book." The right hand is the hand of power and authority (see 1:16). What God holds in His right hand is His to give, and His purpose. "A book" (*biblion*, Strong's G975) here is a scroll: a long strip of papyrus or parchment, written on and then rolled up. The Greek may mean "on the right hand": lying on the open palm, held out, as if waiting for someone to come and take it.

"Written within and on the backside." A scroll was usually written on one side only, the inside. This one was written on both sides, inside and out: it was full. There was no room for anything to be added. Ezekiel was shown such a scroll when God called him:

> **Ezekiel 2:9-10** — *And when I looked, behold, an hand was sent unto me; and, lo, a roll of a book was therein; And he spread it before me; and it was written within and without: and there was written therein lamentations, and mourning, and woe.*

The scroll Ezekiel saw held the judgments coming on Israel. The scroll John sees holds what is coming on the earth.

"Sealed with seven seals." A seal was a lump of wax or clay pressed onto the edge of a scroll and stamped with the owner's mark. No one could open the scroll without breaking the seal, and only the one with the right to break it could do so. This scroll is sealed seven times: completely, perfectly sealed.

What is this book? The book itself answers by what happens when it is opened. As each seal is broken in the following chapters, an event takes place on the earth: the four horsemen, the souls under the altar, the great earthquake, and then, when the seventh seal is opened, the seven trumpets (6:1–8:6). So the book holds God's purpose for the earth in the Day of the Lord: His judgments on the earth, and the taking back of the earth from those who have ruled it wrongly, leading to the kingdom. It is the counsel of God, kept sealed until the time of the end. Daniel had been told, "But thou, O Daniel, shut up the words, and seal the book, even to the time of the end" (Daniel 12:4). That time has now come.

Some have compared it to the deed of purchase that Jeremiah sealed when he bought his cousin's field in Anathoth, as a sign that God would one day bring Israel back to the land: one copy "sealed according to the law and custom, and that which was open" (Jeremiah 32:11). The comparison helps: the sealed scroll holds the right to the inheritance, and only the rightful heir can open it. But the text itself does not draw it, and the book is best understood by what its opening brings.

The number. *Seven* seals. Seven is spiritual perfection (see 1:4): the book is completely sealed, and no part of it can be read until every seal is loosed. Daniel was told to "seal the book, even to the time of the end" (Daniel 12:4); here the sealing is complete, and so is the opening that follows.

Figures of speech. "The right hand of him that sat on the throne" is *Anthropopatheia*: God is spoken of as having a hand, so that men may understand His power and purpose. The seven seals are real seals in the vision; their number shows completeness.

> **Revelation 5:2** *And I saw a strong angel proclaiming with a loud voice, Who is worthy to open the book, and to loose the seals thereof?*

"And I saw a strong angel." "Strong" (*ischuros*): mighty. Three times in the book John sees "a strong angel" or "a mighty angel" (18:21; see also 5:2; 10:1). This one is strong enough for his voice to reach every part of creation.

"Proclaiming with a loud voice." "Proclaiming" is *kērussō* (Strong's G2784), the word for a herald calling out a public announcement in the market or the street. The angel is heaven's herald, and his call goes out to all creation: in heaven, on earth, and under the earth.

"Who is worthy to open the book, and to loose the seals thereof?" The question is not "Who is able?" or "Who is strong enough?" Many mighty beings stood in heaven; the strong angel himself was mighty. The question is "Who is *worthy*?" (*axios*, see 4:11). To open this book requires not power alone, but the right to open it: a worthiness of character and of standing that would make it right for him to unleash God's purposes on the earth and to receive what the book holds. God was worthy, as Creator (4:11). Who else?

Figures of speech. The question is the figure *Erotesis* ("questioning"): a question asked not to receive information, but to make the hearer feel the weight of the matter. All heaven waits for the answer.

> **Revelation 5:3** *And no man in heaven, nor in earth, neither under the earth, was able to open the book, neither to look thereon.*

"And no man in heaven, nor in earth, neither under the earth." The search goes through all creation. "No man" is literally "no one" (*oudeis*): no being of any kind. "In heaven": none of the angels, not the strong angel, not the elders, not the living creatures. "In earth": no man living, no king, no prophet, no priest. "Under the earth": none of the dead in their graves, not Abraham, not Moses, not David, not Elijah. Paul used the same three regions: "That at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth" (Philippians 2:10).

"Was able to open the book, neither to look thereon." No one could open it, or even look into it. Not one in all creation had the standing to do it.

Figures of speech. "In heaven, nor in earth, neither under the earth" names the three parts of creation to mean all of it, so that no one is left out. The repeated negatives, "no man ... nor ... neither ... neither," press the point home.

> **Revelation 5:4** *And I wept much, because no man was found worthy to open and to read the book, neither to look thereon.*

Now comes one of the most human moments in the book.

"And I wept much." John wept. The Greek is *eklaion polu*, "I was weeping much": the tense means he went on weeping, and *klaiō* is not quiet tears but loud weeping, sobbing aloud. This is the same old man who had been called up to heaven to be shown "things which must be hereafter" (4:1). He had seen the throne, the rainbow, the elders and the living creatures, and heard the praise of heaven. And now, at the point where everything was about to be revealed, the book lay sealed in God's hand, and no one could open it.

Why did he weep so? Because he understood what it meant. If the book could not be opened, God's purposes for the earth would stay locked away. Evil would go on unjudged. The prayers of God's people,

"Thy kingdom come," would go unanswered. The earth would remain under the curse, and the promises to the overcomers (chapters 2–3) would never be kept. John was weeping for the whole world.

"Because no man was found worthy to open and to read the book, neither to look thereon." "Was found": the search had been made, and it had failed. "Worthy" again: no one was worthy. The words repeat the angel's question and the failed search, so that the reader feels John's despair with him. (The words "and to read" are in the Received Text but lacking in the Majority and critical texts.)

There is a lesson in John's tears. He did not weep from fear for himself, nor from grief over his exile. He wept because God's purposes seemed to be shut up. It is the grief of a man who cared more for God's will being done than for anything else.

Figures of speech. "Wept much" uses the imperfect tense of continued action: the figure is in the grammar itself, and it makes the reader see John weeping on and on. The repetition of "worthy" from verse 2 is the figure *Anadiplosis* in effect: the angel's question comes back as the cause of John's tears.

> **Revelation 5:5** *And one of the elders saith unto me, Weep not: behold, the Lion of the tribe of Juda, the Root of David, hath prevailed to open the book, and to loose the seven seals thereof.*

To see the full weight of this verse, the reader must remember what has just happened. In God's right hand lies a book, "written within and on the backside, sealed with seven seals" (5:1). A strong angel calls out with a loud voice, "Who is worthy to open the book, and to loose the seals thereof?" (5:2). There is no answer: "no man in heaven, nor in earth, neither under the earth, was able to open the book, neither to look thereon" (5:3). And John breaks down: "I wept much, because no man was found worthy to open and to read the book, neither to look thereon" (5:4). The Greek tense means he went on weeping. He knew what the sealed book meant. If no one could open it, the purposes of God written in it, the judgment of evil, the redemption of the earth, the coming of the kingdom, would stay shut. All creation was silent, and the man who had been called up to see "things which must be hereafter" could only weep.

"And one of the elders saith unto me, Weep not." Into that grief comes a word of comfort, from one of the elders of heaven. "Weep not" is what Christ Himself said to the widow of Nain as her only son was carried out to burial, just before He raised him (Luke 7:13), and to the mourners in the house of Jairus (Luke 8:52). Every time it is said in Scripture, it is said because there is a reason not to weep. Here too: John's tears are about to be answered.

"Behold." Again *Asterismos* (see 4:1): "Look!" John's eyes are full of tears, and he is told to lift them.

"The Lion of the tribe of Juda." This title takes the reader back to the oldest prophecy of a king in Israel. Jacob, dying, blessed his sons, and to Judah he said:

> **Genesis 49:9-10** — *Judah is a lion's whelp: from the prey, my son, thou art gone up: he stooped down, he couched as a lion, and as an old lion; who shall rouse him up? The sceptre shall not depart from Judah, nor a lawgiver from between his feet, until Shiloh come; and unto him shall the gathering of the people be.*

The lion is the king of the beasts: "A lion which is strongest among beasts, and turneth not away for any" (Proverbs 30:30). It is the picture of royal strength that no one can stand against. Jacob saw the tribe of Judah as a lion, and saw the sceptre, the staff of a king, staying in Judah "until Shiloh come," the one to whom the sceptre belongs and to whom the peoples will gather.

"Juda" is the Greek form of Judah, Jacob's fourth son. His name means "praise" (Genesis 29:35). From Judah came the kings of Israel: David was of Judah, and the sceptre was given to his house. And from Judah came Christ: "For it is evident that our Lord sprang out of Juda" (Hebrews 7:14). He is the Lion out of Judah's tribe, the King that Jacob foresaw.

"The Root of David." The second title comes from Isaiah. When the royal house of David had been cut down like a tree to its stump, God promised that it would grow again:

> **Isaiah 11:1** — *And there shall come forth a rod out of the stem of Jesse, and a Branch shall grow out of his roots:*
>
> **Isaiah 11:10** — *And in that day there shall be a root of Jesse, which shall stand for an ensign of the people; to it shall the Gentiles seek: and his rest shall be glorious.*

Jesse was David's father. The "root of Jesse" is the new shoot that springs up from the root of the felled tree: the son of David who restores David's kingdom. God had sworn to David, "thine house and thy kingdom shall be established for ever before thee: thy throne shall be established for ever" (2 Samuel 7:16), and the angel told Mary of her son, "the Lord God shall give unto him the throne of his father David" (Luke 1:32). At the end of the book Christ takes the title to Himself: "I am the root and the offspring of David" (22:16).

So the two titles say one thing: the one who can open the book is the promised King, of Judah's tribe and David's line, the heir of the throne.

"Hath prevailed." "Prevailed" is *enikēsen*, from *nikaō* (Strong's G3528), the word Christ used in every one of the seven promises, "To him that overcometh" (2:7). He is the overcomer. And the tense is past: He *has* prevailed. The victory is not still to be fought for; it has been won. How it was won the next verse shows. When John looks to see the Lion, he sees "a Lamb as it had been slain" (5:6), and the song explains, "Thou art worthy to take the book … for thou wast slain" (5:9). The Lion conquered as a Lamb: by His death, His resurrection, and His ascension to the right hand of God, where He now stands "in the midst of the throne" (5:6). He Himself said, "even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father in his throne" (3:21).

"To open the book, and to loose the seven seals thereof." This is what no one else could do. Daniel had been told, "shut up the words, and seal the book, even to the time of the end" (Daniel 12:4). Ezekiel had seen a roll "written within and without: and there was written therein lamentations, and mourning, and woe" (Ezekiel 2:10). Now the time of the end has come, and the one who has the right to open what was sealed is found. The book is God's purpose for the earth, sealed until the rightful King should take it. As each seal is loosed in the next section, the judgments of the Day of the Lord begin.

The number. *Seven* seals (see 5:1). The Lamb alone can loose all seven.

Figures of speech. *Asterismos* ("behold"). Christ is called a Lion: Bullinger lists Revelation 5:5 among the figures in which God or Christ is pictured in the likeness of a creature, to set before the eye what He is like. Lion and Lamb are both figures of the one Christ, and the book puts them side by side on purpose: the strength of the Lion was won by the sacrifice of the Lamb.

> **Revelation 5:6** *And I beheld, and, lo, in the midst of the throne and of the four beasts, and in the midst of the elders, stood a Lamb as it had been slain, having seven horns and seven eyes, which are the seven Spirits of God sent forth into all the earth.*

John was told to look at a Lion. He lifts his eyes, and sees something else.

"And I beheld, and, lo." "Beheld" and "lo": John looked, and was astonished. "Lo" is *idou*, "behold" again (*Asterismos*): look at this!

"In the midst of the throne and of the four beasts, and in the midst of the elders." The one he sees is at the very centre of everything: in the midst of the throne, surrounded by the living creatures and, beyond them, by the circle of elders. He is not off to one side. He has the central place in heaven.

"Stood a Lamb." John was told of a Lion; he sees a Lamb. "Lamb" here is *arnion* (Strong's G721), a word that means "a little lamb, a young lamb." It is used twenty-nine times in Revelation, twenty-eight of them of Christ, and once of the second beast, who has "two horns like a lamb" but speaks as a dragon (13:11). Elsewhere in the New Testament it is used only once, when Christ told Peter, "Feed my lambs" (John 21:15).

The lamb was the animal of sacrifice in Israel. On the night of the exodus every family killed a lamb and put its blood on the doorposts, and God said, "when I see the blood, I will pass over you" (Exodus 12:13). Every morning and every evening a lamb was offered on the altar (Exodus 29:38-39). Isaiah foretold the Servant of the LORD who would be led "as a lamb to the slaughter":

> **Isaiah 53:7** — *He was oppressed, and he was afflicted, yet he opened not his mouth: he is brought as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so he openeth not his mouth.*

John had heard John the Baptist say of Jesus, "Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world" (John 1:29). He had been one of the two disciples who heard those words and followed Jesus (John 1:35-37). Now, more than sixty years later, he sees the Lamb of God in the midst of the throne of God.

Here is the great surprise of this scene. The Lion of Judah, the conquering King, has won His victory as a Lamb. He "prevailed" (5:5) not by tearing His enemies, but by being slain for others.

"As it had been slain." "Slain" is *esphagmenon*, from *sphazō* (Strong's G4969), "to slaughter," the word used of killing a sacrifice by cutting its throat. It is a perfect participle: slain once, and still bearing the marks. John saw a Lamb standing, alive, and yet with the marks of slaughter on it. Thomas had been told to "reach hither thy hand, and thrust it into my side" (John 20:27); the wounds of the cross were still there after the resurrection. The Lamb in heaven still bears them. He "stood": He is not lying dead on an

altar; He is standing, risen, ascended, and alive for evermore (1:18). By His death, His resurrection, and His ascension He has won the right to open the book.

"Having seven horns." A horn in Scripture is the picture of strength and power, as the horn is the weapon and glory of a strong animal. Hannah sang, "he shall give strength unto his king, and exalt the horn of his anointed" (1 Samuel 2:10). Kings are shown as horns in Daniel's visions (Daniel 7:24). Seven horns are complete power. The Lamb, who seemed weak, has all power. He said Himself, "All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth" (Matthew 28:18).

"And seven eyes." Eyes see. Seven eyes see everything, completely. Zechariah was shown a stone with seven eyes upon it (Zechariah 3:9), and was told of the seven lamps that "they are the eyes of the LORD, which run to and fro through the whole earth" (Zechariah 4:10).

"Which are the seven Spirits of God sent forth into all the earth." The book explains the eyes: they are "the seven Spirits of God," the complete working of God's spirit (see 1:4; 4:5). In 4:5 they burned as lamps before the throne; here they are "sent forth into all the earth," going out from the Lamb. The Lamb has all power (seven horns), and through Him God's spirit goes out into all the earth, seeing and knowing everything (seven eyes). The Lamb is about to open a book of judgment on the earth; nothing on the earth will be hidden from Him.

The numbers. *Four* beasts (see 4:6). *Seven* horns: the horn is the sign of strength and of rule ("my horn is exalted in the LORD," 1 Samuel 2:1), and seven horns are strength made complete. *Seven* eyes: seeing made complete, nothing hidden. Zechariah saw "upon one stone ... seven eyes" (Zechariah 3:9) and was told of "those seven ... the eyes of the LORD, which run to and fro through the whole earth" (Zechariah 4:10). All power and all knowledge, complete, are given to the Lamb.

Figures of speech. The Lamb is a *Metaphor* (more strictly, the figure Bullinger lists among those where Christ is pictured as a creature, as with the Lion of 5:5): Christ is not an animal; He is pictured as the Lamb because of what He did and what He is. The horns and eyes are *Metaphors* too, and the text explains the eyes. "And, lo" is *Asterismos*.

> **Revelation 5:7** *And he came and took the book out of the right hand of him that sat upon the throne.*

This is the turning point of the whole scene, and it is told in a few words.

"And he came." The Lamb moves. All heaven has been waiting, and John has been weeping. Now the Lamb comes forward.

"And took the book out of the right hand of him that sat upon the throne." "Took" is in the perfect tense in Greek (*eilēphen*): "He has taken it." The act is done, and stands done. The book of God's purposes passes from the hand of God into the hand of the Lamb. No one else in heaven or earth or under the earth was worthy; He takes it without being asked twice.

Daniel had seen this moment from afar:

> **Daniel 7:13-14** — *I saw in the night visions, and, behold, one like the Son of man came with the clouds of heaven, and came to the Ancient of days, and they brought him near before him. And there was given him dominion, and glory, and a kingdom, that all people, nations, and languages, should serve him: his dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and his kingdom that which shall not be destroyed.*

The Son of man came to the Ancient of days and was given dominion. The Lamb comes to Him that sits on the throne and takes the book. It is the same moment, seen from two sides.

Here too is the chain of the book's first verse: "The Revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave unto him" (1:1). What God holds, He gives to His Son; and the Son, having received it, will show it to His servants.

Figures of speech. The very shortness of the verse is its force: after the long search and the weeping, the decisive act is told in ten words.

> **Revelation 5:8** *And when he had taken the book, the four beasts and four and twenty elders fell down before the Lamb, having every one of them harps, and golden vials full of odours, which are the prayers of saints.*

"And when he had taken the book." The Lamb has come and taken the book "out of the right hand of him that sat upon the throne" (5:7). It is the moment all heaven was waiting for, and heaven answers it at once.

"The four beasts and four and twenty elders fell down before the Lamb." The four "beasts" are living creatures (*zōa*, Strong's G2226, "living ones"), not wild animals; they are the cherubim that Ezekiel saw beside the throne (Ezekiel 1:5, 10; 10:20; Appendix C, Question 5). The elders are the heavenly elders of 4:4. Both companies "fell down before the Lamb." In chapter 4 they fell before Him that sat on the throne (4:10). Now they fall before the Lamb, because God has given Him the book and set Him in the midst of the throne. The honour is given to the Son for what God has given Him, and it rises to God who gave it: "that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father" (Philippians 2:11). Christ had said that the Father has committed all judgment to the Son, "That all men should honour the Son, even as they honour the Father" (John 5:23).

"Having every one of them harps." The harp (*kithara*) was the instrument of praise in the temple. David set apart singers "who should prophesy with harps, with psalteries, and with cymbals" (1 Chronicles 25:1), and the Psalms call again and again for it: "Praise the LORD with harp" (Psalm 33:2). The harps are for the new song that follows in verse 9.

"And golden vials full of odours." "Vials" (*phialai*) are wide, shallow bowls, like those used at the altar of the tabernacle. "Odours" (*thymiamata*) are incense: sweet spices burned so that their smoke rose before God. In the tabernacle, incense was burned on the golden altar before the veil every morning and evening, "a perpetual incense before the LORD throughout your generations" (Exodus 30:8). The harps are the work of singers, and the bowls of incense the work of priests: the elders do the work of both, as David's twenty-four courses did (see 4:4).

"Which are the prayers of saints." The book explains the incense: it is the prayers of saints. David had prayed in the same picture: "Let my prayer be set forth before thee as incense; and the lifting up of my hands as the evening sacrifice" (Psalm 141:2). Prayer rises before God like the smoke of incense. In 8:3-4 these prayers are offered again, on the golden altar, just before the trumpets sound, and the answer to them is fire cast upon the earth.

Which saints? "Saints" (*hagioi*, Strong's G40) means "holy ones": people set apart to God. The word must be read in the setting of the book. Revelation is not addressed to the church of the grace administration (Part One, Chapter 3 §C), and the saints of this book are God's holy people of the Day of the Lord, as Daniel saw them: "But the saints of the most High shall take the kingdom, and possess the kingdom for ever" (Daniel 7:18). They are those whose prayers rise for God's kingdom to come and for His judgment on the wicked; their cry is heard at the fifth seal, "How long, O Lord, holy and true, dost thou not judge and avenge our blood on them that dwell on the earth?" (6:10). The Lord had told His disciples of such praying: "And shall not God avenge his own elect, which cry day and night unto him, though he bear long with them?" (Luke 18:7). Christ had taught them to pray, "Thy kingdom come" (Matthew 6:10). Here those prayers are held in golden bowls before the throne, at the very moment the Lamb takes the book that will bring the kingdom. Not one of them has been lost.

A believer of the present administration of grace is also called a saint (Ephesians 1:1), and he too prays; but his place is not the subject of this book. Paul wrote that God "hath not appointed us to wrath" (1 Thessalonians 5:9). The prayers in these bowls are answered by judgment on the earth.

The numbers. *Four* beasts and *twenty-four* elders (see 4:4, 6), each holding a harp and a golden vial: the ordered worship of heaven, offering the prayers of God's people on earth.

Figures of speech. "Odours, which are the prayers of saints" is a *Metaphor* explained by the text. "Fell down ... having every one of them harps, and golden vials" joins the work of singer and priest in one company.

> **Revelation 5:9** *And they sung a new song, saying, Thou art worthy to take the book, and to open the seals thereof: for thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation;*

Now heaven sings.

"And they sung a new song." "They": the four living creatures and the twenty-four elders together (5:8). "A new song" (*ōdē kainē*): "new" here (*kainos*) means new in kind, fresh, never sung before, not merely recent. The Psalms call again and again for a new song when God does a new thing: "O sing unto the LORD a new song; for he hath done marvellous things: his right hand, and his holy arm, hath gotten him the victory" (Psalm 98:1). Isaiah wrote, "Sing unto the LORD a new song, and his praise from the end of the earth" (Isaiah 42:10). The song of 4:11 praised God as Creator. This new song praises the Lamb as Redeemer. Something new has happened: the Lamb has been slain, and has taken the book.

"Saying, Thou art worthy to take the book, and to open the seals thereof." Here is the answer to the angel's question, "Who is worthy?" (5:2). The Lamb is. The song says so.

"For thou wast slain." Here is the reason He is worthy. Not because He is strong, though He has seven horns; not because He sees all, though He has seven eyes; but because He was slain. The word is the same as in 5:6, *sphazō*, the slaughter of a sacrifice. His worthiness rests on His death.

"And hast redeemed us to God by thy blood." "Redeemed" is *agorazō* (Strong's G59), from *agora*, "the market-place": to buy in the market. It was the word for buying a slave. The Lamb has bought people for God, and the price was His own blood. Peter wrote, "ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold ... But with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot" (1 Peter 1:18-19). Christ said He came "to give his life a ransom for many" (Matthew 20:28).

A note on the words "us" here and "us ... we" in the next verse, because it bears on who is singing. The King James Version reads "hast redeemed us to God" and, in verse 10, "hast made us unto our God kings and priests: and we shall reign on the earth." Most Greek copies (the Majority text) also read "us" in this verse, but in verse 10 nearly all copies read "hast made *them* ... and *they* shall reign." The oldest copies, which the critical texts follow, have no "us" in this verse either: "hast redeemed to God by thy blood men out of every kindred." On any reading the singers include the four living creatures, who are cherubim, not redeemed men; and in verse 10, on nearly every copy, they speak of the redeemed as "them." The song is therefore heaven's praise of the Lamb *for* what He has done for others: the four living creatures and the elders, leading heaven's worship, sing of the people the Lamb has bought for God (see 4:4; Appendix C, Question 4; Appendix E).

"Out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation." The Lamb's blood has bought people from everywhere. "Kindred" (*phulē*) is tribe, a family line; "tongue" (*glōssa*) is language; "people" (*laos*) is a people, a nation bound by common life; "nation" (*ethnos*) is a nation, a race. No one is left out. The fourfold phrase is used seven times in the book, in varying order (5:9; 7:9; 10:11; 11:9; 13:7; 14:6; 17:15). It is a phrase of the whole earth. God had promised Abraham, "in thee shall all families of the earth be blessed" (Genesis 12:3). Daniel saw "all people, nations, and languages" serve the Son of man (Daniel 7:14).

Figures of speech. "Kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation" is *Polysyndeton*: each is named separately, so that none is overlooked. "By thy blood" is the figure *Metalepsis* (see 1:5): blood put for death, and death for all that His death has bought.

To whom. "Redeemed ... by thy blood" is true of every believer in every administration: no one is redeemed any other way. But the people sung about here are those bought "out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation" who will be made "kings and priests" and "reign on the earth" (5:10), Israel's calling from Sinai fulfilled (Exodus 19:6), as the next verse makes plain (Part One, Chapter 3 §C).

> **Revelation 5:10** *And hast made us unto our God kings and priests: and we shall reign on the earth.*

"And hast made us unto our God kings and priests." On the reading of nearly all Greek copies, "hast made *them*" (see 5:9; Appendix E). The redeemed are made "kings and priests" to God. This is Israel's calling from Sinai, "ye shall be unto me a kingdom of priests, and an holy nation" (Exodus 19:6), which John praised in 1:6 (see 1:6). What Israel failed to be, the redeemed will be. Isaiah foresaw it: "But ye shall be named the Priests of the LORD: men shall call you the Ministers of our God" (Isaiah 61:6).

"And we shall reign on the earth." On nearly all copies, "and *they* shall reign on the earth." Where will the redeemed reign? "On the earth." Not in heaven, but on the earth. The earth that is now in rebellion against God, the earth about to be judged, will be ruled by the redeemed under the Lamb. Daniel saw it:

> **Daniel 7:27** — *And the kingdom and dominion, and the greatness of the kingdom under the whole heaven, shall be given to the people of the saints of the most High, whose kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, and all dominions shall serve and obey him.*

Christ had said, "Blessed are the meek: for they shall inherit the earth" (Matthew 5:5). The book shows the promise kept: "they lived and reigned with Christ a thousand years ... they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with him" (20:4, 6). The book in the Lamb's hand is the book that brings this about.

Figures of speech. "Kings and priests" is the figure *Hendiadys* (see 1:6): a royal priesthood. The Majority Greek text reads "kings and priests" here, as the King James Version does.

To whom. A kingdom of priests reigning on the earth is the promise to Israel (Exodus 19:6; Daniel 7:27), fulfilled in the Day of the Lord and the reign that follows it (20:4-6). Paul wrote to the church of grace of a different hope: "our conversation is in heaven; from whence also we look for the Saviour" (Philippians 3:20), and he never called its members priests (see 1:6; Part One, Chapter 3 §C).

> **Revelation 5:11** *And I beheld, and I heard the voice of many angels round about the throne and the beasts and the elders: and the number of them was ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousands of thousands;*

The song spreads outward. Now the angels join.

"And I beheld, and I heard the voice of many angels round about the throne and the beasts and the elders." John looks, and listens. Around the inner circle of the living creatures and the elders stands a vast outer circle: the angels.

"And the number of them was ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousands of thousands." "Ten thousand times ten thousand" is a hundred million; "thousands of thousands" more besides. In Greek it is "myriads of myriads, and thousands of thousands." The words are not meant for counting; they mean a host beyond number. Daniel saw the same host before the throne of the Ancient of days:

> **Daniel 7:10** — *A fiery stream issued and came forth from before him: thousand thousands ministered unto him, and ten thousand times ten thousand stood before him: the judgment was set, and the books were opened.*

Daniel saw this host when "the judgment was set, and the books were opened." John sees it at the moment the Lamb takes the book. The writer to the Hebrews spoke of "an innumerable company of angels" (Hebrews 12:22).

The numbers. *Ten thousand times ten thousand*, and *thousands of thousands*. Ten is the number of complete order (see 2:10), and a thousand is ten times ten times ten: ten carried as far as it will go. Ten thousand times ten thousand is a hundred million. The words come from Daniel: "thousand thousands

ministered unto him, and ten thousand times ten thousand stood before him" (Daniel 7:10). They are not given for counting; they say that the host of angels is beyond all counting.

Figures of speech. "Ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousands of thousands" is the figure *Hyperbole* in form, a number used to express what cannot be counted. It is not an exaggeration of the truth, but the only way to put a numberless host into words.

> **Revelation 5:12** *Saying with a loud voice, Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory, and blessing.*

"Saying with a loud voice." A hundred million voices and more, crying out together.

"Worthy is the Lamb that was slain." The angels take up the elders' word, "worthy," and say it of the Lamb. Notice that the angels do not say "redeemed us." Angels are not redeemed; they praise the Lamb for what He has done.

"To receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory, and blessing." Seven things are ascribed to the Lamb, the number of spiritual perfection. The elders gave three to God the Creator: glory, honour and power (4:11). The angels give seven to the Lamb who was slain. "Power" (*dunamis*) is might; "riches" (*ploutos*) is wealth, everything of value; "wisdom" (*sophia*) is understanding that sees rightly; "strength" (*ischus*) is force, might in action; "honour" (*timē*) is esteem; "glory" (*doxa*) is splendour; "blessing" (*eulogia*) is praise spoken well of Him.

The one who was poor, "though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor" (2 Corinthians 8:9), receives riches. The one who was crucified "through weakness" (2 Corinthians 13:4) receives power and strength. The one who was despised receives honour and glory. Everything taken from Him at the cross is given back sevenfold.

David had prayed in nearly the same words at the end of his life, when the gifts for the temple were gathered:

> **1 Chronicles 29:11** — *Thine, O LORD, is the greatness, and the power, and the glory, and the victory, and the majesty: for all that is in the heaven and in the earth is thine; thine is the kingdom, O LORD, and thou art exalted as head above all.*

What David ascribed to the LORD, heaven ascribes to the Lamb, the Son of David. This is not a second God being praised beside the first: Christ said that the Father has given all judgment to the Son, "That all men should honour the Son, even as they honour the Father" (John 5:23), and the honour given to the Son is "to the glory of God the Father" (Philippians 2:11).

The number. *Seven* things are ascribed to the Lamb: power, riches, wisdom, strength, honour, glory, blessing. Seven, spiritual perfection: the praise of the Lamb is complete, nothing withheld. The elders gave *three* to God the Creator (4:11), the number of divine perfection; creation will give *four* (5:13), the number of the created world.

Figures of speech. Bullinger notes that the seven are "marked off by the Figure Polysyndeton (i.e., the use of 'many ands') which bids us consider each of these seven features of the Lamb's worthiness separately." He also notes that "power" and "strength" divide the seven into three and four.

> **Revelation 5:13** *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, heard I saying, Blessing, and honour, and glory, and power, be unto him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb for ever and ever.*

The praise spreads to its widest circle: all creation.

"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." Everything that God made now joins the song: every creature in heaven, every creature on earth, every creature under the earth, every creature in the sea. The same regions that were searched in vain in 5:3 for someone worthy now praise the one who was found worthy. Psalm 148 calls on everything God made to praise Him, angels and sun and moon, sea monsters and fire and hail, beasts and birds, kings and young men and children; the last psalm closes, "Let every thing that hath breath praise the LORD" (Psalm 150:6). Here the call is answered.

"Heard I saying, Blessing, and honour, and glory, and power." Four things, the number of the earth and of creation (the four corners, the four winds): creation gives four. The elders gave three (4:11); the angels seven (5:12); the whole creation four.

"Be unto him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb for ever and ever." For the first time the praise is given to both together: to Him that sits on the throne, and to the Lamb. They are named side by side, and they are named distinctly. God, who sits on the throne, and the Lamb, who took the book from His hand, receive the praise of all creation together, "for ever and ever." At the end of the book John sees "the throne of God and of the Lamb" (22:1, 3). Paul wrote that God exalted Christ "That at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth; And that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father" (Philippians 2:10-11). Here that confession is heard.

The number. *Four* things given by every creature: blessing, honour, glory, power. Four is the number of creation (see 4:6), and it is creation that gives them. So the songs of these two chapters are counted: three from the elders (4:11), seven from the angels (5:12), four from all creation (5:13).

Figures of speech. "Blessing, and honour, and glory, and power" is *Polysyndeton*. The listing of every region, "in heaven, and on the earth, and under the earth, and ... in the sea," is the same figure, so that no part of creation is left out.

> **Revelation 5:14** *And the four beasts said, Amen. And the four and twenty elders fell down and worshipped him that liveth for ever and ever.*

The scene ends where it began: with the living creatures and the elders around the throne.

"And the four beasts said, Amen." The living creatures, who began the worship of chapter 4 with "Holy, holy, holy" (4:8), close the worship of chapter 5 with "Amen": "So it is! So be it!" (see 1:6). They set their seal on the praise of all creation.

"And the four and twenty elders fell down and worshipped him that liveth for ever and ever." The elders fall down once more, as they did in 4:10, and worship. (The words "him that liveth for ever and ever" are in the Received Text, but lacking in the Majority and critical texts, which read simply, "and the elders fell down and worshipped.")

The worship is complete. Heaven, earth, and under the earth have praised God and the Lamb. The Lamb holds the book. In the next verse He opens the first seal, and the judgments of the Day of the Lord begin on the earth (6:1). Everything that follows comes from this scene: from the throne of God, circled by the rainbow of His covenant, and from the hand of the Lamb who was slain.

The numbers. *Four* beasts and *twenty-four* elders (see 4:4, 6) close the worship as they began it.

Figures of speech. The scene closes as it opened, with the living creatures and the elders: a framing that Bullinger calls *Epanadiplosis* ("encircling") on the scale of a whole scene. The worship begins and ends in the same place.

In short. Through a door opened in heaven John is taken up in the spirit and sees the throne of God: the One sitting on it shining like jasper and sardius, circled by an emerald rainbow, the sign of His covenant; twenty-four elders on thrones, the elders of heaven, crowned and robed in white; lightnings and thunders from the throne; seven lamps of fire, the seven Spirits of God; a sea of glass; and four living creatures, the cherubim, crying "Holy, holy, holy" without rest. The elders cast their crowns before the throne and praise God as Creator. Then John sees a book in God's right hand, written on both sides and sealed with seven seals: God's purpose for the earth in the Day of the Lord. No one in all creation is worthy to open it, and John weeps much. An elder tells him to weep not: the Lion of Judah, the Root of David, has prevailed. John looks, and sees a Lamb standing as it had been slain, with seven horns and seven eyes, in the midst of the throne. The Lamb takes the book, and heaven sings a new song: He is worthy because He was slain and has redeemed men to God by His blood, out of every nation, to reign on the earth. The angels, numberless, cry "Worthy is the Lamb," and every creature praises Him that sits on the throne and the Lamb together. Everything that follows on earth comes from this throne and this Lamb.

Section D — 6:1–7:8. On Earth: Six Seals Opened, and 144,000 Sealed

Where it stands

The first scene on earth (1E), explained by the throne and the Lamb of Section C. The Lamb who took the book now opens six of its seals, and with each one something happens on the earth. The order of events

is the order Christ Himself gave on the mount of Olives, when His disciples asked Him, "what shall be the sign of thy coming, and of the end of the world?" (Matthew 24:3; Part One, Chapter 7 §C). The section ends with the sealing of 144,000 of Israel, the answer to the question that closes chapter 6: "who shall be able to stand?"

Its structure

	Verses	Content	Matthew 24
A1	6:1-2	First seal: the rider on the white horse, a false christ	24:4-5
B1	6:3-8	Second, third, fourth seals: war, famine, death	24:6-7
A2	6:9-11	Fifth seal: the martyrs under the altar	24:9
B2	6:12-17	Sixth seal: earthquake, signs in heaven; "who shall be able to stand?"	24:29-30
A3	7:1-8	The answer: 144,000 of Israel sealed	24:31

The four horsemen alternate: white (a rider who conquers) and red (war); black (famine) and pale (death). The sixth seal alternates too: the great convulsion, its effects in heaven; the great convulsion, its effects on earth.

The text

Revelation 6. 1 And I saw when the Lamb opened one of the seals, and I heard, as it were the noise of thunder, one of the four beasts saying, Come and see. **2** And I saw, and behold a white horse: and he that sat on him had a bow; and a crown was given unto him: and he went forth conquering, and to conquer. **3** And when he had opened the second seal, I heard the second beast say, Come and see. **4** And there went out another horse that was red: and power was given to him that sat thereon to take peace from the earth, and that they should kill one another: and there was given unto him a great sword. **5** And when he had opened the third seal, I heard the third beast say, Come and see. And I beheld, and lo a black horse; and he that sat on him had a pair of balances in his hand. **6** And I heard a voice in the midst of the four beasts say, A measure of wheat for a penny, and three measures of barley for a penny; and see thou hurt not the oil and the wine. **7** And when he had opened the fourth seal, I heard the voice of the fourth beast say, Come and see. **8** And I looked, and behold a pale horse: and his name that sat on him was Death, and Hell followed with him. And power was given unto them over the fourth part of the earth, to kill with sword, and with hunger, and with death, and with the beasts of the earth. **9** And when he had opened the fifth seal, I saw under the altar the souls of them that were slain for the word of God, and for the testimony which they held: **10** And they cried with a loud voice, saying, How long, O Lord, holy and true, dost thou not judge and avenge our blood on them that dwell on the earth? **11** And white robes were given unto every one of them; and it was said unto them, that they should rest yet for a little season, until their fellowservants also and their brethren, that should be killed as they were, should be fulfilled. **12** And I beheld when he had opened the sixth seal, and, lo, there was a great earthquake; and the sun became black as sackcloth of hair, and the moon became as blood; **13** And the stars of heaven fell unto the earth, even as a fig tree casteth her untimely figs, when she is

shaken of a mighty wind. **14** And the heaven departed as a scroll when it is rolled together; and every mountain and island were moved out of their places. **15** 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; **16** And said to the mountains and rocks, Fall on us, and hide us from the face of him that sitteth on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb: **17** For the great day of his wrath is come; and who shall be able to stand?

Revelation 7. 1 And after these things I saw four angels standing on the four corners of the earth, holding the four winds of the earth, that the wind should not blow on the earth, nor on the sea, nor on any tree. **2** And 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 given to hurt the earth and the sea, **3** Saying, Hurt not the earth, neither the sea, nor the trees, till we have sealed the servants of our God in their foreheads. **4** And I heard the number of them which were sealed: and there were sealed an hundred and forty and four thousand of all the tribes of the children of Israel. **5** Of the tribe of Juda were sealed twelve thousand. Of the tribe of Reuben were sealed twelve thousand. Of the tribe of Gad were sealed twelve thousand. **6** Of the tribe of Aser were sealed twelve thousand. Of the tribe of Nephthalim were sealed twelve thousand. Of the tribe of Manasses were sealed twelve thousand. **7** Of the tribe of Simeon were sealed twelve thousand. Of the tribe of Levi were sealed twelve thousand. Of the tribe of Issachar were sealed twelve thousand. **8** Of the tribe of Zabulon were sealed twelve thousand. Of the tribe of Joseph were sealed twelve thousand. Of the tribe of Benjamin were sealed twelve thousand.

The seals and the Olivet discourse. The reader will find it a great help to keep Matthew 24 open beside this section. On the mount of Olives Christ foretold, in order: false christs (24:5); wars (24:6-7); famines and pestilences (24:7); His followers delivered up and killed (24:9); and then, "Immediately after the tribulation of those days," the sun darkened, the moon not giving her light, and the stars falling (24:29). The six seals follow the same order. What Christ foretold on earth, He now carries out from heaven (Appendix G).

Verse by verse

Where we are: on earth. Verses 6:1-17, six seals opened. The scene moves to the earth. The Lamb opens the seals one by one in heaven, and with each one something happens on the earth: four horsemen (6:1-8), the martyrs under the altar (6:9-11), and the great earthquake and the signs in the heavens (6:12-17). This is the first scene on earth (pair 1), explained by the throne and the Lamb of chapters 4 and 5.

> **Revelation 6:1** *And I saw when the Lamb opened one of the seals, and I heard, as it were the noise of thunder, one of the four beasts saying, Come and see.*

The Lamb has taken the book from the right hand of God (5:7), and all heaven has praised Him. Now He begins to open it.

"And I saw when the Lamb opened one of the seals." It is the Lamb who opens the seals. Every judgment that follows in this book is let loose by His hand and no other. The one who was slain for the world is the one who judges it. Christ said on earth, "the Father judgeth no man, but hath committed all

judgment unto the Son" (John 5:22). The judgments are not accidents of history, and they are not the work of the devil alone, though he is busy in them. They are opened by the Lamb, according to the book God gave Him.

"And I heard, as it were the noise of thunder." John hears a sound like thunder. Thunder in this book comes from the throne (4:5) and goes with God's acts of judgment (8:5; 11:19; 16:18). The voice that speaks at the opening of the first seal is as loud and terrible as a thunderclap.

"One of the four beasts saying, Come and see." The voice belongs to one of the four living creatures, the cherubim around the throne (4:6-8). Each of the first four seals is announced by one of the four, in turn. The cherubim, who stand for the living creation under God's throne (4:7), call out as the judgments begin to fall on the creation.

"Come and see": the King James Version, following the Received Text and the Majority text here, reads the call as an invitation to John to come and look. Many Greek copies read only "Come" (*Erchou*), which would be a summons to the rider to come out. Either way, what follows is the first rider coming forth (Appendix E).

The numbers. The *first* of the *seven* seals, opened by the Lamb, and *one* of the *four* beasts calling. The seven seals divide into four and three, as sevens in Scripture often do (Bullinger, *Number in Scripture*). The first four seals are the four horsemen, each called out by one of the four living creatures; four is the number of the earth (see 4:6), and these four ride on the earth. The last three seals (6:9–8:1) are of another kind.

Figures of speech. "As it were the noise of thunder" is a *Simile*: the voice was like thunder.



Albrecht Dürer, The Apocalypse (woodcut, 1498): the four horsemen (6:1-8).

> **Revelation 6:2** *And I saw, and behold a white horse: and he that sat on him had a bow; and a crown was given unto him: and he went forth conquering, and to conquer.*

The first rider comes out.

"And I saw, and behold a white horse." "Behold": look! (*Asterismos*). A horse in Scripture is the animal of war. In Israel kings were warned not to multiply horses (Deuteronomy 17:16), because horses meant armies and conquest. God asked Job, "Hast thou given the horse strength?" (Job 39:19), and of the war-horse He said, "He saith among the trumpets, Ha, ha; and he smelleth the battle afar off" (Job 39:25). This horse is white.

The four horses of this chapter have a background in the prophet Zechariah. He saw horses red, speckled and white (Zechariah 1:8), sent by the LORD "to walk to and fro through the earth" (Zechariah 1:10); and later four chariots, with red, black, white and grisled horses, which were "the four spirits of the heavens, which go forth from standing before the Lord of all the earth" (Zechariah 6:2-5). Here the horses are four again, and they go out on the earth at the Lamb's command.

"And he that sat on him had a bow." The rider is armed with a bow, a weapon of war from a distance. There is no mention of arrows.

"And a crown was given unto him." "Crown" is *stephanos*, the victor's wreath (see 2:10). It "was given" him: his authority does not come from himself. In this book "it was given" is used again and again of power allowed by God, even to evil powers (6:4, 8; 9:1, 3, 5; 13:5, 7, 14-15). Nothing happens on the earth that is not permitted from the throne.

"And he went forth conquering, and to conquer." He goes out as a conqueror, and his aim is to conquer more. "Conquering" is *nikōn*, from *nikaō*, the very word used of Christ's victory (5:5, "hath prevailed") and of the overcomer in the seven messages (2:7). This rider conquers too; but it is a different kind of conquest.

Who is the rider on the white horse? Many readers think he is Christ, because Christ rides a white horse in 19:11. But the text shows that this rider is not Christ. He is a false conqueror who comes looking like Christ (Appendix C, Question 6). The reasons are plain:

1. *He is the first of four riders who belong together.* The other three bring war, famine and death. This one goes out with them, under the same kind of call, as the first of the judgments.
2. *He has a different crown.* He is given a *stephanos*, a victor's wreath. When Christ rides out in 19:12, "on his head were many crowns," and the word there is *diadēmata*, royal crowns, the crowns of a king.
3. *He has no name.* The rider of 19:11-16 is named again and again: "Faithful and True" (19:11), "The Word of God" (19:13), "KING OF KINGS, AND LORD OF LORDS" (19:16). This one is not named at all.
4. *The Lamb opens the seal; He is not what comes out of it.* Christ is the one opening the book in heaven (6:1). He does not ride out of His own seal.
5. *It is the first thing Christ foretold.* When the disciples asked for the signs of His coming, the very first thing Christ said was this:

> **Matthew 24:4-5** — *And Jesus answered and said unto them, Take heed that no man deceive you. For many shall come in my name, saying, I am Christ; and shall deceive many.*

The first seal brings exactly that: a rider on a white horse, crowned and conquering, who looks like the Christ, and is not. The white horse is the disguise. Paul warned that "Satan himself is transformed into an angel of light" (2 Corinthians 11:14). The first judgment of the Day of the Lord is deception: a conqueror who imitates Christ and goes out to win the world. The bow without arrows may mean a conquest that is won, at first, without bloodshed, by promises and by the appearance of peace; Daniel foretold a ruler who "by peace shall destroy many" (Daniel 8:25). But the peace does not last. The next rider takes peace from the earth.

Figures of speech. "Behold" is *Asterismos*. The horses and riders are real in John's vision and stand for the powers they bring on the earth; the book shows what each one does.

> **Revelation 6:3** *And when he had opened the second seal, I heard the second beast say, Come and see.*

"And when he had opened the second seal." The Lamb opens the second seal. The pattern is the same as before: a seal opened, a living creature's call, a rider going forth.

"I heard the second beast say, Come and see." The second of the four living creatures, the one like a calf, an ox (4:7), now calls out. (The Majority Greek text and the critical texts read only "Come" here.)

Christ had said that after the false christs would come wars. The second seal brings them.

The number. The *second* seal, called by the *second* living creature (see 6:1). The second horseman takes peace from the earth: two is the number of division, and here men are divided against one another, "that they should kill one another."

> **Revelation 6:4** *And there went out another horse that was red: and power was given to him that sat thereon to take peace from the earth, and that they should kill one another: and there was given unto him a great sword.*

"And there went out another horse that was red." "Red" is *purros*, "fiery red," from *pur*, "fire." It is the colour of fire and of blood. The dragon of chapter 12 is the same colour: "a great red dragon" (12:3).

"And power was given to him that sat thereon to take peace from the earth." Again "it was given": the rider has no power of his own. His task is to "take peace from the earth." The first rider may have promised peace; the second takes it away. Peace is one of God's gifts to the earth; when it is taken, everything else falls apart.

"And that they should kill one another." "Kill" here is *sphazō*, "to slaughter," the same word used of the Lamb "slain" (5:6, 9). Men slaughter one another. The war is not only between nations but within them, neighbour against neighbour. Christ said, "For nation shall rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom" (Matthew 24:7), and He added, "the brother shall betray the brother to death, and the father the son" (Mark 13:12). Zechariah foretold a day when God would "deliver the men every one into his neighbour's hand" (Zechariah 11:6).

"And there was given unto him a great sword." "Sword" here is *machaira*, the short sword of close combat and of the executioner. It is "great": the slaughter is vast. Christ had said, "ye shall hear of wars and rumours of wars: see that ye be not troubled: for all these things must come to pass, but the end is not yet" (Matthew 24:6).

Figures of speech. The red horse and its rider are a picture of war, given in vision; the text itself says what the rider does, so the meaning is not in doubt. "A great sword" is a *Metonymy*: the sword is put for the slaughter it brings.

> **Revelation 6:5** *And when he had opened the third seal, I heard the third beast say, Come and see. And I beheld, and lo a black horse; and he that sat on him had a pair of balances in his hand.*

"And when he had opened the third seal, I heard the third beast say, Come and see." The third living creature, the one with the face of a man (4:7), calls out.

"And I beheld, and lo a black horse." "Lo" is *idou*, "behold" (*Asterismos*). Black is the colour of mourning and of famine. Jeremiah lamented over Jerusalem in the siege, "Our skin was black like an oven because

of the terrible famine" (Lamentations 5:10). Famine follows war: fields are burned, farmers are killed or fled, trade is cut off.

"And he that sat on him had a pair of balances in his hand." "Balances" (*zugos*) are a pair of scales, a beam with two pans, used to weigh out goods in the market. In good times grain was measured out by the basketful; in famine, food was weighed out carefully, a little at a time, because there was so little of it. God warned Israel through Moses that if they turned from Him, "they shall deliver you your bread again by weight: and ye shall eat, and not be satisfied" (Leviticus 26:26). Ezekiel was shown the siege of Jerusalem:

> **Ezekiel 4:16** — *Moreover he said unto me, Son of man, behold, I will break the staff of bread in Jerusalem: and they shall eat bread by weight, and with care; and they shall drink water by measure, and with astonishment:*

The rider with the scales brings famine.

The number. The *third* seal, called by the *third* living creature (see 6:1).

Figures of speech. *Asterismos* ("lo"). The balances are a *Metonymy*: the scales are put for the scarcity that makes it necessary to weigh out food.

> **Revelation 6:6** *And I heard a voice in the midst of the four beasts say, A measure of wheat for a penny, and three measures of barley for a penny; and see thou hurt not the oil and the wine.*

A voice now sets the price of bread.

"And I heard a voice in the midst of the four beasts say." The voice comes from the very centre of the living creatures, from the throne itself. The famine is not out of God's control; He sets its terms.

"A measure of wheat for a penny." The "measure" (*choinix*) was a little more than a quart of grain: about a day's ration of food for one man. The "penny" (*dēnarion*) was a silver coin, a day's wage for a labourer. In the parable of the vineyard the owner "agreed with the labourers for a penny a day" (Matthew 20:2). So a man would work all day and earn only enough wheat to feed himself, with nothing left for his wife and children. In normal times a denarius would buy many times that much. The Companion Bible notes that a measure of grain was usually bought for an eighth of a denarius. Prices have risen eight times over.

"And three measures of barley for a penny." Barley was the cheaper grain, the food of the poor and of animals. A day's wage would buy three measures of barley, just enough to feed a small family on the coarsest bread.

"And see thou hurt not the oil and the wine." Oil and wine are spared. Olive trees and grapevines have deep roots and live through a dry season that kills the grain. But the command comes from the throne: "see thou hurt not." The famine has a limit, set by God. It is not yet the full destruction that comes later. The Companion Bible suggests that the sparing of the oil and wine may point to God's special care for His own in the time of famine, as He promised: "In the days of famine they shall be satisfied" (Psalm

37:19). The text does not say so; what it says plainly is that the famine is held within bounds by the voice from the throne.

Christ had said, "and there shall be famines, and pestilences, and earthquakes, in divers places" (Matthew 24:7).

The numbers. *A measure* of wheat for a penny, and *three measures* of barley for a penny. The "measure" (*choinix*) was about a quart, a day's ration of grain for one man. The "penny" (*denarius*) was a day's wages for a labourer (Matthew 20:2). So a whole day's work would buy only one man's bread for one day, or three days of the poorer barley. The numbers describe famine prices: everything a man earns goes for food, and nothing is left for his family. They are given as Christ foretold, "there shall be famines" (Matthew 24:7).

Figures of speech. "Hurt not the oil and the wine" speaks of the oil and wine as if they could be harmed, but it means the olive trees and vines from which they come, a *Metonymy*: the product put for its source.

> **Revelation 6:7** *And when he had opened the fourth seal, I heard the voice of the fourth beast say, Come and see.*

"And when he had opened the fourth seal, I heard the voice of the fourth beast say, Come and see." The fourth and last of the living creatures, the one like a flying eagle (4:7), gives the last call. After this seal the living creatures fall silent; the next three seals are opened without a voice from them.

The number. The *fourth* seal, called by the *fourth* living creature: the last of the four horsemen (see 6:1).

> **Revelation 6:8** *And I looked, and behold a pale horse: and his name that sat on him was Death, and Hell followed with him. And power was given unto them over the fourth part of the earth, to kill with sword, and with hunger, and with death, and with the beasts of the earth.*

"And I looked, and behold a pale horse." "Pale" is *chlōros* (Strong's G5515), the word from which we get "chlorine" and "chlorophyll." It means pale green, and is used elsewhere in this book of green grass (8:7; 9:4). Here it describes a horse the sickly greyish-green colour of a corpse, or of a man stricken with plague. It is the colour of death.

"And his name that sat on him was Death." This rider has a name, and the name is Death. The first three riders were not named; this one is. Death rides out.

"And Hell followed with him." "Hell" is *hadēs*, the grave (see 1:18). Death goes ahead and kills; the grave follows behind and swallows up the dead. Christ holds "the keys of hell and of death" (1:18). The two who ride here are under the authority of the Lamb who opens the seal. At the end of the book, death and the grave are themselves cast into the lake of fire (20:14).

"And power was given unto them over the fourth part of the earth." "Power was given": again, permission from the throne. Death and the grave are given authority over a fourth part of the earth, and

no more. The trumpets will reach a third (8:7-12); the vials the whole (16:1-21). The judgments grow, but each is measured.

"To kill with sword, and with hunger, and with death, and with the beasts of the earth." Four ways of dying. "Sword" here is *rhomphaia*, the great sword of war. "Hunger" is famine. "Death" here means pestilence, plague: Bullinger notes that the word *thanatos*, "death," is used in the Greek Old Testament for the Hebrew word for pestilence some thirty times, "as we call the oriental plague which raged in Europe in the 14th century the 'black death.'" "The beasts of the earth" are wild animals, which multiply and grow bold when men are few and the land is left empty. These are the "four sore judgments" God named through Ezekiel:

> **Ezekiel 14:21** — *For thus saith the Lord GOD; How much more when I send my four sore judgments upon Jerusalem, the sword, and the famine, and the noisome beast, and the pestilence, to cut off from it man and beast?*

Christ had said, "there shall be famines, and pestilences" (Matthew 24:7).

The four horsemen together show the beginning of the Day of the Lord. First comes deception, a false christ who promises peace and conquers; then war, as peace is taken away; then famine, as war destroys the harvests; then death by every means, sword, hunger, plague and beasts, as the grave follows to gather the dead. One leads to the next. Christ said of these things, "All these are the beginning of sorrows" (Matthew 24:8).

The number. *The fourth part* of the earth. Death and Hell are given power over a fourth part, not over the whole. Four is the number of the earth (see 4:6); a fourth part is a measured share of it. God sets the limit of every judgment. Ezekiel was told of God's "four sore judgments upon Jerusalem, the sword, and the famine, and the noisome beast, and the pestilence" (Ezekiel 14:21): the same four are named here, sword, hunger, death and the beasts of the earth.

Figures of speech. "Death" and "Hell" are spoken of as riders, as persons: the figure *Prosopopoeia* (personification). The Companion Bible notes it here: "Death and Hadês are personified." "Death" in the list of four is a *Metonymy* of the effect: death put for pestilence, the thing that causes it (Bullinger). "Sword, and ... hunger, and ... death, and ... the beasts" is *Polysyndeton*.

On earth still, with a glimpse into heaven. Verses 6:9-11, the fifth seal. The fifth seal shows no horseman. John sees under the altar the souls of those who were slain on the earth for the word of God, and hears their cry. What has happened on the earth is shown as it stands before God.

> **Revelation 6:9** *And when he had opened the fifth seal, I saw under the altar the souls of them that were slain for the word of God, and for the testimony which they held:*

The fifth seal is not a rider. The scene turns from the earth to the altar.

"And when he had opened the fifth seal, I saw under the altar." "The altar" is the altar in the heavenly temple that John is shown. In the tabernacle there were two altars: the bronze altar of burnt offering in the court, where sacrifices were slain and their blood poured out, and the golden altar of incense before

the veil (Exodus 27:1-2; 30:1-3). This altar, with blood beneath it, is the altar of sacrifice. In the law, when a sacrifice was killed, the priest was to "pour all the blood of the bullock at the bottom of the altar of the burnt offering" (Leviticus 4:7). The blood of the sacrifice was under the altar.

"The souls of them that were slain." What does John see under the altar? "The souls of them that were slain." "Souls" is *psuchai*, plural of *psuchē* (Strong's G5590). In Scripture the word is very often used of the whole person, the living being. "All the souls that came out of the loins of Jacob were seventy souls" (Exodus 1:5): seventy persons. "And the same day there were added unto them about three thousand souls" (Acts 2:41): three thousand people. Bullinger writes, "All mystery is removed if we simply take the word 'souls' here as being put, by the figure Synecdoche for persons." John sees, in vision, the persons who had been slain, pictured where the blood of the sacrifice lay, at the foot of the altar. Their lives had been poured out like the blood of a sacrifice. Paul used the same picture of himself facing death: "For I am now ready to be offered" (2 Timothy 4:6), literally, "I am already being poured out as a drink offering."

Are the dead conscious in heaven, then? This scene is often read so, but the text does not say it, and the rest of the book says otherwise. These same people are seen again at the end: "and I saw the souls of them that were beheaded for the witness of Jesus, and for the word of God ... and they lived and reigned with Christ a thousand years ... This is the first resurrection" (20:4-5). They "lived" at the first resurrection; they were not living before it. Scripture speaks of death as a sleep until the resurrection: "many of them that sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake" (Daniel 12:2). What John sees here is a vision of the slain, shown at the altar of sacrifice, whose blood cries out for justice, as Abel's did (see 6:10; Appendix C, Question 7).

"For the word of God, and for the testimony which they held." Why were they slain? For the same reasons John was on Patmos: "for the word of God, and for the testimony of Jesus Christ" (1:9). They held to God's word and their witness, and they were killed for it. (The Majority Greek text reads "the testimony of the Lamb which they held.") Christ had foretold this on the mount of Olives:

> **Matthew 24:9** — *Then shall they deliver you up to be afflicted, and shall kill you: and ye shall be hated of all nations for my name's sake.*

The number. The *fifth* seal, the first of the last three (see 6:1). No horseman rides out and no living creature calls. The scene turns from the earth to the altar: from what is done to men to how God sees it.

Figures of speech. "Souls" is put for persons, the figure *Synecdoche* (the part put for the whole), as Bullinger explains.

To whom. These are martyrs of the Day of the Lord, slain after the seals begin to be opened, "hated of all nations" for the sake of Christ's name (Matthew 24:9). The church of grace is not the subject here; the book is describing the time after it has been gathered to the Lord (Part One, Chapter 3 §C).

> **Revelation 6:10** *And they cried with a loud voice, saying, How long, O Lord, holy and true, dost thou not judge and avenge our blood on them that dwell on the earth?*

"And they cried with a loud voice." The slain cry out. How can the dead cry? Scripture has already given the answer in its first account of a murder. When Cain killed Abel, God said to him:

> **Genesis 4:10** — *And he said, What hast thou done? the voice of thy brother's blood crieth unto me from the ground.*

Abel's blood had a voice. It cried out to God for justice. So here the blood of those slain for God's word cries out from under the altar. The writer to the Hebrews speaks of "the blood of sprinkling, that speaketh better things than that of Abel" (Hebrews 12:24): Christ's blood speaks for mercy, Abel's for justice. The blood of the martyrs under the altar cries for justice.

"Saying, How long, O Lord." "How long?" is the cry of God's suffering people all through the Psalms. "How long, LORD? wilt thou be angry for ever?" (Psalm 79:5). That psalm, written when the heathen had laid Jerusalem waste, goes on:

> **Psalm 79:10** — *Wherefore should the heathen say, Where is their God? let him be known among the heathen in our sight by the revenging of the blood of thy servants which is shed.*

"Lord" here is *despotēs* (Strong's G1203), "master, sovereign," the absolute owner. It is the word a slave used of his master. The slain call on God as their sovereign Master, who owns them and has the right and the power to act for them.

"Holy and true." They appeal to God's character. He is "holy": He cannot let evil stand. He is "true": He keeps His word. Christ gave Himself the same titles to Philadelphia (3:7).

"Dost thou not judge and avenge our blood on them that dwell on the earth?" "Avenge" is *ekdikeō* (Strong's G1556), "to do justice, to vindicate, to punish wrong." This is not a cry for personal revenge. It is a cry for justice, for God to set right what has been done, as He promised. Moses sang, "Rejoice, O ye nations, with his people: for he will avenge the blood of his servants" (Deuteronomy 32:43). Christ told the parable of the widow and the unjust judge to teach "that men ought always to pray," and ended, "And shall not God avenge his own elect, which cry day and night unto him, though he bear long with them? I tell you that he will avenge them speedily" (Luke 18:7-8).

"Them that dwell on the earth" is the book's name for the people of the Day of the Lord who oppose God (see 3:10). The answer to this cry comes at the fall of Babylon: "for he hath judged the great whore ... and hath avenged the blood of his servants at her hand" (19:2).

Figures of speech. The question "How long ... dost thou not judge and avenge?" is the figure *Erotesis*: not a request for information, but a cry of longing. The blood that cries is the figure *Prosopopoeia*: a voice given to what has no voice, as in Genesis 4:10.

To whom. Under grace believers are told, "Dearly beloved, avenge not yourselves ... for it is written, Vengeance is mine; I will repay, saith the Lord" (Romans 12:19), and they are to pray for those who persecute them. The cry for God to avenge their blood belongs to the time when God is about to repay: the Day of the Lord, the "day of vengeance of our God" (Isaiah 61:2). These martyrs ask for exactly what God has promised to do in that day (Part One, Chapter 3 §C).

> **Revelation 6:11** *And white robes were given unto every one of them; and it was said unto them, that they should rest yet for a little season, until their fellowservants also and their brethren, that should be killed as they were, should be fulfilled.*

"And white robes were given unto every one of them." "Robes" here is *stolē*, a long, flowing robe, the dress of honour. Each one is given a white robe. White is the colour of purity and of victory (see 3:4-5). Men had condemned them and killed them as criminals; God clothes them in white, declaring them righteous and victorious. The robes are given to each one by name, "unto every one of them": not one is forgotten.

"And it was said unto them, that they should rest yet for a little season." "Rest" is *anapauō* (Strong's G373), "to cease, to rest, to be refreshed." It is the word the book uses of the dead: "Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord from henceforth: Yea, saith the Spirit, that they may rest from their labours" (14:13). They are told to rest, to wait in the sleep of death, "yet for a little season," a little longer. Justice is coming, but not yet.

"Until their fellowservants also and their brethren, that should be killed as they were, should be fulfilled." Why must they wait? Because more will die. "Should be fulfilled" means "should be completed": the number of those who will die for their witness is not yet complete. God knows that number. He has set it. When it is full, He will act. Bullinger takes "fellowservants ... and their brethren" as the figure *Hendiadys*: not two groups, but one, "their brethren who are also their fellow-servants." The martyrs of the fifth seal are the first of many; more will die under the beast (13:7, 15).

There is great comfort in this answer, hard as it is. God has not forgotten. He gives each one a white robe. He tells them to rest. And He tells them that their cry will be answered when the time is full.

The number. White robes "were given unto every *one* of them": not one robe for all, but one for each. God counts His martyrs one by one. They are told to rest until the number of their fellowservants is "fulfilled": God knows the number, and it will be complete.

Figures of speech. "Fellowservants ... and ... brethren," *Hendiadys* (Bullinger). "Rest" is used of the dead as in 14:13, the sleep of death pictured as rest from labour.

On earth. Verses 6:12-17, the sixth seal. The great earthquake, the darkened sun, the falling stars, and men hiding in the rocks from "the face of him that sitteth on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb." The section closes on the question, "who shall be able to stand?"



Albrecht Dürer, The Apocalypse (woodcut, 1498): the fifth and sixth seals: white robes given to the souls under the altar, and the stars falling (6:9-17).

> **Revelation 6:12** *And I beheld when he had opened the sixth seal, and, lo, there was a great earthquake; and the sun became black as sackcloth of hair, and the moon became as blood;*

The sixth seal shakes the whole creation.

"And I beheld when he had opened the sixth seal, and, lo, there was a great earthquake." "Lo": behold (*Asterismos*). "Earthquake" is *seismos* (Strong's G4578), a shaking. A "great" earthquake, the first of several in the book (8:5; 11:13, 19; 16:18). Haggai had foretold God's shaking of all things: "For thus saith the LORD of hosts; Yet once, it is a little while, and I will shake the heavens, and the earth, and the sea, and the dry land" (Haggai 2:6).

"And the sun became black as sackcloth of hair." Sackcloth was a rough cloth woven from black goat's hair, worn in mourning and repentance. The sun turns black like it: its light goes out, as if creation itself puts on mourning.

"And the moon became as blood." The moon turns dark red. (The Majority Greek text and the critical texts read "the *whole* moon became as blood.") Joel had foretold exactly this:

> **Joel 2:31** — *The sun shall be turned into darkness, and the moon into blood, before the great and the terrible day of the LORD come.*

Peter quoted Joel's words on the day of Pentecost (Acts 2:20), and Christ said on the mount of Olives:

> **Matthew 24:29** — *Immediately after the tribulation of those days shall the sun be darkened, and the moon shall not give her light, and the stars shall fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens shall be shaken:*

These are the signs that come just before the great Day of the Lord. Are they literal? The book describes them as John saw them, and the prophets and Christ describe them in the same plain words. God darkened the sun over Egypt for three days, "a thick darkness in all the land of Egypt" (Exodus 10:22), and over the land at the cross "from the sixth hour ... unto the ninth hour" (Matthew 27:45). This study takes them as real signs in the heavens.

The number. The *sixth* seal. Six is the number of man, and of man falling short (see 13:18). At the sixth seal men on the earth, from kings to slaves, are found hiding in the rocks: man at the end of his own strength. The seventh seal is held back until 8:1.

Figures of speech. "Black as sackcloth of hair" and "as blood" are *Similes*. "Lo" is *Asterismos*.

> **Revelation 6:13** *And the stars of heaven fell unto the earth, even as a fig tree casteth her untimely figs, when she is shaken of a mighty wind.*

"And the stars of heaven fell unto the earth." Christ said "the stars shall fall from heaven" (Matthew 24:29). The word "star" (*astēr*) in Greek was used of any bright point of light in the sky, including what we call meteors and "shooting stars." To men on the earth it will seem that the heavens themselves are falling.

"Even as a fig tree casteth her untimely figs, when she is shaken of a mighty wind." "Untimely figs" (*olunthoi*) are the unripe winter figs that grow late in the season and hang on through the winter. A strong wind shakes the tree, and they fall to the ground in showers. So the stars fall from the sky. Isaiah used the same picture:

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

Figures of speech. "Even as a fig tree casteth her untimely figs" is a *Simile*, taken from Isaiah 34:4.

> **Revelation 6:14** *And the heaven departed as a scroll when it is rolled together; and every mountain and island were moved out of their places.*

"And the heaven departed as a scroll when it is rolled together." "Departed" is *apochōrizō*, "to be split apart, to separate." The sky itself seems to split and roll up, as a scroll that is cut and springs back on itself, rolling up from each side. Isaiah, in the verse just quoted, said, "the heavens shall be rolled

together as a scroll" (Isaiah 34:4). The heaven over men's heads, which has always seemed fixed and sure, is shaken.

"And every mountain and island were moved out of their places." The earth is shaken as the heavens are. Mountains, which seem the most lasting things on earth, are moved. Islands are shaken from their places. Nothing stands firm. Under the seventh vial the shaking is complete: "And every island fled away, and the mountains were not found" (16:20).

Figures of speech. "As a scroll when it is rolled together" is a *Simile*, from Isaiah 34:4.

> **Revelation 6:15** *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;*

Now the scene turns to men on the earth, and their terror.

"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." Seven classes of men are named, from the highest to the lowest. "Kings of the earth": the rulers. "Great men" (*megistanes*): the nobles, the courtiers, the men of high office. "Rich men": the wealthy. "Chief captains" (*chiliarchoi*): commanders of a thousand, the military chiefs. "Mighty men": the strong, the powerful. "Every bondman": every slave. "Every free man": every citizen. All of mankind is here, from the throne to the slave quarters. In the face of what is coming, rank, wealth and strength make no difference. The kings of the earth, who once "set themselves ... against the LORD, and against his anointed" (Psalm 2:2), now hide.

"Hid themselves in the dens and in the rocks of the mountains." "Dens" are caves. Men run to the caves and crevices of the mountains to hide. Isaiah had foreseen this very scene in the Day of the Lord:

> **Isaiah 2:19** — *And they shall go into the holes of the rocks, and into the caves of the earth, for fear of the LORD, and for the glory of his majesty, when he ariseth to shake terribly the earth.*

Figures of speech. The seven classes joined by "and" are *Polysyndeton*: each class is named separately, so that no one is left out. Kings and slaves, the two ends of society, are named to mean everyone between them.

> **Revelation 6:16** *And said to the mountains and rocks, Fall on us, and hide us from the face of him that sitteth on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb:*

"And said to the mountains and rocks, Fall on us." Men would rather be crushed under the mountains than face what is coming. Hosea foretold the same of Israel's idolatrous high places: "and they shall say to the mountains, Cover us; and to the hills, Fall on us" (Hosea 10:8). Christ quoted those words as He was led out to be crucified, and the women of Jerusalem wept for Him:

> **Luke 23:28-30** — *But Jesus turning unto them said, Daughters of Jerusalem, weep not for me, but weep for yourselves, and for your children. For, behold, the days are coming, in the which they shall say, Blessed are the barren, and the wombs that never bare, and the paps which never gave suck. Then shall they begin to say to the mountains, Fall on us; and to the hills, Cover us.*

"And hide us from the face of him that sitteth on the throne." What they fear is not the earthquake, nor the darkness. They fear a face: the face of Him that sits on the throne. For the first time men on the earth know who is behind what is happening. They know that God is looking at them. Adam and Eve, when they had sinned, "hid themselves from the presence of the LORD God amongst the trees of the garden" (Genesis 3:8). Men have been hiding from God's face ever since.

"And from the wrath of the Lamb." Here is one of the most striking phrases in the Bible: "the wrath of the Lamb." A lamb is the gentlest of creatures. But the Lamb who was slain is also the judge. Those who would not have Him as their Saviour will have Him as their judge. "Wrath" is *orgē* (Strong's G3709), settled anger against evil. The second psalm warned the kings of the earth, "Kiss the Son, lest he be angry, and ye perish from the way, when his wrath is kindled but a little" (Psalm 2:12).

Figures of speech. "The face of him that sitteth on the throne" is *Anthropopatheia*: God is spoken of as having a face, to show His presence and His gaze. "The wrath of the Lamb" joins the gentlest of creatures with the fiercest anger, the figure *Oxymoron* in effect: a striking union of opposites that makes the reader stop and think.

> **Revelation 6:17** *For the great day of his wrath is come; and who shall be able to stand?*

"For the great day of his wrath is come." "Is come": the men of the earth say it themselves. They recognise what has arrived. It is "the great day of his wrath," the day the prophets called "the day of the LORD." Zephaniah wrote:

> **Zephaniah 1:14-15** — *The great day of the LORD is near, it is near, and hasteth greatly, even the voice of the day of the LORD: the mighty man shall cry there bitterly. That day is a day of wrath, a day of trouble and distress, a day of wasteness and desolation, a day of darkness and gloominess, a day of clouds and thick darkness,*

(The critical texts read "the great day of *their* wrath": the wrath of Him that sits on the throne and of the Lamb together. The Majority text reads "his wrath," as the King James Version does.)

"And who shall be able to stand?" Here is the question with which the sixth seal ends. "Stand" means to stand firm, to survive, to remain upright before the judge. Who can stand in such a day? The prophets asked the same: "for the day of the LORD is great and very terrible; and who can abide it?" (Joel 2:11). "But who may abide the day of his coming? and who shall stand when he appeareth?" (Malachi 3:2). The psalmist asked, "If thou, LORD, shouldest mark iniquities, O Lord, who shall stand?" (Psalm 130:3).

The question is not left hanging. The next chapter answers it. Before the seventh seal is opened, God seals His servants (7:1-8), and John sees a great multitude standing before the throne (7:9). Those whom God seals are able to stand.

Figures of speech. "Who shall be able to stand?" is *Erotesis*: a question asked to make the hearer feel the answer, which seems to be "no one." The book then gives God's answer.

The book pauses. Verses 7:1-8, the sealing of the 144,000, on earth. Here the first of the book's pauses before a seventh begins (Part One, Chapter 8 §D). Six seals have been opened; the seventh is not opened until 8:1. Between them the action stops. The winds of judgment are held back on the earth, and 144,000 of Israel are sealed. This answers the question at the end of chapter 6: these are the ones who will be able to stand. Read 7:1-8 as standing between the sixth and the seventh seal, not as a new judgment.



Albrecht Dürer, The Apocalypse (woodcut, 1498): four angels holding the winds, and the sealing of God's servants (7:1-8).

> **Revelation 7:1** *And after these things I saw four angels standing on the four corners of the earth, holding the four winds of the earth, that the wind should not blow on the earth, nor on the sea, nor on any tree.*

The sixth seal has been opened, and the seventh is still to come. Between them comes a pause. The winds of judgment are held back while God seals His servants.

"And after these things I saw four angels." "After these things" (*meta tauta*, "after this"): the marker of a new sight (see 4:1). John sees a new scene.

"Standing on the four corners of the earth." "The four corners of the earth" means its four quarters, north, south, east and west: the whole earth. Isaiah used the same phrase when he said God would "gather together the dispersed of Judah from the four corners of the earth" (Isaiah 11:12). Ezekiel cried, "An end, the end is come upon the four corners of the land" (Ezekiel 7:2). The four angels stand at the edges of the whole earth, one at each quarter.

"Holding the four winds of the earth." "Holding" is *kratountas*, "gripping, holding fast," the word used of Christ holding the seven stars (2:1). The angels hold back the winds by force, as a man holds a team of horses straining to run. Wind in Scripture is often the instrument of God's judgment. Jeremiah foretold, "And upon Elam will I bring the four winds from the four quarters of heaven, and will scatter them toward all those winds" (Jeremiah 49:36). Daniel saw "the four winds of the heaven strove upon the great sea" (Daniel 7:2) before the four beasts came up out of it.

"That the wind should not blow on the earth, nor on the sea, nor on any tree." Earth, sea, and trees are named, the very things that the first trumpets will strike (8:7-9). The angels hold the winds still, and everything waits. Picture the stillness before a great storm, when not a leaf moves.

The numbers. *Four* angels at the *four* corners of the earth holding the *four* winds. Four is the number of the earth (see 4:6): the four corners mean the whole earth, north, south, east and west, and the four winds are the winds from every quarter (Jeremiah 49:36; Daniel 7:2). The whole earth is held still, every wind from every side, while God seals His servants.

Figures of speech. "The four corners of the earth" is an *Idiom* for the four quarters, the whole earth. "Nor on the sea, nor on any tree" is the figure *Paradiastole* ("neither ... nor"), naming each thing separately so that nothing is left out.

> **Revelation 7:2** *And 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 given to hurt the earth and the sea,*

"And I saw another angel ascending from the east." "From the east" is literally "from the rising of the sun." This angel comes up from the east as the sun rises. In Scripture the glory of God comes from the east: Ezekiel saw "the glory of the God of Israel came from the way of the east" (Ezekiel 43:2). The angel brings hope, like the dawn.

"Having the seal of the living God." A "seal" (*sphragis*, Strong's G4973) is a stamp used to mark something as one's own and to protect it. Kings sealed their decrees with their signet rings; a sealed letter or treasure could not be opened by anyone else. This angel carries God's own seal. "The living God" is God as He is set against the dead idols of the nations. He is the one who gives life and protects it.

"And he cried with a loud voice to the four angels, to whom it was given to hurt the earth and the sea." The four angels had been "given" power to hurt the earth and the sea. They were ready. They were holding the winds back only for a time. The angel from the east cries out to them with a loud voice.

The number. The *four* angels (see 7:1).

Figures of speech. "From the east," literally "from the rising of the sun," names the place by what happens there, a *Metonymy*.

> **Revelation 7:3** *Saying, Hurt not the earth, neither the sea, nor the trees, till we have sealed the servants of our God in their foreheads.*

"Saying, Hurt not the earth, neither the sea, nor the trees." The command: wait. Not yet. Do not harm the earth, the sea, or the trees.

"Till we have sealed the servants of our God in their foreheads." Here is why. God's servants must be sealed first. "We": the angel speaks of himself and his fellows; the sealing is angels' work, done at God's command. "In their foreheads": the seal is set where all can see it. It marks them as God's, and it protects them. Later the locusts from the pit are told "that they should not hurt the grass of the earth ... but only those men which have not the seal of God in their foreheads" (9:4). The beast too will mark his followers "in their right hand, or in their foreheads" (13:16), but God's servants bear His name instead (14:1).

The prophet Ezekiel had seen this very thing done before the judgment of Jerusalem. God called a man clothed in linen, with a writer's inkhorn:

> **Ezekiel 9:4-6** — *And the LORD said unto him, Go through the midst of the city, through the midst of Jerusalem, and set a mark upon the foreheads of the men that sigh and that cry for all the abominations that be done in the midst thereof. And to the others he said in mine hearing, Go ye after him through the city, and smite: let not your eye spare, neither have ye pity: Slay utterly old and young, both maids, and little children, and women: but come not near any man upon whom is the mark; and begin at my sanctuary. Then they began at the ancient men which were before the house.*

Before the judgment fell, God marked His own. The same thing happened in Egypt, when the blood on the doorposts marked the houses the destroyer would pass over (Exodus 12:13, 23).

So here: before the trumpets sound, God seals His servants. This is the answer to the question of 6:17, "who shall be able to stand?" Those whom God seals will stand.

"The servants of our God." Who are these servants? The next verse says: they are of "all the tribes of the children of Israel" (7:4).

Figures of speech. "Hurt not the earth, neither the sea, nor the trees" is *Paradiastole*, as in 7:1. The seal is a real mark in the vision, a sign of ownership and protection.

To whom. The sealing of God's servants is a sealing for protection in the Day of the Lord, set on Israelites of the twelve tribes. Paul writes to the church of grace that its members are "sealed with that holy Spirit of promise" (Ephesians 1:13), a seal given by grace at the time they believe, not a mark in the forehead set by angels before the trumpets sound (Part One, Chapter 3 §C).

> **Revelation 7:4** *And I heard the number of them which were sealed: and there were sealed an hundred and forty and four thousand of all the tribes of the children of Israel.*

"And I heard the number of them which were sealed." John does not count them; he hears the number. It is told to him.

"And there were sealed an hundred and forty and four thousand." One hundred and forty-four thousand. It is twelve times twelve thousand. Twelve is Israel's number: twelve sons of Jacob, twelve tribes, twelve stones on the high priest's breastplate, twelve loaves on the table of shewbread. Here twelve thousand are sealed from each of the twelve tribes. Bullinger, who takes the number literally, says plainly, "there is here no Figure whatever; but it is the simple statement of fact." Whether the number is exact to the last person or a round number, the text does not say, and this study does not build on either view (Appendix C, Question 8). What the text does say is that a definite number, known to God and counted tribe by tribe, is sealed.

"Of all the tribes of the children of Israel." Here is the plain answer to who they are. They are Israelites, "of all the tribes of the children of Israel." They are not a picture of the church, nor of all believers. The text names them tribe by tribe in the next four verses, so that there can be no doubt. In the Day of the Lord, God deals again with Israel as a nation, as Paul foretold: "And so all Israel shall be saved" (Romans 11:26). Christ had said, "And he shall send his angels with a great sound of a trumpet, and they shall gather together his elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other" (Matthew 24:31). These 144,000 are among God's elect of Israel in that day, sealed and kept by Him (Appendix C, Question 8).

They are not the same company as the "great multitude" that John sees next. That multitude "no man could number," and is "of all nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues" (7:9). The 144,000 are counted and are of Israel's tribes. The two groups are set side by side on purpose. The 144,000 appear again in 14:1-5, standing with the Lamb on mount Sion.

The number. *An hundred and forty and four thousand.* The number is built from twelve: 12 times 12 times 1,000. Twelve is the number of governmental perfection, God's people rightly ordered under His rule; twelve tribes make up Israel (Genesis 49:28), and twelve times twelve is that order made full. A thousand is ten carried as far as it goes (see 5:11), a great and full company. The next four verses show how the number is made: twelve thousand from each of the twelve tribes. John "heard the number": it is God's count, given exactly. Nothing in the text says that the number is not to be taken as stated (Appendix C, Question 8).

To whom. These are Israelites by tribe, sealed for protection in the Day of the Lord. Under grace "there is neither Jew nor Greek" in the one body (Galatians 3:28); in the Day of the Lord, the tribes of Israel are named again one by one (Part One, Chapter 3 §C).

> **Revelation 7:5** *Of the tribe of Juda were sealed twelve thousand. Of the tribe of Reuben were sealed twelve thousand. Of the tribe of Gad were sealed twelve thousand.*

Now the tribes are named, with twelve thousand from each. The list is not in the order of Jacob's sons by birth, and it differs from every other list of the tribes in Scripture. The differences are worth noticing.

"Of the tribe of Juda were sealed twelve thousand." Judah comes first. By birth Reuben was the firstborn, and in most lists he comes first. But Reuben lost the birthright by his sin (Genesis 49:3-4; 1 Chronicles 5:1), and from Judah came the king: "Judah prevailed above his brethren, and of him came

the chief ruler" (1 Chronicles 5:2). Judah is the tribe of the Lion who has just opened the book (5:5). The King's tribe leads.

"Of the tribe of Reuben were sealed twelve thousand." Reuben, the firstborn, comes second. He lost the first place, but he is not left out. God's grace keeps a place for him.

"Of the tribe of Gad were sealed twelve thousand." Gad was the son of Leah's handmaid Zilpah. His name means "a troop." Jacob blessed him: "Gad, a troop shall overcome him: but he shall overcome at the last" (Genesis 49:19). In the Day of the Lord he is among those who overcome.

The numbers. *Twelve thousand* from each tribe, three tribes in this verse. Every tribe is given the same number: no tribe is larger in God's sealing, and no tribe is left short. Judah is named first, not Reuben the firstborn, for the Lamb is "the Lion of the tribe of Juda" (5:5).

Figures of speech. The same phrase is repeated twelve times for twelve tribes, "Of the tribe of ... were sealed twelve thousand": the figure *Epistrophe* in effect, repetition at the end of each clause, which gives the list its solemn rhythm and makes each tribe count equally.

> **Revelation 7:6** *Of the tribe of Aser were sealed twelve thousand. Of the tribe of Nephthalim were sealed twelve thousand. Of the tribe of Manasses were sealed twelve thousand.*

"Of the tribe of Aser were sealed twelve thousand." Aser (Asher) was the second son of Zilpah. His name means "happy, blessed." When he was born Leah said, "Happy am I, for the daughters will call me blessed: and she called his name Asher" (Genesis 30:13). Moses blessed him: "as thy days, so shall thy strength be" (Deuteronomy 33:25).

"Of the tribe of Nepthalim were sealed twelve thousand." Nepthalim (Naphtali) was a son of Rachel's handmaid Bilhah. Jacob called him "a hind let loose: he giveth goodly words" (Genesis 49:21). The land of Naphtali was in Galilee, where Christ began His preaching, as Isaiah foretold: "The land of Zabulon, and the land of Nephthalim ... The people which sat in darkness saw great light" (Matthew 4:15-16).

"Of the tribe of Manasses were sealed twelve thousand." Manasses (Manasseh) was the elder son of Joseph, born in Egypt. Jacob adopted Joseph's two sons as his own: "thy two sons, Ephraim and Manasseh ... are mine; as Reuben and Simeon, they shall be mine" (Genesis 48:5). Here Manasseh is named as a tribe, and Joseph is named in verse 8; Ephraim, the younger son, is not named separately. He is counted, it seems, under the name of his father Joseph.

The numbers. *Twelve thousand* from each of three more tribes (see 7:5).

> **Revelation 7:7** *Of the tribe of Simeon were sealed twelve thousand. Of the tribe of Levi were sealed twelve thousand. Of the tribe of Issachar were sealed twelve thousand.*

"Of the tribe of Simeon were sealed twelve thousand." Simeon was Leah's second son. With Levi he had taken cruel revenge on Shechem (Genesis 34), and Jacob said of the two, "I will divide them in Jacob, and scatter them in Israel" (Genesis 49:7). Simeon's inheritance was scattered within Judah's land (Joshua 19:1). But he is here, sealed with the rest.

"Of the tribe of Levi were sealed twelve thousand." Levi was the tribe of the priests. It had no share of the land when Israel entered Canaan: "the LORD God of Israel was their inheritance" (Joshua 13:33). Because of this Levi is often left out of the lists of the tribes when the land is divided, and Joseph's two sons are counted in its place. Here Levi is counted as a tribe among the rest.

"Of the tribe of Issachar were sealed twelve thousand." Issachar was Leah's fifth son. In David's day "the children of Issachar ... were men that had understanding of the times, to know what Israel ought to do" (1 Chronicles 12:32).

The numbers. *Twelve thousand* from each of three more tribes (see 7:5).

> **Revelation 7:8** *Of the tribe of Zabulon were sealed twelve thousand. Of the tribe of Joseph were sealed twelve thousand. Of the tribe of Benjamin were sealed twelve thousand.*

"Of the tribe of Zabulon were sealed twelve thousand." Zabulon (Zebulun) was Leah's sixth son. Jacob said he "shall dwell at the haven of the sea" (Genesis 49:13). His land, too, was in Galilee (Matthew 4:15).

"Of the tribe of Joseph were sealed twelve thousand." Joseph, Rachel's firstborn, sold by his brothers, raised to rule Egypt and save his family, is named here as a tribe. Usually Joseph is not named as a tribe himself, but through his two sons, Ephraim and Manasseh. Here Manasseh is named (7:6) and Joseph stands in place of Ephraim.

"Of the tribe of Benjamin were sealed twelve thousand." Benjamin, Rachel's second son, the youngest, the son of Jacob's old age. His tribe stood with Judah when the kingdom divided, and Saul of Tarsus was of it (Philippians 3:5). He closes the list.

What about Dan? The reader will notice that one tribe is missing: Dan. Ephraim too is not named by his own name, though he may be counted under Joseph. Why is Dan left out? The text does not say. Scripture does tell us some things about Dan that readers have long pointed to. Jacob said, "Dan shall be a serpent by the way, an adder in the path, that biteth the horse heels" (Genesis 49:17). Dan was the first tribe to set up an idol for itself in the land, with its own priesthood, and kept it "until the day of the captivity of the land" (Judges 18:30). Later Jeroboam set up one of his golden calves in the city of Dan (1 Kings 12:29). Moses had warned that the man or tribe who turned to idols would have his name blotted out: "the LORD shall blot out his name from under heaven" (Deuteronomy 29:20). These things may explain why Dan is not among the sealed; but the text itself gives no reason, and this study does not go beyond it (Appendix C, Question 8). And Dan is not forgotten for ever. When Ezekiel was shown the land divided among the tribes in the age to come, the very first portion was Dan's: "a portion for Dan" (Ezekiel 48:1).

So the list ends. Twelve tribes, twelve thousand from each, are sealed. They are the answer to the question "who shall be able to stand?" (6:17). God has sealed His servants of Israel, and they will stand. In the next verse John looks again, and sees a great multitude that no one could number, from every nation (7:9).

The numbers. *Twelve thousand* from each of the last three tribes (see 7:5). The count is complete: twelve tribes, twelve thousand each, 144,000 (7:4). To make twelve, Joseph and his son Manasseh are both named and Dan is left out (see above).

Figures of speech. The repeated formula, "Of the tribe of ... were sealed twelve thousand," closes here, its twelfth time.

In short. The Lamb opens six seals, and the events Christ foretold on the mount of Olives come on the earth in order. Four riders go out at the call of the four living creatures: a false conqueror on a white horse, crowned and armed, who imitates Christ; war on a red horse, taking peace from the earth; famine on a black horse, with a day's wage for a day's bread; and Death on a pale horse, with the grave following, killing a fourth of the earth by sword, hunger, pestilence and beasts. At the fifth seal John sees those slain for God's word pictured under the altar, their blood crying for justice like Abel's; they are given white robes and told to rest until the number of martyrs is complete. At the sixth seal the earth quakes, the sun goes black, the moon turns to blood, the stars fall, the sky rolls up, and every class of men hides in the caves from the face of God and the wrath of the Lamb, asking, "who shall be able to stand?" The answer follows: four angels hold back the winds of judgment while another angel seals the servants of God in their foreheads, 144,000 of the twelve tribes of Israel, twelve thousand from each, Judah first and Dan not named.

Section E — 7:9–8:6. In Heaven: The Great Multitude, and the Seventh Seal

Where it stands

The second scene in heaven (2H). Before the trumpets sound on earth (Section F), John sees a great multitude before the throne, hears where they came from and what awaits them, and then sees the seventh seal opened: silence in heaven, seven trumpets given to seven angels, the prayers of the saints offered on the golden altar, and fire cast to the earth in answer. The section looks ahead to the end of the tribulation, to comfort the reader before the trumpets begin.

Its structure

	Verses	Content
A	7:9-12	Heavenly voices: the great multitude, "Salvation to our God"; all the angels, "Blessing, and glory"
B	7:13-14	The great multitude: whence they came. The elder's question, John's answer, the elder's answer
B	7:15-17	The great multitude: where they are. Before the throne; no more hunger, thirst or heat; fed by the Lamb
A	8:1-6	Heavenly silence and actions: the seventh seal; the seven trumpets given; the censer, the prayers, the fire cast to the earth

The text

Revelation 7. 9 After this I beheld, and, lo, a great multitude, which no man could number, of all nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues, stood before the throne, and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes, and palms in their hands; **10** And cried with a loud voice, saying, Salvation to our God which sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb. **11** And all the angels stood round about the throne, and about the elders and the four beasts, and fell before the throne on their faces, and worshipped God, **12** Saying, Amen: Blessing, and glory, and wisdom, and thanksgiving, and honour, and power, and might, be unto our God for ever and ever. Amen. **13** And one of the elders answered, saying unto me, What are these which are arrayed in white robes? and whence came they? **14** And I said unto him, Sir, thou knowest. And he said to me, These are they which came out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. **15** Therefore are they before the throne of God, and serve him day and night in his temple: and he that sitteth on the throne shall dwell among them. **16** They shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more; neither shall the sun light on them, nor any heat. **17** For the Lamb which is in the midst of the throne shall feed them, and shall lead them unto living fountains of waters: and God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes.

Revelation 8. 1 And when he had opened the seventh seal, there was silence in heaven about the space of half an hour. **2** And I saw the seven angels which stood before God; and to them were given seven trumpets. **3** And another angel came and stood at the altar, having a golden censer; and there was given unto him much incense, that he should offer it with the prayers of all saints upon the golden altar which was before the throne. **4** And the smoke of the incense, which came with the prayers of the saints, ascended up before God out of the angel’s hand. **5** And the angel took the censer, and filled it with fire of the altar, and cast it into the earth: and there were voices, and thunderings, and lightnings, and an earthquake. **6** And the seven angels which had the seven trumpets prepared themselves to sound.

Verse by verse

Where we are: in heaven. Verses 7:9-17, the great multitude. The book looks ahead. The pause before the seventh seal goes on, but the scene moves to heaven (pair 2). John sees a great multitude before the throne, and the elder tells him they "came out of great tribulation" (7:14). The great tribulation has not yet been described; it comes later in the book. So here John is shown these people as they will be when it is over. The book has stepped forward in time to comfort the reader before the trumpets begin.



Albrecht Dürer, The Apocalypse (woodcut, 1498): the great multitude before the throne and before the Lamb, with palms in their hands (7:9-17).

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

John has just heard the number of the sealed of Israel, counted tribe by tribe (7:4-8). Now he looks again, and sees something no one could count.

"After this I beheld." "After this" (*meta tauta*, "after these things"): the signpost of a new sight (see 4:1). This is the second of the six times it opens a new vision, and with it the scene moves from the earth to heaven (Appendix A §C).

"And, lo, a great multitude, which no man could number." "Lo": behold, look! (*Asterismos*). "Multitude" is *ochlos*, a crowd, a throng. Just before, John *heard* a number, 144,000; now he *sees* a crowd that no one could number. The two are set side by side on purpose. One is counted; the other is countless. God had promised Abraham, "Look now toward heaven, and tell the stars, if thou be able to number them: and he said unto him, So shall thy seed be" (Genesis 15:5). Here is a multitude like the stars.

"Of all nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues." Where are they from? Not from the twelve tribes, like the 144,000, but from "all nations" (*ethnos*, the Gentile peoples), every tribe, every people, every language. This is the fourfold phrase of the whole earth (see 5:9). The 144,000 were Israel; the great multitude is from all the nations. They are two different companies (Appendix C, Question 8).

"Stood before the throne, and before the Lamb." They stand: they are the answer to the question "who shall be able to stand?" (6:17). Those whom God sealed on earth stand there; this multitude stands here, "before the throne, and before the Lamb." In the vision John sees them already in the presence of God.

When does this happen? The verses that follow tell us. The multitude "came out of great tribulation" (7:14), and the promises about them are almost all in the future tense: God "shall dwell among them," they "shall hunger no more," the Lamb "shall feed them" and "shall lead them," and God "shall wipe away all tears" (7:15-17). John is shown them as they will be, when the tribulation is over and they stand before God. This scene in heaven looks ahead, past the trumpets and the vials, to the end, so that the reader knows before the worst begins how it will turn out for those who belong to God (Appendix H).

"Clothed with white robes." "Robes" (*stolai*) are the long robes of honour, the same given to the martyrs under the altar (6:11). White is the colour of purity and victory (see 3:4-5). The verse 14 explains how the robes were made white.

"And palms in their hands." Palm branches were carried at times of great joy and victory. At the feast of tabernacles, when Israel remembered God's care in the wilderness and rejoiced over the harvest, God commanded: "And ye shall take you on the first day the boughs of goodly trees, branches of palm trees … and ye shall rejoice before the LORD your God seven days" (Leviticus 23:40). When Christ rode into Jerusalem, the crowd "took branches of palm trees, and went forth to meet him, and cried, Hosanna: Blessed is the King of Israel that cometh in the name of the Lord" (John 12:13). The multitude holds palms because their trial is over and they are celebrating the King's victory.

Figures of speech. "Lo" is *Asterismos*. "Of all nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues" is *Polysyndeton*: every part of mankind is named separately.

To whom. This great multitude is drawn from all nations, and it came out of the great tribulation of the Day of the Lord (7:14). It is not the church of grace, which is gathered to the Lord before that day (1 Thessalonians 4:17; 5:9). It is the company of those from every nation who will turn to God during the tribulation and be brought through it (Part One, Chapter 3 §C; Appendix C, Question 8).

> **Revelation 7:10** *And cried with a loud voice, saying, Salvation to our God which sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb.*

"And cried with a loud voice." The multitude does not whisper. Their voice is loud, as befits a crowd too large to count.

"Saying, Salvation to our God which sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb." Their whole song is one sentence, and it gives all the credit to God and the Lamb. "Salvation" (*sōtēria*, Strong's G4991) means rescue, deliverance, being brought safe through danger to safety. They have been brought safe out of the great tribulation, and they say whose work it was: "Salvation to our God ... and unto the Lamb." In Greek it is "*The* salvation": the salvation they have received belongs to God. They do not say, "We endured," or "We overcame." They claim nothing for themselves. Jonah, in the belly of the fish, said the same: "Salvation is of the LORD" (Jonah 2:9). The psalmist sang, "Salvation belongeth unto the LORD: thy blessing is upon thy people" (Psalm 3:8).

God and the Lamb are named side by side, as in 5:13: God, who sits on the throne, and the Lamb, who was slain. The salvation was planned and given by God, and won by the Lamb.

Figures of speech. "Salvation to our God" leaves out the verb, the figure *Ellipsis*: the sense is "Salvation belongs to our God." The omission makes the cry short and strong, like a shout.

> **Revelation 7:11** *And all the angels stood round about the throne, and about the elders and the four beasts, and fell before the throne on their faces, and worshipped God,*

"And all the angels stood round about the throne, and about the elders and the four beasts." The scene is like that of chapter 5. At the centre is the throne; around it the four living creatures (the cherubim); around them the twenty-four elders; and around them all, in the outer circle, "all the angels" (see 5:11).

"And fell before the throne on their faces, and worshipped God." At the multitude's cry, all the angels fall on their faces. In chapter 5 the angels praised the Lamb (5:11-12); here they worship God. They fall "on their faces": the deepest bow, full length on the ground. The angels, who have never sinned and never needed saving, worship God for saving men. Christ said, "there is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner that repenteth" (Luke 15:10). Here is a countless multitude brought through the tribulation, and the angels fall down in worship.

The number. The *four* beasts (see 4:6), with the elders and all the angels.

Figures of speech. "Fell ... on their faces, and worshipped" is *Polysyndeton* of acts: each act of reverence is separate and complete.

> **Revelation 7:12** *Saying, Amen: Blessing, and glory, and wisdom, and thanksgiving, and honour, and power, and might, be unto our God for ever and ever. Amen.*

"Saying, Amen." The angels begin with "Amen": "So it is! Yes!" They agree with everything the multitude has just said.

"Blessing, and glory, and wisdom, and thanksgiving, and honour, and power, and might." Seven words of praise, as in 5:12. There the angels gave seven things to the Lamb; here they give seven to God. The lists are nearly the same, but where 5:12 had "riches," this one has "thanksgiving." The angels give thanks for the salvation of men. In Greek each of the seven has the article: "*the* blessing, and *the* glory, and *the* wisdom." Every blessing that can be spoken, every glory, every wisdom, belongs to God.

David's prayer when the people gave for the temple had the same ring: "Now therefore, our God, we thank thee, and praise thy glorious name" (1 Chronicles 29:13).

"Be unto our God for ever and ever. Amen." The angels call Him "our God": He is the God of angels as well as men. The praise is "for ever and ever," without end. And the song ends as it began, with "Amen."

Figures of speech. The seven words joined by "and" are *Polysyndeton*, as in 5:12, each part of praise counted separately. The song is framed by "Amen" at the beginning and the end, *Epanadiplosis* ("encircling"): it closes like a ring.

> **Revelation 7:13** *And one of the elders answered, saying unto me, What are these which are arrayed in white robes? and whence came they?*

"And one of the elders answered, saying unto me." "Answered" here does not mean that John asked anything. Bullinger notes that this is a Hebrew idiom: "answered" is used for "began to speak," "spoke up." Literally, the elder "answered ... saying," that is, he asked. One of the elders, the heavenly elders who lead heaven's worship (see 4:4), speaks to John. An elder comforted John when he wept (5:5); now an elder explains what John sees.

"What are these which are arrayed in white robes?" "What are these" means "Who are these?" The elder asks so that he can tell. Teachers in Scripture often ask a question to draw out the answer, as God asked Elijah, "What doest thou here, Elijah?" (1 Kings 19:9), and the angel asked Zechariah, "Knowest thou not what these be?" (Zechariah 4:5).

"And whence came they?" "Whence" means "from where." Two questions: who are they, and where did they come from?

Notice that the elder speaks of the multitude as "these" and "they." He does not say "we." He is not one of them. This is one of the reasons this study takes the elders as heavenly beings, not as redeemed men (see 4:4).

The number. "*One* of the elders": one of the twenty-four (4:4) speaks for heaven to John, as one did in 5:5.

Figures of speech. "Answered, saying" is an *Idiom*, a Hebrew way of speaking, for "spoke up and asked" (Bullinger). The two questions are *Erotesis*: asked to lead to an answer.

> **Revelation 7:14** *And I said unto him, Sir, thou knowest. And he said to me, These are they which came out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.*

"And I said unto him, Sir, thou knowest." "Sir" is *kurie*, "my lord," a respectful address. John does not guess. He says, "You know." It is the humble answer of a man who has been shown more than he can understand, and who waits to be told. Ezekiel answered the same way when God asked him, "Son of man, can these bones live?": "O Lord GOD, thou knowest" (Ezekiel 37:3).

"And he said to me, These are they which came out of great tribulation." Here is the answer to "whence came they?" They came out of "great tribulation." In Greek it is "*the* great tribulation": the definite article points to a particular time, the time Christ foretold:

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

Daniel was told of the same time: "and there shall be a time of trouble, such as never was since there was a nation even to that same time: and at that time thy people shall be delivered, every one that shall be found written in the book" (Daniel 12:1). Jeremiah called it "the time of Jacob's trouble, but he shall be saved out of it" (Jeremiah 30:7).

"Came out of": the Greek is a present participle, "those who are coming out of." They came out of it, one by one, through the whole time of the tribulation, whether by death or by living through to its end. Now John sees them gathered, all of them, before the throne.

"And have washed their robes." "Washed" is *plunō*, the word for washing clothes. Their robes had been stained, and they washed them.

"And made them white in the blood of the Lamb." Here is a wonder. Blood stains; it does not make white. But the blood of the Lamb does what nothing else can: it cleanses. Isaiah wrote, "though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow" (Isaiah 1:18). David prayed, "wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow" (Psalm 51:7). Their robes are white not because they kept them clean by their own efforts, but because they were washed in the blood of the Lamb. The Lamb "wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood" (5:9). By His death, His resurrection, and His ascension He has made them clean. The overcomers of chapter 12 "overcame him by the blood of the Lamb" (12:11).

Figures of speech. "Made them white in the blood" joins opposites, red blood and white robes, the figure *Oxymoron* in effect, so that the reader sees the wonder of the cleansing. "Washed their robes" is a *Metaphor* drawn from washing clothes: the robes stand for their lives, and the washing for the cleansing that comes through the Lamb's sacrifice.

To whom. "Washed … in the blood of the Lamb" is true of everyone God has ever cleansed, in every administration. But these came "out of the great tribulation" of the Day of the Lord, the time Christ foretold to His disciples on the mount of Olives (Matthew 24:21). The church of grace is not appointed to that wrath (1 Thessalonians 5:9; Part One, Chapter 3 §C).

> **Revelation 7:15** *Therefore are they before the throne of God, and serve him day and night in his temple: and he that sitteth on the throne shall dwell among them.*

The elder now tells where they are, and what they do.

"Therefore are they before the throne of God." "Therefore": because they were washed in the blood of the Lamb. That is why they are allowed to stand before the throne of God. No one can come into God's presence unclean. "Who shall ascend into the hill of the LORD? or who shall stand in his holy place? He that hath clean hands, and a pure heart" (Psalm 24:3-4). Their hands and hearts were made clean by the Lamb's blood.

"And serve him day and night in his temple." "Serve" is *latreuō* (Strong's G3000), the word for the service of priests in worship. They serve God as priests serve in the temple, "day and night," without ceasing. In the tabernacle and temple only the priests of Aaron's line could serve in the holy place. Here a multitude from all nations serves in God's temple. Isaiah had foretold that God would take from among the nations "for priests and for Levites, saith the LORD" (Isaiah 66:21).

"And he that sitteth on the throne shall dwell among them." "Shall dwell" is *skēnōsei*, from *skēnē*, "a tent, a tabernacle." Literally, "shall spread His tabernacle over them," "shall tent over them." In the wilderness God's presence covered Israel's camp as a cloud by day and fire by night, and filled the tabernacle with His glory (Exodus 40:34-38). God promised Israel, "I will set my tabernacle among you: and my soul shall not abhor you. And I will walk among you, and will be your God, and ye shall be my people" (Leviticus 26:11-12). John used the same word of Christ's coming in the flesh: "the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us" (John 1:14), literally "tabernacled among us." At the end of the book the same word is used of the new creation: "Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and he will dwell with them" (21:3). The multitude will live under God's covering presence, as Israel did in the wilderness, but for ever.

Figures of speech. "Shall dwell among them" (Greek, "shall spread His tabernacle over them") is a *Metaphor* drawn from the tabernacle in the wilderness, God's covering presence.

> **Revelation 7:16** *They shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more; neither shall the sun light on them, nor any heat.*

"They shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more." Whatever they suffered in the great tribulation, it is over. Many of them had known hunger and thirst: famine was one of the first judgments (6:5-6), and those who would not take the mark of the beast could not "buy or sell" (13:17). They had gone hungry for their faithfulness. Never again.

"Neither shall the sun light on them, nor any heat." "Light on them" means "strike them, beat down on them." In the wilderness of the East the sun beats down with killing heat. Under the fourth vial "power was given unto him to scorch men with fire. And men were scorched with great heat" (16:8-9). These will never suffer such heat again.

These words come almost straight from Isaiah, from a prophecy of Israel's return from exile, when God's Servant would gather the scattered:

> **Isaiah 49:10** — *They shall not hunger nor thirst; neither shall the heat nor sun smite them: for he that hath mercy on them shall lead them, even by the springs of water shall he guide them.*

What God promised to the returning exiles of Israel is given here to the multitude from all nations. Christ said, "I am the bread of life: he that cometh to me shall never hunger; and he that believeth on me shall never thirst" (John 6:35).

Figures of speech. The repeated "no more ... neither ... any more ... neither ... nor" is the figure *Paradiastole* ("neithers and nors"): each suffering is named and ended separately.

> **Revelation 7:17** *For the Lamb which is in the midst of the throne shall feed them, and shall lead them unto living fountains of waters: and God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes.*

"For the Lamb which is in the midst of the throne shall feed them." "Feed" is *poimainō*, "to shepherd" (see 2:27). The Lamb becomes their Shepherd. Here is a wonderful turn: the Lamb is the Shepherd. The one who was led as a lamb to the slaughter now leads His flock. He had said on earth, "I am the good shepherd: the good shepherd giveth his life for the sheep" (John 10:11). He gave His life as the Lamb; now He shepherds as the Lamb. And He does it from "the midst of the throne," with all the power of God's throne behind His care.

"And shall lead them unto living fountains of waters." "Living" waters are running waters, springs that flow fresh, not still water in a cistern. In the dry lands of the East, a spring of living water was life itself. God said through Jeremiah, "they have forsaken me the fountain of living waters, and hewed them out cisterns, broken cisterns, that can hold no water" (Jeremiah 2:13). The best-loved of all the psalms says it simply:

> **Psalm 23:1-2** — *The LORD is my shepherd; I shall not want. He maketh me to lie down in green pastures: he leadeth me beside the still waters.*

Christ told the woman at the well, "whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst; but the water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life" (John 4:14). At the end of the book John is shown "a pure river of water of life, clear as crystal, proceeding out of the throne of God and of the Lamb" (22:1).

"And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes." Here is the tenderest promise in the book. God Himself, the one who sits on the throne, will wipe away every tear. Not the angels, not the elders: God. As a mother wipes the tears from her child's face, God will wipe the tears from the eyes of those who came out of the great tribulation. All their weeping, for their losses, their hunger, their fear, their dead, will be wiped away. Isaiah foretold it:

> **Isaiah 25:8** — *He will swallow up death in victory; and the Lord GOD will wipe away tears from off all faces; and the rebuke of his people shall he take away from off all the earth: for the LORD hath spoken it.*

The same promise is given again for all God's people in the new creation: "And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying" (21:4).

Notice how verses 16 and 17 answer each other. They will hunger no more: the Lamb will feed them. They will thirst no more: He will lead them to living waters. The sun will not strike them: God will wipe away their tears. Every suffering is matched by a comfort.

John had wept in heaven when no one was found worthy to open the book (5:4). Now he hears that God will wipe away all tears. Before the trumpets sound, before the worst of the Day of the Lord comes, John and every reader are shown how it will end for God's people: no hunger, no thirst, no scorching heat, no tears.

Figures of speech. "The Lamb ... shall feed them" (shepherd them) joins the Lamb and the Shepherd in one, a *Metaphor* that makes the reader see that the one who gave Himself for the flock is the one who now leads it. "Wipe away all tears" is *Anthropopatheia*: God is spoken of as wiping tears with a hand, so that men may feel the tenderness of His comfort.

In heaven. Verses 8:1-6, the seventh seal. The pause is over, and the seventh seal is opened. It brings silence in heaven, the seven trumpets given to seven angels, and the prayers of the saints offered on the golden altar. At 8:5 fire is cast to the earth: the seventh seal opens out into the seven trumpets that follow.

> **Revelation 8:1** *And when he had opened the seventh seal, there was silence in heaven about the space of half an hour.*

The scene in heaven continues. The Lamb opens the last seal.

"And when he had opened the seventh seal." This is the seal everything has been waiting for. Six seals have been opened, and the sixth ended with the question, "who shall be able to stand?" (6:17). Chapter 7 gave the answer. Now the seventh and last seal is broken, and the book is fully open.

"There was silence in heaven about the space of half an hour." After all the sound of heaven, the thunder, the loud voices, the songs of the elders, the angels and the multitude, there is sudden, total silence. "Silence" is *sigē*, stillness, no sound at all. For about half an hour, nothing is heard in heaven. No one sings, no one speaks.

Why the silence? Scripture connects silence with the moment before God acts in judgment. Zephaniah wrote:

> **Zephaniah 1:7** — *Hold thy peace at the presence of the Lord GOD: for the day of the LORD is at hand: for the LORD hath prepared a sacrifice, he hath bid his guests.*

Habakkuk wrote, "But the LORD is in his holy temple: let all the earth keep silence before him" (Habakkuk 2:20), and Zechariah, "Be silent, O all flesh, before the LORD: for he is raised up out of his holy habitation" (Zechariah 2:13). The silence is the hush of awe before the storm breaks, the stillness of all heaven waiting to see what God will do.

Half an hour is a short time, but in such a silence it is long. The silence also gives room for what happens next: the prayers of the saints are offered before God (8:3-4). In the temple the people prayed in silence outside while the priest burned incense within (Luke 1:10).

What does the seventh seal contain? It contains the seven trumpets (8:2). The seventh of each series opens into the next: the seventh seal brings the seven trumpets, and the seventh trumpet brings the seven vials (Part One, Chapter 8 §D; Appendix G).

The numbers. The *seventh* seal, the last: the seal that completes the seven (see 1:4), and it opens into the seven trumpets (8:2). *Half an hour* of silence. An hour is a short time; half an hour is shorter still. The number measures the silence: long enough to be felt, short enough to be counted. All heaven is still before the trumpets.

Figures of speech. The silence is described simply, without comparison; its very plainness, after the loud praise of chapter 7, is its force.



Albrecht Dürer, The Apocalypse (woodcut, 1498): the seven angels given seven trumpets; the censer and the altar (8:2-13).

> **Revelation 8:2** *And I saw the seven angels which stood before God; and to them were given seven trumpets.*

"And I saw the seven angels which stood before God." "*The* seven angels": not just any seven, but particular angels, known as those "which stood before God." To "stand before" a king is to be one of his chief servants, always in his presence and ready to be sent. When the angel Gabriel appeared to Zacharias, he said, "I am Gabriel, that stand in the presence of God; and am sent to speak unto thee" (Luke 1:19). These seven have the same high place.

"And to them were given seven trumpets." Each is given a trumpet. Trumpets in Israel had several uses. God commanded Moses to make two silver trumpets, "that thou mayest use them for the calling of the assembly, and for the journeying of the camps" (Numbers 10:2). They were blown to sound the alarm in war: "if ye go to war in your land against the enemy that oppresseth you, then ye shall blow an alarm with the trumpets; and ye shall be remembered before the LORD your God" (Numbers 10:9). And they were blown at the feasts.

The most famous trumpets in Israel's history were blown at Jericho. God told Joshua that seven priests with seven trumpets of rams' horns should go before the ark around the city for seven days, and on the seventh day seven times, and then:

> **Joshua 6:20** — *So the people shouted when the priests blew with the trumpets: and it came to pass, when the people heard the sound of the trumpet, and the people shouted with a great shout, that the wall fell down flat, so that the people went up into the city, every man straight before him, and they took the city.*

The trumpets of Revelation are like those of Jericho: seven trumpets, sounding one after another, until the walls of the world's resistance fall and "the kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of our Lord, and of his Christ" (11:15).

The number. *Seven* angels with *seven* trumpets. Seven is spiritual perfection (see 1:4). At Jericho seven priests blew seven trumpets for seven days, and on the seventh day went round the city seven times (Joshua 6:4): a complete round of warning before the walls fell. The seven trumpets are God's complete warning to the earth.

Figures of speech. "Stood before God" is an *Idiom* for being among His chief attendants, ready to serve.

> **Revelation 8:3** *And another angel came and stood at the altar, having a golden censer; and there was given unto him much incense, that he should offer it with the prayers of all saints upon the golden altar which was before the throne.*

Before the trumpets sound, there is one more act in heaven.

"And another angel came and stood at the altar." Who is this "another angel"? The text calls him an angel, and gives no sign that he is anything else. Some readers have taken him to be Christ, the great High Priest. But in this book Christ is the Lamb, and He is never called an angel; and Scripture says of Christ that He was "made so much better than the angels" (Hebrews 1:4). This is an angel serving at the heavenly altar, doing the work that the priest did in the tabernacle.

"The altar" here is the altar of incense, as the end of the verse shows: "the golden altar which was before the throne." In the tabernacle it stood in the holy place, just before the veil that hid the ark (Exodus 30:1-6), and on it the priest burned incense every morning and every evening (Exodus 30:7-8).

"Having a golden censer." "Censer" (*libanōtos*) is a vessel for carrying burning coals and incense, a firepan. On the day of atonement the high priest took "a censer full of burning coals of fire from off the

altar before the LORD, and his hands full of sweet incense beaten small, and bring it within the vail" (Leviticus 16:12).

"And there was given unto him much incense." "Much incense": abundant, enough for a great offering.

"That he should offer it with the prayers of all saints upon the golden altar which was before the throne." The incense is offered "with the prayers of all saints." The prayers of the saints were seen in 5:8, in the golden bowls of the elders: "odours, which are the prayers of saints." Now they are offered on the altar with much incense. "All saints": not one prayer is left out. Among them is the cry of the martyrs under the altar, "How long, O Lord, holy and true, dost thou not judge and avenge our blood?" (6:10). Among them too is the prayer Christ taught His disciples, "Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven" (Matthew 6:10).

"Saints" are God's holy people of the Day of the Lord (see 5:8).

Figures of speech. The altar, the censer and the incense are real in John's vision, the heavenly things of which the tabernacle was a copy (Hebrews 8:5). Bullinger writes, "If they are Symbols, they are symbols of solemn realities. If they are Figures, they are figures, not of speech, but of facts."

> **Revelation 8:4** *And the smoke of the incense, which came with the prayers of the saints, ascended up before God out of the angel's hand.*

"And the smoke of the incense, which came with the prayers of the saints, ascended up before God out of the angel's hand." The smoke rises, carrying the prayers with it, "before God." They reach Him. David prayed, "Let my prayer be set forth before thee as incense; and the lifting up of my hands as the evening sacrifice" (Psalm 141:2). When Zacharias the priest was burning incense in the temple, "the whole multitude of the people were praying without at the time of incense" (Luke 1:10), and an angel came to tell him, "thy prayer is heard" (Luke 1:13).

The prayers of the saints have been heard. They may have seemed to go unanswered for a long time; the martyrs cried "How long?" But not one prayer was lost. They were kept in golden bowls (5:8), and now they rise before God. What happens next is His answer.

Figures of speech. The rising smoke is a picture of prayer reaching God, a *Metaphor* that Scripture itself uses (Psalm 141:2).

> **Revelation 8:5** *And the angel took the censer, and filled it with fire of the altar, and cast it into the earth: and there were voices, and thunderings, and lightnings, and an earthquake.*

"And the angel took the censer, and filled it with fire of the altar." The same censer that carried the prayers up is now filled with fire from the altar, burning coals.

"And cast it into the earth." The angel throws the fire down to the earth. Here is God's answer to the prayers of His saints: fire on the earth. The prophet Ezekiel saw the same thing when judgment came on Jerusalem. God told the man clothed in linen:

> **Ezekiel 10:2** — *And he spake unto the man clothed with linen, and said, Go in between the wheels, even under the cherub, and fill thine hand with coals of fire from between the cherubims, and scatter them over the city. And he went in in my sight.*

The prayers went up; the fire came down. The saints prayed for God's kingdom to come and for evil to be judged, and God answers by judging the earth. David described such an answer in a psalm:

> **Psalm 18:6-7** — *In my distress I called upon the LORD, and cried unto my God: he heard my voice out of his temple, and my cry came before him, even into his ears. Then the earth shook and trembled; the foundations also of the hills moved and were shaken, because he was wroth.*

"And there were voices, and thunderings, and lightnings, and an earthquake." These are the signs that came from the throne in 4:5, "lightnings and thunderings and voices." Now they come down to the earth, and an earthquake is added. They will come again, growing stronger each time, at the close of the trumpets (11:19, where "great hail" is added) and of the vials (16:18, where there is "a great earthquake, such as was not since men were upon the earth"). What John saw at the throne as a warning comes to the earth as judgment.

Figures of speech. "Voices, and thunderings, and lightnings, and an earthquake" is *Polysyndeton*: each sign stands by itself.

> **Revelation 8:6** *And the seven angels which had the seven trumpets prepared themselves to sound.*

"And the seven angels which had the seven trumpets prepared themselves to sound." "Prepared themselves": they lift their trumpets to their lips, ready to blow. The silence of heaven is about to be broken by the first trumpet blast.

The scene in heaven is complete. John has been shown, before the trumpets sound, the great multitude safe before the throne, God's tender care for them, and the prayers of the saints received and answered. Now the trumpets will sound one after another, and Section F will show what they bring on the earth.

The number. The *seven* angels with the *seven* trumpets (see 8:2). Like the seals, the trumpets divide four and three: the first four strike the natural world (8:7-12); the last three are the three woes (8:13).

In short. After the sealing of the 144,000 of Israel, John sees a great multitude, too many to count, from every nation, standing before the throne and the Lamb in white robes, with palms in their hands, crying "Salvation to our God ... and unto the Lamb," while all the angels fall on their faces and give God sevenfold praise. An elder asks who they are, and tells John: they are those who came out of the great tribulation, who washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. They will serve God day and night in His temple, and He will spread His tabernacle over them; they will never again hunger or thirst or be scorched, for the Lamb will shepherd them and lead them to living waters, and God will wipe away all tears from their eyes. Then the Lamb opens the seventh seal, and there is silence in heaven for half an hour. Seven trumpets are given to the seven angels who stand before God. Another angel offers much incense with the prayers of all the saints on the golden altar, and the smoke rises before God; then he fills the censer with fire from the altar and casts it to the earth, with voices,

thunders, lightnings and an earthquake. The prayers are answered, and the seven angels prepare to sound.

Section F — 8:7–11:14. On Earth: Six Trumpets, the Little Book, and the Two Witnesses

Where it stands

The second scene on earth (2E), explained by Section E. The seventh seal has been opened, the prayers of the saints have gone up before God, and fire has been cast to the earth in answer (8:3-5). Now six trumpets sound. The first four strike the earth, the sea, the rivers and the heavens, a third part of each; the fifth and sixth are the first two "woes." Between the sixth and seventh trumpets the action pauses for the little book and the two witnesses (10:1–11:13). The book closes this section itself: "The second woe is past" (11:14).

Its structure

	Verses	Content
B	8:7	First trumpet: the earth smitten; a third of the trees burnt
C	8:8-9	Second trumpet: the sea smitten; a third of it blood
C	8:10-11	Third trumpet: the rivers and fountains smitten; Wormwood
B	8:12	Fourth trumpet: the heavens smitten; a third darkened
D	8:13	Three woes yet to come
E	9:1-12	Fifth trumpet (first woe): the bottomless pit opened; the locusts. "One woe is past"
E	9:13–11:14	Sixth trumpet (second woe): the four angels loosed; the horsemen; then the mighty angel and the little book (10); the temple measured and the two witnesses (11:1-13). "The second woe is past"

The first four trumpets answer one another: earth and heavens on the outside, sea and rivers within. Their plagues recall the plagues on Egypt (Appendix G).

The text

Revelation 8. 7 The first angel sounded, and there followed hail and fire mingled with blood, and they were cast upon the earth: and the third part of trees was burnt up, and all green grass was burnt up. **8** And the second angel sounded, and as it were a great mountain burning with fire was cast into the sea: and the third part of the sea became blood; **9** And the third part of the creatures which were in the sea, and had life, died; and the third part of the ships were destroyed. **10** And the third angel sounded, and there fell a great star from heaven, burning as it were a lamp, and it fell upon the third part of the rivers, and upon the fountains of waters; **11** And the name of the star is called Wormwood: and the third part

of the waters became wormwood; and many men died of the waters, because they were made bitter. **12** And the fourth angel sounded, and the third part of the sun was smitten, and the third part of the moon, and the third part of the stars; so as the third part of them was darkened, and the day shone not for a third part of it, and the night likewise. **13** And I beheld, and heard an angel flying through the midst of heaven, saying with a loud voice, Woe, woe, woe, to the inhabiters of the earth by reason of the other voices of the trumpet of the three angels, which are yet to sound!

Revelation 9. 1 And the fifth angel sounded, and I saw a star fall from heaven unto the earth: and to him was given the key of the bottomless pit. **2** And he opened the bottomless pit; and there arose a smoke out of the pit, as the smoke of a great furnace; and the sun and the air were darkened by reason of the smoke of the pit. **3** And there came out of the smoke locusts upon the earth: and unto them was given power, as the scorpions of the earth have power. **4** And it was commanded them that they should not hurt the grass of the earth, neither any green thing, neither any tree; but only those men which have not the seal of God in their foreheads. **5** And to them it was given that they should not kill them, but that they should be tormented five months: and their torment was as the torment of a scorpion, when he striketh a man. **6** And in those days shall men seek death, and shall not find it; and shall desire to die, and death shall flee from them. **7** And the shapes of the locusts were like unto horses prepared unto battle; and on their heads were as it were crowns like gold, and their faces were as the faces of men. **8** And they had hair as the hair of women, and their teeth were as the teeth of lions. **9** And they had breastplates, as it were breastplates of iron; and the sound of their wings was as the sound of chariots of many horses running to battle. **10** And they had tails like unto scorpions, and there were stings in their tails: and their power was to hurt men five months. **11** And they had a king over them, which is the angel of the bottomless pit, whose name in the Hebrew tongue is Abaddon, but in the Greek tongue hath his name Apollyon. **12** One woe is past; and, behold, there come two woes more hereafter. **13** And the sixth angel sounded, and I heard a voice from the four horns of the golden altar which is before God, **14** Saying to the sixth angel which had the trumpet, Loose the four angels which are bound in the great river Euphrates. **15** And the four angels were loosed, which were prepared for an hour, and a day, and a month, and a year, for to slay the third part of men. **16** And the number of the army of the horsemen were two hundred thousand thousand: and I heard the number of them. **17** And thus I saw the horses in the vision, and them that sat on them, having breastplates of fire, and of jacinth, and brimstone: and the heads of the horses were as the heads of lions; and out of their mouths issued fire and smoke and brimstone. **18** By these three was the third part of men killed, by the fire, and by the smoke, and by the brimstone, which issued out of their mouths. **19** For their power is in their mouth, and in their tails: for their tails were like unto serpents, and had heads, and with them they do hurt. **20** And the rest of the men which were not killed by these plagues yet repented not of the works of their hands, that they should not worship devils, and idols of gold, and silver, and brass, and stone, and of wood: which neither can see, nor hear, nor walk: **21** Neither repented they of their murders, nor of their sorceries, nor of their fornication, nor of their thefts.

Revelation 10. 1 And I saw another mighty angel come down from heaven, clothed with a cloud: and a rainbow was upon his head, and his face was as it were the sun, and his feet as pillars of fire: **2** And he had in his hand a little book open: and he set his right foot upon the sea, and his left foot on the earth, **3**

And cried with a loud voice, as when a lion roareth: and when he had cried, seven thunders uttered their voices. **4** And when the seven thunders had uttered their voices, I was about to write: and I heard a voice from heaven saying unto me, Seal up those things which the seven thunders uttered, and write them not. **5** And the angel which I saw stand upon the sea and upon the earth lifted up his hand to heaven, **6** And sware by him that liveth for ever and ever, who created heaven, and the things that therein are, and the earth, and the things that therein are, and the sea, and the things which are therein, that there should be time no longer: **7** But in the days of the voice of the seventh angel, when he shall begin to sound, the mystery of God should be finished, as he hath declared to his servants the prophets. **8** And the voice which I heard from heaven spake unto me again, and said, Go and take the little book which is open in the hand of the angel which standeth upon the sea and upon the earth. **9** And I went unto the angel, and said unto him, Give me the little book. And he said unto me, Take it, and eat it up; and it shall make thy belly bitter, but it shall be in thy mouth sweet as honey. **10** And I took the little book out of the angel's hand, and ate it up; and it was in my mouth sweet as honey: and as soon as I had eaten it, my belly was bitter. **11** And he said unto me, Thou must prophesy again before many peoples, and nations, and tongues, and kings.

Revelation 11. 1 And there was given me a reed like unto a rod: and the angel stood, saying, Rise, and measure the temple of God, and the altar, and them that worship therein. **2** But the court which is without the temple leave out, and measure it not; for it is given unto the Gentiles: and the holy city shall they tread under foot forty and two months. **3** And I will give power unto my two witnesses, and they shall prophesy a thousand two hundred and threescore days, clothed in sackcloth. **4** These are the two olive trees, and the two candlesticks standing before the God of the earth. **5** And if any man will hurt them, fire proceedeth out of their mouth, and devoureth their enemies: and if any man will hurt them, he must in this manner be killed. **6** These have power to shut heaven, that it rain not in the days of their prophecy: and have power over waters to turn them to blood, and to smite the earth with all plagues, as often as they will. **7** And when they shall have finished their testimony, the beast that ascendeth out of the bottomless pit shall make war against them, and shall overcome them, and kill them. **8** And their dead bodies shall lie in the street of the great city, which spiritually is called Sodom and Egypt, where also our Lord was crucified. **9** And they of the people and kindreds and tongues and nations shall see their dead bodies three days and an half, and shall not suffer their dead bodies to be put in graves. **10** And they that dwell upon the earth shall rejoice over them, and make merry, and shall send gifts one to another; because these two prophets tormented them that dwelt on the earth. **11** And after three days and an half the Spirit of life from God entered into them, and they stood upon their feet; and great fear fell upon them which saw them. **12** And they heard a great voice from heaven saying unto them, Come up hither. And they ascended up to heaven in a cloud; and their enemies beheld them. **13** And the same hour was there a great earthquake, and the tenth part of the city fell, and in the earthquake were slain of men seven thousand: and the remnant were affrighted, and gave glory to the God of heaven. **14** The second woe is past; and, behold, the third woe cometh quickly.

The trumpets and the plagues of Egypt. When God brought Israel out of Egypt, He struck the land with ten plagues, each one a judgment on Egypt and its gods: "against all the gods of Egypt I will execute judgment: I am the LORD" (Exodus 12:12). The trumpets bring the same kinds of plague again, on a far

greater scale: hail and fire, water turned to blood, darkness, locusts. The reader who knows Exodus 7–12 will recognise them at once. As God once judged Egypt to bring His people out, so in the Day of the Lord He judges the world to bring His people home (Appendix G).

"The third part." The phrase "the third part" is used again and again in the trumpets: a third of the trees, a third of the sea, a third of the waters, a third of the lights of heaven, a third of men. The seals reached a fourth (6:8); the trumpets reach a third; the vials will strike the whole (chapter 16). The judgments grow, but at each stage they are measured. God is still holding back, and calling men to repent (9:20-21).

Verse by verse

Where we are: on earth. Verses 8:7-13, the first four trumpets. This is the second scene on earth (pair 2), explained by the prayers and the fire of 8:3-5. The first four trumpets strike the four parts of the natural world in turn: the land (8:7), the sea (8:8-9), the rivers and fountains (8:10-11), and the lights of heaven (8:12). An eagle then cries three woes for the three trumpets still to come (8:13).

> **Revelation 8:7** *The first angel sounded, and there followed hail and fire mingled with blood, and they were cast upon the earth: and the third part of trees was burnt up, and all green grass was burnt up.*

"The first angel sounded." The first of the seven angels puts the trumpet to his lips and blows. The silence of heaven (8:1) is broken.

"And there followed hail and fire mingled with blood." Hail and fire fall together, and the fire is "mingled with blood." This is the seventh plague on Egypt brought back:

> **Exodus 9:23-24** — *And Moses stretched forth his rod toward heaven: and the LORD sent thunder and hail, and the fire ran along upon the ground; and the LORD rained hail upon the land of Egypt. So there was hail, and fire mingled with the hail, very grievous, such as there was none like it in all the land of Egypt since it became a nation.*

Here there is blood as well. Joel had foretold "wonders in the heavens and in the earth, blood, and fire, and pillars of smoke" before the Day of the Lord (Joel 2:30). The prophets spoke of God's judgment in these terms: "And I will plead against him with pestilence and with blood; and I will rain upon him ... an overflowing rain, and great hailstones, fire, and brimstone" (Ezekiel 38:22).

"And they were cast upon the earth." The hail, fire and blood are cast down on the earth, as the angel cast the fire from the altar (8:5). They come from heaven; men do not cause them.

"And the third part of trees was burnt up, and all green grass was burnt up." (The Majority Greek text and the critical texts add, "and the third part of the earth was burnt up.") A third of the trees is burned, and "all green grass." The four angels had been told not to hurt "the earth ... nor the trees" until God's servants were sealed (7:3). Now the servants are sealed, and the first trumpet strikes exactly what had been held back. Fire sweeps the land: forests, orchards, pasture. With the grass gone, the cattle starve; with the trees burned, the fruit is lost.

The numbers. The *first* trumpet. *The third part* of trees burnt up. A third is a measured part, not the whole: God's judgment here is real but held back. The prophets used the same measure: "two parts therein shall be cut off and die; but the third shall be left therein" (Zechariah 13:8), and Ezekiel was told to burn, smite and scatter Jerusalem's hair in three parts (Ezekiel 5:2, 12). The third part, named twelve times in the four trumpets and the sixth (8:7-12; 9:15, 18), marks these as warning judgments, partial and limited. In the vials the measure is gone, and the judgment is on the whole (chapter 16).

Figures of speech. "Hail and fire mingled with blood" is to be taken as John saw it: the same things fell on Egypt. The repeated "burnt up" (*katekaē*), three times in the Majority text, is the figure *Epistrophe* (the same word at the end of each clause), which hammers home the destruction.

> **Revelation 8:8** *And the second angel sounded, and as it were a great mountain burning with fire was cast into the sea: and the third part of the sea became blood;*

"And the second angel sounded." The second trumpet.

"And as it were a great mountain burning with fire was cast into the sea." John does not say it was a mountain. He says "as it were," like a great mountain, a huge burning mass, falling from the sky into the sea. He describes it by the nearest thing he knew. What it was in itself, the text does not say; what it does, it says plainly. The picture recalls Jeremiah's words against Babylon, which God called "O destroying mountain, saith the LORD, which destroyest all the earth ... and will make thee a burnt mountain" (Jeremiah 51:25). But here the burning mass is cast into the sea by God's hand.

"And the third part of the sea became blood." A third of the sea turns to blood. This is the first plague on Egypt:

> **Exodus 7:20-21** — *And Moses and Aaron did so, as the LORD commanded; and he lifted up the rod, and smote 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. And the fish that was in the river died; and the river stank, and the Egyptians could not drink of the water of the river; and there was blood throughout all the land of Egypt.*

In Egypt it was the Nile; here it is the sea.

The numbers. The *second* trumpet; *the third part* of the sea becomes blood (see 8:7).

Figures of speech. "As it were a great mountain" is a *Simile*: John does not name the thing, but compares it to what it looked like.

> **Revelation 8:9** *And the third part of the creatures which were in the sea, and had life, died; and the third part of the ships were destroyed.*

"And the third part of the creatures which were in the sea, and had life, died." As the fish died in the Nile (Exodus 7:21), a third of all the living things in the sea die. "Creatures ... which had life" is literally "which had souls" (*psuchas*): living beings.

"And the third part of the ships were destroyed." The sea was the great highway of trade in John's day, and is still. Ships carried grain, wine, cloth, metals and every kind of goods from one end of the world to the other. A third of them are destroyed. Trade is struck. When Babylon falls, "every shipmaster, and all the company in ships, and sailors, and as many as trade by sea" stand afar off and weep (18:17). The second trumpet is the first blow at the wealth of the world.

The numbers. *The third part* of the sea creatures die, and *the third part* of the ships are destroyed (see 8:7).

Figures of speech. "Creatures ... which had life" uses "life" (*psuchē*, soul) for living creatures, a *Synecdoche*: the life put for the living being.

> **Revelation 8:10** *And the third angel sounded, and there fell a great star from heaven, burning as it were a lamp, and it fell upon the third part of the rivers, and upon the fountains of waters;*

"And the third angel sounded." The third trumpet.

"And there fell a great star from heaven, burning as it were a lamp." A great star falls, blazing like a torch. "Lamp" here is *lampas*, a torch, a flaming brand (the word used of the seven lamps of fire before the throne, 4:5). It falls from heaven, burning as it comes.

"And it fell upon the third part of the rivers, and upon the fountains of waters." The second trumpet struck the salt sea. The third strikes the fresh water: the rivers and the springs, the water men drink. Without fresh water men cannot live for more than a few days.

The numbers. The *third* trumpet; the star falls on *the third part* of the rivers (see 8:7).

Figures of speech. "Burning as it were a lamp" is a *Simile*.

> **Revelation 8:11** *And the name of the star is called Wormwood: and the third part of the waters became wormwood; and many men died of the waters, because they were made bitter.*

"And the name of the star is called Wormwood." The star has a name: Wormwood. "Wormwood" (*apsinthos*, Strong's G894) is a plant with a very bitter taste; the word is the source of "absinthe." In Scripture wormwood is the taste of judgment and bitterness. Moses warned Israel against any among them who turned to other gods, "a root that beareth gall and wormwood" (Deuteronomy 29:18). Because Israel forsook God's law, He said through Jeremiah:

> **Jeremiah 9:15** — *Therefore thus saith the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel; Behold, I will feed them, even this people, with wormwood, and give them water of gall to drink.*

"And the third part of the waters became wormwood." A third of the fresh water becomes bitter as wormwood.

"And many men died of the waters, because they were made bitter." The waters are not only bitter; they are deadly. Many die. At Marah, just after the exodus, Israel came to water they could not drink, "for they were bitter," and God showed Moses a tree which, cast into the waters, "the waters were made sweet" (Exodus 15:23-25). In Egypt God turned the water of the Nile to blood; at Marah He turned

bitter water sweet for His people. Here, in judgment, He turns sweet water bitter for those who have refused Him.

The number. *The third part* of the waters become wormwood (see 8:7).

Figures of speech. "Wormwood" is the star's name, and it describes what the star does: the figure *Metonymy*, the name of the effect given to its cause.

> **Revelation 8:12** *And the fourth angel sounded, and the third part of the sun was smitten, and the third part of the moon, and the third part of the stars; so as the third part of them was darkened, and the day shone not for a third part of it, and the night likewise.*

"And the fourth angel sounded." The fourth trumpet.

"And the third part of the sun was smitten, and the third part of the moon, and the third part of the stars." "Smitten" (*eplēgē*, from *plēssō*, the root of the word "plague") means struck. The sun, moon and stars are struck, a third part of each. God set them in the heavens at the creation: "And God set them in the firmament of the heaven to give light upon the earth, And to rule over the day and over the night" (Genesis 1:17-18). Now their light is cut by a third.

"So as the third part of them was darkened, and the day shone not for a third part of it, and the night likewise." A third of the day has no sunlight, and a third of the night has no moon or stars. This recalls the ninth plague on Egypt:

> **Exodus 10:21-23** — *And the LORD said unto Moses, Stretch out thine hand toward heaven, that there may be darkness over the land of Egypt, even darkness which may be felt. And Moses stretched forth his hand toward heaven; and there was a thick darkness in all the land of Egypt three days: They saw not one another, neither rose any from his place for three days: but all the children of Israel had light in their dwellings.*

Amos foretold the darkness of the Day of the Lord: "Shall not the day of the LORD be darkness, and not light? even very dark, and no brightness in it?" (Amos 5:20).

The first four trumpets have struck the four parts of the created world: the earth (8:7), the sea (8:8-9), the fresh waters (8:10-11), and the heavens (8:12). Everything God made for man's life and comfort, the land that feeds him, the sea that carries his goods, the water he drinks, the light he works by, has been struck, a third part of each.

The numbers. The *fourth* trumpet, the last of the four that strike the natural world (see 8:6). *The third part* five times: of the sun, of the moon, of the stars, of the day, and of the night (see 8:7). The heavens are struck as the earth, the sea and the rivers were: a third, not the whole.

Figures of speech. "The third part ... and the third part ... and the third part" is *Polysyndeton* and repetition together: each light of heaven is struck separately, and the reader feels the darkness growing.

> **Revelation 8:13** *And I beheld, and heard an angel flying through the midst of heaven, saying with a loud voice, Woe, woe, woe, to the inhabiters of the earth by reason of the other voices of the trumpet of the three angels, which are yet to sound!*

Before the last three trumpets sound, a warning is cried through the heavens.

"And I beheld, and heard an angel flying through the midst of heaven." "The midst of heaven" (*mesouranēma*) is the high point of the sky, where the sun stands at noon, where everyone on earth can see and hear. (The Majority Greek text and the critical texts read "an eagle" instead of "an angel.") The eagle is the bird of swift judgment in the prophets: "Behold, he shall come up and fly as the eagle, and spread his wings over Bozrah" (Jeremiah 49:22). Christ said, "For wheresoever the carcase is, there will the eagles be gathered together" (Matthew 24:28). Whether angel or eagle, it flies at the height of heaven, and cries a warning to the whole earth.

"Saying with a loud voice, Woe, woe, woe." "Woe" (*ouai*) is a cry of grief and doom: "Alas!" It is said three times, one for each of the three trumpets still to come. These are the "three woes." The fifth trumpet is the first woe (9:12), the sixth the second (11:14), and the seventh the third (11:14; 12:12).

"To the inhabiters of the earth." "The inhabiters of the earth" is the same phrase as "them that dwell upon the earth" (3:10; 6:10): the people of the Day of the Lord who have set their hearts on the earth and refused God (see 3:10). The woes are for them.

"By reason of the other voices of the trumpet of the three angels, which are yet to sound!" The first four trumpets were terrible, but the last three will be worse. They are not only judgments on the earth, the sea, and the lights of heaven, but judgments that come directly on men.

The number. *Three* woes, for the *three* trumpets still to sound: the last three of the seven (see 8:6). Three is the number of divine completeness (see 4:8): the woes are God's judgment, complete in its own measure. The first is told in 9:1-12, the second in 9:13–11:14, and the third comes with the seventh trumpet (11:14-15; 12:12).

Figures of speech. "Woe, woe, woe" is the figure *Epizeuxis* ("fastening together"): the same word repeated in succession for the strongest emphasis. Here it is also a count: three woes for three trumpets.

To whom. The woes are for "the inhabiters of the earth," the book's own name for the people of the Day of the Lord who oppose God (3:10). Those sealed by God are not touched by the first of them (9:4).

On earth. Verses 9:1-12, the fifth trumpet, the first woe. The bottomless pit is opened and the locusts come out. The book closes this woe itself: "One woe is past" (9:12).

> **Revelation 9:1** *And the fifth angel sounded, and I saw a star fall from heaven unto the earth: and to him was given the key of the bottomless pit.*

The fifth trumpet is the first woe. It opens the pit.

"And the fifth angel sounded, and I saw a star fall from heaven unto the earth." The Greek says "a star *fallen* from heaven" (*peptōkota*, a perfect participle): John did not see it fall; he saw it already fallen, lying on the earth. This star is not a heavenly light like the star of the third trumpet. It is a person, for the next words say "to him was given the key." In this book stars can stand for angels: "The seven stars are the angels of the seven churches" (1:20). This is an angel who has fallen from heaven. Isaiah spoke of the king of Babylon in words that point beyond him to a fallen angel: "How art thou fallen from heaven, O Lucifer, son of the morning! how art thou cut down to the ground, which didst weaken the nations!" (Isaiah 14:12). Christ said, "I beheld Satan as lightning fall from heaven" (Luke 10:18). Whether this fallen star is Satan himself or another of the fallen angels, the text does not say. What it does say is that he is given the key, and he opens the pit.

"And to him was given the key of the bottomless pit." "Was given": once again, nothing happens without permission from the throne. Christ holds "the keys of hell and of death" (1:18); this fallen angel is given the key of the pit for a time, by God's will.

"The bottomless pit" is in Greek *abussos* (Strong's G12), "the abyss," "without bottom," "boundlessly deep." It is the prison of evil spirits. When Christ cast the legion of demons out of the man at Gadara, "they besought him that he would not command them to go out into the deep" (Luke 8:31): the same word, *abussos*. The demons feared it. In this book the beast comes up out of it (11:7; 17:8), and Satan himself is bound and shut in it for a thousand years (20:1-3). Here, at the fifth trumpet, it is opened.

The number. The *fifth* trumpet, the first of the three woes (8:13).

Figures of speech. "A star" is used for an angel, as the book itself explains its stars (1:20): a *Metaphor*. "The key" is a *Metonymy* for the authority to open.

> **Revelation 9:2** *And he opened the bottomless pit; and there arose a smoke out of the pit, as the smoke of a great furnace; and the sun and the air were darkened by reason of the smoke of the pit.*

"And he opened the bottomless pit." The fallen angel turns the key, and the pit is opened.

"And there arose a smoke out of the pit, as the smoke of a great furnace." Smoke pours up from the abyss, thick and black, like the smoke from a great kiln or smelting furnace. When God destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah, Abraham looked toward the cities, "and, lo, the smoke of the country went up as the smoke of a furnace" (Genesis 19:28). At Sinai, "the smoke thereof ascended as the smoke of a furnace, and the whole mount quaked greatly" (Exodus 19:18).

"And the sun and the air were darkened by reason of the smoke of the pit." The smoke is so thick that it blots out the sun and darkens the very air. What comes out of the abyss brings darkness over the world.

Figures of speech. "As the smoke of a great furnace" is a *Simile*.

> **Revelation 9:3** *And there came out of the smoke locusts upon the earth: and unto them was given power, as the scorpions of the earth have power.*

"And there came out of the smoke locusts upon the earth." Out of the smoke come locusts. The locust was the most feared of all pests in the ancient East. A swarm could cover the sky like a cloud and strip a land bare of every green thing in a day. The eighth plague on Egypt was locusts:

> **Exodus 10:14-15** — *And the locusts went up over all the land of Egypt, and rested in all the coasts of Egypt: very grievous were they; before them there were no such locusts as they, neither after them shall be such. For they covered the face of the whole earth, so that the land was darkened; and they did eat every herb of the land, and all the fruit of the trees which the hail had left: and there remained not any green thing in the trees, or in the herbs of the field, through all the land of Egypt.*

The prophet Joel, writing of the Day of the Lord, saw a locust army coming on the land like an invading army, "a great people and a strong; there hath not been ever the like, neither shall be any more after it" (Joel 2:2).

"And unto them was given power, as the scorpions of the earth have power." But these locusts are different. They are given "power," authority, like the power of scorpions. A scorpion's sting is not usually deadly to a grown man, but it is agonising, a burning pain that can last for days. These locusts sting like scorpions.

What are these locusts? They are not ordinary insects. They come out of the abyss, the prison of evil spirits. They do not eat grass (9:4). They have a king (9:11), whereas "The locusts have no king" (Proverbs 30:27). They have faces like men and hair like women (9:7-8). John is describing real beings that he saw coming out of the pit, creatures of the spirit world loosed on mankind, and he describes them in the shape of the most dreaded plague he knew. This study takes them as John saw them: real beings from the abyss, under the command of its angel, permitted by God for a limited time.

Figures of speech. "As the scorpions of the earth have power" is a *Simile*: their sting is like a scorpion's.

> **Revelation 9:4** *And it was commanded them that they should not hurt the grass of the earth, neither any green thing, neither any tree; but only those men which have not the seal of God in their foreheads.*

"And it was commanded them that they should not hurt the grass of the earth, neither any green thing, neither any tree." Natural locusts eat every green thing. These are commanded not to touch any green thing at all. They are not after the crops.

"But only those men which have not the seal of God in their foreheads." They are after men, and only some men: those who do not have God's seal. Here the sealing of 7:3-4 is seen to matter. God's servants were sealed in their foreheads before the trumpets sounded, and now the locusts may not touch them. As in Egypt, "the LORD shall sever between the cattle of Israel and the cattle of Egypt" (Exodus 9:4), and "against any of the children of Israel shall not a dog move his tongue ... that ye may know how that the LORD doth put a difference between the Egyptians and Israel" (Exodus 11:7), so here God puts a difference between His sealed servants and the rest.

Figures of speech. "The grass … neither any green thing, neither any tree" is *Paradiastole* ("neither … nor"): each is named and spared separately.

To whom. The sealed ones are the 144,000 of Israel (7:4-8). God protects His own in the Day of the Lord, as He protected Israel in Goshen during the plagues of Egypt (Part One, Chapter 3 §C).

> **Revelation 9:5** *And to them it was given that they should not kill them, but that they should be tormented five months: and their torment was as the torment of a scorpion, when he striketh a man.*

"And to them it was given that they should not kill them." Again "it was given": a limit is set. They may not kill. They may only torment.

"But that they should be tormented five months." "Tormented" is *basanizō* (Strong's G928), "to torture, to cause severe pain." The torment lasts "five months." Why five months? It is a limited, fixed time. It is generally noted that five months is about the length of the locust season in those lands, from spring to late summer. The number is given twice (9:5, 10), so that it is plain: the torment has an end, set by God.

"And their torment was as the torment of a scorpion, when he striketh a man." The pain is the pain of a scorpion's sting: burning, spreading, lasting.

The number. *Five months*. The torment is measured: five months and no longer. Bullinger notes that this "corresponds with that of ordinary locusts, which is five months (from May to September)" (*The Apocalypse*), and the Companion Bible points to the flood. Scripture gives that other five months: the waters of the flood "prevailed upon the earth an hundred and fifty days" (Genesis 7:24), from the seventeenth day of the second month to the seventeenth day of the seventh month (Genesis 7:11; 8:4), five months of thirty days. The number is said twice (9:5, 10): the judgment is fixed in length, and God fixed it.

Figures of speech. "As the torment of a scorpion" is a *Simile*.

> **Revelation 9:6** *And in those days shall men seek death, and shall not find it; and shall desire to die, and death shall flee from them.*

"And in those days shall men seek death, and shall not find it." The pain is so great that men will look for death as a way out, and will not find it. Job, in his suffering, spoke of those "Which long for death, but it cometh not; and dig for it more than for hid treasures; Which rejoice exceedingly, and are glad, when they can find the grave" (Job 3:21-22).

"And shall desire to die, and death shall flee from them." Death, which men usually flee from, now flees from them. They want to die, and cannot. God has said they will not be killed (9:5), and they will not be. Jeremiah foretold such a time: "And death shall be chosen rather than life by all the residue of them that remain of this evil family" (Jeremiah 8:3).

Figures of speech. "Death shall flee from them" is the figure *Prosopopoeia* (personification): death is pictured as a person who runs away. The two halves of the verse say the same thing in different words, the figure Bullinger calls *Synonymia*, for emphasis: they seek and do not find; they desire and it flees.

> **Revelation 9:7** *And the shapes of the locusts were like unto horses prepared unto battle; and on their heads were as it were crowns like gold, and their faces were as the faces of men.*

John now describes the locusts in detail, piling likeness on likeness. He is describing beings unlike anything on earth, and he can only do it by comparison.

"And the shapes of the locusts were like unto horses prepared unto battle." Their shape was like war-horses ready for battle. Joel had seen the same in his locust army: "The appearance of them is as the appearance of horses; and as horsemen, so shall they run" (Joel 2:4). Even an ordinary locust's head is shaped somewhat like a horse's. But these were like horses "prepared unto battle": armed, eager, terrible.

"And on their heads were as it were crowns like gold." On their heads was something like crowns, gleaming like gold. They come as conquerors.

"And their faces were as the faces of men." Their faces were like men's faces: intelligent, purposeful. These are not mindless insects.

Figures of speech. "Like unto horses," "as it were crowns like gold," "as the faces of men": *Similes*, one after another. Bullinger notes how John piles up likenesses here to describe what he saw.

> **Revelation 9:8** *And they had hair as the hair of women, and their teeth were as the teeth of lions.*

"And they had hair as the hair of women." Long hair, flowing. It added to their strange and fearful look: part horse, part man, part woman, part insect.

"And their teeth were as the teeth of lions." Teeth that tear. Joel said of the locust army, "whose teeth are the teeth of a lion, and he hath the cheek teeth of a great lion" (Joel 1:6).

Figures of speech. Two more *Similes*.

> **Revelation 9:9** *And they had breastplates, as it were breastplates of iron; and the sound of their wings was as the sound of chariots of many horses running to battle.*

"And they had breastplates, as it were breastplates of iron." Their bodies were covered with something like iron armour. They could not be beaten off or crushed.

"And the sound of their wings was as the sound of chariots of many horses running to battle." The noise of their wings was like the thunder of a chariot army charging into battle. Anyone who has heard a swarm of locusts describes the roar of their wings. Joel said: "Like the noise of chariots on the tops of mountains shall they leap, like the noise of a flame of fire that devoureth the stubble, as a strong people set in battle array" (Joel 2:5).

Figures of speech. *Similes* again, "as it were breastplates of iron," "as the sound of chariots."

> **Revelation 9:10** *And they had tails like unto scorpions, and there were stings in their tails: and their power was to hurt men five months.*

"And they had tails like unto scorpions, and there were stings in their tails." Their weapon is in their tails, like a scorpion's.

"And their power was to hurt men five months." The limit is repeated: five months, and only to hurt, not to kill (9:5). The book says it twice so that the reader cannot miss it. Even in the first woe God sets the bounds.

The number. *Five months* again (see 9:5). The limit is repeated so that it cannot be missed.

Figures of speech. "Like unto scorpions" is a *Simile*. The repetition of "five months" from verse 5 is for emphasis and assurance.

> **Revelation 9:11** *And they had a king over them, which is the angel of the bottomless pit, whose name in the Hebrew tongue is Abaddon, but in the Greek tongue hath his name Apollyon.*

"And they had a king over them." Natural locusts have no king: "The locusts have no king, yet go they forth all of them by bands" (Proverbs 30:27). These have a king. They are an organised army under a commander.

"Which is the angel of the bottomless pit." Their king is "the angel of the bottomless pit," the angel who rules the abyss. He is a fallen angel, a servant of Satan.

"Whose name in the Hebrew tongue is Abaddon." John gives his name in Hebrew first. *Abaddon* means "destruction." In the Old Testament it is set beside the grave as the place of the dead: "Hell is naked before him, and destruction hath no covering" (Job 26:6). "Hell and destruction are before the LORD: how much more then the hearts of the children of men?" (Proverbs 15:11). In those verses "destruction" is *abaddon*.

"But in the Greek tongue hath his name Apollyon." Then in Greek: *Apolluōn*, "Destroyer," from *apollumi*, "to destroy." The two names mean the same: the Destroyer. He is the opposite of Christ in every way. Christ came "to seek and to save that which was lost" (Luke 19:10); this one comes to destroy. Christ said, "The thief cometh not, but for to steal, and to kill, and to destroy: I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly" (John 10:10).

Why two languages? Because the book is for Israel and for the nations alike. Every reader, Hebrew or Greek, is to know the name of the one who leads this army, and what he is.

Figures of speech. The name is given in two languages, each meaning "destroyer": the figure Bullinger calls *Synonymia* (two words of the same meaning), which fixes the meaning beyond doubt.

> **Revelation 9:12** *One woe is past; and, behold, there come two woes more hereafter.*

"One woe is past." The first woe is over. The fifth trumpet has done its work.

"And, behold, there come two woes more hereafter." "Behold": take note. Two more woes are still to come. The book marks its own place, so that the reader does not lose his way: one woe past, two to come. It will mark the end of the second woe in 11:14.

The numbers. *One* woe past, *two* more to come (see 8:13). The book counts the woes for the reader as they go.

Figures of speech. "Behold" is *Asterismos*. The counting of the woes is the book's own signpost through the trumpets.

On earth. Verses 9:13-21, the sixth trumpet, the second woe. A voice from the golden altar in heaven looses four angels at the Euphrates, and a host of horsemen kills a third part of men on the earth. The second woe is not closed until 11:14.

> **Revelation 9:13** *And the sixth angel sounded, and I heard a voice from the four horns of the golden altar which is before God,*

The sixth trumpet is the second woe. It is the longest of all the trumpets, running from here to 11:14.

"And the sixth angel sounded." The sixth trumpet sounds.

"And I heard a voice from the four horns of the golden altar which is before God." The golden altar is the altar of incense, the very altar on which the prayers of all the saints were offered (8:3). In the tabernacle it had a horn at each of its four corners: "And thou shalt overlay it with pure gold, the top thereof, and the sides thereof round about, and the horns thereof" (Exodus 30:3). Once a year, on the day of atonement, the high priest put blood on its horns (Exodus 30:10). The horns were the place of mercy: a man in danger would run and take hold of the horns of the altar, as Adonijah did, and "caught hold on the horns of the altar" (1 Kings 1:50).

Now a voice comes from those horns. The altar where the prayers rose, the altar of mercy, gives the command for judgment. The prayers of the saints are being answered (see 8:3-5). (The words "the four" are in the Received Text and the Majority text, but not in the critical texts.)

The numbers. The *sixth* trumpet, the second woe. The *four* horns of the golden altar: the altar of incense had a horn at each of its four corners (Exodus 30:2-3), and the voice comes from all four, from the whole altar where the prayers of the saints were offered (8:3-4).

Figures of speech. The voice from the horns of the altar gives speech to the altar itself, a kind of *Prosopopoeia*: the place of the prayers itself calls for their answer.

> **Revelation 9:14** *Saying to the sixth angel which had the trumpet, Loose the four angels which are bound in the great river Euphrates.*

"Saying to the sixth angel which had the trumpet." The voice speaks to the angel who has just sounded.

"Loose the four angels which are bound in the great river Euphrates." Four angels are bound at the Euphrates. Angels who are "bound" are not God's holy angels, who are free to do His bidding; they are

fallen angels, held prisoner until God's time. Jude speaks of "the angels which kept not their first estate ... he hath reserved in everlasting chains under darkness unto the judgment of the great day" (Jude 6). These four have been held at the Euphrates, and now they are loosed.

Why the Euphrates? "The great river, the river Euphrates" (Genesis 15:18) was the eastern border of the land God promised to Abraham. It was the river of Babylon; Babylon stood on its banks. It was the boundary between Israel and the great empires of the east, Assyria and Babylon, from which invading armies came. The Euphrates appears again under the sixth vial, when its water is dried up "that the way of the kings of the east might be prepared" (16:12). It was one of the four rivers that flowed out of Eden (Genesis 2:14). At the river where man's first home was, and where Babylon rose against God, the four angels have been held back. Now they are let go.

The numbers. The *sixth* angel; the *four* angels bound at the Euphrates (see 7:1 for four).

Figures of speech. "Bound" is to be taken plainly: these angels are held prisoner until loosed (compare Jude 6; 20:2).

> **Revelation 9:15** *And the four angels were loosed, which were prepared for an hour, and a day, and a month, and a year, for to slay the third part of men.*

"And the four angels were loosed, which were prepared for an hour, and a day, and a month, and a year." They were "prepared": made ready, held in readiness. For what? For "the hour, and a day, and a month, and a year" (in Greek, "for *the* hour and day and month and year"): one exact moment, fixed in advance to the very hour. Nothing in the Day of the Lord happens by chance. God's timetable is exact. The angels have been waiting for that moment, and it has come.

"For to slay the third part of men." Their task is to kill a third of mankind. The fourth seal touched "the fourth part of the earth" (6:8); under the fifth trumpet men were tormented but not killed (9:5). Now, under the sixth, a third of men are killed. The judgments grow heavier.

The numbers. *An hour, and a day, and a month, and a year*: the Greek has one article for all four, "*the* hour and day and month and year." It is not a length of time but a single moment, fixed to the hour, for which these angels were kept ready. God has appointed it exactly. *The third part* of men (see 8:7).

Figures of speech. "The hour, and a day, and a month, and a year" is *Polysyndeton*: each unit of time is named separately, to show that the moment is fixed exactly, not roughly.

> **Revelation 9:16** *And the number of the army of the horsemen were two hundred thousand thousand: and I heard the number of them.*

"And the number of the army of the horsemen were two hundred thousand thousand." Two hundred thousand thousand: two hundred million. (The critical texts read "twice ten thousand times ten thousand," the same number. The Majority Greek text reads "ten thousand times ten thousand," a host beyond counting, as in 5:11.)

"And I heard the number of them." John does not count them; he hears the number, as he heard the number of the sealed (7:4). The number is told him by heaven.

Who are these horsemen? The text does not call them men. They are led by the four angels from the Euphrates; their horses have heads like lions and breathe fire, smoke and brimstone; their tails are like serpents (9:17-19). Like the locusts of the fifth trumpet, they are described as beings not of this world. This study takes them as John saw them, a vast host loosed by the four angels, and does not identify them with any army of men, ancient or modern.

The number. *Two hundred thousand thousand*: two hundred million. (The Majority Greek text reads "myriads of myriads," ten thousand times ten thousand; see 5:11.) It is given as a number John "heard": "and I heard the number of them." Like the 144,000 (7:4), it is God's count, not a guess. Whether it is counted exactly or means a host beyond reckoning, it is far beyond any army the world had seen in John's day.

Figures of speech. The number is the figure Bullinger lists as a large round number: it is given to show that the host is beyond all ordinary counting.

> **Revelation 9:17** *And thus I saw the horses in the vision, and them that sat on them, having breastplates of fire, and of jacinth, and brimstone: and the heads of the horses were as the heads of lions; and out of their mouths issued fire and smoke and brimstone.*

"And thus I saw the horses in the vision." "In the vision": John reminds the reader that he is describing what he saw in vision. He is telling us what it looked like.

"And them that sat on them, having breastplates of fire, and of jacinth, and brimstone." The riders wear breastplates in three colours. "Of fire" means fiery red. "Jacinth" (*huakinthinos*, the hyacinth) is a dark blue, the colour of smoke. "Brimstone" (*theiōdēs*) is sulphur-yellow. Red, smoky blue, and yellow: the colours of fire, smoke and brimstone, the three plagues of the next verse.

"And the heads of the horses were as the heads of lions." Their heads were like lions': fierce, devouring.

"And out of their mouths issued fire and smoke and brimstone." The horses breathe out fire, smoke and brimstone. These are the very things God rained on Sodom and Gomorrah: "Then the LORD rained upon Sodom and upon Gomorrah brimstone and fire from the LORD out of heaven" (Genesis 19:24), and Abraham saw "the smoke of the country went up as the smoke of a furnace" (Genesis 19:28). Fire and brimstone are the signs of God's judgment from Sodom to the lake of fire (19:20; 20:10; 21:8).

Figures of speech. "As the heads of lions" is a *Simile*. "Fire and smoke and brimstone" is *Polysyndeton*: each plague is named separately, and the next verse counts them.

> **Revelation 9:18** *By these three was the third part of men killed, by the fire, and by the smoke, and by the brimstone, which issued out of their mouths.*

"By these three was the third part of men killed." "These three": the three plagues, fire, smoke and brimstone. A third of mankind dies by them.

"By the fire, and by the smoke, and by the brimstone, which issued out of their mouths." The three are named again, one by one. The book repeats them so that there is no doubt what killed a third of men: the fire, the smoke and the brimstone of judgment.

The numbers. *Three* plagues, fire, smoke and brimstone; *the third part* of men killed (see 8:7).

Figures of speech. The three plagues are named twice, in verses 17 and 18, the figure Bullinger calls *Epanodos* in effect (a return to the same words), which stamps them on the reader's mind.

> **Revelation 9:19** *For their power is in their mouth, and in their tails: for their tails were like unto serpents, and had heads, and with them they do hurt.*

"For their power is in their mouth, and in their tails." The horses hurt both ways: from the front, with fire from their mouths; from behind, with their tails.

"For their tails were like unto serpents, and had heads, and with them they do hurt." Their tails are like serpents, with heads that bite. The serpent in Scripture is the creature of Satan from the first pages: "Now the serpent was more subtil than any beast of the field" (Genesis 3:1), and in this book Satan is "that old serpent" (12:9). The locusts stung with scorpion tails (9:10); these horses bite with serpent tails.

Figures of speech. "Like unto serpents" is a *Simile*.

> **Revelation 9:20** *And the rest of the men which were not killed by these plagues yet repented not of the works of their hands, that they should not worship devils, and idols of gold, and silver, and brass, and stone, and of wood: which neither can see, nor hear, nor walk:*

Now comes one of the saddest verses in the book.

"And the rest of the men which were not killed by these plagues." Two thirds of mankind survived the sixth trumpet. They had seen the earth burned, the sea turned to blood, the waters made bitter, the light darkened, the torment of the locusts, and a third of all men killed by fire and smoke and brimstone. They knew where it came from (6:16-17).

"Yet repented not of the works of their hands." They did not repent. "Repented" is *metanoeō*, to change the mind and turn (see 2:5). The judgments were also calls to repent: God holds back His full judgment and strikes a third, not the whole, to give men time to turn. They would not.

"The works of their hands" means the idols they had made. The prophets mocked those who bow down to what their own hands have made: "they worship the work of their own hands, that which their own fingers have made" (Isaiah 2:8).

"That they should not worship devils." "Devils" here is *daimonia*, demons, evil spirits. Behind the idols are demons. Moses said of Israel's idolatry, "They sacrificed unto devils, not to God; to gods whom they

knew not" (Deuteronomy 32:17). Paul wrote, "the things which the Gentiles sacrifice, they sacrifice to devils, and not to God: and I would not that ye should have fellowship with devils" (1 Corinthians 10:20). The men of the earth had just been tormented by creatures from the abyss, and still they worshipped the demons.

"And idols of gold, and silver, and brass, and stone, and of wood: which neither can see, nor hear, nor walk." The list goes down from the most costly to the cheapest: gold, silver, bronze, stone, wood. And the idols can do nothing: they cannot see, hear, or walk. The psalmist said:

> **Psalm 115:4-8** — *Their idols are silver and gold, the work of men's hands. They have mouths, but they speak not: eyes have they, but they see not: They have ears, but they hear not: noses have they, but they smell not: They have hands, but they handle not: feet have they, but they walk not: neither speak they through their throat. They that make them are like unto them; so is every one that trusteth in them.*

Daniel told king Belshazzar, on the night Babylon fell, "thou hast praised the gods of silver, and gold, of brass, iron, wood, and stone, which see not, nor hear, nor know: and the God in whose hand thy breath is, and whose are all thy ways, hast thou not glorified" (Daniel 5:23).

Figures of speech. "Gold, and silver, and brass, and stone, and of wood" is *Polysyndeton*. "Neither can see, nor hear, nor walk" is *Paradiastole* ("neither ... nor"), naming each thing the idols cannot do, to show how helpless they are.

> **Revelation 9:21** *Neither repented they of their murders, nor of their sorceries, nor of their fornication, nor of their thefts.*

"Neither repented they of their murders, nor of their sorceries, nor of their fornication, nor of their thefts." Verse 20 named their sins against God: idolatry and demon-worship. Verse 21 names their sins against men: four of them.

"Murders": the taking of life, against the sixth commandment.

"Sorceries" is *pharmakeia* (Strong's G5331), from *pharmakon*, "a drug, a potion." From it comes our word "pharmacy." In the ancient world sorcery and drugs went together: the sorcerer used potions, poisons, and drugs to work his spells and to bring men under his power. The word appears again at the fall of Babylon: "for by thy sorceries were all nations deceived" (18:23). Paul lists "witchcraft" (*pharmakeia*) among the works of the flesh (Galatians 5:20).

"Fornication": sexual immorality.

"Thefts": stealing, against the eighth commandment.

Four sins against men, after the sins against God: the second table of the law broken as well as the first. And they repented of none of them. Like Pharaoh, who hardened his heart after each plague (Exodus 8:15, 32; 9:34), the men of the earth harden their hearts under judgment. Under the vials it will be the same: men "blasphemed the name of God ... and they repented not to give him glory" (16:9).

Figures of speech. "Neither ... nor ... nor ... nor" is *Paradiastole*, as in verse 20: each sin is named, and each is unrepented.

The book pauses again. Verses 10:1–11:13, between the sixth and seventh trumpets, on earth. This is the second pause before a seventh (Part One, Chapter 8 §D). The sixth trumpet has sounded (9:13); the seventh will not sound until 11:15. Between them come the mighty angel and the little book (10:1-11), and the measuring of the temple and the two witnesses (11:1-13). John is on the earth: he sees the angel "come down from heaven" (10:1) and hears a voice "from heaven" (10:4, 8). The book closes the pause itself: "The second woe is past" (11:14).

> **Revelation 10:1** *And I saw another mighty angel come down from heaven, clothed with a cloud: and a rainbow was upon his head, and his face was as it were the sun, and his feet as pillars of fire:*

The sixth trumpet has sounded, but the second woe is not yet declared past (that comes at 11:14). Here the action on earth pauses, and John sees a series of things that belong to the sixth trumpet: a mighty angel with a little book (chapter 10), and the measuring of the temple and the two witnesses (11:1-13).

"And I saw another mighty angel come down from heaven." "Another mighty angel": like the strong angel of 5:2, who asked who was worthy to open the book. (The Majority Greek text reads simply "a mighty angel.") He comes down from heaven to the earth.

"Clothed with a cloud." He is wrapped in a cloud. Clouds in Scripture are the dress of God's glory (see 1:7).

"And a rainbow was upon his head." The rainbow of the throne (4:3), the sign of God's covenant with the earth (Genesis 9:13), is on his head. He comes from the throne, bearing its sign.

"And his face was as it were the sun." His face shone like the sun, as the face of the Son of man did (1:16).

"And his feet as pillars of fire." His legs were like pillars of fire, as the pillar of fire led Israel through the wilderness (Exodus 13:21).

Who is this angel? Because he bears such marks of glory, some readers have taken him to be Christ. But the text calls him an angel, "another mighty angel," of the same kind as the strong angel of 5:2. In this book Christ is never called an angel; He is the Son of man and the Lamb. And this angel lifts his hand to heaven and swears by Him that lives for ever (10:5-6), as a servant swears by his Lord. He is a mighty angel sent from God's presence, and the glory he carries is the glory of the one who sent him, as Moses' face shone when he came down from speaking with God (Exodus 34:29).

Figures of speech. "As it were the sun," "as pillars of fire": *Similes*.

> **Revelation 10:2** *And he had in his hand a little book open: and he set his right foot upon the sea, and his left foot on the earth,*

"And he had in his hand a little book open." "A little book" (*biblaridion*, a small scroll) is "open." The book of chapter 5 was sealed with seven seals, and only the Lamb could open it. This little book is open

already. Its contents are not secret; they are about to be given to John to eat and to prophesy (10:9-11). What is in it? The text does not list its contents; but John is told after eating it, "Thou must prophesy again before many peoples" (10:11), and what he prophesies next is the measuring of the temple and the two witnesses (11:1-13), and then the rest of the book. The little book holds the prophecy that follows.

"And he set his right foot upon the sea, and his left foot on the earth." He stands astride the world, one foot on the sea and one on the land. To set one's foot on something is to claim it. God promised Joshua, "Every place that the sole of your foot shall tread upon, that have I given unto you" (Joshua 1:3). The angel stands on sea and land to claim them for God. The sixth trumpet has struck the earth; the seventh will announce that "The kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of our Lord, and of his Christ" (11:15).

Figures of speech. Setting the feet on sea and land is a sign of possession, as in Joshua 1:3: the action itself makes the claim.

> **Revelation 10:3** *And cried with a loud voice, as when a lion roareth: and when he had cried, seven thunders uttered their voices.*

"And cried with a loud voice, as when a lion roareth." His cry was like a lion's roar. The lion roars when it springs on its prey; its roar makes every creature tremble. Amos wrote, "The lion hath roared, who will not fear? the Lord GOD hath spoken, who can but prophesy?" (Amos 3:8). The prophets used the lion's roar for God's voice in judgment:

> **Joel 3:16** — *The LORD also shall roar out of Zion, and utter his voice from Jerusalem; and the heavens and the earth shall shake: but the LORD will be the hope of his people, and the strength of the children of Israel.*

"And when he had cried, seven thunders uttered their voices." At his cry, "seven thunders" speak. "*The* seven thunders" in Greek, as if they were known. Thunder is God's voice: "The voice of the LORD is upon the waters: the God of glory thundereth" (Psalm 29:3). In that psalm "the voice of the LORD" is named seven times (Psalm 29:3-9). The seven thunders "uttered their voices": they spoke words, and John understood them, for he was about to write them down (10:4).

The number. *Seven* thunders. In Psalm 29 "the voice of the LORD" is named seven times, and "the God of glory thundereth" (Psalm 29:3). Seven thunders are God's voice in its fulness (see 1:4).

Figures of speech. "As when a lion roareth" is a *Simile*. The thunders that speak are a *Prosopopoeia*: thunder given a voice and words.

> **Revelation 10:4** *And when the seven thunders had uttered their voices, I was about to write: and I heard a voice from heaven saying unto me, Seal up those things which the seven thunders uttered, and write them not.*

"And when the seven thunders had uttered their voices, I was about to write." John was ready. He had been told to write "what thou seest" (1:11), and he had been writing everything. He takes up his pen to write what the thunders said.

"And I heard a voice from heaven saying unto me, Seal up those things which the seven thunders uttered, and write them not." A voice from heaven stops him. "Seal up": keep it closed, do not reveal it. "And write them not." This is the only thing in the whole book that John is told not to write. Everywhere else the command is "write." Here it is "seal up."

Daniel had been told to seal up parts of what he was shown: "wherefore shut thou up the vision; for it shall be for many days" (Daniel 8:26); "But thou, O Daniel, shut up the words, and seal the book, even to the time of the end" (Daniel 12:4). Paul, caught up into paradise, "heard unspeakable words, which it is not lawful for a man to utter" (2 Corinthians 12:4).

What did the seven thunders say? We do not know, and we are not meant to. God has chosen not to tell us. This study does not guess at it. "The secret things belong unto the LORD our God: but those things which are revealed belong unto us and to our children for ever" (Deuteronomy 29:29). The reader is told this much: there are things in God's purpose for the Day of the Lord that He has not written down, and He knows them all.

The number. The *seven* thunders (see 10:3). What they said was complete, and it was sealed.

Figures of speech. "Seal up ... and write them not" says the same thing twice, positive and negative, the figure Bullinger calls *Pleonasm* in effect: the command is made doubly plain.

> **Revelation 10:5** *And the angel which I saw stand upon the sea and upon the earth lifted up his hand to heaven,*

"And the angel which I saw stand upon the sea and upon the earth." The same mighty angel, still standing astride the world.

"Lifted up his hand to heaven." To lift the hand to heaven is the sign of an oath. Abraham said to the king of Sodom, "I have lift up mine hand unto the LORD, the most high God, the possessor of heaven and earth" (Genesis 14:22). (The Majority Greek text and the critical texts read "his right hand.")

The scene is taken from Daniel. At the end of his last vision, Daniel saw a man clothed in linen standing above the river, and heard one ask him, "How long shall it be to the end of these wonders?" (Daniel 12:6). The answer came with an oath:

> **Daniel 12:7** — *And I heard the man clothed in linen, which was upon the waters of the river, when he held up his right hand and his left hand unto heaven, and sware by him that liveth for ever that it shall be for a time, times, and an half; and when he shall have accomplished to scatter the power of the holy people, all these things shall be finished.*

Figures of speech. The lifted hand is the gesture of an oath, an action that speaks; the words follow in verse 6.

> **Revelation 10:6** *And sware by him that liveth for ever and ever, who created heaven, and the things that therein are, and the earth, and the things that therein are, and the sea, and the things which are therein, that there should be time no longer:*

"And sware by him that liveth for ever and ever." He swears by God, "him that liveth for ever and ever" (see 4:9). An oath is sworn by one greater than oneself: "For men verily swear by the greater: and an oath for confirmation is to them an end of all strife" (Hebrews 6:16). The angel swears by the living God.

"Who created heaven, and the things that therein are, and the earth, and the things that therein are, and the sea, and the things which are therein." He names God as Creator of all: heaven, earth, and sea, and everything in each. The fourth commandment says, "For in six days the LORD made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that in them is" (Exodus 20:11). The angel stands on sea and land, and swears by the one who made them. The Creator has the right to judge His creation and to claim it back (see 4:11).

"That there should be time no longer." This does not mean that time itself will stop. The Greek *chronos ouketi estai* means "there shall be delay no longer," "no more time will pass before it happens." The waiting is over. The souls under the altar had cried, "How long?" and been told to "rest yet for a little season" (6:10-11). The little season is ending. Habakkuk had been told, "though it tarry, wait for it; because it will surely come, it will not tarry" (Habakkuk 2:3). Now the delay is ended.

Figures of speech. "Heaven, and the things that therein are, and the earth, and the things that therein are, and the sea, and the things which are therein" is *Polysyndeton*, with the repeated phrase "the things that therein are": every part of creation and everything in it is named, so that God's claim covers all.

> **Revelation 10:7** *But in the days of the voice of the seventh angel, when he shall begin to sound, the mystery of God should be finished, as he hath declared to his servants the prophets.*

"But in the days of the voice of the seventh angel, when he shall begin to sound." The delay ends when the seventh trumpet sounds. "When he shall begin to sound": from the moment the seventh angel lifts his trumpet, the end begins.

"The mystery of God should be finished." "Mystery" (*mustērion*) is a secret now made known (see 1:20). "The mystery of God" here is God's purpose for the earth: how He will bring His kingdom and put down all rebellion against Him, a purpose spoken of by the prophets for ages but never brought to completion. "Should be finished" is *etelesthē*, "brought to its end, completed." It is from the same verb Christ spoke on the cross, "It is finished" (*tetelestai*, John 19:30). At the seventh trumpet the mystery is finished: "The kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of our Lord, and of his Christ; and he shall reign for ever and ever" (11:15).

"As he hath declared to his servants the prophets." "Declared" is *euangelizō*, the verb from which "evangelise" comes: "announced as good news." God announced this as good news to His servants the prophets long ago. Amos had said, "Surely the Lord GOD will do nothing, but he revealeth his secret unto his servants the prophets" (Amos 3:7). What the prophets foretold, the kingdom of God on the earth, is good news, and the seventh trumpet brings it to pass. Daniel foretold it:

> **Daniel 2:44** — *And in the days of these kings shall the God of heaven set up a kingdom, which shall never be destroyed: and the kingdom shall not be left to other people, but it shall break in pieces and consume all these kingdoms, and it shall stand for ever.*

The number. The *seventh* angel, the last trumpet (11:15). With the seventh, the mystery of God is finished: seven, the number of what God brings to its full end (see 1:4).

To whom. "The mystery of God" here is His purpose for the earth and its kingdom, "declared to his servants the prophets." It is not the same as "the mystery" Paul speaks of in his letters, "which in other ages was not made known unto the sons of men" (Ephesians 3:5) and was "hid in God" (Ephesians 3:9): the one body of Jew and Gentile in Christ in the administration of grace. That mystery was hidden from the prophets; this one was declared to them (Part One, Chapter 3 §C).

> **Revelation 10:8** *And the voice which I heard from heaven spake unto me again, and said, Go and take the little book which is open in the hand of the angel which standeth upon the sea and upon the earth.*

"And the voice which I heard from heaven spake unto me again." The same voice that told John not to write the thunders (10:4) now speaks again.

"And said, Go and take the little book which is open in the hand of the angel which standeth upon the sea and upon the earth." John is told to go to the mighty angel, standing astride sea and land, and take the open book from his hand. Until now John has been a watcher and a writer. Now he is given something to do. He is to walk up to this towering angel and take the book.

Figures of speech. The repetition of "which standeth upon the sea and upon the earth" from 10:2 and 10:5 keeps the picture of the angel's claim before the reader.



Albrecht Dürer, The Apocalypse (woodcut, 1498): John eats the little book; the mighty angel with feet as pillars of fire (10:1-11).

> **Revelation 10:9** *And I went unto the angel, and said unto him, Give me the little book. And he said unto me, Take it, and eat it up; and it shall make thy belly bitter, but it shall be in thy mouth sweet as honey.*

"And I went unto the angel, and said unto him, Give me the little book." John obeys. He goes to the angel and asks for the book.

"And he said unto me, Take it, and eat it up." "Eat it up": devour it, eat the whole of it. To eat a book is to take God's word wholly into oneself, to make it part of one's very being, before speaking it to others. Ezekiel was given the same command when God called him to prophesy to Israel:

> **Ezekiel 3:1-3** — *Moreover he said unto me, Son of man, eat that thou findest; eat this roll, and go speak unto the house of Israel. So I opened my mouth, and he caused me to eat that roll. And he said unto me, Son of man, cause thy belly to eat, and fill thy bowels with this roll that I give thee. Then did I eat it; and it was in my mouth as honey for sweetness.*

Jeremiah said, "Thy words were found, and I did eat them; and thy word was unto me the joy and rejoicing of mine heart" (Jeremiah 15:16).

"And it shall make thy belly bitter, but it shall be in thy mouth sweet as honey." The angel warns John before he eats: the book will taste sweet, but it will turn bitter inside him.

Figures of speech. "Eat it up" is a *Metaphor* for taking God's word wholly into oneself (Ezekiel 3:1-3; Jeremiah 15:16). John truly ate the book in the vision; its meaning is that the prophet must first receive the word before he speaks it.

> **Revelation 10:10** *And I took the little book out of the angel's hand, and ate it up; and it was in my mouth sweet as honey: and as soon as I had eaten it, my belly was bitter.*

"And I took the little book out of the angel's hand, and ate it up." John does as he is told.

"And it was in my mouth sweet as honey." God's word is sweet. The psalmist said, "How sweet are thy words unto my taste! yea, sweeter than honey to my mouth!" (Psalm 119:103). It is sweet to receive a word from God, sweet to know His purposes, sweet above all to know that His kingdom is coming and that the mystery of God will be finished (10:7).

"And as soon as I had eaten it, my belly was bitter." But once it was inside him, it turned bitter. Why? Because the word was not only a word of the kingdom coming, but a word of judgment. To know what God will do to the earth, to the city, and to those who will not repent, is bitter to carry. Ezekiel, after he ate the roll, wrote, "So the spirit lifted me up, and took me away, and I went in bitterness, in the heat of my spirit; but the hand of the LORD was strong upon me" (Ezekiel 3:14). Jeremiah wept over the judgments he had to speak: "Oh that my head were waters, and mine eyes a fountain of tears, that I might weep day and night for the slain of the daughter of my people!" (Jeremiah 9:1).

Every true servant of God knows both tastes. The word of God is sweet in the mouth: the promises, the glory of God, the coming of the King. And it is bitter in the belly: the judgment on those who refuse it, the cost of carrying it, the sorrow of seeing men turn away.

Figures of speech. "Sweet as honey" is a *Simile*. The sweet mouth and the bitter belly set opposites side by side, the figure *Antithesis*, showing the two sides of the prophet's message.

> **Revelation 10:11** *And he said unto me, Thou must prophesy again before many peoples, and nations, and tongues, and kings.*

"And he said unto me." (The Majority Greek text and the critical texts read "And they say unto me": the voice is not named, but the command comes from heaven.)

"Thou must prophesy again before many peoples, and nations, and tongues, and kings." "Must" is *dei*, the word of divine necessity (see 1:1). John has no choice; God has laid it on him. "Prophesy again": he has prophesied already, in all he has written so far; now there is more. "Before many peoples, and nations, and tongues, and kings": the prophecy concerns the whole earth and its rulers, and it is spoken about them and over them. The rest of the book is that prophecy: the two witnesses, the woman and the dragon, the beasts, the harvest, the vials, the fall of Babylon, the coming of the King, the thousand years, the judgment, the new creation.

When God called Jeremiah, He said, "See, I have this day set thee over the nations and over the kingdoms, to root out, and to pull down, and to destroy, and to throw down, to build, and to plant"

(Jeremiah 1:10). John is given the same kind of commission: the word he speaks is over nations and kings.

Figures of speech. "Peoples, and nations, and tongues, and kings" is *Polysyndeton*, the fourfold phrase of the whole earth (see 5:9), here with "kings" in place of "kindreds": the prophecy will reach the rulers of the world.

Still in the pause, on earth. Verses 11:1-13, the temple measured and the two witnesses. The scene is the holy city, Jerusalem, on the earth. Verses 11:2-3 look across the whole time of the trouble, forty-two months, 1,260 days, and tell the reader at the outset how long the witnesses will prophesy. Then 11:7-13 tell their end.

> **Revelation 11:1** *And there was given me a reed like unto a rod: and the angel stood, saying, Rise, and measure the temple of God, and the altar, and them that worship therein.*

John has eaten the little book and been told he must prophesy again (10:11). The prophecy begins here, still within the time of the sixth trumpet. The scene is no longer the whole earth, but one city: Jerusalem.

"And there was given me a reed like unto a rod." A "reed" (*kalamos*) was a straight cane, light and long, used as a measuring rod, as a builder uses a measuring line. It is "like unto a rod" (*rhabdos*), a staff, straight and firm. Who gave it to John, the text does not say.

"And the angel stood, saying." (These words are in the Received Text but lacking in the Majority and critical texts, which read simply "saying." The voice is the voice that has been speaking with John, 10:8-11.)

"Rise, and measure the temple of God." "Temple" here is *naos* (Strong's G3485), the inner sanctuary, the holy place and the most holy place, the house itself, not the whole temple area with its courts (*hieron*). Bullinger notes how important it is to keep the two words apart. John is to measure the sanctuary.

Which temple? The verse tells us it has an outer court "given unto the Gentiles" and stands in "the holy city" that is trodden down (11:2), and the two witnesses lie dead in "the street of the great city ... where also our Lord was crucified" (11:8). This is a temple of God in Jerusalem, on the earth, in the time of the Day of the Lord. Paul wrote that "the man of sin" will sit "in the temple of God, shewing himself that he is God" (2 Thessalonians 2:4), and Christ spoke of "the abomination of desolation, spoken of by Daniel the prophet, stand in the holy place" (Matthew 24:15). So in that time there will again be a temple in Jerusalem.

To measure is to mark out, to set apart, to claim as one's own and to protect. Ezekiel saw a man "with a line of flax in his hand, and a measuring reed" who measured the whole temple of the age to come (Ezekiel 40:3). Zechariah saw "a man with a measuring line in his hand," who was going "To measure Jerusalem, to see what is the breadth thereof" (Zechariah 2:2), and was told that God would be "unto her a wall of fire round about" (Zechariah 2:5). What God measures, He claims and guards.

"And the altar." The altar of sacrifice before the sanctuary. It too is measured and claimed.

"And them that worship therein." The worshippers are measured too. One cannot measure people with a rod, of course. Bullinger notes that here the word "measure" is used of two things, the temple and the worshippers, and strictly fits only the first; for the second a word like "take account of," "number," must be understood. God takes account of His true worshippers, as He sealed His servants (7:3) and knows them by name.

Figures of speech. "Measure ... them that worship therein" is the figure *Zeugma* ("yoking"), which Bullinger names here: one verb is joined to two objects but properly belongs to only one, and a second verb ("count," "take account of") must be supplied for the other.

To whom. A temple with an altar and a court of the Gentiles, in the holy city of Jerusalem, has nothing to do with the church of grace, in which "there is neither Greek nor Jew" (Colossians 3:11) and believers are themselves "the temple of the living God" (2 Corinthians 6:16). This is God dealing again with Jerusalem and Israel in the Day of the Lord (Part One, Chapter 3 §C).

> **Revelation 11:2** *But the court which is without the temple leave out, and measure it not; for it is given unto the Gentiles: and the holy city shall they tread under foot forty and two months.*

"But the court which is without the temple leave out, and measure it not." "Leave out" is literally "cast out" (*ekbale exō*): exclude it, throw it out of the measurement. The outer court is not to be measured. In Herod's temple the outer court was called the court of the Gentiles; non-Jews could enter it but go no further.

"For it is given unto the Gentiles." "Gentiles" is *ethnē*, the nations. The outer court is handed over to them. God claims the sanctuary and its worshippers, but leaves the court, and the city, to the nations for a set time.

"And the holy city shall they tread under foot forty and two months." "The holy city" is Jerusalem; it is called "the holy city" in the Gospels too (Matthew 4:5; 27:53). "Tread under foot" means to trample, to crush, to treat with contempt. Christ had foretold it:

> **Luke 21:24** — *And they shall fall by the edge of the sword, and shall be led away captive into all nations: and Jerusalem shall be trodden down of the Gentiles, until the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled.*

"Forty and two months" is three and a half years. The book gives this same length of time in three ways: forty-two months (11:2; 13:5), one thousand two hundred and threescore days (11:3; 12:6), and "a time, and times, and half a time" (12:14). Each count agrees with the others: forty-two months of thirty days are 1,260 days, and "a time, and times, and half a time" is one year, two years and half a year. The times come from Daniel, who was told that the little horn would wear out the saints "until a time and times and the dividing of time" (Daniel 7:25). A symbol would not need to be counted three ways, by days, by months and by years. This study takes it as a real three and a half years (Appendix C, Question 15).

The number. *Forty and two months.* This is the first of the book's three ways of counting the same time: forty-two months (11:2; 13:5), 1,260 days (11:3; 12:6), and "a time, and times, and half a time" (12:14). Forty-two months of thirty days are 1,260 days, and both are three years and a half. That is half of seven years: the half-week of Daniel, "in the midst of the week he shall cause the sacrifice and the oblation to cease" (Daniel 9:27). Half of seven is seven broken off, cut short; Christ said of that time, "except those days should be shortened, there should no flesh be saved" (Matthew 24:22). Bullinger notes that forty-two is six times seven, man's number joined to God's: the time in which man's rebellion is worked out to its end under God's limit (Part One, Chapter 5 §D).

Figures of speech. "Tread under foot" is a *Metaphor* for conquest and contempt.

> **Revelation 11:3** *And I will give power unto my two witnesses, and they shall prophesy a thousand two hundred and threescore days, clothed in sackcloth.*

"And I will give power unto my two witnesses." "I": the speaker now speaks as God, or as Christ in God's name: "*my* two witnesses." "Power" is in italics in the King James Version; the Greek says simply "I will give to my two witnesses, and they shall prophesy." God gives them their task and the power to carry it out.

"Witnesses" (*martures*, see 1:5) are those who testify to what they know. Why two? Because God's law required two witnesses to establish any matter: "at the mouth of two witnesses, or at the mouth of three witnesses, shall the matter be established" (Deuteronomy 19:15). Christ sent out His disciples "two and two" (Mark 6:7). Two witnesses make the testimony sure.

"And they shall prophesy a thousand two hundred and threescore days." "Threescore" is sixty: 1,260 days, three and a half years (see 11:2). They "prophesy": they speak God's word, warning and calling to repentance, for the whole of that time.

"Clothed in sackcloth." Sackcloth was rough, dark cloth woven from goat's hair. It was worn in mourning and in repentance. When Jonah preached in Nineveh, "the people of Nineveh believed God, and proclaimed a fast, and put on sackcloth, from the greatest of them even to the least of them" (Jonah 3:5). Elijah wore "a girdle of leather about his loins" and was "an hairy man" (2 Kings 1:8). Their dress is their message: mourn, repent, turn to God.

Who are the two witnesses? The text makes plain what they are. They are two real people, not symbols: they prophesy, they have bodies that lie in the street, they are killed, they lie unburied three and a half days, they rise, and they go up to heaven in the sight of their enemies (11:7-12). They prophesy in Jerusalem, "where also our Lord was crucified" (11:8). They have powers like Elijah's and like Moses' (11:5-6). What the text does not tell us is their names. Readers have long suggested Elijah and Moses, or Enoch and Elijah; the evidence for each is set out in Appendix C, Question 9. Each suggestion rests on matching their powers to someone, or on reasoning from other verses; the text never names them. This study takes them as two real prophets of God in the Day of the Lord, and leaves their names where the text leaves them.

The numbers. *Two* witnesses. Two is the number of witness: the law required it, "at the mouth of two witnesses, or at the mouth of three witnesses, shall the matter be established" (Deuteronomy 19:15), and Christ sent out His disciples "two and two" (Mark 6:7). *A thousand two hundred and threescore days*: 1,260 days, the same time as the forty-two months of 11:2, counted now in days. The witnesses prophesy day by day, every day of it.

Figures of speech. "My two witnesses" is plain speech, and the text that follows shows that they are real persons.

> **Revelation 11:4** *These are the two olive trees, and the two candlesticks standing before the God of the earth.*

"These are the two olive trees, and the two candlesticks." The book explains the witnesses by a picture from the prophet Zechariah. When the Jews had returned from Babylon and were rebuilding the temple, Zechariah saw a golden lampstand with "two olive trees by it, one upon the right side of the bowl, and the other upon the left side thereof" (Zechariah 4:3). He asked what they were, and was told:

> **Zechariah 4:14** — *Then said he, These are the two anointed ones, that stand by the Lord of the whole earth.*

In Zechariah's day the two anointed ones were the two leaders God had anointed to rebuild His house: Zerubbabel, the governor of David's line, and Joshua, the high priest (Zechariah 3–4). To Zerubbabel God said, "Not by might, nor by power, but by my spirit, saith the LORD of hosts" (Zechariah 4:6). The olive trees supplied oil for the lamps without any human hand: God's spirit, flowing through His anointed servants, kept the light burning.

So the two witnesses are God's anointed servants in the Day of the Lord, as Zerubbabel and Joshua were in their day: olive trees full of God's spirit, and lampstands holding up His light in the darkness of a trodden-down Jerusalem.

"Standing before the God of the earth." (The Majority Greek text and the critical texts read "the Lord of the earth," as in Zechariah 4:14, "the Lord of the whole earth.") Bullinger notes that this title is used when God's right to rule the earth is being asserted. The witnesses stand before Him, as His servants, ready to do His will, while the nations trample His city.

The numbers. *Two* olive trees and *two* candlesticks: two, because there are two witnesses (see 11:3). Zechariah saw one candlestick and two olive trees (Zechariah 4:2-3, 11-14).

Figures of speech. "These are the two olive trees" is a *Metaphor*, explained by Zechariah 4.

> **Revelation 11:5** *And if any man will hurt them, fire proceedeth out of their mouth, and devoureth their enemies: and if any man will hurt them, he must in this manner be killed.*

"And if any man will hurt them, fire proceedeth out of their mouth, and devoureth their enemies." No one can harm them while their testimony lasts. Fire comes out of their mouths and devours those who try. Elijah was sent for by king Ahaziah with a captain and fifty men, and Elijah said, "If I be a man of God, then let fire come down from heaven, and consume thee and thy fifty. And there came down fire from

heaven, and consumed him and his fifty" (2 Kings 1:10). Through Jeremiah God said, "Behold, I will make my words in thy mouth fire, and this people wood, and it shall devour them" (Jeremiah 5:14).

"And if any man will hurt them, he must in this manner be killed." The warning is given twice. Anyone who tries to harm them will be killed in the same way: by the fire of their mouth. They are untouchable until God's time.

Figures of speech. The repetition of "if any man will hurt them" is for emphasis: their protection is complete. "Fire proceedeth out of their mouth" is to be taken as John saw it; Elijah's fire and Jeremiah's words show what it means: their word, spoken in God's name, brings judgment on those who oppose them.

> **Revelation 11:6** *These have power to shut heaven, that it rain not in the days of their prophecy: and have power over waters to turn them to blood, and to smite the earth with all plagues, as often as they will.*

"These have power to shut heaven, that it rain not in the days of their prophecy." This is the power of Elijah. In the days of king Ahab, "Elijah the Tishbite ... said unto Ahab, As the LORD God of Israel liveth, before whom I stand, there shall not be dew nor rain these years, but according to my word" (1 Kings 17:1). James tells us how long it lasted: "it rained not on the earth by the space of three years and six months" (James 5:17). Three and a half years: the very length of the witnesses' prophecy.

"And have power over waters to turn them to blood." This is the power of Moses. At God's command Moses and Aaron struck the Nile, "and all the waters that were in the river were turned to blood" (Exodus 7:20).

"And to smite the earth with all plagues, as often as they will." Like Moses in Egypt, they can bring plagues on the land, whenever they choose. The plagues of Egypt were sent to break the pride of a king who said, "Who is the LORD, that I should obey his voice?" (Exodus 5:2). The plagues of the two witnesses are sent on a world that has refused God.

The text says they *have the powers* of Elijah and Moses. It does not say they *are* Elijah and Moses (Appendix C, Question 9). Malachi had foretold that God would send "Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the LORD" (Malachi 4:5). Moses and Elijah had appeared with Christ on the mount of transfiguration, speaking "of his decease which he should accomplish at Jerusalem" (Luke 9:31). Whoever the two witnesses are, they come in the spirit and power of those two great prophets.

Figures of speech. "Shut heaven" is a *Metonymy*: heaven is put for the rain that falls from it, and to shut heaven is to stop the rain.

> **Revelation 11:7** *And when they shall have finished their testimony, the beast that ascendeth out of the bottomless pit shall make war against them, and shall overcome them, and kill them.*

"And when they shall have finished their testimony." They will not die until their work is done. "Finished" is *telesōsin*, "brought to its end, completed." No one could touch them while they were

testifying (11:5); only "when they shall have finished" may they be killed. So it was with Christ: no one could take Him until His hour had come. "No man laid hands on him, because his hour was not yet come" (John 7:30).

"The beast that ascendeth out of the bottomless pit." Here the beast is named for the first time in the book. He "ascendeth out of the bottomless pit," the abyss that was opened under the fifth trumpet (9:1-2). He will be described at length in chapters 13 and 17: a ruler empowered by the dragon, who makes war on God's people and demands the worship of the world. Here he appears suddenly, as the one who kills the witnesses. The book often mentions something briefly before explaining it fully later.

"Shall make war against them, and shall overcome them, and kill them." He makes war on them, overcomes them, and kills them. Daniel had seen it: "I beheld, and the same horn made war with the saints, and prevailed against them" (Daniel 7:21). Christ's servants "overcome" by faithfulness (2:7); the beast "overcomes" them by killing them. But his victory lasts three and a half days.

Figures of speech. "Make war ... overcome ... kill" is a *Climax* (a ladder of rising steps): each word goes further than the last.

> **Revelation 11:8** *And their dead bodies shall lie in the street of the great city, which spiritually is called Sodom and Egypt, where also our Lord was crucified.*

"And their dead bodies shall lie in the street of the great city." Their bodies (in Greek, singular, "their corpse," as if the two were one) lie in "the street," the broad open square of the city, where everyone passes.

"Which spiritually is called Sodom and Egypt." "Spiritually" means "by the spirit's way of speaking," figuratively, in God's view of it. God calls the city by two names. Sodom was the city of wickedness and perversion that God destroyed with fire from heaven (Genesis 19). Egypt was the land of bondage, which enslaved God's people and killed their sons (Exodus 1). Isaiah had already called Jerusalem's rulers by the first name: "Hear the word of the LORD, ye rulers of Sodom; give ear unto the law of our God, ye people of Gomorrah" (Isaiah 1:10). Jerusalem, the holy city, in that day has become like Sodom for its wickedness and like Egypt for its persecution of God's people.

"Where also our Lord was crucified." Here the text names the city beyond doubt. It is the city where Christ was crucified: Jerusalem. (The Majority Greek text and the critical texts read "their Lord.") The witnesses die where their Lord died. Christ had said, "it cannot be that a prophet perish out of Jerusalem" (Luke 13:33), and "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, which killest the prophets, and stonest them that are sent unto thee" (Luke 13:34).

Figures of speech. "Sodom and Egypt" are names used for a city that is like them, the figure *Antonomasia* (see 2:20): Jerusalem is called by the names of the cities it has come to resemble.

> **Revelation 11:9** *And they of the people and kindreds and tongues and nations shall see their dead bodies three days and an half, and shall not suffer their dead bodies to be put in graves.*

"And they of the people and kindreds and tongues and nations shall see their dead bodies three days and an half." People from all over the world see their bodies: "peoples and kindreds and tongues and nations," the fourfold phrase of the whole earth (see 5:9). They look at them for three and a half days. A day for each year of their prophecy.

"And shall not suffer their dead bodies to be put in graves." "Suffer" means allow. They will not let them be buried. In the East, to leave the dead unburied was the worst of insults. The psalmist mourned over Jerusalem's slain: "The dead bodies of thy servants have they given to be meat unto the fowls of the heaven ... and there was none to bury them" (Psalm 79:2-3). The bodies are left in the open as a trophy, a public display of the beast's victory over God's prophets.

The number. *Three days and an half*. The witnesses prophesied three years and a half (11:3); they lie dead three days and a half. A day for a year: the world rejoices over their bodies for a little while, in the same measure, broken and short. It is a half-week again (see 11:2).

Figures of speech. "People and kindreds and tongues and nations" is *Polysyndeton*: the whole world is there to see.

> **Revelation 11:10** *And they that dwell upon the earth shall rejoice over them, and make merry, and shall send gifts one to another; because these two prophets tormented them that dwelt on the earth.*

"And they that dwell upon the earth shall rejoice over them, and make merry." "They that dwell upon the earth": the book's name for the people of the Day of the Lord who oppose God (see 3:10). They "rejoice" and "make merry": they celebrate, feast and dance over the dead prophets.

"And shall send gifts one to another." As at a great festival, they exchange gifts. In Esther's day, when the Jews were delivered, they made "days of feasting and joy, and of sending portions one to another" (Esther 9:22). Here the whole world holds a feast of the same kind, but for the opposite reason: not because God's people are saved, but because God's prophets are dead.

"Because these two prophets tormented them that dwelt on the earth." Why such joy? Because the two prophets had "tormented" them. "Tormented" is *basanizō*, the word used of the locusts' sting (9:5). For three and a half years they had preached repentance, shut the heavens, turned waters to blood, and brought plagues. The world could not silence them. Now they are dead, and the world rejoices. When Ahab saw Elijah he said, "Art thou he that troubleth Israel?" (1 Kings 18:17). The prophet who tells the truth is always called a troubler by those who do not want to hear it.

The number. "These *two* prophets" (see 11:3).

Figures of speech. "Rejoice ... and make merry, and shall send gifts" is *Polysyndeton*: each part of the celebration is named, so that the reader sees how complete the world's rejoicing is.

> **Revelation 11:11** *And after three days and an half the Spirit of life from God entered into them, and they stood upon their feet; and great fear fell upon them which saw them.*

"And after three days and an half the Spirit of life from God entered into them." After three and a half days, as the world is still celebrating, God acts. "The Spirit of life from God": the breath of life, the life that comes from God alone. In the beginning God "formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul" (Genesis 2:7). Ezekiel saw the valley of dry bones, and God said, "Behold, I will cause breath to enter into you, and ye shall live" (Ezekiel 37:5). Now the same breath of life from God enters the dead witnesses.

"And they stood upon their feet." They stand up, alive. Ezekiel wrote of the dry bones: "So I prophesied as he commanded me, and the breath came into them, and they lived, and stood up upon their feet, an exceeding great army" (Ezekiel 37:10).

"And great fear fell upon them which saw them." The celebrating crowds stop. The two men they had left lying dead in the street are standing on their feet before their eyes. "Great fear fell" on them. They had thought they were rid of God's witnesses; now they see that God has raised them.

The number. *Three days and an half* again (see 11:9). After the counted time, life from God.

Figures of speech. "The Spirit of life" is life itself, given by God, the breath of Genesis 2:7 and Ezekiel 37.

> **Revelation 11:12** *And they heard a great voice from heaven saying unto them, Come up hither. And they ascended up to heaven in a cloud; and their enemies beheld them.*

"And they heard a great voice from heaven saying unto them, Come up hither." A great voice from heaven calls to them, in the very words that called John in 4:1: "Come up hither." But John went up "in the spirit," in vision; the two witnesses go up bodily, raised from the dead.

"And they ascended up to heaven in a cloud." They go up in a cloud, as their Lord did: "while they beheld, he was taken up; and a cloud received him out of their sight" (Acts 1:9). Elijah too was taken up: "Elijah went up by a whirlwind into heaven" (2 Kings 2:11).

"And their enemies beheld them." This is the difference from Christ's ascension. Christ ascended before His disciples only; the witnesses ascend before their enemies. The world that rejoiced at their death watches them rise into heaven. God vindicates His servants in the sight of those who killed them.

Figures of speech. The ascension "in a cloud" is to be taken as told, as Christ's ascension was.

To whom. The two witnesses are raised and taken up in the sight of their enemies in Jerusalem, during the Day of the Lord. This is not the gathering of the church of grace, which is "caught up together ... in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air" (1 Thessalonians 4:17) before that day, and not before the eyes of a watching world in the street of Jerusalem (Part One, Chapter 3 §C).

> **Revelation 11:13** *And the same hour was there a great earthquake, and the tenth part of the city fell, and in the earthquake were slain of men seven thousand: and the remnant were affrighted, and gave glory to the God of heaven.*

"And the same hour was there a great earthquake." At the very hour they rise (the Majority Greek text reads "in that day"), a great earthquake strikes the city.

"And the tenth part of the city fell." A tenth of Jerusalem falls in ruins.

"And in the earthquake were slain of men seven thousand." Seven thousand people die. The Greek says "names of men seven thousand" (*onomata anthrōpōn*): seven thousand persons, each known by name to God. (Bullinger lists "names" for persons as a *Metonymy*; see 3:4.) In Elijah's day God said He had kept "seven thousand in Israel, all the knees which have not bowed unto Baal" (1 Kings 19:18). Here seven thousand die.

"And the remnant were affrighted, and gave glory to the God of heaven." "The remnant": those who survived. They were terrified, and "gave glory to the God of heaven." This is the first time in all the judgments of this book that men on the earth give glory to God. After the sixth trumpet "the rest of the men ... repented not" (9:20). Here, in Jerusalem, after seeing the witnesses raised and taken up and feeling the earthquake, the remnant gives glory to God. "The God of heaven" is the title used of God by those who returned from Babylon (Ezra 1:2; Nehemiah 1:4; Daniel 2:44). It is the beginning of the turning of Jerusalem, which Zechariah foretold: "they shall look upon me whom they have pierced, and they shall mourn for him" (Zechariah 12:10).

The numbers. *The tenth part* of the city falls, and *seven thousand* men are slain. A tenth is a measured share, the tithe, the part that belongs to God (Leviticus 27:30); Isaiah spoke of "a tenth" left in the land (Isaiah 6:13). Seven thousand recalls Elijah: "Yet I have left me seven thousand in Israel, all the knees which have not bowed unto Baal" (1 Kings 19:18). There God kept seven thousand alive; here seven thousand die. Seven, spiritual perfection (see 1:4), joined to a thousand (see 5:11): a full and complete number. And "the remnant" give glory to God.

Figures of speech. "Names of men" is a *Metonymy*: names put for persons (Bullinger).

To whom. The remnant in Jerusalem who give glory to the God of heaven are of Israel, in the city where their Lord was crucified. Their fear and turning begin to fulfil God's promises to Israel in the Day of the Lord (Romans 11:26; Part One, Chapter 3 §C).

The pause is closed. Verse 11:14. "The second woe is past; and, behold, the third woe cometh quickly." This one verse ends the second scene on earth and turns the reader back to the trumpets.

> **Revelation 11:14** *The second woe is past; and, behold, the third woe cometh quickly.*

"The second woe is past." The sixth trumpet, the second woe, is over. Everything from 9:13 to 11:13 belonged to it: the loosing of the four angels and the army of horsemen, the mighty angel and the little book, the measuring of the temple, the two witnesses, their death, their resurrection and their ascension, and the earthquake (Appendix A). The first woe was declared past at 9:12; now the second.

"And, behold, the third woe cometh quickly." "Behold": take note. The third woe, the seventh trumpet, comes quickly, without delay. The angel swore there would be "time no longer" (10:6): now the delay is over. The seventh trumpet is about to sound, and with it "the mystery of God should be finished" (10:7). What the third woe brings is shown in the chapters that follow: the dragon cast down to the earth "having great wrath" (12:12), the beast, and the seven last plagues.

The numbers. The *second* woe past, the *third* coming (see 8:13).

Figures of speech. "Behold" is *Asterismos*. The counting of the woes is the book's own signpost (see 9:12).

In short. Six trumpets sound. The first four strike a third of the earth and its trees and grass, a third of the sea and its ships, a third of the fresh waters (made bitter by the star Wormwood), and a third of the lights of heaven, as the plagues once struck Egypt. An eagle cries woe on the earth-dwellers. At the fifth trumpet a fallen star opens the abyss, and locust-like creatures of the pit, led by the Destroyer, Abaddon or Apollyon, torment for five months all who lack God's seal, so that men long to die and cannot. At the sixth trumpet, the voice from the golden altar looses four angels bound at the Euphrates, and a vast host of horsemen kills a third of men with fire, smoke and brimstone; yet the rest do not repent of their idols, murders, sorceries, fornication or thefts. Then a mighty angel, clothed with a cloud and crowned with the rainbow, stands on sea and land with an open little book, swears by the Creator that there will be no more delay, and that the mystery of God foretold by the prophets will be finished at the seventh trumpet; the seven thunders are sealed, and John eats the book, sweet in the mouth and bitter in the belly, and is told he must prophesy again. He measures the temple of God in Jerusalem, whose court and city are trodden down by the nations for forty-two months. God's two witnesses, olive trees and lampstands like Zerubbabel and Joshua, with the powers of Elijah and Moses, prophesy in sackcloth for 1,260 days; then the beast from the abyss kills them, and the world rejoices over their unburied bodies for three and a half days, until the breath of life from God raises them and they go up to heaven in a cloud before their enemies. An earthquake kills seven thousand in the city, and the remnant gives glory to the God of heaven. The second woe is past.

Section G — 11:15–11:19. In Heaven: The Seventh Trumpet

Where it stands

The third scene in heaven (3H), the shortest of the seven. The second woe is past (11:14), and the third comes quickly. The seventh trumpet sounds, and heaven announces that the kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of the Lord and of His Christ. The elders give thanks, and in one verse name everything that is still to come in the rest of the book. Its effect on earth is told in the last half of verse 19 (3E). The seventh trumpet opens into the seven vials of chapter 16, and chapters 12–15 stand between (Part One, Chapter 8 §D).

Its structure

	Verses	Content
A	11:15a	The seventh trumpet sounds
B	11:15b	Great voices in heaven: "The kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of our Lord, and of his Christ"
B	11:16-18	The twenty-four elders: "We give thee thanks"
A	11:19a	The temple of God opened in heaven; the ark seen
—	11:19b	On earth: lightnings, voices, thunderings, an earthquake, great hail

The text

Revelation 11. 15 And the seventh angel sounded; and there were great voices in heaven, saying, The kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of our Lord, and of his Christ; and he shall reign for ever and ever. **16** And the four and twenty elders, which sat before God on their seats, fell upon their faces, and worshipped God, **17** Saying, We give thee thanks, O LORD God Almighty, which art, and wast, and art to come; because thou hast taken to thee thy great power, and hast reigned. **18** And the nations were angry, and thy wrath is come, and the time of the dead, that they should be judged, and that thou shouldest give reward unto thy servants the prophets, and to the saints, and them that fear thy name, small and great; and shouldest destroy them which destroy the earth. **19** And the temple of God was opened in heaven, and there was seen in his temple the ark of his testament: and there were lightnings, and voices, and thunderings, and an earthquake, and great hail.

Verse by verse

Where we are: in heaven. Verses 11:15-19, the seventh trumpet. The book announces ahead. This is the third scene in heaven (pair 3). Heaven declares the kingdom of the world to be the kingdom of the Lord and of His Christ, and the elders name everything still to come (11:18). All of this is announced here and carried out later: the King comes in 19:11-16, the dead are judged in 20:11-15. Heaven speaks of what God has decided as already done. The last half of 11:19 turns to the earth (pair 3 on earth): lightnings, voices, an earthquake, and great hail.

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

This is the moment the mighty angel swore to (10:5-7). The delay is over.

"And the seventh angel sounded." The last of the seven trumpets sounds. This is "the days of the voice of the seventh angel," when "the mystery of God should be finished, as he hath declared to his servants the prophets" (10:7). It is also the third woe (11:14), for what is joy in heaven is woe to the earth-dwellers who have refused God (12:12).

Remember Jericho. Seven priests with seven trumpets went round the city seven days, and on the seventh day seven times; and at the last blast "the wall fell down flat" (Joshua 6:20). Here the seventh trumpet sounds, and the walls of the world's rebellion are doomed.

"And there were great voices in heaven." Not one voice but many, loud and together: all heaven speaks. Who the speakers are, the text does not say; it is the united voice of heaven.

"Saying, The kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of our Lord, and of his Christ." Here is the announcement the whole book has been moving toward. The rule of the world, which men and Satan have held against God, passes to God and to His Christ. (The Majority Greek text and the critical texts read the singular, "The kingdom of the world is become the kingdom of our Lord, and of his Christ": the world's rule is one kingdom, and it changes hands.)

"Our Lord, and ... his Christ" means God and His Anointed. "Christ" (*christos*) means "anointed," the Greek form of the Hebrew "Messiah." The words come from the second psalm, where the kings of the earth rise up "against the LORD, and against his anointed" (Psalm 2:2). That psalm goes on: "Yet have I set my king upon my holy hill of Zion" (Psalm 2:6). God and His Anointed, whom the nations opposed, now take the kingdom.

"Are become": the Greek is an aorist, "has become." The thing is done, as far as heaven is concerned. It is announced here as accomplished; it is carried out on earth in the chapters that follow, when the King comes riding (19:11-16), the beast and false prophet are cast into the lake of fire (19:20), and the saints reign with Christ (20:4). Heaven speaks of what God has decided as already done.

"And he shall reign for ever and ever." "He": God, whose kingdom it is. His reign has no end. Daniel foretold it:

> **Daniel 2:44** — *And in the days of these kings shall the God of heaven set up a kingdom, which shall never be destroyed: and the kingdom shall not be left to other people, but it shall break in pieces and consume all these kingdoms, and it shall stand for ever.*

When Israel crossed the Red Sea, Moses sang, "The LORD shall reign for ever and ever" (Exodus 15:18). The song of the Red Sea is sung again in heaven, at the moment God takes the kingdom of the world. The angel told Mary of her Son, "he shall reign over the house of Jacob for ever; and of his kingdom there shall be no end" (Luke 1:33). Paul wrote that at the end Christ "shall have delivered up the kingdom to God, even the Father" (1 Corinthians 15:24), "that God may be all in all" (1 Corinthians 15:28).

The number. The *seventh* angel, the seventh trumpet: the last, and the third woe (see 8:13; 10:7). With it the kingdom is announced.

Figures of speech. "Are become" speaks of what will be done as already done: the figure Bullinger calls *Heterosis* of tense (the past for the future), used to show that it is certain. "Our Lord, and ... his Christ" names God and His Anointed together, as in Psalm 2:2.

To whom. This is the coming of God's kingdom on the earth, the kingdom the prophets foretold to Israel (Daniel 2:44; 7:14, 27) and the kingdom Christ taught His disciples to pray for, "Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven" (Matthew 6:10). It is the subject of the Day of the Lord (Part One, Chapter 3 §C).

> **Revelation 11:16** *And the four and twenty elders, which sat before God on their seats, fell upon their faces, and worshipped God,*

"And the four and twenty elders, which sat before God on their seats." The heavenly elders who lead heaven's worship (see 4:4), sitting on their thrones before God.

"Fell upon their faces, and worshipped God." At the announcement of the kingdom, they leave their thrones and fall on their faces. As in 4:10 and 5:14, the highest in heaven bow lowest before God. The kingdom has come, and they do not rise to share it; they fall down to worship the one whose kingdom it is.

The number. The *twenty-four* elders (see 4:4).

Figures of speech. "Fell upon their faces, and worshipped" is *Polysyndeton* of acts: each part of their worship is separate and complete.

> **Revelation 11:17** *Saying, We give thee thanks, O LORD God Almighty, which art, and wast, and art to come; because thou hast taken to thee thy great power, and hast reigned.*

"Saying, We give thee thanks." "Give thanks" is *eucharisteō* (Strong's G2168), the word from which "Eucharist" comes. The elders do not ask anything; they give thanks.

"O Lord God Almighty." The same title the living creatures cried without rest, "Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty" (4:8): the LORD of hosts (see 1:8).

"Which art, and wast, and art to come." God's name, as in 1:4, 8 and 4:8. (The Majority Greek text and the critical texts lack "and art to come," reading only "which art, and wast." Bullinger notes the reason: the one who was "to come" has now come. The coming is no longer future; it is here.)

"Because thou hast taken to thee thy great power, and hast reigned." God has always had all power. He is "the Almighty." But for long ages He has allowed men and Satan to rule the earth in rebellion against Him, and He has held back His power in patience. Now He "hast taken" His great power, taken it up and used it. And He "hast reigned": He has begun to rule openly over the earth. The psalmist sang, "The LORD reigneth; let the people tremble" (Psalm 99:1), and "The LORD reigneth, he is clothed with majesty" (Psalm 93:1). Isaiah foresaw the messenger who would say to Zion, "Thy God reigneth!" (Isaiah 52:7).

Figures of speech. "Hast taken ... and hast reigned" again speaks of the reign as begun, though its full working-out follows in the later chapters: *Heterosis* of tense, showing certainty.

> **Revelation 11:18** *And the nations were angry, and thy wrath is come, and the time of the dead, that they should be judged, and that thou shouldest give reward unto thy servants the prophets,*

> *and to the saints, and them that fear thy name, small and great; and shouldest destroy them which destroy the earth.*

In one verse the elders sum up everything that remains in the book. It is a table of contents for chapters 12 to 22.

"And the nations were angry." "Were angry" is *ōrgisthēsan*, from *orgē*, "wrath." The nations rage against God, as the second psalm foretold: "Why do the heathen rage, and the people imagine a vain thing? The kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers take counsel together, against the LORD, and against his anointed" (Psalm 2:1-2). Their rage will be gathered at Armageddon (16:14-16) and at the last battle (19:19).

"And thy wrath is come." Their wrath is answered by God's wrath. The same word: the nations were *orgē*-angry, and now God's *orgē* has come. This is the seven vials, "seven golden vials full of the wrath of God" (15:7), poured out in chapter 16.

"And the time of the dead, that they should be judged." "Time" is *kairos*, the appointed season (see 1:3). The dead do not judge themselves, and they are not judged at the moment of death. There is an appointed time when "the dead, small and great, stand before God; and the books were opened ... and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works" (20:12). That time is announced here.

"And that thou shouldest give reward unto thy servants the prophets, and to the saints, and them that fear thy name, small and great." The appointed time is also the time of reward. Three groups are named: God's servants the prophets; the saints, God's holy people of the Day of the Lord (see 5:8); and "them that fear thy name," those from among the nations who fear God. "Small and great": none too small to be forgotten, none too great to be excused. The psalmist wrote, "He will bless them that fear the LORD, both small and great" (Psalm 115:13). The reward is given at the first resurrection, when the faithful "lived and reigned with Christ" (20:4), and Christ says at the close of the book, "And, behold, I come quickly; and my reward is with me, to give every man according as his work shall be" (22:12). Daniel was told of the same: "And many of them that sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt. And they that be wise shall shine as the brightness of the firmament" (Daniel 12:2-3).

"And shouldest destroy them which destroy the earth." Those who have ruined the earth will themselves be ruined. "Destroy" is *diaphtheirō* (Strong's G1311), "to corrupt utterly, to ruin." Those who have corrupted the earth with their idolatry, violence, sorcery and immorality, above all Babylon, "which did corrupt the earth with her fornication" (19:2), and the beast and his kings, will themselves be destroyed (chapters 18–19). God set man in the garden "to dress it and to keep it" (Genesis 2:15); the destroyers of the earth will lose it.

Figures of speech. "Destroy them which destroy" uses the same word twice in different forms: the figure *Polyptoton*. The punishment matches the crime word for word. "The nations were angry, and thy wrath is come" sets man's anger and God's anger side by side with the same root, the figure *Antanaclasis* in

effect, showing that God's answer meets man's rebellion exactly. The whole verse is joined by "and ... and ... and," *Polysyndeton*: each coming event is named separately.

To whom. "The saints" and "thy servants the prophets" are God's people of the Day of the Lord and the prophets of Israel (see 5:8). The reward "according to ... work" is the rule of the Day of the Lord and the judgment (22:12; 20:12). Under grace the believer's hope is the gift of God, not a reward for works (Romans 6:23; Part One, Chapter 3 §C).

> **Revelation 11:19** *And the temple of God was opened in heaven, and there was seen in his temple the ark of his testament: and there were lightnings, and voices, and thunderings, and an earthquake, and great hail.*

"And the temple of God was opened in heaven." The temple (*naos*, the sanctuary) in heaven is thrown open. In the earthly tabernacle the most holy place was hidden behind the veil, and only the high priest could enter, once a year (Hebrews 9:7). When Christ died, "the veil of the temple was rent in twain from the top to the bottom" (Matthew 27:51). Now the heavenly sanctuary itself stands open, and John can see into it.

"And there was seen in his temple the ark of his testament." "Testament" is *diathēkē* (Strong's G1242), "covenant." The ark of the covenant was the most sacred object in Israel: a chest of acacia wood covered with gold, with the mercy seat on top and two golden cherubim over it (Exodus 25:10-22). Inside were the two tables of the law, God's covenant with Israel (Exodus 25:16; Deuteronomy 10:5). Above the mercy seat God's presence dwelt: "there I will meet with thee, and I will commune with thee from above the mercy seat" (Exodus 25:22). (The Majority Greek text reads "the ark of the covenant of the Lord.")

The earthly ark disappears from Scripture's record after Jerusalem fell to Babylon. Jeremiah foretold a day when it would no longer be needed or missed:

> **Jeremiah 3:16** — *And it shall come to pass, when ye be multiplied and increased in the land, in those days, saith the LORD, they shall say no more, The ark of the covenant of the LORD: neither shall it come to mind: neither shall they remember it; neither shall they visit it; neither shall that be done any more.*

But here John sees the ark in heaven: the heavenly ark, of which the earthly one was only a copy. Moses was told to make everything "after their pattern, which was shewed thee in the mount" (Exodus 25:40), and the writer to the Hebrews says the earthly things were "the patterns of things in the heavens" (Hebrews 9:23).

Why is the ark seen now, at the seventh trumpet? Because the ark is the sign of God's covenant with Israel. At the moment the kingdom of the world becomes the kingdom of God and His Christ, God shows John the ark of His covenant: He remembers His promises to Israel, and He will keep them. The next chapter begins with a woman clothed with the sun, who is Israel (12:1), and the dragon's war against her.

"And there were lightnings, and voices, and thunderings, and an earthquake, and great hail." This last half of the verse is the scene on earth (Appendix A). The signs that came from the throne in 4:5 ("lightnings and thunderings and voices") came to the earth at the seventh seal with an earthquake added (8:5). Now, at the seventh trumpet, "great hail" is added too. At the seventh vial they will come again with "a great earthquake, such as was not since men were upon the earth" and hail "every stone about the weight of a talent" (16:18-21). Each time they are greater. (The Majority Greek text lacks "and an earthquake" here.)

Figures of speech. "Lightnings, and voices, and thunderings, and an earthquake, and great hail" is *Polysyndeton*: each sign stands by itself.

To whom. The ark of God's covenant is the sign of His covenant with Israel (Exodus 25:16; Deuteronomy 10:5). Its appearance at the seventh trumpet looks to God's faithfulness to Israel in the Day of the Lord (Part One, Chapter 3 §C).

In short. The seventh trumpet sounds, and great voices in heaven proclaim that the kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of our Lord and of His Christ, and that He will reign for ever and ever. The twenty-four elders fall on their faces and give thanks to the Lord God Almighty, who has taken His great power and begun to reign. In one verse they name all that is still to come: the raging of the nations and the wrath of God, the time of the dead to be judged, the reward of God's servants the prophets, the saints and all who fear His name, small and great, and the destruction of those who destroy the earth. Then the temple of God in heaven is opened, and the ark of His covenant is seen, the sign that God remembers His promises; and on earth there are lightnings, voices, thunderings, an earthquake and great hail.

Section H — 12:1–12:12. In Heaven: The Woman, the Child, and the Dragon

Where it stands

The fourth scene in heaven (4H), at the centre of the seven pairs. The seventh trumpet has sounded, and the kingdom has been announced (11:15). Now the book steps back (Part One, Chapter 8 §D) to show the war behind all the judgments: the dragon against the woman and her child. Here the enemy is named and shown for what he is, and the reader learns why the earth suffers such woe in the last days. This scene explains the scene on earth that follows (Section I), where the dragon, cast down, makes war through the two beasts.

Its structure

	Verses	Content
A	12:1a	A great sign in heaven
B	12:1b-5	The woman and the dragon: the woman clothed with the sun, in travail; the great red dragon; the man child born and caught up to God
B	12:6	The woman's flight into the wilderness, 1,260 days
B	12:7-9	War in heaven: Michael and his angels against the dragon; the dragon cast out
A	12:10-12	A loud voice in heaven: rejoicing in heaven, and the reasons; woe to the earth, and the reason ("he knoweth that he hath but a short time")

The text

Revelation 12. 1 And there appeared a great wonder in heaven; a woman clothed with the sun, and the moon under her feet, and upon her head a crown of twelve stars: **2** And she being with child cried, travailing in birth, and pained to be delivered. **3** And there appeared another wonder in heaven; and behold a great red dragon, having seven heads and ten horns, and seven crowns upon his heads. **4** And his tail drew the third part of the stars of heaven, and did cast them to the earth: and the dragon stood before the woman which was ready to be delivered, for to devour her child as soon as it was born. **5** And she brought forth a man child, who was to rule all nations with a rod of iron: and her child was caught up unto God, and to his throne. **6** And the woman fled into the wilderness, where she hath a place prepared of God, that they should feed her there a thousand two hundred and threescore days. **7** And there was war in heaven: Michael and his angels fought against the dragon; and the dragon fought and his angels, **8** And prevailed not; neither was their place found any more in heaven. **9** And the great dragon was cast out, that old serpent, called the Devil, and Satan, which deceiveth the whole world: he was cast out into the earth, and his angels were cast out with him. **10** And I heard a loud voice saying in heaven, Now is come salvation, and strength, and the kingdom of our God, and the power of his Christ: for the accuser of our brethren is cast down, which accused them before our God day and night. **11** And they overcame him by the blood of the Lamb, and by the word of their testimony; and they loved not their lives unto the death. **12** Therefore rejoice, ye heavens, and ye that dwell in them. Woe to the inhabiters of the earth and of the sea! for the devil is come down unto you, having great wrath, because he knoweth that he hath but a short time.

Verse by verse

Where we are: in heaven. Verses 12:1-6. The book steps back. This is the fourth scene in heaven (pair 4), at the centre of the book. Here the book goes back in time. The seventh trumpet has sounded, but now John is shown a sign that begins with the birth of the man child, who "was caught up unto God, and to his throne" (12:5): that is, the birth and ascension of Christ, long before the Day of the Lord. The book steps back to show the war behind all the judgments: the dragon against the woman and her child. Verse 12:6 then looks forward to the woman's flight, which is told in full on earth in 12:13-17.



Albrecht Dürer, The Apocalypse (woodcut, 1498): the woman clothed with the sun, and the great red dragon with seven heads (12:1-6).

> **Revelation 12:1** *And there appeared a great wonder in heaven; a woman clothed with the sun, and the moon under her feet, and upon her head a crown of twelve stars:*

"And there appeared a great wonder in heaven." "Wonder" is *sēmeion* (Strong's G4592), "a sign": something that points beyond itself to something else. It is the word John uses in his Gospel for Christ's miracles, which pointed to who He was (John 2:11). So John tells the reader plainly: what follows is a sign, a picture with a meaning. It is "great," and it "appeared in heaven," set in the sky for all to see, as a sign written across the heavens.

"A woman clothed with the sun, and the moon under her feet, and upon her head a crown of twelve stars." The woman is clothed with the sun, stands on the moon, and wears a crown of twelve stars. Who is she?

Scripture gives the key in the dreams of Joseph, Jacob's son:

> **Genesis 37:9-10** — *And he dreamed yet another dream, and told it his brethren, and said, Behold, I have dreamed a dream more; and, behold, the sun and the moon and the eleven stars made obeisance to me. And he told it to his father, and to his brethren: and his father rebuked him, and said unto him, What is this dream that thou hast dreamed? Shall I and thy mother and thy brethren indeed come to bow down ourselves to thee to the earth?*

Jacob understood the dream at once. The sun was himself, Jacob, whose other name is Israel; the moon was Joseph's mother; the stars were Joseph's brothers, the fathers of the tribes. With Joseph himself they made twelve. Sun, moon and twelve stars: the family of Israel, the nation God chose.

So the woman is Israel. She is clothed with the glory God gave her, crowned with the twelve tribes. Paul lists Israel's glories: "Who are Israelites; to whom pertaineth the adoption, and the glory, and the covenants, and the giving of the law, and the service of God, and the promises; Whose are the fathers, and of whom as concerning the flesh Christ came" (Romans 9:4-5). The next verses show her giving birth to the child who will rule the nations, Christ, who came of Israel "as concerning the flesh." She cannot be the church, for Christ was not born of the church; and she cannot be Mary alone, for after the child is caught up to God, the woman flees into the wilderness for 1,260 days and is persecuted by the dragon (12:6, 13-17). Israel, God's chosen nation, is the woman (Appendix C, Question 10).

The number. A crown of *twelve* stars. Twelve is the number of governmental perfection (see 4:4) and of Israel's twelve tribes. In Joseph's dream "the sun and the moon and the eleven stars made obeisance" to him (Genesis 37:9): the sun and moon were his father and mother, and the stars his brothers, so that with Joseph himself they were twelve. The woman crowned with twelve stars is Israel (Appendix C, Question 10).

Figures of speech. The woman is a *sign* (the text's own word), and the book points to its meaning. The sun, moon and stars come from Joseph's dream, where they stand for Jacob's family: Scripture explains its own picture.

To whom. The woman is Israel, crowned with the twelve tribes. In the administration of grace Israel's place is set aside for a time, as Paul wrote, "blindness in part is happened to Israel, until the fulness of the Gentiles be come in" (Romans 11:25). In the Day of the Lord, God takes up His dealings with Israel again, and she stands at the centre of the book (Part One, Chapter 3 §C).

> **Revelation 12:2** *And she being with child cried, travailing in birth, and pained to be delivered.*

"And she being with child cried, travailing in birth." She is pregnant, and in labour. "Cried" is in the imperfect tense: she kept crying out. "Travailing" (*ōdinousa*, from *ōdin*, "birth-pang") means in the pains of childbirth.

"And pained to be delivered." "Pained" is *basanizomenē*, "being tormented," the word used of the torment of the locusts (9:5). She is in agony, longing to bring forth.

The prophets often pictured Israel as a woman in labour. In times of trouble, Israel cried to God like a woman in pain:

> **Isaiah 26:17-18** — *Like as a woman with child, that draweth near the time of her delivery, is in pain, and crieth out in her pangs; so have we been in thy sight, O LORD. We have been with child, we have been in pain, we have as it were brought forth wind; we have not wrought any deliverance in the earth; neither have the inhabitants of the world fallen.*

Micah wrote of the birth of the ruler from Bethlehem: "Be in pain, and labour to bring forth, O daughter of Zion, like a woman in travail" (Micah 4:10), and then, "But thou, Bethlehem Ephratah ... out of thee shall he come forth unto me that is to be ruler in Israel ... Therefore will he give them up, until the time that she which travaileth hath brought forth" (Micah 5:2-3).

Israel's whole history, from Abraham to Bethlehem, was a long labour to bring forth the promised seed, the Messiah. All the promises, all the covenants, all the sufferings of the nation, were the birth-pangs of the one who was to come. God had said in the garden that the seed of the woman would bruise the serpent's head (Genesis 3:15). The seed was coming, and the woman cried out in pain to bring Him forth.

Figures of speech. The woman in labour is a *Metaphor* the prophets themselves used for Israel (Isaiah 26:17; Micah 4:10).

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

"And there appeared another wonder in heaven." A second sign (*sēmeion*), set in heaven beside the first.

"And behold a great red dragon." "Behold": look at this! (*Asterismos*). A "dragon" (*drakōn*, Strong's G1404) in Greek is a great serpent, a monster. In the Greek Old Testament the word is used for the sea monster and the serpent: "In that day the LORD with his sore and great and strong sword shall punish leviathan the piercing serpent, even leviathan that crooked serpent; and he shall slay the dragon that is in the sea" (Isaiah 27:1). God called Pharaoh "the great dragon that lieth in the midst of his rivers" (Ezekiel 29:3).

Who is the dragon? The book itself tells us in verse 9: "the great dragon ... that old serpent, called the Devil, and Satan." There is no need to guess.

He is "red," *purros*, fiery red, the colour of the second horse that took peace from the earth (6:4), the colour of fire and blood. Christ said of him, "He was a murderer from the beginning, and abode not in the truth, because there is no truth in him" (John 8:44).

"Having seven heads and ten horns." The dragon has seven heads and ten horns. These are the same seven heads and ten horns the beast of chapter 13 will have (13:1), and the scarlet beast of chapter 17 (17:3). The beast is the dragon's image on earth; the dragon gives him "his power, and his seat, and great authority" (13:2). Chapter 17 explains the heads and horns: the seven heads are "seven mountains" and "seven kings," and the ten horns "are ten kings" (17:9-12). Daniel's fourth beast also had ten horns: "it was diverse from all the beasts that were before it; and it had ten horns" (Daniel 7:7). Behind the kingdoms of the world that oppose God stands the dragon.

"And seven crowns upon his heads." "Crowns" here are *diadēmata*, royal crowns, the crowns of kings, not the victor's wreath (*stephanos*). The dragon claims to be king. Christ called him "the prince of this world" (John 12:31), and Paul "the god of this world" (2 Corinthians 4:4). When he tempted Christ, he showed Him "all the kingdoms of the world, and the glory of them; And saith unto him, All these things will I give thee, if thou wilt fall down and worship me" (Matthew 4:8-9). He wears the crowns of the world's kingdoms. But at His coming Christ wears "many crowns" (*diadēmata*, 19:12): the true King takes them all.

The numbers. *Seven* heads, *ten* horns, *seven* crowns. Seven heads and seven crowns are rule made complete: the dragon claims all the authority of the world's kingdoms (Luke 4:5-6). Ten horns are ten kings (17:12), a complete number of earthly powers (see 2:10), as Daniel's fourth beast had ten horns, "ten kings that shall arise" (Daniel 7:24). The crowns here are *diadēmata*, royal crowns: the dragon's seven heads wear them. The beast from the sea will wear ten (13:1).

Figures of speech. "Behold" is *Asterismos*. The dragon is a *sign*, and the book names what it stands for (12:9).

> **Revelation 12:4** *And his tail drew the third part of the stars of heaven, and did cast them to the earth: and the dragon stood before the woman which was ready to be delivered, for to devour her child as soon as it was born.*

"And his tail drew the third part of the stars of heaven, and did cast them to the earth." With a sweep of his tail the dragon drags down a third of the stars of heaven and throws them to the earth. What are these stars? The book has already said that stars can stand for angels: "The seven stars are the angels of the seven churches" (1:20). Verse 9 speaks of "his angels" cast out with him. The stars swept down by the dragon are the angels who followed Satan in his rebellion. Daniel saw a horn that "waxed great, even to the host of heaven; and it cast down some of the host and of the stars to the ground, and stamped upon them" (Daniel 8:10). Jude speaks of "the angels which kept not their first estate, but left their own habitation" (Jude 6).

"And the dragon stood before the woman which was ready to be delivered, for to devour her child as soon as it was born." Here is the picture of all Satan's history with God's purpose. He stands before the woman as she is about to give birth, waiting to devour the child the moment it is born. Ever since God said to the serpent in Eden, "I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel" (Genesis 3:15), Satan has waited to destroy the promised seed.

He tried again and again. When the child was born in Bethlehem, Herod sent soldiers to kill Him:

> **Matthew 2:16** — *Then Herod, when he saw that he was mocked of the wise men, was exceeding wroth, and sent forth, and slew all the children that were in Bethlehem, and in all the coasts thereof, from two years old and under, according to the time which he had diligently enquired of the wise men.*

At Nazareth the people tried to throw Him off a cliff (Luke 4:29). In the end Satan entered into Judas (Luke 22:3), and Christ was crucified. But the dragon could not devour Him.

The number. *The third part* of the stars of heaven. Stars are angels in this book (1:20; 9:1). A third part is a measured share (see 8:7): the dragon drew a third of heaven's host after him, not all of it.

Figures of speech. The sweep of the dragon's tail is part of the sign; the stars stand for angels, as the book itself shows (1:20; 12:9): a *Metaphor*. "To devour her child" is a *Metaphor* drawn from a wild beast waiting for its prey.

> **Revelation 12:5** *And she brought forth a man child, who was to rule all nations with a rod of iron: and her child was caught up unto God, and to his throne.*

"And she brought forth a man child." "Man child" is *huion arsena*, literally "a son, a male": the double word stresses that this is a male child, a son. Isaiah used the same words of Zion: "Before she travailed, she brought forth; before her pain came, she was delivered of a man child ... for as soon as Zion travailed, she brought forth her children" (Isaiah 66:7-8).

"Who was to rule all nations with a rod of iron." Who is the child? This phrase answers the question. "To rule all nations with a rod of iron" is the promise of the second psalm to God's King: "Thou shalt break them with a rod of iron; thou shalt dash them in pieces like a potter's vessel" (Psalm 2:9). In this book it is said of Christ at His coming: "and he shall rule them with a rod of iron" (19:15). The man child is Christ. Isaiah foretold Him: "For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given: and the government shall be upon his shoulder" (Isaiah 9:6). He was born of Israel: "of whom as concerning the flesh Christ came" (Romans 9:5).

"And her child was caught up unto God, and to his throne." "Caught up" is *harpazō* (Strong's G726), "to seize, to snatch away, to carry off by force." The child is snatched up out of the dragon's reach, to God and to His throne. This is Christ's ascension: "while they beheld, he was taken up; and a cloud received him out of their sight" (Acts 1:9). The writer to the Hebrews says, "We have such an high priest, who is set on the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in the heavens" (Hebrews 8:1). Christ said to Laodicea, "I ... am set down with my Father in his throne" (3:21).

Notice what this verse leaves out. It goes in one breath from Christ's birth to His ascension. His life, His teaching, His death and resurrection are not named here. Why? Because the subject of this sign is the dragon's attempt to devour the child, and its failure. The dragon waited at the birth to devour Him; the next thing we see is the child safe on the throne of God. Everything between, His death and resurrection included, is summed up in His being caught up out of the dragon's reach. By His death, His resurrection,

and His ascension the child the dragon meant to destroy now sits at God's right hand (Appendix C, Question 10).

Figures of speech. The verse passes over Christ's whole life between His birth and His ascension: the figure Bullinger calls *Ellipsis*, an omission the reader is meant to fill from what he knows, so that the point, the dragon's failure, stands out.

To whom. "Caught up" (*harpazō*) is the same verb Paul uses of the church being "caught up" to meet the Lord in the air (1 Thessalonians 4:17). But here it is the man child who is caught up, and the man child is Christ, who will "rule all nations with a rod of iron" (12:5; compare Psalm 2:9; 19:15). This is His ascension, not the gathering of the church (Appendix C, Question 10).

> **Revelation 12:6** *And the woman fled into the wilderness, where she hath a place prepared of God, that they should feed her there a thousand two hundred and threescore days.*

"And the woman fled into the wilderness." With her child safe in heaven, the dragon turns on the woman, and she flees. The book returns to this flight in verses 13-16 and tells it more fully; here it is told in brief.

When does she flee? Christ told those in Judea what to do when the time came:

> **Matthew 24:15-16** — *When ye therefore shall see the abomination of desolation, spoken of by Daniel the prophet, stand in the holy place, (whoso readeth, let him understand:) Then let them which be in Judaea flee into the mountains:*

And He added, "For then shall be great tribulation, such as was not since the beginning of the world" (Matthew 24:21). The woman's flight is Israel's flight in that time.

"Where she hath a place prepared of God." God has made ready a place for her. She does not flee into nothing. Just as God prepared the wilderness for Israel after the exodus, when "he led them on safely, so that they feared not" (Psalm 78:53), He prepares a place for her now.

"That they should feed her there a thousand two hundred and threescore days." "They": those God appoints. She is fed there, as God fed Israel with manna in the wilderness for forty years (Exodus 16:35), and as He fed Elijah by the ravens at the brook Cherith and by the widow of Zarephath, for the three and a half years of drought (1 Kings 17:4-16). God does not merely hide her; He feeds her. For 1,260 days, three and a half years (see 11:2-3; Appendix C, Question 15), she is kept and fed in the wilderness, while the dragon rages on the earth.

The number. *A thousand two hundred and threescore days*: the 1,260 days of 11:3, the same half-week (see 11:2). The woman is fed in the wilderness for the whole time of the trouble.

Figures of speech. "They should feed her" uses an indefinite "they," a Hebrew way of speaking (*Idiom*) for "she should be fed": who feeds her is less important than that God provides.

To whom. The woman's flight is Israel's flight in the great tribulation, as Christ foretold to those "in Judaea" (Matthew 24:16). God's care for her in the wilderness is His faithfulness to Israel in the Day of the Lord (Part One, Chapter 3 §C).

In heaven. Verses 12:7-12, war in heaven. The scene stays in heaven: Michael and his angels fight the dragon, and he is cast out to the earth (12:7-9). A loud voice in heaven rejoices, and warns the earth that the devil has come down "having great wrath, because he knoweth that he hath but a short time" (12:10-12). From here the book moves forward again, into the time of the beast.



Albrecht Dürer, The Apocalypse (woodcut, 1498): Michael and his angels fight against the dragon (12:7-9).

> **Revelation 12:7** *And there was war in heaven: Michael and his angels fought against the dragon; and the dragon fought and his angels,*

The scene now turns from earth back to heaven, and a war breaks out there.

"And there was war in heaven." "War" is *polemos*, battle, open warfare. In heaven itself there is fighting.

"Michael and his angels fought against the dragon." Michael is named. His name in Hebrew means "Who is like God?" He is called an archangel: "Yet Michael the archangel, when contending with the devil he disputed about the body of Moses, durst not bring against him a railing accusation, but said, The Lord rebuke thee" (Jude 9). In Daniel he is "one of the chief princes" (Daniel 10:13), "Michael your

prince" (Daniel 10:21), the angel charged with Israel. Daniel was told that in the time of the end he would stand up:

> **Daniel 12:1** — *And at that time shall Michael stand up, the great prince which standeth for the children of thy people: and there shall be a time of trouble, such as never was since there was a nation even to that same time: and at that time thy people shall be delivered, every one that shall be found written in the book.*

Here Michael stands up. The great prince of Israel leads the angels of God against the dragon, and the time of trouble such as never was begins.

"And the dragon fought and his angels." The dragon fights back, with his own angels, the stars he swept down (12:4). Satan is not alone; he has an army of fallen angels. Paul wrote, "we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places" (Ephesians 6:12).

When does this war take place? The book places it here, in the time of the end, when the woman flees and Satan is cast down with "but a short time" left (12:12). The text gives no other date, and this study does not date it further.

Figures of speech. "Michael and his angels ... the dragon ... and his angels" sets the two armies side by side, the figure *Antithesis*.

> **Revelation 12:8** *And prevailed not; neither was their place found any more in heaven.*

"And prevailed not." The dragon and his angels lose. "Prevailed" is *ischusen*, "had strength": they did not have the strength to win.

"Neither was their place found any more in heaven." They lose their place in heaven. Until now Satan has had access to heaven. In Job's day "there was a day when the sons of God came to present themselves before the LORD, and Satan came also among them" (Job 1:6), and there he accused Job: "Doth Job fear God for nought?" (Job 1:9). In Zechariah's vision Joshua the high priest stood before the angel of the LORD, "and Satan standing at his right hand to resist him" (Zechariah 3:1). That access is now ended for ever. There is no more place for him in heaven.

Figures of speech. "Neither was their place found any more" is a *Tapeinosis*-like understatement: it says they were not found there, and means that they were driven out completely and for good.

> **Revelation 12:9** *And the great dragon was cast out, that old serpent, called the Devil, and Satan, which deceiveth the whole world: he was cast out into the earth, and his angels were cast out with him.*

"And the great dragon was cast out." "Cast out" is *eblēthē*, "was thrown." He does not leave; he is thrown out.

"That old serpent, called the Devil, and Satan." The book now explains its own sign (Part One, Chapter 5 §B). It gives the dragon four names, each telling something about him:

- **"The great dragon":** the monster, the destroyer, fierce and cruel.
- **"That old serpent":** the serpent of Eden. "Now the serpent was more subtil than any beast of the field which the LORD God had made" (Genesis 3:1). He is "old," *archaios*, "ancient, from the beginning": the same enemy who deceived Eve in the garden.
- **"The Devil":** *diabolos* (Strong's G1228), "slanderer, accuser" (see 2:10). He slanders God to men and men to God.
- **"Satan":** a Hebrew word meaning "adversary," one who opposes. He is God's enemy and man's.

"Which deceiveth the whole world." "Deceiveth" is *planaō*, "to lead astray, to make wander" (see 2:20). This is his chief work: deception. He began in Eden: "The serpent beguiled me, and I did eat" (Genesis 3:13). He deceives "the whole world," all mankind. When he is bound for a thousand years, it is "that he should deceive the nations no more" (20:3), and when he is loosed he "shall go out to deceive the nations" (20:8).

"He was cast out into the earth, and his angels were cast out with him." He is thrown down to the earth, and his angels with him. Christ had said, "I beheld Satan as lightning fall from heaven" (Luke 10:18), and "Now is the judgment of this world: now shall the prince of this world be cast out" (John 12:31). Here it happens.

Figures of speech. Bullinger names the giving of many names to one person the figure *Polyonymia* ("many names"). Each name shows another side of the enemy: dragon, serpent, slanderer, adversary.

> **Revelation 12:10** *And I heard a loud voice saying in heaven, Now is come salvation, and strength, and the kingdom of our God, and the power of his Christ: for the accuser of our brethren is cast down, which accused them before our God day and night.*

Now a loud voice in heaven celebrates the victory.

"And I heard a loud voice saying in heaven." Whose voice, the text does not say; but it speaks of "our God" and "our brethren," so the speakers are in heaven and count God's people on earth as their brothers.

"Now is come salvation, and strength, and the kingdom of our God, and the power of his Christ." "Now": at this moment. With the dragon cast out, four things have come. "Salvation" (*sōtēria*): deliverance. "Strength" (*dunamis*): God's power at work. "The kingdom of our God": His rule. "The power of his Christ": "power" here is *exousia*, "authority," the right to rule, given to His Anointed. What was announced at the seventh trumpet (11:15) is now being carried out: the enemy is thrown out of heaven.

"For the accuser of our brethren is cast down." Here is the reason for the rejoicing. "Accuser" is *katēgōr*, a prosecutor who brings charges in court. The Devil, the slanderer, has been bringing charges against God's people. Now he is thrown down.

"Which accused them before our God day and night." Day and night, without stopping, he accused them before God. That is what he did with Job: "Put forth thine hand now, and touch all that he hath,

and he will curse thee to thy face" (Job 1:11). That is what he did with Joshua the high priest, standing in filthy garments before the angel (Zechariah 3:1-3). But God answered him: "The LORD rebuke thee, O Satan; even the LORD that hath chosen Jerusalem rebuke thee: is not this a brand plucked out of the fire?" (Zechariah 3:2).

Figures of speech. "Salvation, and strength, and the kingdom ... and the power" is *Polysyndeton*: each blessing is named and celebrated separately. "Day and night" names the two halves of time for all time, *Synecdoche*.

To whom. "Our brethren" are God's people on earth in the Day of the Lord, whom Satan accuses and who overcome him "by the blood of the Lamb" (12:11). Under grace Paul asks, "Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifieth" (Romans 8:33). The accuser's case against all of God's people fails because of Christ's blood; here the accuser himself is thrown out of heaven in the Day of the Lord (Part One, Chapter 3 §C).

> **Revelation 12:11** *And they overcame him by the blood of the Lamb, and by the word of their testimony; and they loved not their lives unto the death.*

"And they overcame him." "Overcame" is *nikaō*, the word of every promise in the seven messages, "To him that overcometh" (2:7). Here are the overcomers. They "overcame him," the accuser himself. How?

"By the blood of the Lamb." First, by the blood of the Lamb. Satan accused them of their sins; the blood of the Lamb answered every accusation. They had "washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb" (7:14). No charge could stand against those whom the Lamb's blood had cleansed. By His death, His resurrection, and His ascension the Lamb has made them clean.

"And by the word of their testimony." Second, by their testimony: their witness to Christ, which they spoke and would not take back. The souls under the altar were slain "for the word of God, and for the testimony which they held" (6:9).

"And they loved not their lives unto the death." Third, they did not hold on to their own lives. They were willing to die rather than deny Him. Christ had said, "He that loveth his life shall lose it; and he that hateth his life in this world shall keep it unto life eternal" (John 12:25), and to Smyrna, "be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life" (2:10). Satan's last weapon is the threat of death. Those who do not love their lives unto death have taken that weapon from him.

Figures of speech. Bullinger lists "They loved not their lives unto the death" under *Tapeinosis* (lessening a thing in order to increase it): "The fact implied is that they disregarded their life to the point of death, and that because there was One whom they loved more than life and for whose sake they willingly gave it up." The three means of victory are joined by "and," *Polysyndeton*.

To whom. These overcomers are God's people in the Day of the Lord, who face the accuser and the beast and give their lives rather than deny Christ. The promises to "him that overcometh" in the seven messages are kept to them (2:7, 11; 3:21; Part One, Chapter 3 §C).

> **Revelation 12:12** *Therefore rejoice, ye heavens, and ye that dwell in them. Woe to the inhabiters of the earth and of the sea! for the devil is come down unto you, having great wrath, because he knoweth that he hath but a short time.*

"Therefore rejoice, ye heavens, and ye that dwell in them." "Therefore": because the accuser is thrown out. Heaven is told to rejoice. "Ye that dwell in them": literally "ye that tabernacle in them," those who have their dwelling in heaven. Isaiah had called on the heavens to sing: "Sing, O ye heavens; for the LORD hath done it: shout, ye lower parts of the earth" (Isaiah 44:23).

"Woe to the inhabiters of the earth and of the sea!" But heaven's gain is the earth's loss. (The Majority Greek text and the critical texts read simply "Woe to the earth and to the sea.") This is the third woe, announced in 8:13 and 11:14: the dragon on the earth.

"For the devil is come down unto you, having great wrath." "Great wrath" is *thumos megas*, "great fury," a boiling rage. The devil, thrown out of heaven, comes down to the earth in a fury. He can no longer accuse in heaven; he can only rage on the earth.

"Because he knoweth that he hath but a short time." Why such fury? Because he knows his time is short. "Time" here is *kairos*, the appointed season (see 1:3). He knows God's timetable. He has three and a half years (12:6, 14; 13:5) before Christ comes and he is bound (20:1-3). A beaten enemy who knows the end is near is the most dangerous of all. Like a cornered animal, he will do all the damage he can before the end.

Figures of speech. "Rejoice, ye heavens" is the figure *Apostrophe*: the heavens are spoken to directly, as if they could hear. The rejoicing of heaven and the woe of the earth are set side by side, *Antithesis*.

In short. At the centre of the book a great sign appears in heaven: a woman clothed with the sun, the moon under her feet, crowned with twelve stars, in the pains of childbirth. She is Israel, the family of Jacob in Joseph's dream. A second sign appears: a great red dragon with seven heads, ten horns and seven royal crowns, whose tail sweeps a third of the stars, his angels, down to the earth; he stands before the woman to devour her child as soon as it is born. She gives birth to a son who is to rule all nations with a rod of iron, Christ, and the child is caught up to God and His throne, out of the dragon's reach. The woman flees into the wilderness to a place God has prepared, where she is fed for 1,260 days. Then there is war in heaven: Michael, Israel's great prince, and his angels fight the dragon and his angels, and the dragon is thrown out, named at last as the old serpent, the Devil and Satan, the deceiver of the whole world. A loud voice in heaven rejoices that salvation and the kingdom of God have come, and that the accuser of the brethren is cast down; they overcame him by the blood of the Lamb, by the word of their testimony, and by not loving their lives unto death. Heaven rejoices, but woe to the earth: the devil has come down in great wrath, knowing that his time is short.

Section I — 12:13–13:18. On Earth: The Dragon and the Two Beasts

Where it stands

The fourth scene on earth (4E), explained by Section H. The dragon, cast down to the earth in great wrath (12:12), persecutes the woman, and when she is protected he makes war on the rest of her seed through two beasts: one from the sea, one from the earth. Here the reader meets the two men through whom Satan rules the world in the last days: a king who demands worship, and a false prophet who makes men give it. Paul foretold the same: "that man of sin ... whose coming is after the working of Satan with all power and signs and lying wonders" (2 Thessalonians 2:3, 9).

Its structure

	Verses	Content
A	12:13a	The dragon cast unto the earth
B	12:13b-17	The dragon and the woman: he persecutes her; she flies to the wilderness; the flood; war on the remnant of her seed
A	13:1a	The dragon standing on the sand of the sea
Y	13:1b-10	The beast from the sea: the vision; his origin; his description; his power from the dragon; his deeds; the call to hear; the lesson ("the patience and the faith of the saints")
Z	13:11-18	The beast from the earth: the vision; his origin; his description; his authority from the first beast; his deeds; the lesson ("Here is wisdom"); the call to count

The two beasts are described in the same order, line by line, so that the second is seen as the servant of the first.

The text

Revelation 12. 13 And when the dragon saw that he was cast unto the earth, he persecuted the woman which brought forth the man child. **14** And to the woman were given two wings of a great eagle, that she might fly into the wilderness, into her place, where she is nourished for a time, and times, and half a time, from the face of the serpent. **15** And the serpent cast out of his mouth water as a flood after the woman, that he might cause her to be carried away of the flood. **16** And the earth helped the woman, and the earth opened her mouth, and swallowed up the flood which the dragon cast out of his mouth. **17** And the dragon was wroth with the woman, and went to make war with the remnant of her seed, which keep the commandments of God, and have the testimony of Jesus Christ.

Revelation 13. 1 And I stood upon the sand of the sea, and saw a beast rise up out of the sea, having seven heads and ten horns, and upon his horns ten crowns, and upon his heads the name of blasphemy. **2** And the beast which I saw was like unto a leopard, and his feet were as the feet of a bear, and his

mouth as the mouth of a lion: and the dragon gave him his power, and his seat, and great authority. **3** And I saw one of his heads as it were wounded to death; and his deadly wound was healed: and all the world wondered after the beast. **4** And they worshipped the dragon which gave power unto the beast: and they worshipped the beast, saying, Who is like unto the beast? who is able to make war with him? **5** And there was given unto him a mouth speaking great things and blasphemies; and power was given unto him to continue forty and two months. **6** And he opened his mouth in blasphemy against God, to blaspheme his name, and his tabernacle, and them that dwell in heaven. **7** And it was given unto him to make war with the saints, and to overcome them: and power was given him over all kindreds, and tongues, and nations. **8** And all that dwell upon the earth shall worship him, whose names are not written in the book of life of the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world. **9** If any man have an ear, let him hear. **10** He that leadeth into captivity shall go into captivity: he that killeth with the sword must be killed with the sword. Here is the patience and the faith of the saints. **11** And I beheld another beast coming up out of the earth; and he had two horns like a lamb, and he spake as a dragon. **12** And he exerciseth all the power of the first beast before him, and causeth the earth and them which dwell therein to worship the first beast, whose deadly wound was healed. **13** And he doeth great wonders, so that he maketh fire come down from heaven on the earth in the sight of men, **14** And deceiveth them that dwell on the earth by the means of those miracles which he had power to do in the sight of the beast; saying to them that dwell on the earth, that they should make an image to the beast, which had the wound by a sword, and did live. **15** And he had power to give life unto the image of the beast, that the image of the beast should both speak, and cause that as many as would not worship the image of the beast should be killed. **16** And he causeth all, both small and great, rich and poor, free and bond, to receive a mark in their right hand, or in their foreheads: **17** And that no man might buy or sell, save he that had the mark, or the name of the beast, or the number of his name. **18** Here is wisdom. Let him that hath understanding count the number of the beast: for it is the number of a man; and his number is Six hundred threescore and six.

Three enemies. In these chapters the reader meets three enemies of God who work together: the dragon (Satan), the beast from the sea, and the beast from the earth, who is later called "the false prophet" (16:13; 19:20). The dragon gives the first beast his power; the second beast makes the world worship the first. They are a counterfeit of God's order: Satan takes the place that belongs to God, the beast the place that belongs to Christ, and the false prophet the place of God's true prophets, who lead men to worship God. All three come to the same end in the lake of fire (19:20; 20:10).

Verse by verse

Where we are: on earth. Verses 12:13-17, the dragon and the woman. A closer look. This is the fourth scene on earth (pair 4), explained by 12:1-12. These verses take up and enlarge what 12:6 told in one sentence: the woman's flight into the wilderness, where she is fed for the time of the trouble. The dragon, cast down to the earth, persecutes her and makes war with the rest of her seed.

> **Revelation 12:13** *And when the dragon saw that he was cast unto the earth, he persecuted the woman which brought forth the man child.*

The scene moves from heaven to earth. Verses 7-12 told of the war in heaven and the dragon's fall; now we see what he does when he lands.

"And when the dragon saw that he was cast unto the earth." The dragon realises where he is: thrown out of heaven, confined to the earth, with "but a short time" (12:12).

"He persecuted the woman which brought forth the man child." "Persecuted" is *diōkō* (Strong's G1377), "to pursue, to chase, to hunt down." He cannot reach the child, who is on God's throne (12:5). So he turns on the woman who bore Him: Israel. Satan's hatred of Israel is his hatred of the Christ who came from Israel and of the promises God made to her. Throughout history he has tried to destroy the nation: in Egypt, when Pharaoh ordered every son thrown into the river (Exodus 1:22); in Persia, when Haman plotted "to destroy all the Jews" (Esther 3:6). In the last days he will make his greatest attempt.

Figures of speech. "The woman which brought forth the man child" names her by the child she bore: a reminder of why the dragon hates her.

To whom. The woman is Israel, persecuted in the great tribulation (see 12:1, 6). This is God's dealing with Israel in the Day of the Lord (Part One, Chapter 3 §C).

> **Revelation 12:14** *And to the woman were given two wings of a great eagle, that she might fly into the wilderness, into her place, where she is nourished for a time, and times, and half a time, from the face of the serpent.*

"And to the woman were given two wings of a great eagle." God gives her wings. These are not literal wings; they are God's way of carrying her swiftly to safety. At Sinai God reminded Israel how He had brought them out of Egypt:

> **Exodus 19:4** — *Ye have seen what I did unto the Egyptians, and how I bare you on eagles' wings, and brought you unto myself.*

Moses sang of God's care for Israel in the wilderness: "As an eagle stirreth up her nest, fluttereth over her young, spreadeth abroad her wings, taketh them, beareth them on her wings: So the LORD alone did lead him" (Deuteronomy 32:11-12). As God carried Israel out of Egypt into the wilderness, He carries her again.

"That she might fly into the wilderness, into her place." "Her place": the place God prepared for her (12:6).

"Where she is nourished for a time, and times, and half a time." She is fed there, as verse 6 said. "A time, and times, and half a time" is the measure Daniel was given: one time (a year), two times (two years), and half a time (half a year), three and a half years. It is the same as the 1,260 days of verse 6 (Appendix C, Question 15). Daniel was told that the little horn "shall wear out the saints of the most High ... and they shall be given into his hand until a time and times and the dividing of time" (Daniel 7:25).

"From the face of the serpent." Bullinger notes that "from the face of" is a Hebrew way of saying "far away from": she is carried a great way off from the serpent, out of his reach. The dragon is called "the serpent" here, reminding the reader that he is the serpent of Eden (12:9).

The numbers. *Two* wings of a great eagle: God said to Israel, "I bare you on eagles' wings, and brought you unto myself" (Exodus 19:4). *A time, and times, and half a time*: one year, two years, and half a year, three years and a half. These are Daniel's words: "a time and times and the dividing of time" (Daniel 7:25), "a time, times, and an half" (Daniel 12:7). The book has now counted the same period in months (11:2), in days (11:3; 12:6), and in years, and the three counts agree.

Figures of speech. "Two wings of a great eagle" is a *Metaphor* drawn from Exodus 19:4 and Deuteronomy 32:11: God's swift and powerful care. "From the face of the serpent" is an *Idiom* meaning "far from the serpent" (Bullinger).

> **Revelation 12:15** *And the serpent cast out of his mouth water as a flood after the woman, that he might cause her to be carried away of the flood.*

"And the serpent cast out of his mouth water as a flood after the woman." The serpent pours water from his mouth like a river, after her as she flees.

"That he might cause her to be carried away of the flood." He wants to sweep her away, drown her, as a river in flood sweeps everything in its path.

What is the flood? In Scripture a flood is often a picture of an overwhelming attack by enemies. David sang, "The sorrows of death compassed me, and the floods of ungodly men made me afraid" (Psalm 18:4). Isaiah wrote, "When the enemy shall come in like a flood, the Spirit of the LORD shall lift up a standard against him" (Isaiah 59:19), and of the king of Assyria invading Judah, "he shall overflow and go over, he shall reach even to the neck" (Isaiah 8:8). The serpent sends a flood of some kind after the woman to destroy her. The text does not say more exactly what it is, and this study does not go beyond the text.

Figures of speech. "Water as a flood" is a *Simile*. The flood out of the serpent's mouth stands for an overwhelming attack, as floods do in the Psalms and the prophets.

> **Revelation 12:16** *And the earth helped the woman, and the earth opened her mouth, and swallowed up the flood which the dragon cast out of his mouth.*

"And the earth helped the woman." The earth itself comes to her rescue.

"And the earth opened her mouth, and swallowed up the flood which the dragon cast out of his mouth." The earth opens and swallows the flood. God uses His creation to protect His people. When Korah rebelled against Moses, "the earth opened her mouth, and swallowed them up, and their houses, and all the men that appertained unto Korah" (Numbers 16:32). At the Red Sea God made the sea a wall for Israel and a grave for Pharaoh (Exodus 14:22, 28). Whatever the dragon's flood is, God makes the earth itself swallow it, and the woman is safe.

Figures of speech. "The earth opened her mouth" is *Prosopopoeia* (personification): the earth is pictured as a living being with a mouth, as in Numbers 16:32.

> **Revelation 12:17** *And the dragon was wroth with the woman, and went to make war with the remnant of her seed, which keep the commandments of God, and have the testimony of Jesus Christ.*

"And the dragon was wroth with the woman." "Was wroth" is *ōrgisthē*, "was angry." Twice foiled, at the birth of the child and at the flight of the woman, the dragon is furious.

"And went to make war with the remnant of her seed." He turns on "the remnant of her seed," the rest of her children, those of Israel who are not in the wilderness place. God had said in Eden, "I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed" (Genesis 3:15). The war goes on to the end.

"Which keep the commandments of God, and have the testimony of Jesus Christ." The remnant is marked by two things. They "keep the commandments of God": they obey God's law. And they "have the testimony of Jesus Christ": they hold to Christ's witness and confess Him. These are believing Israelites in the Day of the Lord, faithful to God's commandments and to Jesus as the Christ. The same two marks are given later: "Here is the patience of the saints: here are they that keep the commandments of God, and the faith of Jesus" (14:12).

(The verse in some editions ends here; in the Greek texts the next words, "And I stood upon the sand of the sea," begin chapter 13.)

Figures of speech. "Keep the commandments of God, and have the testimony of Jesus Christ" joins two marks of the faithful, the law and the witness: *Polysyndeton* of a simple kind, each mark counted.

To whom. "Keep the commandments of God" is the mark of faithful Israel under the law. Under grace Paul wrote, "ye are not under the law, but under grace" (Romans 6:14). The remnant of the woman's seed are faithful Israelites in the Day of the Lord, holding both God's commandments and the testimony of Jesus (Part One, Chapter 3 §C).

On earth. Verses 13:1-10, the beast from the sea. The dragon stands on the sand of the sea, and the first beast rises out of it. The verses tell his origin, his look, his power from the dragon, his deeds for forty-two months, and the lesson for the saints (13:9-10).

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

"And I stood upon the sand of the sea." John stands on the shore. (The critical texts read "*he* stood": the dragon, standing on the shore as if to call up the beast from the sea. The Majority text, with the King James Version, reads "I stood.") Either way, the scene is set at the edge of the sea.

"And saw a beast rise up out of the sea." "Beast" here is *thērion* (Strong's G2342), "a wild beast," a dangerous, savage animal. It is a different word from the "beasts" around the throne, the *zōa* or living creatures (4:6). This is a beast of prey.

It rises "out of the sea." Daniel saw the same: "the four winds of the heaven strove upon the great sea. And four great beasts came up from the sea, diverse one from another" (Daniel 7:2-3). The sea in Scripture often stands for the restless mass of the nations: "But the wicked are like the troubled sea, when it cannot rest, whose waters cast up mire and dirt" (Isaiah 57:20). Later in this book an angel says, "The waters which thou sawest … are peoples, and multitudes, and nations, and tongues" (17:15). The beast rises out of the nations of the world.

"Having seven heads and ten horns." The same seven heads and ten horns as the dragon (12:3). The beast is the dragon's image and instrument on earth. Chapter 17 explains: the seven heads are "seven mountains" and "seven kings," and "the ten horns which thou sawest are ten kings, which have received no kingdom as yet; but receive power as kings one hour with the beast" (17:9-12).

"And upon his horns ten crowns." On the dragon, the crowns were on the heads (12:3); on the beast they are on the horns. The horns are "ten kings" (17:12), who rule with the beast. The crowns are *diadēmata*, royal crowns.

"And upon his heads the name of blasphemy." "Blasphemy" (*blasphēmia*) is evil speaking against God (see 2:9). Each head bears a name that insults God. (The Majority Greek text and the critical texts read "names of blasphemy.") Every power in the beast's kingdom claims for itself what belongs to God alone.

Who is the beast? The text shows that the beast is a person. He "speaks" (13:5), he "opened his mouth in blasphemy" (13:6), he makes war (13:7), he is worshipped (13:8), and at the end he is "cast alive into a lake of fire burning with brimstone" with the false prophet (19:20). He is a king at the head of a kingdom, and the kingdom is described in him: so Daniel was told that his four beasts were both "four kings" (Daniel 7:17) and four kingdoms (Daniel 7:23). He is the "man of sin … the son of perdition; Who opposeth and exalteth himself above all that is called God, or that is worshipped; so that he as God sitteth in the temple of God, shewing himself that he is God" (2 Thessalonians 2:3-4). John calls the spirit of such a one "antichrist" (1 John 2:18). This study takes him as a real man, a ruler of the last days, empowered by Satan (Appendix C, Question 11).

The numbers. *Seven* heads and *ten* horns, as the dragon had (12:3), and *ten* crowns. The crowns have moved from the heads to the horns: the dragon's power is now worn by the ten kings who rule with the beast (17:12). Ten, a complete round of earthly powers (see 2:10); seven, complete rule (see 12:3).

Figures of speech. The beast is a *sign* of a real ruler and his kingdom, as Daniel's beasts were (Daniel 7:17, 23). The heads and horns are explained in 17:9-12.

> **Revelation 13:2** *And the beast which I saw was like unto a leopard, and his feet were as the feet of a bear, and his mouth as the mouth of a lion: and the dragon gave him his power, and his seat, and great authority.*

"And the beast which I saw was like unto a leopard." The beast's body is like a leopard: swift and fierce.

"And his feet were as the feet of a bear." His feet are like a bear's: crushing, powerful.

"And his mouth as the mouth of a lion." His mouth is like a lion's: devouring.

Daniel saw four beasts rise from the sea, one after another: "The first was like a lion ... And behold another beast, a second, like to a bear ... After this I beheld, and lo another, like a leopard ... After this I saw in the night visions, and behold a fourth beast, dreadful and terrible, and strong exceedingly" (Daniel 7:4-7). Those beasts were four kingdoms that would rule the world one after another. John's beast has the leopard, the bear and the lion all in one body, in reverse order, as if looking back from the end. He sums up all the empires of the world that have opposed God, gathered into one final kingdom.

"And the dragon gave him his power, and his seat, and great authority." Here is where the beast's power comes from. The dragon gives him three things: "his power" (*dunamis*, might), "his seat" (*thronos*, his throne), and "great authority" (*exousia*). This is exactly what Satan offered Christ in the wilderness:

> **Luke 4:5-7** — *And the devil, taking him up into an high mountain, shewed unto him all the kingdoms of the world in a moment of time. And the devil said unto him, All this power will I give thee, and the glory of them: for that is delivered unto me; and to whomsoever I will I give it. If thou therefore wilt worship me, all shall be thine.*

Christ refused: "Get thee behind me, Satan: for it is written, Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve" (Luke 4:8). What Christ refused, the beast accepts. "His seat": Satan's throne, which was at Pergamos (2:13), is given to the beast.

Figures of speech. "Like unto a leopard," "as the feet of a bear," "as the mouth of a lion": *Similes*, drawn from Daniel 7. "His power, and his seat, and great authority" is *Polysyndeton*.

> **Revelation 13:3** *And I saw one of his heads as it were wounded to death; and his deadly wound was healed: and all the world wondered after the beast.*

"And I saw one of his heads as it were wounded to death." One of the seven heads looked as though it had been killed. "Wounded to death" is *esphagmenēn eis thanaton*, "slain unto death." The word "slain" (*sphazō*) is the very word used of the Lamb: "a Lamb as it had been slain" (5:6). And "as it were" (*hōs*) is the same "as" used there. The beast is shown as an imitation of the Lamb: as if slain, and yet alive.

"And his deadly wound was healed." "Deadly wound" is literally "the wound (stroke) of his death." It was healed. Verse 14 says the beast "had the wound by a sword, and did live." What the head and the wound mean, the text describes but does not explain further, and the readings offered for them are many. This study sets out the words and does not force a meaning onto them (Appendix C, Question 11). What is plain is the purpose of the picture: the beast appears to die and to live again, as Christ truly died and rose. Satan imitates the resurrection.

"And all the world wondered after the beast." "Wondered" is *ethaumasen*, "marvelled, was amazed." The whole earth was astonished, and followed after him. A ruler who appears to come back from death, or whose kingdom revives after a deadly blow, would amaze the world. Paul foretold the deception of that day: "And for this cause God shall send them strong delusion, that they should believe a lie" (2 Thessalonians 2:11).

The number. "*One* of his heads": one of the seven (13:1) is wounded to death, and healed.

Figures of speech. "As it were wounded to death" uses the same words as the Lamb "as it had been slain" (5:6): the beast is pictured as a counterfeit of the Lamb, a deliberate echo that the reader is meant to notice.

> **Revelation 13:4** *And they worshipped the dragon which gave power unto the beast: and they worshipped the beast, saying, Who is like unto the beast? who is able to make war with him?*

"And they worshipped the dragon which gave power unto the beast." The world worships the dragon. They may not know that is what they are doing; they think they are only honouring a great ruler. But to worship the beast is to worship the one who gave him his power. Satan's oldest ambition is to be worshipped. Isaiah wrote of him in his pride: "For thou hast said in thine heart, I will ascend into heaven, I will exalt my throne above the stars of God ... I will be like the most High" (Isaiah 14:13-14). He asked Christ, "If thou therefore wilt worship me" (Luke 4:7). Now the world does.

"And they worshipped the beast." They worship the beast too.

"Saying, Who is like unto the beast?" These words are a twisted echo of Israel's song at the Red Sea: "Who is like unto thee, O LORD, among the gods? who is like thee, glorious in holiness, fearful in praises, doing wonders?" (Exodus 15:11). The name Michael itself means "Who is like God?" (see 12:7). The world now sings the praise of God to the beast.

"Who is able to make war with him?" They think him unbeatable. No nation can stand against him. They will learn otherwise at his end (19:19-20).

Figures of speech. "Who is like unto the beast? who is able to make war with him?" is *Erotesis*: questions asked not for information but to express wonder. They echo Exodus 15:11 in mockery of God.

> **Revelation 13:5** *And there was given unto him a mouth speaking great things and blasphemies; and power was given unto him to continue forty and two months.*

"And there was given unto him a mouth speaking great things and blasphemies." "Was given": God permits it. The phrase "it was given unto him" is repeated four times about the beast in these verses (13:5, 5, 7, 7). However great the beast seems, his power and his time are given from above. He has "a mouth speaking great things": boastful, arrogant words. Daniel saw the same little horn: "behold, in this horn were eyes like the eyes of man, and a mouth speaking great things" (Daniel 7:8).

"And power was given unto him to continue forty and two months." He has authority for forty-two months: three and a half years (see 11:2). (The Majority Greek text reads "power was given unto him to

make war forty and two months.") His time is limited. He will not rule for ever, nor even for long. Daniel was told the same: "they shall be given into his hand until a time and times and the dividing of time" (Daniel 7:25).

The number. *Forty and two months* (see 11:2). The beast's power is given for a counted time, and no longer. The holy city is trodden down forty-two months (11:2); the beast acts forty-two months: it is the same time.

Figures of speech. "It was given unto him," repeated, is the figure *Anaphora* in effect (repetition at the start of clauses), which keeps reminding the reader that the beast acts only by God's permission.

> **Revelation 13:6** *And he opened his mouth in blasphemy against God, to blaspheme his name, and his tabernacle, and them that dwell in heaven.*

"And he opened his mouth in blasphemy against God." He speaks evil against God. Daniel foretold, "And the king shall do according to his will; and he shall exalt himself, and magnify himself above every god, and shall speak marvellous things against the God of gods" (Daniel 11:36).

"To blaspheme his name." He insults God's name, God Himself, all that God is.

"And his tabernacle." God's tabernacle, His dwelling place: heaven, and God's presence.

"And them that dwell in heaven." Those who dwell in heaven: the angels, and all who belong to God's dwelling. Satan has been thrown out of heaven (12:9); the beast rails against those who are there.

Figures of speech. "His name, and his tabernacle, and them that dwell in heaven" is *Polysyndeton*: each object of his blasphemy is named.

> **Revelation 13:7** *And it was given unto him to make war with the saints, and to overcome them: and power was given him over all kindreds, and tongues, and nations.*

"And it was given unto him to make war with the saints, and to overcome them." He is permitted to make war on "the saints," God's holy people of the Day of the Lord (see 5:8), and to overcome them: to defeat them, to kill them. Daniel saw it:

> **Daniel 7:21-22** — *I beheld, and the same horn made war with the saints, and prevailed against them; Until the Ancient of days came, and judgment was given to the saints of the most High; and the time came that the saints possessed the kingdom.*

"Until the Ancient of days came": the beast's victory is real, but it ends when God acts. Many of the saints will die (6:9-11; 13:15), but they "overcame him by the blood of the Lamb ... and they loved not their lives unto the death" (12:11). The beast overcomes them by killing them; they overcome him by being faithful.

"And power was given him over all kindreds, and tongues, and nations." His rule covers the whole earth: every tribe, language and nation (the fourfold phrase, see 5:9; the Majority Greek text and the critical texts include "people" as well). He is a world ruler.

Figures of speech. "All kindreds, and tongues, and nations" is *Polysyndeton*, naming all mankind.

To whom. "The saints" here are God's people of the Day of the Lord, "the saints of the most High" of Daniel 7 (see 5:8). The beast's war on them is the great tribulation (Part One, Chapter 3 §C).

> **Revelation 13:8** *And all that dwell upon the earth shall worship him, whose names are not written in the book of life of the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world.*

"And all that dwell upon the earth shall worship him." "All that dwell upon the earth": the book's own name for the people of the Day of the Lord who belong to this world and oppose God (see 3:10). All of them will worship the beast.

"Whose names are not written in the book of life of the Lamb." But not everyone on the earth. Those whose names are written in the Lamb's book of life will not worship him. "The book of life" is the register of those who belong to God and will live (see 3:5). Here it is "the book of life of the Lamb": it belongs to the Lamb, who bought them with His blood (5:9).

"Slain from the foundation of the world." In the King James Version these words describe the Lamb: "the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world." The Lamb's death was in God's purpose before the world began. Peter wrote that we were redeemed "with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot: Who verily was foreordained before the foundation of the world, but was manifest in these last times for you" (1 Peter 1:19-20). In the Greek the words can also be read with "written": "whose names are not written from the foundation of the world in the book of life of the slain Lamb," and that is how the same words are put in 17:8, "whose names were not written in the book of life from the foundation of the world." Both are true: God's purpose of redemption through the Lamb was settled before the world was made, and so were the names of those who would belong to Him. The point of the verse is that no one written in the Lamb's book will bow to the beast.

Figures of speech. "The book of life" is *Anthropopatheia* (see 3:5): God is spoken of as keeping a book, so that men may understand that He knows His own.

> **Revelation 13:9** *If any man have an ear, let him hear.*

"If any man have an ear, let him hear." The call of the seven messages (2:7) comes once more. But it is shorter: there is no "what the Spirit saith unto the churches." The assemblies are not addressed now; this is a call to each single hearer, whoever he may be, in the days of the beast. What follows must be heard and taken to heart.

Figures of speech. The call to hear is a solemn interruption, the figure *Epitrechon* in effect (a short sentence thrown in to draw attention), marking what follows as vital.

> **Revelation 13:10** *He that leadeth into captivity shall go into captivity: he that killeth with the sword must be killed with the sword. Here is the patience and the faith of the saints.*

"He that leadeth into captivity shall go into captivity." (The Majority Greek text reads "If anyone is for captivity, he goes into captivity.") These words come from Jeremiah, where God told the prophet that the people's fate was fixed:

> **Jeremiah 15:2** — *And it shall come to pass, if they say unto thee, Whither shall we go forth? then thou shalt tell them, Thus saith the LORD; Such as are for death, to death; and such as are for the sword, to the sword; and such as are for the famine, to the famine; and such as are for the captivity, to the captivity.*

Read with Jeremiah, the verse tells the saints what is appointed for them in the days of the beast: some are for captivity, and to captivity they will go. Read as the King James Version has it, it tells them that the one who takes them captive will himself be taken captive. Either way, the saints are to bear it, and leave it to God.

"He that killeth with the sword must be killed with the sword." Christ said to Peter in the garden, when Peter drew his sword, "Put up again thy sword into his place: for all they that take the sword shall perish with the sword" (Matthew 26:52). The saints are not to fight the beast with his own weapons. The beast who kills with the sword will be killed by the sword of Christ's mouth (19:15, 21). God will repay: "Vengeance is mine; I will repay, saith the Lord" (Romans 12:19, quoting Deuteronomy 32:35).

"Here is the patience and the faith of the saints." "Here": in this, in enduring captivity and death without taking up the sword, the saints show their patience and their faith. "Patience" is *hupomonē*, steadfast endurance (see 1:9). "Faith" is trust in God, that He will judge and repay. This is what the beast's days will demand of them: to endure, and to trust.

Figures of speech. "Leadeth into captivity … go into captivity" and "killeth with the sword … killed with the sword" repeat the same words in two forms, the figure *Polyptoton*: the punishment matches the deed word for word.

On earth. Verses 13:11-18, the beast from the earth. The second beast rises out of the earth and makes the world worship the first beast, set up his image, and take his mark. The section ends with the number of the beast (13:18).



Albrecht Dürer, The Apocalypse (woodcut, 1498): the beast with seven heads, and the beast with horns like a lamb (13:1-18).

> **Revelation 13:11** *And I beheld another beast coming up out of the earth; and he had two horns like a lamb, and he spake as a dragon.*

Now John sees the second beast.

"And I beheld another beast coming up out of the earth." "Another" (*allon*): another of the same kind, another wild beast (*thērion*). The first came out of the sea, the nations; this one comes "out of the earth." Daniel was told, "These great beasts, which are four, are four kings, which shall arise out of the earth" (Daniel 7:17). This second beast is later named "the false prophet" (16:13; 19:20; 20:10). He is a person, cast alive into the lake of fire with the beast (19:20).

"And he had two horns like a lamb." He looks like a lamb: gentle, harmless, even like the Lamb Himself. Only two horns, small ones, like a young lamb's. He does not look like a threat.

"And he spake as a dragon." But when he speaks, he speaks like the dragon: with the voice of Satan. Christ warned of exactly this:

> **Matthew 7:15** — *Beware of false prophets, which come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves.*

He looks like a lamb, but his words are the dragon's words. He is the religious leader of the beast's kingdom: the one who makes the beast's rule look holy.

The number. *Two* horns like a lamb. The first beast had ten horns of power (13:1); this one has two, like a lamb, mild to look at, but he speaks as a dragon. Two is the number of witness (see 11:3): he is a false witness, imitating the two true witnesses of chapter 11 and the true Lamb (5:6).

Figures of speech. "Like a lamb" and "as a dragon" are *Similes* set against each other, the figure *Antithesis*: the outside and the inside of the false prophet.

> **Revelation 13:12** *And he exerciseth all the power of the first beast before him, and causeth the earth and them which dwell therein to worship the first beast, whose deadly wound was healed.*

"And he exerciseth all the power of the first beast before him." "Exerciseth" means "uses, wields." He has all the first beast's authority, and uses it "before him," in his presence and on his behalf. He has no kingdom of his own. He is the first beast's servant and spokesman.

"And causeth the earth and them which dwell therein to worship the first beast." His great work is to make the world worship the first beast. He is a prophet, a religious leader, and he uses all his power to lead men to false worship. The true spirit of God leads men to worship God and glorify Christ; the false prophet leads them to worship the beast.

"Whose deadly wound was healed." The beast is named by his "resurrection" (13:3). The false prophet points to it as proof that the beast deserves worship.

The number. *The first beast*, twice: the beast from the sea (13:1). The second always serves the first.

Figures of speech. "The earth and them which dwell therein" puts the earth for its people, a *Metonymy*, and then names the people too, so that no one is left out.

> **Revelation 13:13** *And he doeth great wonders, so that he maketh fire come down from heaven on the earth in the sight of men,*

"And he doeth great wonders." "Wonders" is *sēmeia*, "signs," the word used of Christ's miracles (see 12:1). The false prophet works signs. Christ warned of this very thing:

> **Matthew 24:24** — *For there shall arise false Christs, and false prophets, and shall shew great signs and wonders; insomuch that, if it were possible, they shall deceive the very elect.*

Paul wrote that the coming of the man of sin would be "after the working of Satan with all power and signs and lying wonders" (2 Thessalonians 2:9).

"So that he maketh fire come down from heaven on the earth in the sight of men." He brings down fire from heaven. This is Elijah's sign. On mount Carmel, when Elijah faced the prophets of Baal, he prayed, and "the fire of the LORD fell, and consumed the burnt sacrifice" (1 Kings 18:38), and the people fell on their faces and said, "The LORD, he is the God" (1 Kings 18:39). The two witnesses had fire

proceeding from their mouths (11:5). Now the false prophet imitates the sign of God's true prophets, to persuade the world that the beast is God.

Figures of speech. "Great wonders" are *signs*, real works of power that point to a false claim: the very deception lies in their being real.

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

"And deceiveth them that dwell on the earth by the means of those miracles which he had power to do in the sight of the beast." "Deceiveth" is *planaō*, "leads astray" (see 12:9), the dragon's own work. The false prophet's miracles are real, but their purpose is deception. "Which he had power to do" is literally "which it was given him to do": even his signs are permitted.

The law had warned Israel about this long before:

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

A sign proves nothing if it leads away from God. The test of a prophet is not whether he can work wonders, but whether he leads men to the true God.

"Saying to them that dwell on the earth, that they should make an image to the beast." He commands the earth-dwellers to make an image, a statue, of the beast.

"Which had the wound by a sword, and did live." The beast is again named by his wound and his recovery (see 13:3). Here we learn the wound was "by a sword," and that "he did live" (*ezēsen*, "lived," the word used of Christ, who "was dead, and is alive," 2:8).

Figures of speech. "Had the wound ... and did live" mimics the words used of Christ's death and life: the false resurrection is described in the language of the true.

> **Revelation 13:15** *And he had power to give life unto the image of the beast, that the image of the beast should both speak, and cause that as many as would not worship the image of the beast should be killed.*

"And he had power to give life unto the image of the beast." "Life" here is *pneuma*, "breath, spirit." He is given power to give breath to the image, so that it seems alive.

"That the image of the beast should both speak." The image speaks. A statue that speaks would seem to the world a miracle beyond doubt.

"And cause that as many as would not worship the image of the beast should be killed." The image itself, or the false prophet through it, orders the death of everyone who will not worship. This is the

scene of Daniel 3 again. King Nebuchadnezzar set up a golden image ninety feet high on the plain of Dura, and commanded:

> **Daniel 3:5-6** — *That at what time ye hear the sound of the cornet, flute, harp, sackbut, psaltery, dulcimer, and all kinds of musick, ye fall down and worship the golden image that Nebuchadnezzar the king hath set up: And whoso falleth not down and worshippeth shall the same hour be cast into the midst of a burning fiery furnace.*

Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego refused: "be it known unto thee, O king, that we will not serve thy gods, nor worship the golden image which thou hast set up" (Daniel 3:18). God brought them through the fire. So the saints of the Day of the Lord will refuse to worship the beast's image. Many will die for it. But at the end John sees them living and reigning with Christ: "which had not worshipped the beast, neither his image, neither had received his mark upon their foreheads, or in their hands; and they lived and reigned with Christ a thousand years" (20:4).

Christ spoke of "the abomination of desolation, spoken of by Daniel the prophet, stand in the holy place" (Matthew 24:15). The image of the beast, set up for worship, is the climax of that abomination.

Figures of speech. "As many as would not worship ... should be killed" sets refusal and death side by side: the price of faithfulness is stated plainly.

> **Revelation 13:16** *And he causeth all, both small and great, rich and poor, free and bond, to receive a mark in their right hand, or in their foreheads:*

"And he causeth all, both small and great, rich and poor, free and bond." Every class of mankind is named in pairs: small and great, rich and poor, free and slave. No one is exempt.

"To receive a mark in their right hand, or in their foreheads." "Mark" is *charagma* (Strong's G5480), "an engraving, a stamp, a brand," the word used for the stamp on a coin or the brand on a slave or an animal, marking ownership. The mark is placed on the right hand or the forehead, where all can see it. God's servants were sealed in their foreheads with God's seal (7:3; 14:1); the beast's followers are marked with his. Every person on earth will bear one or the other. Under the law God told Israel to bind His words "for a sign upon thine hand, and they shall be as frontlets between thine eyes" (Deuteronomy 6:8): the hand for what a man does, the forehead for what he thinks and confesses. The beast claims both.

Figures of speech. "Small and great, rich and poor, free and bond" is the figure *Synathroesmus* (Bullinger's "enumeration"), naming the parts of a whole in pairs of opposites to mean everyone. Each pair also names both extremes, so that all between are included.

> **Revelation 13:17** *And that no man might buy or sell, save he that had the mark, or the name of the beast, or the number of his name.*

"And that no man might buy or sell, save he that had the mark, or the name of the beast, or the number of his name." Without the mark, no one can buy or sell. The beast controls all trade. To refuse the mark is to be cut off from the means of living: no food, no work, no market. Those who are faithful

to God will go hungry (see 7:16, "They shall hunger no more"). The mark may be the beast's name itself, or the number of his name, which verse 18 gives.

The pressure the believers of Thyatira faced from the trade-guilds (see 2:18-20) becomes, in the beast's day, the pressure of the whole world: worship, or starve.

Figures of speech. "The mark, or the name ... or the number" is a series joined by "or," naming each form the mark may take.

To whom. The mark of the beast belongs to the days of the beast, in the Day of the Lord. Those warned against it are the people of that day (14:9-11). The church of grace is not on the earth in that day (1 Thessalonians 4:17; 5:9; Part One, Chapter 3 §C).

> **Revelation 13:18** *Here is wisdom. Let him that hath understanding count the number of the beast: for it is the number of a man; and his number is Six hundred threescore and six.*

"Here is wisdom." "Here": in what follows, wisdom is needed. Daniel was told that in the time of the end "none of the wicked shall understand; but the wise shall understand" (Daniel 12:10).

"Let him that hath understanding count the number of the beast." "Understanding" is *nous*, "mind," the power to think and grasp. "Count" is *psēphizō*, from *psēphos*, a pebble used for counting (see 2:17): "reckon, calculate." The number is to be worked out.

"For it is the number of a man." The number belongs to a man. It is "the number of his name" (13:17). In both Hebrew and Greek, letters were also used as numbers; every name had a number, the sum of its letters. The beast's name will add up to this number.

"And his number is Six hundred threescore and six." Six hundred and sixty-six. "Threescore" is sixty. (Some ancient copies read 616. Irenaeus, writing about A.D. 180, knew of them and held to 666, which he said was "found in all the most approved and ancient copies," *Against Heresies* 5.30.1.)

What name does it count? Many names have been proposed since the second century, and none has won agreement. Irenaeus himself declined to name one, saying it was safer to wait for the fulfilment. Every proposed solution requires choosing a language, a spelling and a title that the text does not give. This study therefore adopts no solution (Appendix C, Question 12). The text says that "him that hath understanding" will be able to count it. It does not say that he lives in John's day. Those living in the days of the beast, when the man has appeared and his name is known, will be able to count it, and will know him for what he is.

Six in Scripture is the number of man: man was made on the sixth day (Genesis 1:31). Goliath, the giant who defied the armies of the living God, was "six cubits and a span" tall (1 Samuel 17:4), and his spear's head "weighed six hundred shekels of iron" (1 Samuel 17:7). Nebuchadnezzar's image was sixty cubits high and six cubits broad (Daniel 3:1). The beast is "the number of a man": man at his height, setting himself up as God, and falling short.

The number. *Six hundred threescore and six*: 666. Six is the number of man. Man was made on the sixth day (Genesis 1:31), and six days were given him for his labour (Exodus 20:9); six falls one short of seven, the number of God's completeness. The verse itself says so: "it is the number of a man." Here six is written three times over, in hundreds, tens and units. Scripture gives two pictures of the same number. Nebuchadnezzar's golden image, which all were commanded to worship on pain of the furnace, was "threescore cubits, and the breadth thereof six cubits" (Daniel 3:1), as the image of the beast must be worshipped on pain of death (13:15). And the gold that came to Solomon in one year was "six hundred threescore and six talents" (1 Kings 10:14), in the year his heart began to turn. 666 is man at his height, demanding worship, still falling short. Who the man is, the book does not say, and this study does not guess (Appendix C, Question 12).

Figures of speech. "Here is wisdom" is the figure *Epitrechon* in effect, a short remark thrown in to call the reader's attention, like the call to hear in 13:9.

In short. Cast down to the earth, the dragon persecutes the woman, Israel, but God gives her the wings of a great eagle to fly to her place in the wilderness, where she is fed for three and a half years; the flood the serpent pours after her is swallowed by the earth. Furious, he makes war on the remnant of her seed, who keep God's commandments and hold the testimony of Jesus Christ. Then a beast rises out of the sea with the dragon's seven heads and ten horns, combining Daniel's leopard, bear and lion: a real man and world ruler, given the dragon's power, throne and authority. One of his heads seems slain and is healed, in mockery of the Lamb, and the whole world wonders after him and worships the dragon and the beast. He blasphemes God for forty-two months, makes war on the saints and overcomes them, and rules every nation; all the earth-dwellers worship him except those written in the Lamb's book of life. The saints are called to patience and faith, not the sword. A second beast rises out of the earth, the false prophet, lamb-like but speaking as a dragon. He works great signs, even fire from heaven, sets up a speaking image of the beast, has all who refuse to worship it killed, and marks every person on the right hand or forehead, so that none may buy or sell without the beast's mark, name or number. The number is 666, the number of a man; the study adopts no solution, for those with understanding in that day will count it.

Section J — 14:1–14:5. In Heaven: The Lamb and the 144,000

Where it stands

The fifth scene in heaven (5H). After the beast and his mark (Section I), the reader needs to know what has become of those who refused it. John sees the Lamb standing on mount Sion with the 144,000 who bear His name and His Father's name. Where the world bore the beast's mark, these bear God's name; where the world worshipped the beast, these follow the Lamb. This scene explains the scene on earth that follows (Section K): the gospel proclaimed, Babylon's fall announced, and the harvest of the earth.

Its structure

	Verses	Content
A	14:1	Description: the Lamb on mount Sion, and with Him the 144,000, His Father's name in their foreheads
B	14:2	The heavenly voices: the singers, as harpers harping
B	14:3	The heavenly voices: the new song, before the throne, which only the 144,000 could learn
A	14:4-5	Description: undefiled; they follow the Lamb; redeemed, the firstfruits; no guile; without fault

The text

Revelation 14. 1 And I looked, and, lo, a Lamb stood on the mount Sion, and with him an hundred forty and four thousand, having his Father’s name written in their foreheads. **2** And I heard a voice from heaven, as the voice of many waters, and as the voice of a great thunder: and I heard the voice of harpers harping with their harps: **3** And they sung as it were a new song before the throne, and before the four beasts, and the elders: and no man could learn that song but the hundred and forty and four thousand, which were redeemed from the earth. **4** These are they which were not defiled with women; for they are virgins. These are they which follow the Lamb whithersoever he goeth. These were redeemed from among men, being the firstfruits unto God and to the Lamb. **5** And in their mouth was found no guile: for they are without fault before the throne of God.

Verse by verse

Where we are: in heaven. Verses 14:1-5, the Lamb and the 144,000. The book looks ahead. This is the fifth scene in heaven (pair 5). The voice John hears is "from heaven" (14:2), and the song is sung "before the throne" (14:3), so this mount Sion is the heavenly one. The 144,000 who were sealed on the earth in 7:1-8 are shown standing with the Lamb, not one missing. As with the multitude of 7:9-17, they are shown as they will be when their trial is over.

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

After the darkness of chapter 13, the beast, his image and his mark, the scene turns to light.

"And I looked, and, lo, a Lamb stood on the mount Sion." "Lo": behold, look! (*Asterismos*). John sees "the Lamb" (in Greek, "*the* Lamb," the Lamb of 5:6) standing on mount Sion. Against the beast who rose from the sea stands the Lamb; against the false lamb who spoke like a dragon (13:11) stands the true Lamb.

"Mount Sion" (Zion) was the hill of Jerusalem where David built his city and where the temple stood. It became the name of God's dwelling among His people. God said in the second psalm, "Yet have I set my king upon my holy hill of Zion" (Psalm 2:6).

Which Sion is this, the earthly hill or the heavenly? The next verses answer: the voice John hears is "from heaven" (14:2), and the song is sung "before the throne, and before the four beasts, and the elders" (14:3), who are in heaven (chapter 4). This is mount Sion in heaven, of which the earthly Sion was a picture. The writer to the Hebrews spoke of it: "But ye are come unto mount Sion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to an innumerable company of angels" (Hebrews 12:22; Appendix A).

"And with him an hundred forty and four thousand." With the Lamb stand the 144,000. These are the same 144,000 who were sealed in chapter 7, twelve thousand from each of the twelve tribes of Israel (7:4-8). Then they were sealed on the earth for protection before the trumpets; now they stand with the Lamb on mount Sion. Not one of them is missing. God sealed them, and God kept them (Appendix C, Question 8). As with the multitude of 7:9-17, John is shown them as they will be when their trial is over.

"Having his Father's name written in their foreheads." (The Majority Greek text and the critical texts read "having his name and his Father's name written in their foreheads.") In chapter 7 they were "sealed ... in their foreheads" (7:3); here we learn what the seal was: the name of the Lamb and of His Father. The beast's followers bore "the name of the beast" on their foreheads or hands (13:17); these bear God's name. A name on the forehead marks whose you are. Christ promised the overcomer at Philadelphia, "I will write upon him the name of my God ... and I will write upon him my new name" (3:12). In the holy city, "his name shall be in their foreheads" (22:4).

The number. *An hundred forty and four thousand* (see 7:4): the same number as were sealed, so the same company, every one of them kept.

Figures of speech. "Lo" is *Asterismos*. "His Father's name" written on them is the seal of 7:3, now explained: a *Metonymy*, the name put for ownership by the one named.

To whom. The 144,000 are Israelites of the twelve tribes (7:4-8), standing with the Lamb on mount Sion. They are God's sealed servants of the Day of the Lord (Part One, Chapter 3 §C).

> **Revelation 14:2** *And I heard a voice from heaven, as the voice of many waters, and as the voice of a great thunder: and I heard the voice of harpers harping with their harps:*

"And I heard a voice from heaven." John hears a great sound from heaven.

"As the voice of many waters." It is vast, like the roar of the sea. It is the same comparison John used of the voice of the Son of man: "his voice as the sound of many waters" (1:15). Ezekiel heard God's glory coming "and his voice was like a noise of many waters" (Ezekiel 43:2).

"And as the voice of a great thunder." It is also like a great thunderclap: overwhelming in power.

"And I heard the voice of harpers harping with their harps." But this vast, thunderous sound is music. It is the sound of harpers playing on their harps. The harp was the instrument of praise in the temple (see 5:8). What sounds like thunder and the sea is in fact a great choir of praise. A sound that would terrify the earth is joy in heaven.

Figures of speech. "As the voice of many waters," "as the voice of a great thunder": *Similes*. "Harpers harping with their harps" repeats the same root three times, the figure *Polyptoton*, which fills the ear with the sound of harping.

> **Revelation 14:3** *And they sung as it were a new song before the throne, and before the four beasts, and the elders: and no man could learn that song but the hundred and forty and four thousand, which were redeemed from the earth.*

"And they sung as it were a new song before the throne, and before the four beasts, and the elders." They sing "a new song" (see 5:9), a song never sung before, for a deliverance never seen before. It is sung "before the throne," in God's presence, before the four living creatures and the twenty-four elders. Psalm 144 speaks of such a song: "I will sing a new song unto thee, O God: upon a psaltery and an instrument of ten strings will I sing praises unto thee. It is he that giveth salvation unto kings: who delivereth David his servant from the hurtful sword" (Psalm 144:9-10).

"And no man could learn that song but the hundred and forty and four thousand." Only the 144,000 can learn it. Why? Because the song is the song of what they lived through. They were sealed, protected through the trumpets, kept from the beast's mark when the whole world bowed to him, and brought to mount Sion. No one else lived through exactly what they lived through, and no one else can sing their song. Some songs can only be learned by experience.

"Which were redeemed from the earth." "Redeemed" is *agorazō*, "bought" in the market (see 5:9). They were bought out of the earth, out of the world that worshipped the beast, by the blood of the Lamb.

The numbers. The *four* beasts (see 4:6) and the *144,000* again (see 7:4). Only those of this counted company could learn the song.

Figures of speech. "As it were a new song" is a *Simile* of manner: what John heard was like a song, and it was new.

> **Revelation 14:4** *These are they which were not defiled with women; for they are virgins. These are they which follow the Lamb whithersoever he goeth. These were redeemed from among men, being the firstfruits unto God and to the Lamb.*

The text now describes the 144,000 in four ways.

"These are they which were not defiled with women; for they are virgins." "Defiled" is *molunō*, "to stain, to soil" (the word used of the few in Sardis who had not "defiled their garments," 3:4). "Virgins" is *parthenoi*, used here of men: those who have kept themselves pure.

What does this mean? The words are plain: these men did not defile themselves with women; they kept themselves chaste. The world of the beast is a world of fornication: "neither repented they ... of their fornication" (9:21); Babylon is "the mother of harlots" (17:5), and "all nations have drunk of the wine of the wrath of her fornication" (18:3). In such a world, these men kept themselves pure. In Israel, men consecrated to God for a holy purpose kept themselves from women for that time. Before God spoke at

Sinai, Moses told the people, "Be ready against the third day: come not at your wives" (Exodus 19:15). When David's men came to the priest at Nob, he was told, "Of a truth women have been kept from us about these three days" (1 Samuel 21:5), as soldiers in the LORD's service. The 144,000 are God's sealed servants in a time of war and distress, wholly given to Him. Christ had said of those very days, "And woe unto them that are with child, and to them that give suck in those days!" (Matthew 24:19).

And their bodily purity goes with their faithfulness to God. In the prophets, Israel's turning to idols is called harlotry and adultery: "thou hast played the harlot with many lovers" (Jeremiah 3:1). These would have nothing to do with the harlot Babylon or with the beast's idolatry. They were pure in body and faithful in worship.

"These are they which follow the Lamb whithersoever he goeth." They follow the Lamb wherever He goes. "Follow" (*akoloutheō*) is the word of discipleship. Christ called His disciples with it: "Follow me" (Matthew 4:19), and said, "My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me" (John 10:27). The world followed the beast, wondering after him (13:3); these follow the Lamb, wherever He leads.

"These were redeemed from among men." (The Majority Greek text reads "These were redeemed by Jesus from among men.") They were bought out from among mankind.

"Being the firstfruits unto God and to the Lamb." "Firstfruits" (*aparchē*, Strong's G536) were the first part of the harvest, which belonged to God. Before Israel could eat any of the harvest, the first sheaf was brought to the priest and waved before the LORD:

> **Leviticus 23:10** — *Speak unto the children of Israel, and say unto them, When ye be come into the land which I give unto you, and shall reap the harvest thereof, then ye shall bring a sheaf of the firstfruits of your harvest unto the priest:*

The firstfruits were the pledge of the whole harvest to come: if the first sheaf was the LORD's, the whole harvest was blessed. The 144,000 are the firstfruits of Israel, the first part of the harvest of the Day of the Lord, given wholly to God and to the Lamb. The rest of the harvest follows: the harvest of the earth (14:14-16), and in the end, "so all Israel shall be saved" (Romans 11:26). Jeremiah wrote of Israel, "Israel was holiness unto the LORD, and the firstfruits of his increase" (Jeremiah 2:3).

Figures of speech. "These are they ... These are they ... These were": the repeated "these," the figure *Anaphora*, sets each mark of the 144,000 before the reader in turn. "Firstfruits" is a *Metaphor* drawn from the harvest offering.

To whom. The 144,000 are of Israel, the firstfruits of the harvest of the Day of the Lord. Paul speaks of Christ as "the firstfruits of them that slept" (1 Corinthians 15:20), and James of believers as "a kind of firstfruits of his creatures" (James 1:18), but the 144,000 of this book are a counted company from the twelve tribes (7:4-8; Part One, Chapter 3 §C).

> **Revelation 14:5** *And in their mouth was found no guile: for they are without fault before the throne of God.*

"And in their mouth was found no guile." "Guile" (*dolos*, the Received Text; the Majority Greek text and the critical texts read *pseudos*, "lie") is deceit, trickery. In a world deceived by the false prophet (13:14), where the beast's whole kingdom rested on a lie (2 Thessalonians 2:11), they spoke the truth. Zephaniah foretold the remnant of Israel in the last days:

> **Zephaniah 3:13** — *The remnant of Israel shall not do iniquity, nor speak lies; neither shall a deceitful tongue be found in their mouth: for they shall feed and lie down, and none shall make them afraid.*

They are like their Lord, of whom Isaiah said, "he had done no violence, neither was any deceit in his mouth" (Isaiah 53:9), and Peter, "Who did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth" (1 Peter 2:22).

"For they are without fault before the throne of God." "Without fault" is *amōmos* (Strong's G299), "without blemish," the word used of a sacrifice that could be offered to God because it had no defect: "a lamb without blemish and without spot" (1 Peter 1:19). The firstfruits offered to God must be without blemish, and they are. (The words "before the throne of God" are in the Received Text but lacking in the Majority and critical texts, which read simply "for they are without fault.")

Figures of speech. "Without fault" uses the word for an unblemished sacrifice: a *Metaphor* that ties them to the firstfruits of verse 4.

In short. After the beast and his mark, John sees the Lamb standing on mount Sion in heaven, and with Him the 144,000 of Israel's tribes, sealed in chapter 7, now bearing the name of the Lamb and of His Father on their foreheads. A sound from heaven like many waters and great thunder proves to be harpers harping, and the 144,000 sing a new song before the throne that no one else can learn, for it is the song of what they lived through. They kept themselves pure from women and from the harlot's idolatry, they follow the Lamb wherever He goes, they were bought from among men as the firstfruits to God and to the Lamb, and no lie was found in their mouth; they are without blemish, like an offering fit for God.

Section K — 14:6–14:20. On Earth: Six Angels and the Harvest of the Earth

Where it stands

The fifth scene on earth (5E), explained by Section J. Six angels appear in turn, with the Son of man among them. Three angels proclaim to the earth: the everlasting gospel, the fall of Babylon, and the doom of the beast's worshippers. Between the warnings comes a blessing on those who die in the Lord. Then come the harvest and the vintage of the earth. The section looks ahead to the end of the Day of the Lord, telling in brief what chapters 16 to 19 will tell at length.

Its structure

	Verses	Who	What
i	14:6-7	First angel	The everlasting gospel: "Fear God, and give glory to him"
ii	14:8	Second angel	"Babylon is fallen, is fallen"
iii	14:9-13	Third angel	Warning against the beast and his mark; the patience of the saints; "Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord"
iv	14:14	The Son of man	On a white cloud, with a sharp sickle
v	14:15-16	Fourth angel	"Thrust in thy sickle": the harvest reaped
vi	14:17	Fifth angel	Out of the temple, with a sharp sickle
vii	14:18-20	Sixth angel	"Thrust in thy sharp sickle": the vintage; the winepress

Three proclamations, then the harvest and the vintage, built alike: one who holds a sickle, one who cries "Thrust in," and the reaping.

The text

Revelation 14. 6 And I saw another angel fly in the midst of heaven, having the everlasting gospel to preach unto them that dwell on the earth, and to every nation, and kindred, and tongue, and people, **7** Saying with a loud voice, Fear God, and give glory to him; for the hour of his judgment is come: and worship him that made heaven, and earth, and the sea, and the fountains of waters. **8** And there followed another angel, saying, Babylon is fallen, is fallen, that great city, because she made all nations drink of the wine of the wrath of her fornication. **9** And the third angel followed them, saying with a loud voice, If any man worship the beast and his image, and receive his mark in his forehead, or in his hand, **10** The same shall drink of the wine of the wrath of God, which is poured out without mixture into the cup of his indignation; and he shall be tormented with fire and brimstone in the presence of the holy angels, and in the presence of the Lamb: **11** And the smoke of their torment ascendeth up for ever and ever: and they have no rest day nor night, who worship the beast and his image, and whosoever receiveth the mark of his name. **12** Here is the patience of the saints: here are they that keep the commandments of God, and the faith of Jesus. **13** And I heard a voice from heaven saying unto me, Write, Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord from henceforth: Yea, saith the Spirit, that they may rest from their labours; and their works do follow them. **14** And I looked, and behold a white cloud, and upon the cloud one sat like unto the Son of man, having on his head a golden crown, and in his hand a sharp sickle. **15** And another angel came out of the temple, crying with a loud voice to him that sat on the cloud, Thrust in thy sickle, and reap: for the time is come for thee to reap; for the harvest of the earth is ripe. **16** And he that sat on the cloud thrust in his sickle on the earth; and the earth was reaped. **17** And another angel came out of the temple which is in heaven, he also having a sharp sickle. **18** And another angel came out from the altar, which had power over fire; and cried with a loud cry to him that had the sharp sickle, saying, Thrust in thy sharp sickle, and gather the clusters of the vine of the earth; for her grapes are fully ripe. **19** And the angel thrust in his sickle into the earth, and gathered the vine of the earth, and cast it into the great winepress of the wrath of God. **20** And the winepress was trodden

without the city, and blood came out of the winepress, even unto the horse bridles, by the space of a thousand and six hundred furlongs.

Verse by verse

Where we are: on earth. Verses 14:6-13, three angels proclaim. The book announces ahead. This is the fifth scene on earth (pair 5). Three angels fly "in the midst of heaven," the open sky above the earth, and speak to those who dwell on the earth. The second angel cries "Babylon is fallen, is fallen" (14:8): this is announced here, but Babylon's fall is not carried out until 16:19, and not told in full until chapters 17 and 18.

> **Revelation 14:6** *And I saw another angel fly in the midst of heaven, having the everlasting gospel to preach unto them that dwell on the earth, and to every nation, and kindred, and tongue, and people,*

"And I saw another angel fly in the midst of heaven." "Another angel": another besides those already seen. He flies "in the midst of heaven," at the height of the sky (*mesouranēma*), where the eagle cried woe in 8:13, where every eye can see and every ear can hear.

"Having the everlasting gospel." "Gospel" is *euangelion* (Strong's G2098), "good news," from *eu*, "good," and *angelia*, "message." "Everlasting" (*aiōnion*) means age-lasting, eternal: good news that has always been true and always will be. What is it? The next verse gives its content: "Fear God, and give glory to him; for the hour of his judgment is come: and worship him that made heaven, and earth" (14:7). It is the good news that has been true since the creation: there is one God, the Creator, who is to be feared and worshipped, and who will judge. It is not the full gospel of grace that Paul preached, "the gospel of the grace of God" (Acts 20:24), the "mystery" made known in Christ (Ephesians 3:3-6). It is the simplest form of the good news, the call that every man in every age has heard from creation itself: "The heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament sheweth his handywork" (Psalm 19:1).

"To preach unto them that dwell on the earth." It is preached to "them that dwell on the earth," the very people who have followed the beast (13:8). Even now, in the darkest time, God sends them good news and calls them to turn.

"And to every nation, and kindred, and tongue, and people." To all mankind, the fourfold phrase (see 5:9). No one is left without a witness. Christ had said, "And this gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations; and then shall the end come" (Matthew 24:14). Here it is: preached from the sky by an angel, to the whole earth, just before the end.

Figures of speech. "Every nation, and kindred, and tongue, and people" is *Polysyndeton*, the whole of mankind named part by part.

To whom. "The everlasting gospel" preached by an angel to "them that dwell on the earth" is God's call in the Day of the Lord, the "gospel of the kingdom" Christ said would be preached "for a witness unto all nations" before the end (Matthew 24:14). Under grace the gospel is preached by men, the ambassadors of Christ (2 Corinthians 5:20), and it is "the gospel of the grace of God" (Acts 20:24; Part One, Chapter 3 §C).

> **Revelation 14:7** *Saying with a loud voice, Fear God, and give glory to him; for the hour of his judgment is come: and worship him that made heaven, and earth, and the sea, and the fountains of waters.*

"Saying with a loud voice, Fear God, and give glory to him." "Fear God": hold Him in awe, reverence Him, turn from evil before Him. "The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom" (Proverbs 9:10). "Give glory to him": honour Him as God, as the remnant in Jerusalem did (11:13). The world was giving glory to the beast; the angel calls it to give glory to God.

"For the hour of his judgment is come." "The hour" is come: the appointed time. God's judgment is not coming some day; it is here. The call to fear Him is urgent.

"And worship him that made heaven, and earth, and the sea, and the fountains of waters." The angel calls men to worship the Creator, not the beast. God made "heaven, and earth, and the sea, and the fountains of waters": the very things the trumpets have struck (8:7-12). The commandment said, "For in six days the LORD made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that in them is" (Exodus 20:11). The first song in heaven praised God for this: "thou hast created all things, and for thy pleasure they are and were created" (4:11). The angel's message is the same: the one who made all things is the one to worship. Paul preached the same to the idol-worshippers of Lystra: "turn from these vanities unto the living God, which made heaven, and earth, and the sea, and all things that are therein" (Acts 14:15).

Figures of speech. "Heaven, and earth, and the sea, and the fountains of waters" is *Polysyndeton*: each part of creation is named, so that the Creator's claim covers everything.

> **Revelation 14:8** *And there followed another angel, saying, Babylon is fallen, is fallen, that great city, because she made all nations drink of the wine of the wrath of her fornication.*

"And there followed another angel, saying, Babylon is fallen, is fallen." A second angel follows the first with a second message: Babylon has fallen. "Is fallen, is fallen" is the cry of Isaiah, when he saw in vision the fall of ancient Babylon:

> **Isaiah 21:9** — *And, behold, here cometh a chariot of men, with a couple of horsemen. And he answered and said, Babylon is fallen, is fallen; and all the graven images of her gods he hath broken unto the ground.*

"Babylon" is named here for the first time in the book. Babylon was the city of Nimrod (Genesis 10:10), where men built the tower to make a name for themselves against God (Genesis 11:4, 9); the great city of Nebuchadnezzar, which destroyed Jerusalem and the temple and carried Judah into captivity (2 Kings 25). In Revelation Babylon is "that great city" (14:8), a real city called Babylon, the centre of the world's trade, luxury, idolatry and persecution of God's people in the last days (Appendix C, Question 13). Its fall is announced here, four chapters before it is described. Chapters 17 and 18 tell it in full.

"That great city." In the Majority Greek text and the critical texts, "Babylon the great." Nebuchadnezzar boasted, "Is not this great Babylon, that I have built for the house of the kingdom by the might of my power, and for the honour of my majesty?" (Daniel 4:30). That same hour he was struck down.

"Because she made all nations drink of the wine of the wrath of her fornication." Babylon made all nations drunk with her wine. "Fornication" here is both her immorality and her idolatry: she seduced the nations away from God into her worship and her ways, as a harlot seduces. "The wine of the wrath of her fornication" is a striking phrase: the wine of her fornication is also the wine of God's wrath, for those who drink her cup will drink God's (14:10). Bullinger notes that "wrath" (*thumos*) can also mean "heat, passion," like the Hebrew word for heat and poison: so the sense is "the heating, maddening wine of her fornication." Jeremiah wrote of ancient Babylon:

> **Jeremiah 51:7** — *Babylon hath been a golden cup in the LORD's hand, that made all the earth drunken: the nations have drunken of her wine; therefore the nations are mad.*

Figures of speech. "Is fallen, is fallen" is the figure *Epizeuxis*: the same words repeated for emphasis, and in Hebrew speech for certainty. "Is fallen" speaks of what is still to come as already done (the past for the future, *Heterosis*), because God has decreed it. "The wine of ... her fornication" is a *Metaphor*: her seduction pictured as an intoxicating drink.

> **Revelation 14:9** *And the third angel followed them, saying with a loud voice, If any man worship the beast and his image, and receive his mark in his forehead, or in his hand,*

"And the third angel followed them, saying with a loud voice." A third angel, with the most solemn warning in the book.

"If any man worship the beast and his image, and receive his mark in his forehead, or in his hand." The warning is plain and personal: "If any man." Each person must choose. The beast threatened death to everyone who would not worship his image (13:15), and starvation to everyone who would not take his mark (13:17). God now warns of something far worse for those who do.

The number. The *third* angel: the last of the three who proclaim (14:6-11). Three proclamations, the gospel, Babylon's fall, and the warning: three, God's word spoken completely (see 4:8).

Figures of speech. "Worship ... and receive" joins the act of worship and the taking of the mark: they go together.

> **Revelation 14:10** *The same shall drink of the wine of the wrath of God, which is poured out without mixture into the cup of his indignation; and he shall be tormented with fire and brimstone in the presence of the holy angels, and in the presence of the Lamb:*

"The same shall drink of the wine of the wrath of God." Those who drank Babylon's wine (14:8) will drink God's. "Wrath" here is *thumos*, "fury, burning anger." The Psalms speak of God's cup:

> **Psalm 75:8** — *For in the hand of the LORD there is a cup, and the wine is red; it is full of mixture; and he poureth out of the same: but the dregs thereof, all the wicked of the earth shall wring them out, and drink them.*

Isaiah spoke of Jerusalem, "which hast drunk at the hand of the LORD the cup of his fury" (Isaiah 51:17). Jeremiah was told to take "the wine cup of this fury at my hand, and cause all the nations, to whom I send thee, to drink it" (Jeremiah 25:15).

"Which is poured out without mixture into the cup of his indignation." "Without mixture" (*akratos*) means undiluted, full strength. Wine in the ancient world was usually mixed with water before drinking. God's wrath is poured out unmixed: no water of mercy added. "Indignation" is *orgē*, settled wrath. In this life God's judgments are always mixed with mercy, giving time to repent. This cup has no mercy in it.

"And he shall be tormented with fire and brimstone." "Tormented" is *basanizō* (see 9:5). "Fire and brimstone" are the judgment of Sodom: "the LORD rained upon Sodom and upon Gomorrah brimstone and fire from the LORD out of heaven" (Genesis 19:24). They are the lake of fire into which the beast and false prophet are cast (19:20), and the devil (20:10), and "the fearful, and unbelieving" (21:8).

"In the presence of the holy angels, and in the presence of the Lamb." The judgment is not hidden. It takes place before the holy angels and before the Lamb. Those who refused the Lamb's mercy face the Lamb's judgment. Christ said, "Whosoever therefore shall be ashamed of me and of my words in this adulterous and sinful generation; of him also shall the Son of man be ashamed, when he cometh in the glory of his Father with the holy angels" (Mark 8:38).

Figures of speech. "The wine of the wrath of God" and "the cup of his indignation" are *Metaphors*: God's judgment pictured as a cup the wicked must drink to the dregs, as the Psalms and prophets picture it.

> **Revelation 14:11** *And the smoke of their torment ascendeth up for ever and ever: and they have no rest day nor night, who worship the beast and his image, and whosoever receiveth the mark of his name.*

"And the smoke of their torment ascendeth up for ever and ever." The smoke rises "for ever and ever." Isaiah used these words of the judgment on Edom: "It shall not be quenched night nor day; the smoke thereof shall go up for ever: from generation to generation it shall lie waste" (Isaiah 34:10). The same is said later of Babylon: "And her smoke rose up for ever and ever" (19:3). The smoke is the lasting witness to a judgment that is final and cannot be undone.

"And they have no rest day nor night." The worshippers of the beast "have no rest." The living creatures around the throne "rest not day and night, saying, Holy, holy, holy" (4:8): their unceasing worship. The worshippers of the beast have no rest day or night, but in torment. And in verse 13 the dead in the Lord "rest from their labours." The contrast is complete.

"Who worship the beast and his image, and whosoever receiveth the mark of his name." The verse ends by naming them again, so there can be no mistake: those who worship the beast and his image and take his mark.

(What the lake of fire is, and what "the second death" means, are set out where the book itself describes them, 20:10, 14-15; 21:8.)

Figures of speech. "For ever and ever" and "day nor night" are taken from Isaiah 34:10, where they describe a judgment that is final and lasting. "Day nor night" names the two halves of time for all time, *Synecdoche*.

> **Revelation 14:12** *Here is the patience of the saints: here are they that keep the commandments of God, and the faith of Jesus.*

"Here is the patience of the saints." "Here," in this: in the face of the beast's threats and God's warning, the saints show their patience. "Patience" is *hupomonē*, steadfast endurance (see 1:9). The beast threatened death; God warns of the lake of fire. The saints endure the first rather than suffer the second. Christ said, "And fear not them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul: but rather fear him which is able to destroy both soul and body in hell" (Matthew 10:28).

"Here are they that keep the commandments of God, and the faith of Jesus." The saints are marked by two things, as in 12:17: they keep God's commandments, and they hold "the faith of Jesus": faith in Jesus, faithfulness to Him. The same call came in 13:10: "Here is the patience and the faith of the saints."

Figures of speech. "Here is ... Here are" repeats "here" to point the reader to the saints' endurance, *Anaphora*.

To whom. "The saints" are God's people of the Day of the Lord (see 5:8), marked by keeping God's commandments and the faith of Jesus (12:17). Their endurance under the beast is the "patience" the seven messages called for (2:2-3, 19; 3:10; Part One, Chapter 3 §C).

> **Revelation 14:13** *And I heard a voice from heaven saying unto me, Write, Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord from henceforth: Yea, saith the Spirit, that they may rest from their labours; and their works do follow them.*

"And I heard a voice from heaven saying unto me, Write." A voice from heaven tells John to write this down, so that it may be remembered.

"Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord from henceforth." This is the second of the book's seven blessings (Part One, Chapter 1 §D). "From henceforth": from now on, from this time. In the days of the beast, when to refuse his mark means death, those who die "in the Lord," faithful to Him, are blessed. The world calls them losers; God calls them blessed. The psalmist said, "Precious in the sight of the LORD is the death of his saints" (Psalm 116:15).

"Yea, saith the Spirit." God, who is Spirit, answers "Yes" (see 2:7). He confirms the blessing.

"That they may rest from their labours." "Rest" is *anapauō*, the word spoken to the souls under the altar, "that they should rest yet for a little season" (6:11). The dead in the Lord rest from their labours. "Labours" is *kopos*, toil to the point of weariness (see 2:2). Their struggle is over. They sleep in death until the resurrection (20:4-5). Daniel was told, "But go thou thy way till the end be: for thou shalt rest, and stand in thy lot at the end of the days" (Daniel 12:13). Isaiah wrote, "The righteous perisheth ... he shall enter into peace: they shall rest in their beds" (Isaiah 57:1-2).

"And their works do follow them." Their works go with them. Nothing they did for God is lost. It is remembered, and will be rewarded "according to their works" when the dead are raised (11:18; 22:12).

Figures of speech. "Rest from their labours" is a *Metaphor*: death for the faithful pictured as rest after a day of hard work. "Their works do follow them" is *Prosopopoeia*: their works are pictured as companions walking behind them.

To whom. These are the faithful dead of the days of the beast, who die "in the Lord ... from henceforth." Their rest and the reward of their works belong to the Day of the Lord and the first resurrection (20:4-6; Part One, Chapter 3 §C).

On earth. Verses 14:14-20, the harvest and the vintage. The book announces ahead. The Son of man appears on a white cloud with a sickle (14:14), and the earth is reaped (14:15-16). Then the vintage is gathered and trodden in the winepress (14:17-20). This is told here in brief; the treading of the winepress takes place when the King comes, in 19:15.

> **Revelation 14:14** *And I looked, and behold a white cloud, and upon the cloud one sat like unto the Son of man, having on his head a golden crown, and in his hand a sharp sickle.*

The three proclamations are over. Now comes the harvest.

"And I looked, and behold a white cloud." "Behold": look! (*Asterismos*). A white cloud: white, the colour of purity and glory.

"And upon the cloud one sat like unto the Son of man." On the cloud sits "one like unto the Son of man." These are the words of Daniel 7:13 and of John's first vision: "one like unto the Son of man" (1:13). This is Christ. Daniel saw Him "with the clouds of heaven" (Daniel 7:13); John announced, "Behold, he cometh with clouds" (1:7). Christ said, "Hereafter shall ye see the Son of man sitting on the right hand of power, and coming in the clouds of heaven" (Matthew 26:64).

"Having on his head a golden crown." "Crown" here is *stephanos*, the victor's wreath (see 2:10). He has won. Gold: the crown of the highest honour.

"And in his hand a sharp sickle." A sickle is a curved blade for reaping grain. "Sharp": ready for work. The time of harvest has come. Christ had told the parable of the wheat and the tares, and explained it: "The harvest is the end of the world; and the reapers are the angels" (Matthew 13:39). Joel had foretold the harvest of the nations in the Day of the Lord: "Put ye in the sickle, for the harvest is ripe" (Joel 3:13).

Figures of speech. "Behold" is *Asterismos*. "Like unto the Son of man" is the title of Daniel 7:13, a *Simile* in form, as in 1:13. The sickle is a *Metonymy* for the harvest it reaps.

> **Revelation 14:15** *And another angel came out of the temple, crying with a loud voice to him that sat on the cloud, Thrust in thy sickle, and reap: for the time is come for thee to reap; for the harvest of the earth is ripe.*

"And another angel came out of the temple." An angel comes out of the temple in heaven, from God's presence.

"Crying with a loud voice to him that sat on the cloud, Thrust in thy sickle, and reap." He calls to the Son of man: "Thrust in thy sickle, and reap." How can an angel tell the Son of man what to do? The angel

does not command Him on his own authority; he comes "out of the temple," from the presence of God, bringing the word that the time has come. Christ said on earth, "But of that day and that hour knoweth no man, no, not the angels which are in heaven, neither the Son, but the Father" (Mark 13:32). The Father sets the time; the angel brings the word; the Son reaps.

"For the time is come for thee to reap; for the harvest of the earth is ripe." "Ripe" is *exēranthē*, "has dried, withered": the grain is dry and fully ready, past waiting. Joel's words again: "Put ye in the sickle, for the harvest is ripe: come, get you down; for the press is full, the fats overflow; for their wickedness is great" (Joel 3:13).

Figures of speech. "Thrust in thy sickle" (literally "send thy sickle") is an *Idiom* for beginning the harvest.

> **Revelation 14:16** *And he that sat on the cloud thrust in his sickle on the earth; and the earth was reaped.*

"And he that sat on the cloud thrust in his sickle on the earth; and the earth was reaped." The Son of man swings His sickle over the earth, and the earth is reaped. The harvest is gathered.

What is this harvest? The text does not explain it. In Christ's parable, at the harvest both wheat and tares are gathered: "Gather ye together first the tares, and bind them in bundles to burn them: but gather the wheat into my barn" (Matthew 13:30). Christ also said that at His coming He would "send his angels with a great sound of a trumpet, and they shall gather together his elect" (Matthew 24:31). In Joel, the harvest and the winepress are both pictures of judgment on the nations (Joel 3:12-13). Some readers take this grain harvest as the gathering of God's people, and the vintage that follows as the judgment of the wicked; others take both as judgment. The text says only that the Son of man reaped the earth, and it does not say what was gathered. This study does not go beyond the text. What is plain is that the harvest is reaped by the Son of man Himself, and that the vintage which follows (14:17-20) is wrath.

Figures of speech. "The earth was reaped" puts the earth for its people, *Metonymy*: it is men who are gathered, not soil.

> **Revelation 14:17** *And another angel came out of the temple which is in heaven, he also having a sharp sickle.*

"And another angel came out of the temple which is in heaven." A fifth angel comes from the heavenly temple, from God's presence.

"He also having a sharp sickle." He too has a sharp sickle. This time the reaper is an angel, not the Son of man. And this sickle is for grapes, not grain.

Figures of speech. "He also" sets this angel beside the Son of man of verse 14: the same kind of instrument, a different harvest.

> **Revelation 14:18** *And another angel came out from the altar, which had power over fire; and cried with a loud cry to him that had the sharp sickle, saying, Thrust in thy sharp sickle, and gather the clusters of the vine of the earth; for her grapes are fully ripe.*

"And another angel came out from the altar." A sixth angel comes "from the altar": the altar where the souls of the slain cried, "How long, O Lord ... dost thou not judge and avenge our blood?" (6:9-10), and where the prayers of all the saints were offered with incense and then answered with fire (8:3-5).

"Which had power over fire." This angel has authority over fire: the fire of the altar, the fire of judgment.

"And cried with a loud cry to him that had the sharp sickle, saying, Thrust in thy sharp sickle, and gather the clusters of the vine of the earth." He calls to the angel with the sickle: gather the grapes. "The vine of the earth" is set against Christ, who said, "I am the true vine, and my Father is the husbandman" (John 15:1). The vine of the earth is the world that has grown up apart from God and bears fruit for the beast. Israel was once God's vine: "For the vineyard of the LORD of hosts is the house of Israel ... and he looked for judgment, but behold oppression; for righteousness, but behold a cry" (Isaiah 5:7). Moses sang of Israel's enemies, "For their vine is of the vine of Sodom, and of the fields of Gomorrah: their grapes are grapes of gall, their clusters are bitter" (Deuteronomy 32:32).

"For her grapes are fully ripe." "Fully ripe" (*ēkmasan*): at their peak, bursting. The wickedness of the earth has come to its full. God had told Abraham that his descendants would wait four hundred years for the land, "for the iniquity of the Amorites is not yet full" (Genesis 15:16). Now the earth's iniquity is full.

Figures of speech. "The vine of the earth" is a *Metaphor* for the world in its rebellion, set against Christ the true vine.

> **Revelation 14:19** *And the angel thrust in his sickle into the earth, and gathered the vine of the earth, and cast it into the great winepress of the wrath of God.*

"And the angel thrust in his sickle into the earth, and gathered the vine of the earth." The angel reaps the vine of the earth.

"And cast it into the great winepress of the wrath of God." The grapes are thrown into "the great winepress of the wrath of God." A winepress was a stone trough where grapes were trodden underfoot until the juice ran out through a channel into a vat below. The picture is of the wicked crushed under God's judgment as grapes under the feet of the treaders. Isaiah saw the one who comes from Edom with garments red, and asked why; the answer came:

> **Isaiah 63:3** — *I have trodden the winepress alone; and of the people there was none with me: for I will tread them in mine anger, and trample them in my fury; and their blood shall be sprinkled upon my garments, and I will stain all my raiment.*

This is fulfilled when Christ comes: "he treadeth the winepress of the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God" (19:15). The vintage is seen here in advance; it takes place at His coming.

Figures of speech. "The great winepress of the wrath of God" is a *Metaphor*: God's judgment pictured as the treading of grapes, taken from Isaiah 63 and Joel 3:13.

> **Revelation 14:20** *And the winepress was trodden without the city, and blood came out of the winepress, even unto the horse bridles, by the space of a thousand and six hundred furlongs.*

"And the winepress was trodden without the city." "Without the city": outside the city. Which city? In this book "the great city ... where also our Lord was crucified" is Jerusalem (11:8). Joel foretold that God would gather the nations "into the valley of Jehoshaphat" (Joel 3:2), and "Let the heathen be wakened, and come up to the valley of Jehoshaphat: for there will I sit to judge all the heathen round about" (Joel 3:12). Christ Himself suffered "without the gate" of Jerusalem (Hebrews 13:12). Now, outside the city, the nations are judged.

"And blood came out of the winepress, even unto the horse bridles." What comes out of this winepress is not grape juice but blood, deep enough to reach the bridles of horses. The vintage is a battle: the slaughter of the armies gathered against Christ when He comes (16:14-16; 19:17-21).

"By the space of a thousand and six hundred furlongs." A "furlong" (*stadion*) was about 607 feet. Sixteen hundred furlongs is about 184 miles, roughly the length of the land of Israel from north to south. The judgment covers the whole land.

The number. *A thousand and six hundred furlongs*: 1,600 furlongs, about 184 miles. It is forty times forty, or four times four times a hundred: four, the number of the earth (see 4:6), multiplied by itself and enlarged. The blood of the winepress reaches across the land. Whether the measure is the length of the flow or the reach of the slaughter, the number shows that the judgment covers the whole land, from end to end.

Figures of speech. "Unto the horse bridles" is the figure Bullinger calls *Hyperbole* in form: a picture of slaughter so great that the measure seems beyond belief, to show how terrible the judgment will be. The vintage and the battle are one: the *Metaphor* of the winepress gives way to the reality of blood.

In short. Six angels and the Son of man appear in turn. The first angel flies through the height of heaven with the everlasting gospel for every nation: fear God, give Him glory, and worship the Creator, for the hour of His judgment has come. The second announces, in Isaiah's words, that Babylon the great, who made the nations drunk with the wine of her fornication, is fallen. The third warns that anyone who worships the beast or takes his mark will drink the undiluted wine of God's wrath and be tormented with fire and brimstone before the Lamb, with no rest day or night. Here is the patience of the saints who keep God's commandments and the faith of Jesus; and a voice from heaven blesses those who die in the Lord from now on, for they rest from their labours and their works follow them. Then the Son of man, crowned and seated on a white cloud, reaps the ripe harvest of the earth at the word brought from the temple; and an angel with a sharp sickle, called by the angel from the altar, gathers the fully ripe vine of the earth into the great winepress of the wrath of God, trodden outside the city, from which blood flows to the horses' bridles for about 180 miles.

Section L — 15:1–15:8. In Heaven: The Seven Angels with the Seven Last Plagues

Where it stands

The sixth scene in heaven (6H). The seventh trumpet sounded at 11:15, and chapters 12 to 14 stood between it and its outworking. Now, before the vials are poured out on earth (Section M), John sees the seven angels who hold the seven last plagues, the victors over the beast singing the song of Moses and the Lamb beside the sea of glass, and the temple filled with God's glory, so that no one can enter until the plagues are finished.

Its structure

	Verses	Content
A	15:1	The seven angels with the seven last plagues
B	15:2-4	Worship offered: the victors on the sea of glass sing the song of Moses and of the Lamb
A	15:5-7	The seven angels come out of the temple and are given the seven golden vials
B	15:8	Worship no longer possible: the temple filled with smoke, and no one able to enter

The text

Revelation 15. 1 And I saw another sign in heaven, great and marvellous, seven angels having the seven last plagues; for in them is filled up the wrath of God. **2** And I saw as it were a sea of glass mingled with fire: and them that had gotten the victory over the beast, and over his image, and over his mark, and over the number of his name, stand on the sea of glass, having the harps of God. **3** And they sing the song of Moses the servant of God, and the song of the Lamb, saying, Great and marvellous are thy works, Lord God Almighty; just and true are thy ways, thou King of saints. **4** Who shall not fear thee, O Lord, and glorify thy name? for thou only art holy: for all nations shall come and worship before thee; for thy judgments are made manifest. **5** And after that I looked, and, behold, the temple of the tabernacle of the testimony in heaven was opened: **6** And the seven angels came out of the temple, having the seven plagues, clothed in pure and white linen, and having their breasts girded with golden girdles. **7** And one of the four beasts gave unto the seven angels seven golden vials full of the wrath of God, who liveth for ever and ever. **8** And the temple was filled with smoke from the glory of God, and from his power; and no man was able to enter into the temple, till the seven plagues of the seven angels were fulfilled.

Verse by verse

Where we are: in heaven. Verses 15:1-8, the seven angels with the seven last plagues. This is the sixth scene in heaven (pair 6). The seventh trumpet sounded at 11:15; chapters 12 to 14 stood between it and its outworking. Now the book takes up the main line again. Verses 15:2-4 look ahead, showing those who overcame the beast already standing on the sea of glass. Verses 15:5-8 return to the angels, who receive the seven vials.

> **Revelation 15:1** *And I saw another sign in heaven, great and marvellous, seven angels having the seven last plagues; for in them is filled up the wrath of God.*

"And I saw another sign in heaven, great and marvellous." "Sign" is *sēmeion*, as in 12:1 and 12:3: the third great sign in heaven. The first was the woman, the second the dragon; this is the third. It is "great and marvellous," wonderful, astonishing.

"Seven angels having the seven last plagues." Seven angels, each holding a plague. "Plagues" is *plēgai* (Strong's G4127), "blows, strokes, wounds": the word for the plagues on Egypt. These are "the seven last plagues": "last" (*eschatas*) because after them there are no more. They are God's final judgments on the earth before Christ comes.

"For in them is filled up the wrath of God." "Filled up" is *etelesthē*, "completed, brought to its end," the word used of the mystery of God being "finished" at the seventh trumpet (10:7). In these seven plagues God's wrath is completed. The seventh trumpet (11:15) opens into these seven vials, and they finish the judgments of the Day of the Lord (Part One, Chapter 8 §D; Appendix G).

God had warned Israel long before that if they would not turn, He would add judgments seven times over: "And if ye walk contrary unto me, and will not hearken unto me; I will bring seven times more plagues upon you according to your sins" (Leviticus 26:21).

The numbers. *Seven* angels with the *seven* last plagues. Seven is spiritual perfection (see 1:4): "in them is filled up the wrath of God." God had warned Israel under the law, "I will punish you seven times more for your sins" (Leviticus 26:18, 21, 24, 28). The seven last plagues are His wrath made full.

Figures of speech. "Great and marvellous" pairs two words of wonder, the figure *Synonymia*, to stress how astonishing the sign is.

> **Revelation 15:2** *And I saw as it were a sea of glass mingled with fire: and them that had gotten the victory over the beast, and over his image, and over his mark, and over the number of his name, stand on the sea of glass, having the harps of God.*

"And I saw as it were a sea of glass mingled with fire." The sea of glass before the throne (4:6), clear as crystal, is now "mingled with fire": glowing, as if fire were flashing through it. Fire is the sign of judgment, and judgment is about to fall.

"And them that had gotten the victory over the beast, and over his image, and over his mark, and over the number of his name." On it stand the overcomers. "Had gotten the victory" is *nikōntas*, from *nikaō*,

"those who overcame" (see 2:7). They overcame the beast, his image, his mark, and the number of his name: everything chapter 13 described. They would not worship the image, would not take the mark, would not bow. Many of them died for it (13:15). (The words "and over his mark" are in the Received Text but lacking in the Majority and critical texts.)

How did they overcome? Chapter 12 told us: "they overcame him by the blood of the Lamb, and by the word of their testimony; and they loved not their lives unto the death" (12:11). The beast "overcame" them by killing them (13:7); they overcame the beast by refusing him to the end.

"Stand on the sea of glass, having the harps of God." They stand "on" the sea of glass (or "by" it, beside it; the Greek *epi* can mean either). They hold "the harps of God": harps given by God for His praise.

The picture is of Israel on the shore of the Red Sea. When Pharaoh's army had been drowned and Israel stood safe on the far shore, "Israel saw that great work which the LORD did upon the Egyptians: and the people feared the LORD, and believed the LORD, and his servant Moses" (Exodus 14:31). Then they sang. Here the overcomers stand by the sea of glass mingled with fire, safe, while the judgment is about to fall on the beast's kingdom, and they sing.

As with the multitude of 7:9-17 and the 144,000 of 14:1-5, John is shown them as they will be when their trial is over and they stand before God.

Figures of speech. "As it were a sea of glass" is a *Simile*. "Over the beast, and over his image, and over his mark, and over the number of his name" is *Polysyndeton*: each part of the beast's demand is named, and each was overcome.

To whom. The overcomers are those who refused the beast's mark in the Day of the Lord, the fulfilment of the promises "to him that overcometh" in the seven messages (2:7; 3:21). They sing the song of Moses, the song of Israel's deliverance (Part One, Chapter 3 §C).

> **Revelation 15:3** *And they sing the song of Moses the servant of God, and the song of the Lamb, saying, Great and marvellous are thy works, Lord God Almighty; just and true are thy ways, thou King of saints.*

"And they sing the song of Moses the servant of God." The song of Moses was the song Israel sang after crossing the Red Sea:

> **Exodus 15:1-2** — *Then sang Moses and the children of Israel this song unto the LORD, and spake, saying, I will sing unto the LORD, for he hath triumphed gloriously: the horse and his rider hath he thrown into the sea. The LORD is my strength and song, and he is become my salvation: he is my God, and I will prepare him an habitation; my father's God, and I will exalt him.*

Moses also wrote a second song at the end of his life, which begins, "Give ear, O ye heavens, and I will speak" (Deuteronomy 32:1), and speaks of God's righteous ways and His judgment on His enemies. Moses is called "the servant of God," as he is in Joshua: "Moses the servant of the LORD" (Joshua 1:1).

"And the song of the Lamb." It is also "the song of the Lamb." The Lamb has delivered His people as God delivered Israel from Egypt. The passover lamb's blood saved Israel's firstborn in Egypt (Exodus 12:13); the Lamb's blood has saved these. It is one song: the song of God's deliverance, from the exodus to the end.

"Saying, Great and marvellous are thy works, Lord God Almighty." The words of the song come from Israel's Scriptures. "Great and marvellous are thy works": "I will praise thee; for I am fearfully and wonderfully made: marvellous are thy works" (Psalm 139:14); "The works of the LORD are great" (Psalm 111:2). "Lord God Almighty": the LORD of hosts (see 1:8).

"Just and true are thy ways." God's ways, His dealings, His judgments, are just and true. Moses' second song says: "He is the Rock, his work is perfect: for all his ways are judgment: a God of truth and without iniquity, just and right is he" (Deuteronomy 32:4). The psalmist wrote, "The LORD is righteous in all his ways, and holy in all his works" (Psalm 145:17). Even as His wrath is about to be poured out, those who have suffered most declare that His ways are just.

"Thou King of saints." (The Majority Greek text reads "King of the nations"; the critical texts read "King of the nations" or "King of the ages.") Jeremiah wrote, "Who would not fear thee, O King of nations? for to thee doth it appertain" (Jeremiah 10:7). God is King over all the nations, even those that have followed the beast.

Notice what the song does not say. It does not praise the overcomers for their victory. It does not mention the beast at all. It is wholly about God: His works, His ways, His holiness, His judgments.

Figures of speech. "Great and marvellous ... just and true" sets two pairs side by side, each pair saying one thing in two words (*Synonymia*), so that God's works and ways are praised fully.

> **Revelation 15:4** *Who shall not fear thee, O Lord, and glorify thy name? for thou only art holy: for all nations shall come and worship before thee; for thy judgments are made manifest.*

"Who shall not fear thee, O Lord, and glorify thy name?" This is Jeremiah's question: "Who would not fear thee, O King of nations?" (Jeremiah 10:7). The answer is: no one. In the end, everyone will fear God and glorify His name. It was the call of the first angel: "Fear God, and give glory to him" (14:7).

"For thou only art holy." God alone is holy. The living creatures cry, "Holy, holy, holy" (4:8). Hannah sang, "There is none holy as the LORD: for there is none beside thee" (1 Samuel 2:2).

"For all nations shall come and worship before thee." All nations will come and worship. The psalmist foretold it:

> **Psalm 86:9** — *All nations whom thou hast made shall come and worship before thee, O Lord; and shall glorify thy name.*

The beast demanded the worship of all nations (13:8); in the end all nations will worship God. Isaiah saw the same: "And it shall come to pass, that from one new moon to another, and from one sabbath to another, shall all flesh come to worship before me, saith the LORD" (Isaiah 66:23).

"For thy judgments are made manifest." "Judgments" here is *dikaiōmata*, "righteous acts, just decrees." God's righteous acts have been made plain for all to see. When God judges, the whole world sees that He is just.

Figures of speech. "Who shall not fear thee?" is *Erotesis*: a question whose answer is plain, "No one." The three reasons, each beginning "for," build one on another, the figure *Climax*.

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

"And after that I looked." "After that" is *meta tauta*, "after these things": the signpost of a new vision (see 4:1). This is the fourth of the six times it opens a new sight.

"And, behold, the temple of the tabernacle of the testimony in heaven was opened." "Behold" (*Asterismos*). The temple in heaven is opened, as it was at the seventh trumpet (11:19). Here it is called "the temple of the tabernacle of the testimony." The "testimony" was the two tables of the law, which God called "the testimony": "And thou shalt put into the ark the testimony which I shall give thee" (Exodus 25:16). The tabernacle in the wilderness was called "the tabernacle of testimony" because it held them (Numbers 1:50). The judgments come from the sanctuary where God's law is kept. They are the just answer of God's holy law to a world that has broken it.

Figures of speech. "The temple of the tabernacle of the testimony" is a chain of three nouns, each defining the next, the figure Bullinger lists among the *Heteroses* of case (genitives of relation): the sanctuary, which is the tabernacle, which holds the testimony.

> **Revelation 15:6** *And the seven angels came out of the temple, having the seven plagues, clothed in pure and white linen, and having their breasts girded with golden girdles.*

"And the seven angels came out of the temple, having the seven plagues." The seven angels come out from God's presence, carrying the plagues. They have been in the sanctuary; now they come out to do God's work.

"Clothed in pure and white linen." They are dressed in pure, shining linen. (The Majority Greek text reads "linen … bright"; some old copies read "stone" instead of "linen.") Linen was the dress of the priests: God commanded Aaron's garments to be made of "fine linen" (Exodus 28:39). Daniel saw "a certain man clothed in linen" (Daniel 10:5). The angels are dressed as priests, for the judgments they carry are holy.

"And having their breasts girded with golden girdles." Golden sashes across their chests, as the Son of man wore (1:13). They are dressed like their Lord. They come from His presence, in His likeness, to carry out His judgment.

The numbers. The *seven* angels with the *seven* plagues (see 15:1).

Figures of speech. The angels' dress is described as John saw it; it tells the reader what kind of work they do, priestly and holy.

> **Revelation 15:7** *And one of the four beasts gave unto the seven angels seven golden vials full of the wrath of God, who liveth for ever and ever.*

"And one of the four beasts gave unto the seven angels seven golden vials." One of the four living creatures, the cherubim around the throne, hands each angel a golden bowl. "Vials" (*phialai*) are wide, shallow bowls, like those used at the altar of the tabernacle (Exodus 27:3). The cherubim, who stand for the creation under God's throne (4:7), give the bowls of judgment to the angels.

"Full of the wrath of God." The bowls are full of God's wrath. Here is a striking echo. In 5:8 the elders held "golden vials full of odours, which are the prayers of saints." Now seven golden vials are filled with God's wrath. The prayers of the saints, "How long, O Lord ... dost thou not judge and avenge our blood?" (6:10), have risen before God in golden bowls; now they are answered in golden bowls. The bowls that held the prayers are matched by the bowls that hold the answer.

"Who liveth for ever and ever." The God whose wrath this is "liveth for ever and ever" (see 4:9). The beast's power lasts forty-two months (13:5); God lives for ever.

The numbers. *One* of the *four* beasts (see 4:6) gives the *seven* angels *seven* golden vials. The vials are given from among the living creatures who stand for creation: creation itself hands over the judgment.

Figures of speech. "Vials full of the wrath of God" is a *Metaphor*: God's judgment pictured as the contents of bowls, ready to be poured out.

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

"And the temple was filled with smoke from the glory of God, and from his power." Smoke fills the temple: the smoke of God's glory and power. This is what happened when the tabernacle was finished:

> **Exodus 40:34-35** — *Then a cloud covered the tent of the congregation, and the glory of the LORD filled the tabernacle. And Moses was not able to enter into the tent of the congregation, because the cloud abode thereon, and the glory of the LORD filled the tabernacle.*

At the dedication of Solomon's temple, "the priests could not stand to minister because of the cloud: for the glory of the LORD had filled the house of the LORD" (1 Kings 8:11). Isaiah saw the LORD on His throne, and "the house was filled with smoke" (Isaiah 6:4).

"And no man was able to enter into the temple, till the seven plagues of the seven angels were fulfilled." No one can go into the temple until the seven plagues are finished. In the tabernacle, the priest went in to make atonement and to pray for the people. Now no one can go in. There is no more intercession, no more holding back. The time for mercy to delay the judgment is over; the wrath must run its full course. When the seven plagues are "fulfilled" (*telesthōsin*, "completed"), the temple will be open again.

The numbers. The *seven* plagues of the *seven* angels (see 15:1). No one can enter the temple until all seven are finished.

Figures of speech. "Smoke from the glory of God, and from his power" pairs God's glory and His power, the two filling the house together.

In short. John sees a third great sign in heaven: seven angels with the seven last plagues, in which God's wrath is completed. Beside the sea of glass, now glowing with fire, stand those who overcame the beast, his image and the number of his name, holding the harps of God and singing the song of Moses and the song of the Lamb, as Israel sang by the Red Sea: great and marvellous are God's works, just and true His ways; who will not fear Him? All nations will come and worship, for He alone is holy and His righteous acts are made plain. Then the temple of the tabernacle of the testimony is opened in heaven, and the seven angels come out, dressed like priests in pure linen with golden sashes, and one of the living creatures gives them seven golden bowls full of the wrath of the God who lives for ever. The temple fills with the smoke of God's glory and power, and no one can enter until the seven plagues are finished.

Section M — 16:1–18:24. On Earth: The Seven Vials, and the Fall of Babylon

Where it stands

The sixth scene on earth (6E), the longest section of the book, explained by Section L. It has three parts: the seven vials (chapter 16); the great whore and the beast (chapter 17); and the judgment of the great city (chapter 18). Chapters 17 and 18 are a close-up of the seventh vial, under which "great Babylon came in remembrance before God" (16:19). Here the wrath of God is completed, and the city that made the nations drunk falls.

Its structure

Chapter 16. The seven vials.

	Verses	Vial	Effect
1	16:1-2	On the earth	A grievous sore on the beast's worshippers
2	16:3	On the sea	The sea becomes blood
3	16:4-7	On the rivers	The rivers become blood; the angel and the altar say God is righteous
4	16:8-9	On the sun	Men scorched; they repent not
5	16:10-11	On the seat of the beast	Darkness; they repent not
6	16:12-16	On the Euphrates	Dried up; three unclean spirits gather the kings to Armageddon
7	16:17-21	Into the air	"It is done"; the great earthquake; great Babylon remembered; great hail

Chapter 17. The great whore. The vision (17:1-6): the woman, her seat on many waters and on the scarlet beast. The interpretation (17:7-18): the woman; the beast; the beast; the woman, "that great city."

Chapter 18. The judgment of the great city. Three sets of three:

	Verses	Content
1	18:1-3	Babylon's judgment announced; her associates' sin
	18:4	God's people: "Come out of her, my people"
2	18:5-19	The reasons for her judgment; the lament of kings, merchants and shipmasters
	18:20	God's people: "Rejoice over her"
3	18:21-23	The manner of her judgment: the millstone; her silence
	18:24	God's people: their blood found in her

The text

Revelation 16. 1 And I heard a great voice out of the temple saying to the seven angels, Go your ways, and pour out the vials of the wrath of God upon the earth. **2** And the first went, and poured out his vial upon the earth; and there fell a noisome and grievous sore upon the men which had the mark of the beast, and upon them which worshipped his image. **3** And the second angel poured out his vial upon the sea; and it became as the blood of a dead man: and every living soul died in the sea. **4** And the third angel poured out his vial upon the rivers and fountains of waters; and they became blood. **5** And I heard the angel of the waters say, Thou art righteous, O Lord, which art, and wast, and shalt be, because thou hast judged thus. **6** For they have shed the blood of saints and prophets, and thou hast given them blood to drink; for they are worthy. **7** And I heard another out of the altar say, Even so, Lord God Almighty, true and righteous are thy judgments. **8** And the fourth angel poured out his vial upon the sun; and power was given unto him to scorch men with fire. **9** And men were scorched with great heat, and blasphemed the name of God, which hath power over these plagues: and they repented not to give him glory. **10** And the fifth angel poured out his vial upon the seat of the beast; and his kingdom was full of darkness; and they gnawed their tongues for pain, **11** And blasphemed the God of heaven because of their pains and their sores, and repented not of their deeds. **12** And the sixth angel poured out his vial upon the great river Euphrates; and the water thereof was dried up, that the way of the kings of the east might be prepared. **13** And I saw three unclean spirits like frogs come out of the mouth of the dragon, and out of the mouth of the beast, and out of the mouth of the false prophet. **14** For they are the spirits of devils, working miracles, which go forth unto the kings of the earth and of the whole world, to gather them to the battle of that great day of God Almighty. **15** Behold, I come as a thief. Blessed is he that watcheth, and keepeth his garments, lest he walk naked, and they see his shame. **16** And he gathered them together into a place called in the Hebrew tongue Armageddon. **17** And the seventh angel poured out his vial into the air; and there came a great voice out of the temple of heaven, from the throne, saying, It is done. **18** And there were voices, and thunders, and lightnings; and there was a great

earthquake, such as was not since men were upon the earth, so mighty an earthquake, and so great. **19** And the great city was divided into three parts, and the cities of the nations fell: and great Babylon came in remembrance before God, to give unto her the cup of the wine of the fierceness of his wrath. **20** And every island fled away, and the mountains were not found. **21** And there fell upon men a great hail out of heaven, every stone about the weight of a talent: and men blasphemed God because of the plague of the hail; for the plague thereof was exceeding great.

Revelation 17. 1 And there came one of the seven angels which had the seven vials, and talked with me, saying unto me, Come hither; I will shew unto thee the judgment of the great whore that sitteth upon many waters: **2** With whom the kings of the earth have committed fornication, and the inhabitants of the earth have been made drunk with the wine of her fornication. **3** So he carried me away in the spirit into the wilderness: and I saw a woman sit upon a scarlet coloured beast, full of names of blasphemy, having seven heads and ten horns. **4** And the woman was arrayed in purple and scarlet colour, and decked with gold and precious stones and pearls, having a golden cup in her hand full of abominations and filthiness of her fornication: **5** And upon her forehead was a name written, MYSTERY, BABYLON THE GREAT, THE MOTHER OF HARLOTS AND ABOMINATIONS OF THE EARTH. **6** And I saw the woman drunken with the blood of the saints, and with the blood of the martyrs of Jesus: and when I saw her, I wondered with great admiration. **7** And the angel said unto me, Wherefore didst thou marvel? I will tell thee the mystery of the woman, and of the beast that carrieth her, which hath the seven heads and ten horns. **8** The beast that thou sawest was, and is not; and shall ascend out of the bottomless pit, and go into perdition: and they that dwell on the earth shall wonder, whose names were not written in the book of life from the foundation of the world, when they behold the beast that was, and is not, and yet is. **9** And here is the mind which hath wisdom. The seven heads are seven mountains, on which the woman sitteth. **10** And there are seven kings: five are fallen, and one is, and the other is not yet come; and when he cometh, he must continue a short space. **11** And the beast that was, and is not, even he is the eighth, and is of the seven, and goeth into perdition. **12** And the ten horns which thou sawest are ten kings, which have received no kingdom as yet; but receive power as kings one hour with the beast. **13** These have one mind, and shall give their power and strength unto the beast. **14** These shall make war with the Lamb, and the Lamb shall overcome them: for he is Lord of lords, and King of kings: and they that are with him are called, and chosen, and faithful. **15** And he saith unto me, The waters which thou sawest, where the whore sitteth, are peoples, and multitudes, and nations, and tongues. **16** And the ten horns which thou sawest upon the beast, these shall hate the whore, and shall make her desolate and naked, and shall eat her flesh, and burn her with fire. **17** For God hath put in their hearts to fulfil his will, and to agree, and give their kingdom unto the beast, until the words of God shall be fulfilled. **18** And the woman which thou sawest is that great city, which reigneth over the kings of the earth.

Revelation 18. 1 And after these things I saw another angel come down from heaven, having great power; and the earth was lightened with his glory. **2** And he cried mightily with a strong voice, saying, Babylon the great is fallen, is fallen, and is become the habitation of devils, and the hold of every foul spirit, and a cage of every unclean and hateful bird. **3** For all nations have drunk of the wine of the wrath of her fornication, and the kings of the earth have committed fornication with her, and the merchants of

the earth are waxed rich through the abundance of her delicacies. **4** And I heard another voice from heaven, saying, Come out of her, my people, that ye be not partakers of her sins, and that ye receive not of her plagues. **5** For her sins have reached unto heaven, and God hath remembered her iniquities. **6** Reward her even as she rewarded you, and double unto her double according to her works: in the cup which she hath filled fill to her double. **7** How much she hath glorified herself, and lived deliciously, so much torment and sorrow give her: for she saith in her heart, I sit a queen, and am no widow, and shall see no sorrow. **8** Therefore shall her plagues come in one day, death, and mourning, and famine; and she shall be utterly burned with fire: for strong is the Lord God who judgeth her. **9** And the kings of the earth, who have committed fornication and lived deliciously with her, shall bewail her, and lament for her, when they shall see the smoke of her burning, **10** Standing afar off for the fear of her torment, saying, Alas, alas that great city Babylon, that mighty city! for in one hour is thy judgment come. **11** And the merchants of the earth shall weep and mourn over her; for no man buyeth their merchandise any more: **12** The merchandise of gold, and silver, and precious stones, and of pearls, and fine linen, and purple, and silk, and scarlet, and all thyine wood, and all manner vessels of ivory, and all manner vessels of most precious wood, and of brass, and iron, and marble, **13** And cinnamon, and odours, and ointments, and frankincense, and wine, and oil, and fine flour, and wheat, and beasts, and sheep, and horses, and chariots, and slaves, and souls of men. **14** And the fruits that thy soul lusted after are departed from thee, and all things which were dainty and goodly are departed from thee, and thou shalt find them no more at all. **15** The merchants of these things, which were made rich by her, shall stand afar off for the fear of her torment, weeping and wailing, **16** And saying, Alas, alas, that great city, that was clothed in fine linen, and purple, and scarlet, and decked with gold, and precious stones, and pearls! **17** For in one hour so great riches is come to nought. And every shipmaster, and all the company in ships, and sailors, and as many as trade by sea, stood afar off, **18** And cried when they saw the smoke of her burning, saying, What city is like unto this great city! **19** And they cast dust on their heads, and cried, weeping and wailing, saying, Alas, alas, that great city, wherein were made rich all that had ships in the sea by reason of her costliness! for in one hour is she made desolate. **20** Rejoice over her, thou heaven, and ye holy apostles and prophets; for God hath avenged you on her. **21** And a mighty angel took up a stone like a great millstone, and cast it into the sea, saying, Thus with violence shall that great city Babylon be thrown down, and shall be found no more at all. **22** And the voice of harpers, and musicians, and of pipers, and trumpeters, shall be heard no more at all in thee; and no craftsman, of whatsoever craft he be, shall be found any more in thee; and the sound of a millstone shall be heard no more at all in thee; **23** And the light of a candle shall shine no more at all in thee; and the voice of the bridegroom and of the bride shall be heard no more at all in thee: for thy merchants were the great men of the earth; for by thy sorceries were all nations deceived. **24** And in her was found the blood of prophets, and of saints, and of all that were slain upon the earth.

The vials, the trumpets and Egypt. The seven vials follow the same order as the first four trumpets (earth, sea, rivers, sun), but where the trumpets struck a third, the vials strike the whole. And like the trumpets, they recall the plagues on Egypt: sores, blood, darkness, frogs, hail (Appendix G). There is one great difference. After the vials, there is no call to repent, and no pause. These are "the seven last plagues; for in them is filled up the wrath of God" (15:1).

Verse by verse

Where we are: on earth. Verses 16:1-21, the seven vials. This is the sixth scene on earth (pair 6), the longest in the book, explained by chapter 15. A great voice out of the temple in heaven sends the seven angels, and the vials are poured out on the earth one after another: the land, the sea, the rivers, the sun, the seat of the beast, the Euphrates, and the air.

> **Revelation 16:1** *And I heard a great voice out of the temple saying to the seven angels, Go your ways, and pour out the vials of the wrath of God upon the earth.*

"And I heard a great voice out of the temple." The voice comes from the temple, the temple filled with smoke that no one could enter (15:8). Only God is there. This is the voice of God Himself.

"Saying to the seven angels, Go your ways, and pour out the vials of the wrath of God upon the earth." "Go your ways": go. "Pour out": empty the bowls. The psalmist prayed against those who persecuted the righteous, "Pour out thine indignation upon them, and let thy wrathful anger take hold of them" (Psalm 69:24). Zephaniah foretold the day of the LORD:

> **Zephaniah 3:8** — *Therefore wait ye upon me, saith the LORD, until the day that I rise up to the prey: for my determination is to gather the nations, that I may assemble the kingdoms, to pour upon them mine indignation, even all my fierce anger: for all the earth shall be devoured with the fire of my jealousy.*

The number. The *seven* angels (see 15:1). The vials, like the seals and the trumpets, divide four and three: the first four fall on the earth, the sea, the rivers and the sun; the last three on the seat of the beast, the Euphrates, and the air.

Figures of speech. "Pour out the vials of the wrath of God" is a *Metaphor*: God's judgment pictured as the contents of a bowl poured out on the earth.

> **Revelation 16:2** *And the first went, and poured out his vial upon the earth; and there fell a noisome and grievous sore upon the men which had the mark of the beast, and upon them which worshipped his image.*

"And the first went, and poured out his vial upon the earth." The first angel pours his bowl on the land.

"And there fell a noisome and grievous sore upon the men which had the mark of the beast, and upon them which worshipped his image." "Noisome" means foul, loathsome; "grievous" means painful, malignant. A "sore" (*helkos*, Strong's G1668) is an ulcer, a festering wound. It is the word used in the Greek Old Testament of the sixth plague on Egypt:

> **Exodus 9:10-11** — *And they took ashes of the furnace, and stood before Pharaoh; and Moses sprinkled it up toward heaven; and it became a boil breaking forth with blains upon man, and upon beast. And the magicians could not stand before Moses because of the boils; for the boil was upon the magicians, and upon all the Egyptians.*

In Egypt even the magicians could not stand. Here the sores fall on exactly those the third angel warned: "If any man worship the beast and his image, and receive his mark in his forehead, or in his hand, The

same shall drink of the wine of the wrath of God" (14:9-10). They took the beast's mark on their bodies; now their bodies are marked by God's judgment.

The number. The *first* vial, on the earth. It strikes the same part of creation as the first trumpet (8:7), but now there is no "third part": the sore falls on all who bear the beast's mark (see 8:7).

Figures of speech. "Noisome and grievous" pairs two words of pain, *Synonymia*, to stress how terrible the sore is.

> **Revelation 16:3** *And the second angel poured out his vial upon the sea; and it became as the blood of a dead man: and every living soul died in the sea.*

"And the second angel poured out his vial upon the sea." The second bowl is poured on the sea.

"And it became as the blood of a dead man." Not fresh blood, but the blood of a corpse: thick, dark, clotted, stinking. Under the second trumpet a third of the sea became blood (8:8); now all of it. This is the first plague on Egypt, when the Nile became blood (Exodus 7:20-21), now on the whole sea.

"And every living soul died in the sea." "Living soul" means living creature (see 8:9). Everything in the sea dies. Under the second trumpet a third of the creatures in the sea died; now every one.

The number. The *second* vial: the sea, as at the second trumpet (8:8), but now the whole sea, not a third.

Figures of speech. "As the blood of a dead man" is a *Simile*. "Every living soul" uses "soul" for living creature, *Synecdoche*.

> **Revelation 16:4** *And the third angel poured out his vial upon the rivers and fountains of waters; and they became blood.*

"And the third angel poured out his vial upon the rivers and fountains of waters." The third bowl falls on the fresh water: rivers and springs. Under the third trumpet a third of them were made bitter (8:10-11).

"And they became blood." Now they become blood. There is no fresh water to drink. In Egypt "the Egyptians could not drink of the water of the river" (Exodus 7:21). Now the whole earth is in Egypt's place.

The number. The *third* vial: the rivers and fountains, as at the third trumpet (8:10), now wholly.

> **Revelation 16:5** *And I heard the angel of the waters say, Thou art righteous, O Lord, which art, and wast, and shalt be, because thou hast judged thus.*

"And I heard the angel of the waters say." There is an angel set over the waters. Scripture speaks of angels with charge over parts of creation: the angel "which had power over fire" (14:18), the four angels holding the four winds (7:1). This angel, whose waters have been turned to blood, speaks.

"Thou art righteous, O Lord, which art, and wast, and shalt be." The angel declares God righteous. "Righteous" (*dikaios*) means just, right in all He does. (The Majority Greek text and the critical texts read "which art, and wast, the Holy One," with no "and shalt be": God's coming is now present, as in 11:17.) The psalmist said, "Righteous art thou, O LORD, and upright are thy judgments" (Psalm 119:137).

"Because thou hast judged thus." The judgment is right. Even the angel whose charge has been struck says so.

Figures of speech. The angel's speech is an *Apostrophe*: he turns and speaks directly to God.

> **Revelation 16:6** *For they have shed the blood of saints and prophets, and thou hast given them blood to drink; for they are worthy.*

"For they have shed the blood of saints and prophets." Here is why the judgment is just. The men of the earth shed the blood of God's saints and prophets: the souls under the altar (6:9), the two witnesses (11:7), the saints the beast made war on (13:7, 15).

"And thou hast given them blood to drink." They shed blood; now they drink blood. The punishment fits the crime exactly. God had said through Isaiah of Israel's oppressors, "And I will feed them that oppress thee with their own flesh; and they shall be drunken with their own blood, as with sweet wine" (Isaiah 49:26).

"For they are worthy." "Worthy" (*axioi*): they deserve it. It is the same word used of the faithful in Sardis, "they shall walk with me in white: for they are worthy" (3:4), and of the Lamb, "Thou art worthy" (5:9). Each receives what is due: the faithful walk in white, the murderers drink blood. This is the answer to the cry of the souls under the altar: "How long, O Lord, holy and true, dost thou not judge and avenge our blood on them that dwell on the earth?" (6:10).

Figures of speech. "Shed the blood ... given them blood to drink" repeats "blood" in two settings, the figure *Antanaclasis* (the same word used with a turn of sense): the blood they spilled becomes the blood they drink.

> **Revelation 16:7** *And I heard another out of the altar say, Even so, Lord God Almighty, true and righteous are thy judgments.*

"And I heard another out of the altar say." (The Majority Greek text and the critical texts read "And I heard the altar say.") The altar speaks: the altar under which the souls of the slain cried out (6:9-10), and on which the prayers of all the saints were offered (8:3-5). The altar that cried "How long?" now answers.

"Even so, Lord God Almighty." "Even so" is *nai*, "Yes!" (see 1:7). The altar agrees with the angel of the waters.

"True and righteous are thy judgments." God's judgments are true (they keep His word) and righteous (they are just). The psalmist wrote, "The judgments of the LORD are true and righteous altogether" (Psalm 19:9). The same words are sung in heaven when Babylon falls (19:2).

Figures of speech. The altar given a voice is *Prosopopoeia*: the place of sacrifice and prayer itself confirms that the prayers are answered justly.

> **Revelation 16:8** *And the fourth angel poured out his vial upon the sun; and power was given unto him to scorch men with fire.*

"And the fourth angel poured out his vial upon the sun." The fourth bowl is poured on the sun. Under the fourth trumpet a third of the sun was darkened (8:12); now the sun's heat is increased.

"And power was given unto him to scorch men with fire." "Him" is the sun. It is given power to burn men like fire. Malachi foretold, "For, behold, the day cometh, that shall burn as an oven; and all the proud, yea, and all that do wickedly, shall be stubble" (Malachi 4:1). To the multitude before the throne it was promised, "neither shall the sun light on them, nor any heat" (7:16). The sun that will never touch God's people scorches the beast's.

The number. The *fourth* vial: the sun, as at the fourth trumpet (8:12). The last of the four on the natural world (see 16:1).

Figures of speech. "Power was given unto him" speaks of the sun as a person given authority, *Prosopopoeia*.

> **Revelation 16:9** *And men were scorched with great heat, and blasphemed the name of God, which hath power over these plagues: and they repented not to give him glory.*

"And men were scorched with great heat." The heat is terrible.

"And blasphemed the name of God, which hath power over these plagues." They know exactly who is sending the plagues: "God, which hath power over these plagues." And they curse Him. They do not doubt that God exists; they hate Him.

"And they repented not to give him glory." They will not repent. They will not give God glory. After the sixth trumpet, "the rest of the men ... repented not" (9:20-21). At the end of the trumpets, the remnant in Jerusalem "gave glory to the God of heaven" (11:13). Here the men of the beast refuse, even under the burning sun. Like Pharaoh, who "hardened his heart" after every plague (Exodus 8:15, 32), they harden themselves.

Figures of speech. "Blasphemed ... and they repented not to give him glory" sets what they did against what they should have done, the figure *Antithesis*: cursing instead of glorifying.

> **Revelation 16:10** *And the fifth angel poured out his vial upon the seat of the beast; and his kingdom was full of darkness; and they gnawed their tongues for pain,*

"And the fifth angel poured out his vial upon the seat of the beast." "Seat" is *thronos*, "throne." The dragon gave the beast "his power, and his seat, and great authority" (13:2). Now God's judgment strikes the beast's own throne, the centre of his rule.

"And his kingdom was full of darkness." Darkness falls on the whole of the beast's kingdom. This is the ninth plague on Egypt: "there was a thick darkness in all the land of Egypt three days: They saw not one

another" (Exodus 10:22-23). Under the fourth trumpet a third of the light was cut off (8:12); now the beast's kingdom is plunged into darkness. Joel had foretold that before the great day, "The sun shall be turned into darkness" (Joel 2:31).

"And they gnawed their tongues for pain." "Gnawed" (*emasōnto*): chewed, bit. In agony, they bit their tongues. The sores of the first vial (16:2) still burn; the sun has scorched them (16:9); and now, in the dark, they bite their tongues for pain.

The number. The *fifth* vial, the first of the last three (see 16:1): on the very seat of the beast.

Figures of speech. "Gnawed their tongues for pain" is a vivid picture of agony, to be taken as written.

> **Revelation 16:11** *And blasphemed the God of heaven because of their pains and their sores, and repented not of their deeds.*

"And blasphemed the God of heaven because of their pains and their sores." Again they curse God. "The God of heaven" is the title the remnant in Jerusalem used when they gave Him glory (11:13). These use it to curse Him. The sores of the first vial are still on them: the judgments are piling up, one on another.

"And repented not of their deeds." For the third time in the plagues, they do not repent (9:20-21; 16:9, 11). God's judgments are just, and they are also calls to turn. These men have heard the everlasting gospel (14:6-7) and the warning of the third angel (14:9-11), and they would not turn.

Figures of speech. The refrain "repented not" (9:20, 21; 16:9, 11) runs through the judgments, the figure *Epistrophe* on the scale of the book: the same ending again and again, showing the hardness of men's hearts.

> **Revelation 16:12** *And the sixth angel poured out his vial upon the great river Euphrates; and the water thereof was dried up, that the way of the kings of the east might be prepared.*

"And the sixth angel poured out his vial upon the great river Euphrates." The Euphrates again (see 9:14): the great river of Babylon, the eastern boundary of the land God promised to Abraham.

"And the water thereof was dried up." The river dries up. God has dried up waters before, for His people: the Red Sea, "and the waters were divided" (Exodus 14:21), and the Jordan, when "all the Israelites passed over on dry ground" (Joshua 3:17). Here He dries up the Euphrates, not for His people, but for the gathering of His enemies to their judgment. Jeremiah had foretold judgment on Babylon's waters:

> **Jeremiah 50:38** — *A drought is upon her waters; and they shall be dried up: for it is the land of graven images, and they are mad upon their idols.*

"That the way of the kings of the east might be prepared." "The kings of the east" is literally "the kings from the rising of the sun." With the river dry, nothing stands in their way. Who they are, the text does not say. They are among "the kings of the earth and of the whole world" whom the three unclean spirits gather (16:14). This study does not identify them with any nation of today.

The number. The *sixth* vial: the Euphrates, where the four angels were bound at the sixth trumpet (9:14).

Figures of speech. "The kings of the east" (Greek, "from the rising of the sun") is an *Idiom* for kings from the eastern lands.

> **Revelation 16:13** *And I saw three unclean spirits like frogs come out of the mouth of the dragon, and out of the mouth of the beast, and out of the mouth of the false prophet.*

"And I saw three unclean spirits like frogs." "Unclean" means impure, foul. "Like frogs": the second plague on Egypt was frogs (Exodus 8:6). Under the law frogs were unclean animals (Leviticus 11:10). These spirits look like frogs: slimy, loathsome, croaking.

"Come out of the mouth of the dragon, and out of the mouth of the beast, and out of the mouth of the false prophet." They come from the mouths of the three enemies of God. The dragon is Satan (12:9); the beast is the ruler from the sea (13:1); "the false prophet" is named here for the first time: he is the second beast, from the earth (13:11), who worked signs and deceived the world (13:13-14). Out of their mouths, the source of their lies, come these spirits.

The number. *Three* unclean spirits, one from the mouth of each of the three enemies, the dragon, the beast, and the false prophet. Three is the number of divine completeness (see 4:8); here it is counterfeited. The three enemies send out three spirits, a full and united work of deceit, to gather the whole world to war.

Figures of speech. "Like frogs" is a *Simile*. "Out of the mouth ... and out of the mouth ... and out of the mouth" is *Polysyndeton* with repetition, *Anaphora*: each of the three is named as a source.

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

"For they are the spirits of devils." The book explains its own sign (Part One, Chapter 5 §B). They are demons, "spirits of devils."

"Working miracles." "Miracles" is *sēmeia*, "signs." Like the false prophet (13:13-14), they deceive by signs. Christ warned of "great signs and wonders" by which false prophets would deceive, "if it were possible ... the very elect" (Matthew 24:24). Paul foretold "all power and signs and lying wonders" (2 Thessalonians 2:9).

"Which go forth unto the kings of the earth and of the whole world." They go out to the rulers of the whole earth.

"To gather them to the battle of that great day of God Almighty." Their purpose is to gather the kings to war, to "the battle of that great day of God Almighty." The second psalm foretold it: "The kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers take counsel together, against the LORD, and against his anointed" (Psalm 2:2). Joel foretold it:

> **Joel 3:9-12** — *Proclaim ye this among the Gentiles; Prepare war, wake up the mighty men, let all the men of war draw near; let them come up: Beat your plowshares into swords, and your pruninghooks into spears: let the weak say, I am strong. Assemble yourselves, and come, all ye heathen, and gather yourselves together round about: thither cause thy mighty ones to come down, O LORD. Let the heathen be wakened, and come up to the valley of Jehoshaphat: for there will I sit to judge all the heathen round about.*

The demons think they are gathering the kings to fight God; in truth God is gathering them to be judged. The battle itself is fought in 19:19-21.

Figures of speech. "That great day of God Almighty" is the Day of the Lord, named by its greatness (see 6:17).

The book steps aside for one verse. Verse 16:15. Between the gathering of the kings (16:13-14) and the place of the battle (16:16), the Lord's own voice breaks in: "Behold, I come as a thief." It is a parenthesis, a word spoken over the scene to the reader. The account of the sixth vial then goes on in 16:16.

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

Suddenly, in the middle of the vials, Christ Himself speaks.

"Behold, I come as a thief." "Behold": mark this! (*Asterismos*). The voice is Christ's own. "As a thief": suddenly, without warning, when no one expects Him. He had said it to Sardis: "If therefore thou shalt not watch, I will come on thee as a thief" (3:3). He had said it on the mount of Olives: "But know this, that if the goodman of the house had known in what watch the thief would come, he would have watched" (Matthew 24:43). While the demons gather the kings and the world prepares for war, the King is about to come.

"Blessed is he that watcheth." This is the third of the book's seven blessings (Part One, Chapter 1 §D). "Watcheth" is *grēgoreō*, "keeps awake, stays alert" (see 3:2). In the darkness of the fifth vial and the deception of the sixth, the one who stays awake and alert, who is not deceived, is blessed.

"And keepeth his garments." He keeps his clothes on, ready. A watchman on duty did not undress and sleep. To Sardis Christ said, "Thou hast a few names even in Sardis which have not defiled their garments" (3:4). To Laodicea He counselled "white raiment, that thou mayest be clothed, and that the shame of thy nakedness do not appear" (3:18).

"Lest he walk naked, and they see his shame." The one caught asleep and unclothed is shamed. In the temple, it is said, the captain of the guard went round at night, and a watchman found asleep at his post could have his clothes taken and burned, so that he was put to shame. Whether or not that custom stands behind these words, their meaning is plain: the one not ready when the King comes will be put to open shame.

Figures of speech. "Behold" is *Asterismos*. The sudden voice of Christ breaking into the narrative is the figure *Parenthesis* (see 2:9): a word set in the middle so that it falls exactly where it is needed. "As a thief" is a *Simile*.

To whom. Paul wrote to the church of grace, "But ye, brethren, are not in darkness, that that day should overtake you as a thief" (1 Thessalonians 5:4). Here Christ warns those who will be on the earth in the days of the sixth vial, the people of the Day of the Lord, as He warned Sardis (3:3; Part One, Chapter 3 §C).

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

"And he gathered them together." "He" (or "they," the spirits): the kings are gathered.

"Into a place called in the Hebrew tongue Armageddon." "Armageddon" is Hebrew: *Har Megiddo*, "the mountain of Megiddo." Megiddo was a fortress city overlooking the great plain of Esdraelon (the valley of Jezreel), in the north of the land of Israel. It guarded the main road between Egypt and Mesopotamia, and many battles were fought there. Deborah's song tells of the battle there: "The kings came and fought, then fought the kings of Canaan in Taanach by the waters of Megiddo" (Judges 5:19). There king Josiah was killed fighting Pharaoh Necho: "and king Josiah went against him; and he slew him at Megiddo" (2 Kings 23:29). Zechariah, foretelling Israel's mourning when they look on the one they pierced, compared it to the mourning for Josiah: "In that day shall there be a great mourning in Jerusalem, as the mourning of Hadadrimmon in the valley of Megiddon" (Zechariah 12:11).

The name is given "in the Hebrew tongue," as Abaddon was (9:11), pointing the reader to the land of Israel. The kings of the whole world are gathered there. The gathering is here; the battle comes when the King appears (19:19-21).

Figures of speech. "Called in the Hebrew tongue" points to the meaning of the name, which must be understood to see where the gathering takes place.

To whom. Armageddon is in the land of Israel. The nations are gathered against Jerusalem and God's people there, as Zechariah foretold: "For I will gather all nations against Jerusalem to battle" (Zechariah 14:2). This is the Day of the Lord (Part One, Chapter 3 §C).

On earth. Verses 16:17-21, the seventh vial. "It is done." The great earthquake, the great city divided, great Babylon remembered before God (16:19), and great hail. Babylon's fall is told here in a single clause; the next two chapters return to it and tell it in full.

> **Revelation 16:17** *And the seventh angel poured out his vial into the air; and there came a great voice out of the temple of heaven, from the throne, saying, It is done.*

"And the seventh angel poured out his vial into the air." The last bowl is poured "into the air," the atmosphere that surrounds the whole earth. Nothing escapes it. Paul called Satan "the prince of the power of the air" (Ephesians 2:2); his realm is struck.

"And there came a great voice out of the temple of heaven, from the throne." The voice comes from the throne itself.

"Saying, It is done." In Greek one word: *Gegonen*, "It has come to pass," "It is done." God's wrath is complete (15:1). Christ said on the cross, "It is finished" (*Tetelestai*, John 19:30), when the work of redemption was done. Here God says, "It is done," when the work of judgment is done. The same word is spoken from the throne at the end of the book, when all things are made new: "It is done. I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end" (21:6).

The number. The *seventh* vial, the last: "It is done." With the seventh, the wrath of God is filled up (15:1).

Figures of speech. "It is done," one word in Greek, is spoken with deliberate brevity: the shortest possible statement carries the greatest weight. It answers "It is finished" (John 19:30), the one word spoken from the cross.

> **Revelation 16:18** *And there were voices, and thunders, and lightnings; and there was a great earthquake, such as was not since men were upon the earth, so mighty an earthquake, and so great.*

"And there were voices, and thunders, and lightnings." The signs of the throne (4:5), which came to the earth at the seventh seal (8:5) and the seventh trumpet (11:19), come again at the seventh vial, now at their greatest.

"And there was a great earthquake, such as was not since men were upon the earth, so mighty an earthquake, and so great." An earthquake greater than any in all of human history. The words pile up: "a great earthquake ... so mighty an earthquake, and so great." Daniel was told of "a time of trouble, such as never was since there was a nation even to that same time" (Daniel 12:1). Christ said of the tribulation, "such as was not since the beginning of the world" (Matthew 24:21). Zechariah foretold that when the LORD's feet stand on the mount of Olives, "the mount of Olives shall cleave in the midst thereof toward the east and toward the west, and there shall be a very great valley" (Zechariah 14:4).

Figures of speech. "Voices, and thunders, and lightnings" is *Polysyndeton*. "Such as was not ... so mighty ... and so great" is a heaping up of words, *Synonymia*, so that the reader feels the scale of the shaking.

> **Revelation 16:19** *And the great city was divided into three parts, and the cities of the nations fell: and great Babylon came in remembrance before God, to give unto her the cup of the wine of the fierceness of his wrath.*

"And the great city was divided into three parts." "The great city": which city? In 11:8 "the great city" was Jerusalem, "where also our Lord was crucified." Here it is set beside "the cities of the nations" and "great Babylon," and readers have taken it either as Jerusalem or as Babylon. Every other time after 11:8 that "the great city" is named, it is Babylon (14:8; 17:18; 18:10, 16, 18, 19, 21). The study takes it as Babylon, named in the next words. It is split into three by the earthquake.

"And the cities of the nations fell." The cities of the Gentiles collapse.

"And great Babylon came in remembrance before God." God remembers Babylon. Her sins have not been forgotten, though she has gone on for so long. "Came in remembrance" is a Hebrew way of saying that God now acts on what He knows. When God "remembered Noah" (Genesis 8:1), He acted to save him. When He remembers Babylon, He acts to judge her. Chapters 17 and 18 now tell her judgment in full.

"To give unto her the cup of the wine of the fierceness of his wrath." The cup of 14:10, "the wine of the wrath of God," is given to Babylon. Jeremiah was told:

> **Jeremiah 25:15** — *For thus saith the LORD God of Israel unto me; Take the wine cup of this fury at my hand, and cause all the nations, to whom I send thee, to drink it.*

And among those nations, "the king of Sheshach shall drink after them" (Jeremiah 25:26): Sheshach is a cipher for Babylon (Jeremiah 51:41). Babylon made all nations drink of the wine of her fornication (14:8); now she drinks the wine of God's wrath.

The number. *Three* parts: the great city is split three ways by the great earthquake. A city divided against itself cannot stand (Matthew 12:25); here it is divided completely. Three, the number of what is complete and entire (see 4:8), is the measure of its ruin.

Figures of speech. "Came in remembrance before God" is *Anthropopatheia*: God, who never forgets, is spoken of as remembering, to show that the time has come to act. "The cup of the wine of the fierceness of his wrath" is a chain of nouns, each deepening the last: the cup, the wine, the fierceness, the wrath.

> **Revelation 16:20** *And every island fled away, and the mountains were not found.*

"And every island fled away, and the mountains were not found." The earthquake reshapes the earth. Islands vanish; mountains are levelled. At the sixth seal "every mountain and island were moved out of their places" (6:14); now they disappear. Isaiah foretold, "Every valley shall be exalted, and every mountain and hill shall be made low" (Isaiah 40:4).

Figures of speech. "Every island fled away" is *Prosopopoeia*: the islands are pictured as fleeing in terror.

> **Revelation 16:21** *And there fell upon men a great hail out of heaven, every stone about the weight of a talent: and men blasphemed God because of the plague of the hail; for the plague thereof was exceeding great.*

"And there fell upon men a great hail out of heaven, every stone about the weight of a talent." Hailstones fall, each "about the weight of a talent." A talent was the heaviest weight in use, commonly reckoned at something like a hundred pounds or more. Hailstones that size would crush anything they fell on. The seventh plague on Egypt was hail:

> **Exodus 9:24** — *So there was hail, and fire mingled with the hail, very grievous, such as there was none like it in all the land of Egypt since it became a nation.*

When Israel fought the Amorites at Beth-horon, "the LORD cast down great stones from heaven upon them ... they were more which died with hailstones than they whom the children of Israel slew with the sword" (Joshua 10:11). God asked Job, "Hast thou entered into the treasures of the snow? or hast thou seen the treasures of the hail, Which I have reserved against the time of trouble, against the day of battle and war?" (Job 38:22-23). This is that day.

"And men blasphemed God because of the plague of the hail; for the plague thereof was exceeding great." Even now, as the hailstones fall, men curse God. To the very end of the plagues, they refuse to repent. The wrath of God is complete; the hardness of men is complete too.

The number. Hailstones "about the weight of a *talent*." A talent was the heaviest weight in use, the load a man could carry, between about sixty and a hundred pounds. The seventh plague on Egypt was hail (Exodus 9:23-24); this hail is beyond anything Egypt knew.

Figures of speech. "Exceeding great" (*megalē ... sphodra*) is emphatic: the plague was very great indeed. The last words of the chapter, men cursing God, match the refrain of the vials (16:9, 11): to the end, no repentance.

Still on earth. Verses 17:1–18:24. The book draws close. Here the book stops and looks closer at one thing the seventh vial named in a single clause: "great Babylon came in remembrance before God" (16:19). One of the seven angels carries John "in the spirit into the wilderness" (17:3) and shows him the woman on the scarlet beast. Chapter 17 is the vision of the woman and its meaning (17:1-6, 7-18); chapter 18 is the judgment of the great city. These two chapters do not come after the seventh vial in time; they are a close-up of what happened under it. Verse 17:14 also looks ahead, to the war of the Lamb told in 19:19-21.

> **Revelation 17:1** *And there came one of the seven angels which had the seven vials, and talked with me, saying unto me, Come hither; I will shew unto thee the judgment of the great whore that sitteth upon many waters:*

The seventh vial has been poured out, and "great Babylon came in remembrance before God" (16:19). Now John is taken aside and shown Babylon close up.

"And there came one of the seven angels which had the seven vials." One of the seven angels who poured out the bowls of wrath comes to John. The judgment of Babylon belongs to the seventh vial, and one of those same angels explains it.

"And talked with me, saying unto me, Come hither." "Come hither": come here. The same words, from "one of the seven angels which had the seven vials," are spoken again in 21:9: "Come hither, I will shew thee the bride, the Lamb's wife." The book sets the two scenes against each other on purpose. Here the angel shows John the harlot; there he shows him the bride. Here a city of filth; there a holy city. The reader is meant to compare them (Appendix A).

"I will shew unto thee the judgment of the great whore." "Whore" (*pornē*, Strong's G4204) is a harlot, a prostitute: one who sells herself. "Judgment" (*krima*) is the sentence passed on her. John is about to see her, and then her sentence carried out (chapter 18).

"That sitteth upon many waters." She sits enthroned on "many waters." Jeremiah addressed ancient Babylon in the same words:

> **Jeremiah 51:13** — *O thou that dwellest upon many waters, abundant in treasures, thine end is come, and the measure of thy covetousness.*

Ancient Babylon stood on the Euphrates, with its canals and waterways all around. But the angel explains the waters in verse 15: "The waters which thou sawest, where the whore sitteth, are peoples, and multitudes, and nations, and tongues." She sits over the peoples of the world, ruling them.

The numbers. *One* of the *seven* angels which had the *seven* vials (see 15:1). One of the angels of the last plagues shows John the harlot; one of the same company will show him the bride (21:9).

Figures of speech. "The great whore" is a *Metaphor*, and the book explains it: "the woman which thou sawest is that great city" (17:18). The prophets called proud cities harlots: Nahum called Nineveh "the wellfavoured harlot, the mistress of witchcrafts, that selleth nations through her whoredoms" (Nahum 3:4); Isaiah said of Tyre, "she shall turn to her hire, and shall commit fornication with all the kingdoms of the world" (Isaiah 23:17).

> **Revelation 17:2** *With whom the kings of the earth have committed fornication, and the inhabitants of the earth have been made drunk with the wine of her fornication.*

"With whom the kings of the earth have committed fornication." The kings of the earth have joined themselves to her. "Fornication" here is the selling of loyalty for gain: the kings gave themselves to her for her wealth, her favours and her power, and went after her gods. In the prophets, a city that traded with all nations and drew them into its idolatry and luxury was called a harlot (Isaiah 23:17; Nahum 3:4).

"And the inhabitants of the earth have been made drunk with the wine of her fornication." The ordinary people too, "the inhabitants of the earth," the people of the Day of the Lord who follow the beast (see 3:10), are drunk with her wine. They are intoxicated by her: by her wealth, her pleasures, her religion. Jeremiah wrote of ancient Babylon, "Babylon hath been a golden cup in the LORD's hand, that made all the earth drunken: the nations have drunken of her wine; therefore the nations are mad" (Jeremiah 51:7).

Figures of speech. "Fornication" and "made drunk with the wine" are *Metaphors*: unfaithfulness to God and blind devotion to Babylon, pictured as harlotry and drunkenness.



Albrecht Dürer, The Apocalypse (woodcut, 1498): the woman on the scarlet beast, and the fall of Babylon (17:1-18:24).

> **Revelation 17:3** *So he carried me away in the spirit into the wilderness: and I saw a woman sit upon a scarlet coloured beast, full of names of blasphemy, having seven heads and ten horns.*

"So he carried me away in the spirit into the wilderness." For the third time John is "in the spirit" (1:10; 4:2; 17:3; 21:10): a new vision opens. He is carried "into the wilderness," a desert place. In 21:10 he will be carried "in the spirit to a great and high mountain" to see the holy city. The harlot is seen in a wilderness; the bride from a high mountain. Isaiah's oracle against Babylon was called "The burden of the desert of the sea" (Isaiah 21:1).

"And I saw a woman sit upon a scarlet coloured beast." The woman sits on a beast. "Scarlet" (*kokkinos*) is a deep, rich red, the colour of royalty and luxury, and of blood. The beast is the beast of chapter 13, the ruler from the sea: he has the same "names of blasphemy" and the same "seven heads and ten horns." The dragon too was red (12:3).

She "sits upon" him: he carries her, and for a time she rides him, as if she controls him. But at the end of the chapter he turns on her and destroys her (17:16).

"Full of names of blasphemy." The beast is covered with names that insult God (see 13:1).

"Having seven heads and ten horns." The same as in 12:3 and 13:1. The angel explains them in verses 9-12.

The numbers. *Seven* heads and *ten* horns (see 12:3; 13:1): the beast John saw rise from the sea, now carrying the woman.

Figures of speech. The woman riding the beast is a *sign* (17:7), which the angel explains: the woman is a city (17:18), and the beast is the ruler and his kingdom (17:8-14).

> **Revelation 17:4** *And the woman was arrayed in purple and scarlet colour, and decked with gold and precious stones and pearls, having a golden cup in her hand full of abominations and filthiness of her fornication:*

"And the woman was arrayed in purple and scarlet colour." Purple and scarlet were the most costly dyes of the ancient world, the colours of kings and the very rich. Purple dye came from a shellfish, a few drops from each; a robe of it cost a fortune. (Thyatira was known for its purple trade, 2:18; Acts 16:14.)

"And decked with gold and precious stones and pearls." She is covered with jewellery: gold, gems, pearls. All the wealth of the world is on her. The merchants who mourn her will name the very same things (18:12, 16).

"Having a golden cup in her hand." A golden cup, beautiful on the outside. Jeremiah: "Babylon hath been a golden cup in the LORD's hand, that made all the earth drunken" (Jeremiah 51:7).

"Full of abominations and filthiness of her fornication." But inside, the cup is full of "abominations" and "filthiness." "Abomination" (*bdelugma*, Strong's G946) is something detestable, disgusting to God; in the Old Testament it is used above all of idols and idol-worship: "Molech, the abomination of the children of Ammon" (1 Kings 11:7). Christ spoke of "the abomination of desolation" (Matthew 24:15). "Filthiness" is uncleanness, moral filth. The cup is gold outside and filth within. Christ said of the Pharisees, "ye make clean the outside of the cup and of the platter, but within they are full of extortion and excess" (Matthew 23:25).

Figures of speech. "Purple and scarlet ... gold and precious stones and pearls" is *Polysyndeton* in the Greek: each part of her finery is named. The golden cup full of filth is an *Antithesis*: beauty outside, abomination inside.

> **Revelation 17:5** *And upon her forehead was a name written, MYSTERY, BABYLON THE GREAT, THE MOTHER OF HARLOTS AND ABOMINATIONS OF THE EARTH.*

"And upon her forehead was a name written." God's servants have His name on their foreheads (7:3; 14:1); the beast's followers have his mark (13:16). The harlot has her own name written on her forehead. The name tells plainly what she is.

"MYSTERY." "Mystery" (*mustērion*) means a secret that God now makes known (see 1:20). The angel will tell John "the mystery of the woman" (17:7), and he does. Her name is a secret only until it is explained, and the explanation follows.

"BABYLON THE GREAT." Her name is Babylon. It is the name of the city founded by Nimrod (Genesis 10:10), where men built the tower "whose top may reach unto heaven; and let us make us a name"

(Genesis 11:4), and which God named Babel, "because the LORD did there confound the language of all the earth" (Genesis 11:9). It is the name of the city of Nebuchadnezzar, who destroyed Jerusalem and its temple and carried God's people captive, and who boasted:

> **Daniel 4:30** — *The king spake, and said, Is not this great Babylon, that I have built for the house of the kingdom by the might of my power, and for the honour of my majesty?*

"Babylon the great" is the city of man's pride against God, from Babel to the end.

"THE MOTHER OF HARLOTS AND ABOMINATIONS OF THE EARTH." She is the mother of harlots, the source and origin of all the idolatry and unfaithfulness of the earth. From Babel came the scattering of the nations and their many gods; from Babylon came the captivity of God's people. Every city and every system since that has drawn men away from God has been her daughter.

Who is Babylon? The angel will say in verse 18: "the woman which thou sawest is that great city, which reigneth over the kings of the earth." She is a city. Chapter 18 describes her fall as the fall of a real city, with merchants, ships, music, millstones and lamps. Her fall is told in the very words the prophets used of the fall of Babylon on the Euphrates (Isaiah 13, 21, 47; Jeremiah 50–51), and the river Euphrates is named twice as the judgments approach (9:14; 16:12). This study takes her as a real city, called Babylon, judged as the prophets foretold Babylon would be judged (Appendix C, Question 13). It does not identify her with any city or institution of today, because the text does not.

Figures of speech. The name is written in capitals in the King James Version, like the name of Christ in 19:16, "KING OF KINGS, AND LORD OF LORDS": the two titles are set against each other. "Mother of harlots" is a *Metaphor*: she is the source from which all others came.

> **Revelation 17:6** *And I saw the woman drunken with the blood of the saints, and with the blood of the martyrs of Jesus: and when I saw her, I wondered with great admiration.*

"And I saw the woman drunken with the blood of the saints, and with the blood of the martyrs of Jesus." She made others drunk with her wine (17:2); she herself is drunk with blood: the blood of God's people. "The saints" are God's holy people (see 5:8); "the martyrs of Jesus" are His witnesses who died for Him (see 2:13). She has killed them, and gloried in it, as a drunkard glories in his wine. At her fall it is said, "in her was found the blood of prophets, and of saints, and of all that were slain upon the earth" (18:24).

"And when I saw her, I wondered with great admiration." "Admiration" here means astonishment, not approval. John was amazed, stunned. He stared at her in wonder. The sight was so strange, so splendid and so terrible, that he could not understand it.

Figures of speech. "Drunken with the blood" is a *Metaphor*: her slaughter of the saints pictured as drunkenness, as Isaiah 49:26 pictures it. "Wondered with great admiration" repeats the idea of wonder twice (in Greek, "wondered with great wonder"), the figure *Polyptoton*: John's astonishment is doubled.

To whom. "The saints" and "the martyrs of Jesus" here are God's people of the Day of the Lord, slain under the beast and in Babylon (see 5:8; 13:7). The church of grace is not the subject (Part One, Chapter 3 §C).

On earth. Verses 17:7-18, the meaning of the woman and the beast. The angel explains what John has seen: the beast (17:8-13), the war against the Lamb (17:14, told ahead of 19:19-21), the waters (17:15), the ten horns and the woman's end (17:16-17), and the woman herself, "that great city" (17:18).

> **Revelation 17:7** *And the angel said unto me, Wherefore didst thou marvel? I will tell thee the mystery of the woman, and of the beast that carrieth her, which hath the seven heads and ten horns.*

"And the angel said unto me, Wherefore didst thou marvel?" "Wherefore" means "why": Why are you astonished? The angel does not leave John wondering. The book explains its own signs (Part One, Chapter 5 §B).

"I will tell thee the mystery of the woman, and of the beast that carrieth her, which hath the seven heads and ten horns." He will tell the meaning of both the woman and the beast. The explanation follows in two parts: first the beast (17:8-17), then the woman (17:18).

The numbers. *Seven* heads and *ten* horns (see 17:3). The angel will explain both numbers.

Figures of speech. "Wherefore didst thou marvel?" is *Erotesis*: a question asked to lead into an explanation.

> **Revelation 17:8** *The beast that thou sawest was, and is not; and shall ascend out of the bottomless pit, and go into perdition: and they that dwell on the earth shall wonder, whose names were not written in the book of life from the foundation of the world, when they behold the beast that was, and is not, and yet is.*

"The beast that thou sawest was, and is not." The angel begins with the beast. "Was, and is not": he existed, and now does not. These words mock God's name. God is "him which is, and which was, and which is to come" (1:4); the beast "was, and is not, and yet is." God's name speaks of unbroken being; the beast's speaks of a gap, a break, a death.

"And shall ascend out of the bottomless pit." He will come up out of the abyss, the prison of evil spirits (see 9:1). This was already said in 11:7: "the beast that ascendeth out of the bottomless pit." He comes from below, from the realm of the dead and the demons.

"And go into perdition." "Perdition" (*apōleia*, Strong's G684) means destruction, ruin. His end is fixed before he even rises: destruction. Paul called him "the son of perdition" (2 Thessalonians 2:3). He is cast "alive into a lake of fire burning with brimstone" (19:20).

"And they that dwell on the earth shall wonder, whose names were not written in the book of life from the foundation of the world." The earth-dwellers will be astonished at him, all except those

written in the book of life (see 3:5; 13:8). God's people are not deceived by the beast's return; they know who he is.

"When they behold the beast that was, and is not, and yet is." (The Majority Greek text and the critical texts read "and shall be present," or "and shall come.") The world's wonder at the beast is the wonder of 13:3, when his deadly wound was healed and "all the world wondered after the beast." The beast who was, and was not, comes again, and the world is amazed.

Figures of speech. "Was, and is not, and yet is" is a deliberate echo of God's name, "which is, and which was, and which is to come" (1:4), turned into a mockery of it. The beast is a counterfeit of God, as his "deadly wound ... healed" is a counterfeit of the Lamb (13:3).

> **Revelation 17:9** *And here is the mind which hath wisdom. The seven heads are seven mountains, on which the woman sitteth.*

"And here is the mind which hath wisdom." As in 13:18, "Here is wisdom," a call for understanding. What follows needs a mind that has wisdom.

"The seven heads are seven mountains, on which the woman sitteth." The beast's seven heads are "seven mountains," and the woman sits on them. Many readers have taken these as the seven hills of Rome. But the angel at once gives them a second meaning: "And there are seven kings" (17:10). In Scripture mountains often stand for kingdoms. Daniel saw the stone that struck the image become "a great mountain, and filled the whole earth" (Daniel 2:35), and it was explained as a kingdom (Daniel 2:44). Jeremiah called Babylon "O destroying mountain, saith the LORD, which destroyest all the earth" (Jeremiah 51:25). Since the text itself says the mountains are kings, they should not be taken simply as the hills of one city (Appendix C, Question 13).

The numbers. *Seven* heads are *seven* mountains. The book explains its own number, and calls for wisdom to read it: "here is the mind which hath wisdom." Seven mountains, seven kings (17:10): seven, complete rule (see 12:3).

Figures of speech. "The seven heads are seven mountains" is a *Metaphor*, explained by the text, and then explained again: the mountains are kings.

> **Revelation 17:10** *And there are seven kings: five are fallen, and one is, and the other is not yet come; and when he cometh, he must continue a short space.*

"And there are seven kings." The seven heads, which are seven mountains, are also seven kings. Daniel's beasts were "four kings" (Daniel 7:17) and four kingdoms (Daniel 7:23): king and kingdom go together.

"Five are fallen, and one is, and the other is not yet come." The angel counts the seven kings. Five have fallen: they are past. One "is": he exists at the time the angel speaks. The seventh "is not yet come."

"And when he cometh, he must continue a short space." The seventh king, when he comes, will last only a short while.

Which kings are these? The text does not say. Many lists have been offered: Roman emperors, world empires, kings of the last days. Each requires choosing a starting point and a way of counting that the text does not give. The angel gives this as a riddle for "the mind which hath wisdom" (17:9). This study offers no list, and holds the question open (Appendix C, Question 11).

The numbers. *Seven* kings: *five* are fallen, *one* is, the other is not yet come, and when he comes he continues "a short space." The angel counts them for John: five in the past, one in John's present, one still future. The seven are a complete line of rule (see 12:3). Who they are, the text does not name (Appendix C, Question 11).

Figures of speech. "Five ... one ... the other" is a count, given as a riddle to be understood by those who will see it fulfilled.

> **Revelation 17:11** *And the beast that was, and is not, even he is the eighth, and is of the seven, and goeth into perdition.*

"And the beast that was, and is not, even he is the eighth, and is of the seven." The beast himself is an eighth king, and yet he is "of the seven": one of them, or springing from them. He was, and is not, and comes again: one of the seven heads, perhaps the one "wounded to death" whose "deadly wound was healed" (13:3), returning as the eighth. The text gives it as a riddle, and it is to be understood by those with wisdom in that day.

"And goeth into perdition." Whatever the riddle, the end is plain: destruction (17:8).

The numbers. *The eighth*, and *of the seven*. Eight is the number of a new beginning, the first of a new series: the eighth day begins a new week; a son of Israel was circumcised on the eighth day (Genesis 17:12); and eight souls came through the flood to begin the world again (1 Peter 3:20). The beast is "the eighth": he comes as if he were something new, a new beginning for the world. But he is "of the seven": no new thing, only the old line of rule come again. His new beginning is a counterfeit of resurrection (13:3), and he "goeth into perdition."

Figures of speech. "The eighth, and is of the seven" is an *Enigma*, a riddle, given for wisdom to solve in its time.

> **Revelation 17:12** *And the ten horns which thou sawest are ten kings, which have received no kingdom as yet; but receive power as kings one hour with the beast.*

"And the ten horns which thou sawest are ten kings." The book explains its sign. The ten horns are ten kings. Daniel was told the same of the fourth beast: "And the ten horns out of this kingdom are ten kings that shall arise" (Daniel 7:24).

"Which have received no kingdom as yet." In John's day they had not yet come to power. They belong to the future.

"But receive power as kings one hour with the beast." They receive authority "as kings," for "one hour," a short time, together with the beast. They rule with him and under him.

The numbers. *Ten* horns are *ten* kings, as Daniel was told: "the ten horns out of this kingdom are ten kings that shall arise" (Daniel 7:24). Ten, a complete round of earthly powers (see 2:10). They reign *one hour* with the beast: a short time, measured by God.

Figures of speech. "Are ten kings" is a *Metaphor* explained. "One hour" is a *Synecdoche* for a short time.

> **Revelation 17:13** *These have one mind, and shall give their power and strength unto the beast.*

"These have one mind." The ten kings are united. They agree completely.

"And shall give their power and strength unto the beast." They hand over their power to the beast. They do not resist him; they serve him willingly. What God gives them (17:17) they give to the beast.

The number. *One* mind. The ten kings are many, but they agree as one: ten powers with a single will, given to the beast.

Figures of speech. "Power and strength" pairs two words of one meaning, *Synonymia*: they give him everything.

> **Revelation 17:14** *These shall make war with the Lamb, and the Lamb shall overcome them: for he is Lord of lords, and King of kings: and they that are with him are called, and chosen, and faithful.*

"These shall make war with the Lamb." The beast and the ten kings make war on the Lamb Himself. This is the battle of 16:14-16, gathered at Armageddon, and fought in 19:19-21: "And I saw the beast, and the kings of the earth, and their armies, gathered together to make war against him that sat on the horse, and against his army."

"And the Lamb shall overcome them." The Lamb wins. "Overcome" is *nikaō*: the Lamb who "hath prevailed" (5:5) prevails again.

"For he is Lord of lords, and King of kings." Here is why. The Rider on the white horse bears the same name: "KING OF KINGS, AND LORD OF LORDS" (19:16). Moses called God "God of gods, and Lord of lords, a great God, a mighty, and a terrible" (Deuteronomy 10:17). Paul wrote of God, "the blessed and only Potentate, the King of kings, and Lord of lords" (1 Timothy 6:15). God has given His Son this title. The ten kings are kings; He is King over all kings.

"And they that are with him are called, and chosen, and faithful." Those who come with the Lamb are His own: "called" (summoned by Him), "chosen" (picked out by Him), and "faithful" (true to Him to the end). They are the armies of heaven who follow Him in 19:14.

Figures of speech. "Lord of lords, and King of kings" is the Hebrew way of expressing the highest of all, a Hebrew way of expressing the superlative (an *Idiom*) (as "holy of holies" means the most holy). "Called, and chosen, and faithful" is *Polysyndeton*: three marks of His company, each counted.

To whom. "Called, and chosen, and faithful" are those who come with the Lamb to the battle (19:14). They are His company in the Day of the Lord. Under grace believers are also called and chosen

(Ephesians 1:4; 2 Timothy 1:9), but the setting here is the war of the Lamb against the beast at His coming (Part One, Chapter 3 §C).

> **Revelation 17:15** *And he saith unto me, The waters which thou sawest, where the whore sitteth, are peoples, and multitudes, and nations, and tongues.*

"And he saith unto me, The waters which thou sawest, where the whore sitteth, are peoples, and multitudes, and nations, and tongues." The book explains its sign. The "many waters" on which the harlot sits (17:1) are the peoples of the world. "Peoples, and multitudes, and nations, and tongues": the fourfold phrase of the whole earth (see 5:9), with "multitudes" in place of "kindreds." Her influence reaches every nation. Isaiah wrote, "Woe to the multitude of many people, which make a noise like the noise of the seas; and to the rushing of nations, that make a rushing like the rushing of mighty waters!" (Isaiah 17:12).

Figures of speech. "The waters ... are peoples" is a *Metaphor*, explained by the text.

> **Revelation 17:16** *And the ten horns which thou sawest upon the beast, these shall hate the whore, and shall make her desolate and naked, and shall eat her flesh, and burn her with fire.*

"And the ten horns which thou sawest upon the beast." (The Majority Greek text and the critical texts read "the ten horns which thou sawest, and the beast.") The ten kings, and the beast with them.

"These shall hate the whore." Here is a turn. The powers that carried the harlot turn against her. They hate her.

"And shall make her desolate and naked." They strip her of everything: her wealth, her finery, her glory. "Desolate" means laid waste, emptied. "Naked": the purple and scarlet and gold taken away. Ezekiel used the same words for God's judgment on unfaithful Jerusalem through the very nations she had courted:

> **Ezekiel 23:29** — *And they shall deal with thee hatefully, and shall take away all thy labour, and shall leave thee naked and bare: and the nakedness of thy whoredoms shall be discovered, both thy lewdness and thy whoredoms.*

"And shall eat her flesh." They devour her, as wild beasts devour their prey. When Jezebel was thrown from the window, "In the portion of Jezreel shall dogs eat the flesh of Jezebel" (2 Kings 9:36).

"And burn her with fire." They burn her. Chapter 18 tells of the smoke of her burning, seen by the kings and merchants from afar (18:9, 18).

The number. The *ten* horns (see 17:12) turn on the woman.

Figures of speech. "Desolate and naked ... eat her flesh, and burn her with fire" is a *Climax*, each step worse than the last. The harlot pictured as a woman stripped and devoured is a *Metaphor* drawn from Ezekiel 23.

> **Revelation 17:17** *For God hath put in their hearts to fulfil his will, and to agree, and give their kingdom unto the beast, until the words of God shall be fulfilled.*

"For God hath put in their hearts to fulfil his will." Why do they turn on her? Because God has put it in their hearts. They think they act for themselves; in fact they do God's will. Solomon wrote, "The king's heart is in the hand of the LORD, as the rivers of water: he turneth it whithersoever he will" (Proverbs 21:1). God used Assyria as "the rod of mine anger" (Isaiah 10:5) against Israel, though Assyria "meaneth not so" (Isaiah 10:7). God uses even His enemies to carry out His purposes.

"And to agree, and give their kingdom unto the beast." God also puts it in their hearts to agree together and give their kingdom to the beast. Even their union under the beast serves God's plan, for it gathers them to their own judgment (17:14).

"Until the words of God shall be fulfilled." All of it lasts "until the words of God shall be fulfilled": until everything God has spoken comes to pass. The beast's power, the kings' alliance, the harlot's fall: all are within the bounds of God's word.

Figures of speech. "God hath put in their hearts" is *Anthropopatheia*: God's sovereign working in men's choices described in human terms.

> **Revelation 17:18** *And the woman which thou sawest is that great city, which reigneth over the kings of the earth.*

"And the woman which thou sawest is that great city." Here is the last explanation, and the plainest. The woman is a city. Not a system, not an idea, but a city: "that great city."

"Which reigneth over the kings of the earth." She rules over the kings of the earth. In John's day the city that ruled over the kings of the earth was Rome, and many readers have taken Babylon to mean Rome. But the angel has named her "BABYLON THE GREAT" (17:5), and the next chapter describes her fall in the words the prophets used of Babylon on the Euphrates. In the days of the beast, the city that rules over the kings of the earth will be the city called Babylon. This study takes her as a real city, called Babylon, judged as the prophets foretold Babylon would be judged (Appendix C, Question 13).

Figures of speech. "The woman ... is that great city" is a *Metaphor* explained: the last of the explanations in this chapter.

To whom. Babylon is the great city of the Day of the Lord, the persecutor of God's people in that day. The prophecies about her fall were given to Israel (Isaiah 13; 47; Jeremiah 50–51), and their fulfilment belongs to the Day of the Lord (Part One, Chapter 3 §C).

On earth. Verses 18:1-24, the fall of the great city. The close-up continues. An angel comes down from heaven and announces Babylon's fall (18:1-3); a voice from heaven calls God's people out of her (18:4-8); kings, merchants and seamen mourn on the earth (18:9-19); heaven is called to rejoice (18:20); and a mighty angel casts a millstone into the sea (18:21-24).

> **Revelation 18:1** *And after these things I saw another angel come down from heaven, having great power; and the earth was lightened with his glory.*

"And after these things I saw another angel come down from heaven." "After these things" (*meta tauta*): a new vision (see 4:1), the fifth of the six times this phrase opens one. Another angel comes down from heaven.

"Having great power." "Power" is *exousia*, "authority." He comes with great authority to announce Babylon's fall.

"And the earth was lightened with his glory." The whole earth shines with his glory. After the darkness of the fifth vial (16:10), the earth is lit up by the angel who brings the news of Babylon's end. Ezekiel saw the glory of God return to the temple: "and his voice was like a noise of many waters: and the earth shined with his glory" (Ezekiel 43:2).

Figures of speech. "The earth was lightened with his glory" uses the earth for the people on it, *Metonymy*: all could see the light.

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

"And he cried mightily with a strong voice, saying, Babylon the great is fallen, is fallen." The angel cries with a mighty voice the words of 14:8 and of Isaiah 21:9: "Babylon is fallen, is fallen." What was announced in chapter 14 now takes place.

"And is become the habitation of devils." "Devils" are demons. The great city becomes a dwelling place for demons.

"And the hold of every foul spirit." "Hold" (*phulakē*) is a prison, a lair. She becomes the den of every unclean spirit.

"And a cage of every unclean and hateful bird." "Cage" is again *phulakē*: a haunt, a roost for every unclean and hated bird. The city that was full of music, trade and luxury becomes a ruin where only demons and carrion birds live. Isaiah foretold this of Babylon:

> **Isaiah 13:19-21** — *And Babylon, the glory of kingdoms, the beauty of the Chaldees' excellency, shall be as when God overthrew Sodom and Gomorrah. It shall never be inhabited, neither shall it be dwelt in from generation to generation: neither shall the Arabian pitch tent there; neither shall the shepherds make their fold there. But wild beasts of the desert shall lie there; and their houses shall be full of doleful creatures; and owls shall dwell there, and satyrs shall dance there.*

Jeremiah wrote the same: "Therefore the wild beasts of the desert with the wild beasts of the islands shall dwell there, and the owls shall dwell therein: and it shall be no more inhabited for ever" (Jeremiah 50:39).

Figures of speech. "Is fallen, is fallen" is *Epizeuxis* (see 14:8). "The habitation ... the hold ... a cage" is a *Climax* of desolation: from a dwelling of demons down to a roost of birds.

> **Revelation 18:3** *For all nations have drunk of the wine of the wrath of her fornication, and the kings of the earth have committed fornication with her, and the merchants of the earth are waxed rich through the abundance of her delicacies.*

"For all nations have drunk of the wine of the wrath of her fornication." Three groups are named as bound to Babylon. First, all the nations: they drank her wine and were made drunk (see 14:8; 17:2).

"And the kings of the earth have committed fornication with her." Second, the kings: they gave themselves to her for gain (17:2).

"And the merchants of the earth are waxed rich through the abundance of her delicacies." Third, the merchants: they grew rich from her luxury. "Delicacies" (*strēnos*) means luxury, wanton living, reckless spending. She lived for pleasure, and the merchants of the world grew rich selling to her.

Each of the three groups will mourn her fall: the kings (18:9-10), the merchants (18:11-17), and the seamen (18:17-19).

Figures of speech. "All nations ... the kings ... the merchants" names three groups in turn, a *Synathroesmus* (enumeration): every class that profited from her.

> **Revelation 18:4** *And I heard another voice from heaven, saying, Come out of her, my people, that ye be not partakers of her sins, and that ye receive not of her plagues.*

"And I heard another voice from heaven, saying, Come out of her, my people." A voice from heaven calls God's people out of Babylon. "My people": God has people in Babylon, even at the end. The prophets gave the same call to the Jews in ancient Babylon:

> **Jeremiah 51:45** — *My people, go ye out of the midst of her, and deliver ye every man his soul from the fierce anger of the LORD.*

Isaiah cried, "Go ye forth of Babylon, flee ye from the Chaldeans, with a voice of singing declare ye, tell this" (Isaiah 48:20). God called Lot out of Sodom before the fire fell: "Arise, take thy wife, and thy two daughters, which are here; lest thou be consumed in the iniquity of the city" (Genesis 19:15).

"That ye be not partakers of her sins." If they stay, they will share in her sins, joining in her ways.

"And that ye receive not of her plagues." And if they stay, they will share in her punishment. They must come out before the judgment falls.

Figures of speech. "Partakers of her sins ... receive not of her plagues" sets sin and punishment side by side: to share the one is to share the other.

To whom. "My people" in Babylon are God's people of the Day of the Lord, called out as the Jews were called out of ancient Babylon (Jeremiah 51:45). The call is given in the words of the prophets to Israel (Part One, Chapter 3 §C).

> **Revelation 18:5** *For her sins have reached unto heaven, and God hath remembered her iniquities.*

"For her sins have reached unto heaven." Her sins are piled so high they reach heaven. "Reached" is *ekollēthēsan*, literally "were glued together," heaped one on another until the pile touched the sky. Jeremiah said of Babylon, "for her judgment reacheth unto heaven, and is lifted up even to the skies" (Jeremiah 51:9). Here is the end of the story of Babel, whose builders said, "Go to, let us build us a city and a tower, whose top may reach unto heaven" (Genesis 11:4). Their tower never reached heaven; her sins did.

"And God hath remembered her iniquities." God remembers (see 16:19). Every one of her iniquities is before Him, and He now acts on them.

Figures of speech. "Her sins have reached unto heaven" is a *Hyperbole* in form, sins pictured as a heap that touches the sky, drawn from Jeremiah 51:9 and the tower of Babel.

> **Revelation 18:6** *Reward her even as she rewarded you, and double unto her double according to her works: in the cup which she hath filled fill to her double.*

"Reward her even as she rewarded you." "Reward" means "repay." Pay her back as she paid you. Jeremiah: "take vengeance upon her; as she hath done, do unto her" (Jeremiah 50:15). The psalmist, weeping by the rivers of Babylon, wrote, "O daughter of Babylon, who art to be destroyed; happy shall he be, that rewardeth thee as thou hast served us" (Psalm 137:8).

"And double unto her double according to her works." "Double unto her double": repay her twice over. This is the language of full repayment. Jeremiah: "And first I will recompense their iniquity and their sin double" (Jeremiah 16:18).

"In the cup which she hath filled fill to her double." The cup she filled for others, the golden cup full of abominations (17:4), is filled for her, twice over.

Who is commanded to repay her? The voice from heaven speaks to those whom God appoints to carry out His judgment: the ten kings and the beast, into whose hearts God has put it to destroy her (17:16-17). God's people do not take vengeance themselves; "Vengeance is mine; I will repay, saith the Lord" (Romans 12:19). God repays, and He uses whom He will.

Figures of speech. "Reward her even as she rewarded you" is *Polyptoton* (one word in two forms): the punishment matches the deed. "Double unto her double" doubles the word "double" for emphasis, *Epizeuxis*.

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

"How much she hath glorified herself, and lived deliciously." She made herself glorious and lived in luxury. "Lived deliciously" is *estrēniasen*, "lived wantonly, in reckless luxury."

"So much torment and sorrow give her." Measure for measure: as much glory and luxury as she took, so much torment and grief.

"For she saith in her heart, I sit a queen, and am no widow, and shall see no sorrow." Here is her pride. She says to herself: I am a queen; I am not a widow; I will never grieve. These are almost exactly the words Isaiah put in the mouth of ancient Babylon:

> **Isaiah 47:7-8** — *And thou saidst, I shall be a lady for ever: so that thou didst not lay these things to thy heart, neither didst remember the latter end of it. Therefore hear now this, thou that art given to pleasures, that dwellest carelessly, that sayest in thine heart, I am, and none else beside me; I shall not sit as a widow, neither shall I know the loss of children:*

"I am, and none else beside me": she claims God's own words, "I am the LORD, and there is none else" (Isaiah 45:5). Babylon puts herself in God's place.

Figures of speech. "I sit a queen, and am no widow, and shall see no sorrow" is *Polysyndeton*: each part of her boast is set out. Her words to herself are the figure Bullinger calls *Dialogismos* in effect (a speech put in someone's mouth), drawn from Isaiah 47.

> **Revelation 18:8** *Therefore shall her plagues come in one day, death, and mourning, and famine; and she shall be utterly burned with fire: for strong is the Lord God who judgeth her.*

"Therefore shall her plagues come in one day." Because of her pride, her judgment comes suddenly, "in one day." Isaiah went on:

> **Isaiah 47:9** — *But these two things shall come to thee in a moment in one day, the loss of children, and widowhood: they shall come upon thee in their perfection for the multitude of thy sorceries, and for the great abundance of thine enchantments.*

"Death, and mourning, and famine." Three plagues: death, grief, hunger. She said she would "see no sorrow"; she sees nothing else.

"And she shall be utterly burned with fire." She is burned completely, as the ten kings will do (17:16).

"For strong is the Lord God who judgeth her." Here is why no one can save her: the God who judges her is strong. Jeremiah: "Their Redeemer is strong; the LORD of hosts is his name: he shall throughly plead their cause, that he may give rest to the land, and disquiet the inhabitants of Babylon" (Jeremiah 50:34).

The number. *One* day. Her plagues come all at once, "in one day." Isaiah had said of Babylon, "these two things shall come to thee in a moment in one day, the loss of children, and widowhood" (Isaiah 47:9).

Figures of speech. "Death, and mourning, and famine" is *Polysyndeton*. "In one day" is set against her boast that she would never see sorrow: an *Antithesis*.

> **Revelation 18:9** *And the kings of the earth, who have committed fornication and lived deliciously with her, shall bewail her, and lament for her, when they shall see the smoke of her burning,*

Now come the three laments: of the kings, the merchants, and the seamen. They are built like the lament over Tyre in Ezekiel 26 and 27, where the princes, the merchants and the seamen each mourn the fall of the great trading city.

"And the kings of the earth, who have committed fornication and lived deliciously with her." The kings who joined themselves to her and shared her luxury.

"Shall bewail her, and lament for her." "Bewail" is *klaiō*, to weep aloud; "lament" is *koptō*, to beat the breast (see 1:7).

"When they shall see the smoke of her burning." They see the smoke of the city going up. Ezekiel wrote of Tyre: "Then all the princes of the sea shall come down from their thrones ... they shall clothe themselves with trembling ... And they shall take up a lamentation for thee" (Ezekiel 26:16-17).

Figures of speech. "Bewail ... and lament" pairs two words of mourning, *Synonymia*.

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

"Standing afar off for the fear of her torment." They stand at a distance. They do not come to help her; they are afraid of being caught in her judgment. Their love for her was love for what she could give them; now that she has nothing to give, they keep away.

"Saying, Alas, alas, that great city Babylon, that mighty city!" "Alas" is *ouai*, "woe": the cry of grief (see 8:13). They cry it twice.

"For in one hour is thy judgment come." "In one hour": the speed of her fall astonishes them. A city that seemed eternal is gone in an hour. The phrase is said three times, by kings, merchants and seamen (18:10, 17, 19).

The number. *One* hour. The kings lament, "in one hour is thy judgment come." What stood for ages falls in an hour.

Figures of speech. "Alas, alas" is *Epizeuxis*, the doubled cry of grief. "That great city Babylon, that mighty city" names her greatness twice, to show how great her fall is.

> **Revelation 18:11** *And the merchants of the earth shall weep and mourn over her; for no man buyeth their merchandise any more:*

"And the merchants of the earth shall weep and mourn over her." Next the merchants weep and mourn.

"For no man buyeth their merchandise any more." Here is why they mourn: not for her, but for their trade. No one is left to buy their goods. Ezekiel wrote of Tyre's merchants, "The merchants among the people shall hiss at thee; thou shalt be a terror, and never shalt be any more" (Ezekiel 27:36). "Merchandise" (*gomos*) is a ship's cargo: whole shiploads with no buyer.

Figures of speech. "Weep and mourn" pairs two words of grief, *Synonymia*. Their grief is for themselves, an irony the text leaves the reader to see.

> **Revelation 18:12** *The merchandise of gold, and silver, and precious stones, and of pearls, and fine linen, and purple, and silk, and scarlet, and all thyine wood, and all manner vessels of ivory, and all manner vessels of most precious wood, and of brass, and iron, and marble,*

The list of Babylon's trade follows, in four groups. It is modelled on Ezekiel's list of the trade of Tyre (Ezekiel 27:12-24). Luxuries come first.

"The merchandise of gold, and silver, and precious stones, and of pearls." Precious metals and jewels: the finery the harlot wore (17:4).

"And fine linen, and purple, and silk, and scarlet." The finest cloth: linen, purple, silk from the far east, scarlet. The colours of her dress (17:4).

"And all thyine wood." "Thyine wood" is a fragrant, beautifully grained wood from North Africa, prized for costly furniture.

"And all manner vessels of ivory, and all manner vessels of most precious wood, and of brass, and iron, and marble." Ivory, rare woods, bronze, iron, marble: the materials of fine houses and ornaments.

Figures of speech. The long list joined by "and" is *Polysyndeton*: each item of her wealth is named and counted, as the merchants count their losses.

> **Revelation 18:13** *And cinnamon, and odours, and ointments, and frankincense, and wine, and oil, and fine flour, and wheat, and beasts, and sheep, and horses, and chariots, and slaves, and souls of men.*

"And cinnamon, and odours, and ointments, and frankincense." Spices and perfumes: cinnamon, incense, perfumed oils, frankincense. (The critical texts add "and amomum," a fragrant spice, after cinnamon.)

"And wine, and oil, and fine flour, and wheat." Food: wine, oil, the finest flour, grain.

"And beasts, and sheep, and horses, and chariots." Livestock: cattle, sheep, horses, and carriages.

"And slaves, and souls of men." The list ends here, at the bottom. "Slaves" is *sōmatōn*, literally "bodies." The Companion Bible notes that "bodies" was the trade word for slaves. "And souls of men": human lives themselves bought and sold. Tyre too "traded the persons of men" (Ezekiel 27:13). At the very bottom of all of Babylon's trade lay the buying and selling of people. The list moves from gold to human beings, and the reader sees what her wealth was built on.

Figures of speech. "Slaves" for "bodies" is a *Metonymy* (the body put for the person, as the trade itself spoke of them). The list ending with "souls of men" is a *Climax* downward: from gold to men, the lowest and worst of her trade last.

> **Revelation 18:14** *And the fruits that thy soul lusted after are departed from thee, and all things which were dainty and goodly are departed from thee, and thou shalt find them no more at all.*

"And the fruits that thy soul lusted after are departed from thee." The voice turns to speak to Babylon herself. "The fruits that thy soul lusted after": the ripe, desirable things she craved. They are gone.

"And all things which were dainty and goodly are departed from thee." Everything rich and splendid has gone from her.

"And thou shalt find them no more at all." The Greek uses the strong double negative (*ou mē*): "you will never, ever find them again." This is the first of the "no more" sayings of her fall, which ring through verses 21-23.

Figures of speech. The voice turning to speak to Babylon is an *Apostrophe*. "Dainty and goodly" pairs two words, *Synonymia*.

> **Revelation 18:15** *The merchants of these things, which were made rich by her, shall stand afar off for the fear of her torment, weeping and wailing,*

"The merchants of these things, which were made rich by her, shall stand afar off for the fear of her torment, weeping and wailing." The merchants, who grew rich from her, do what the kings did: they stand at a distance, afraid, weeping. They do not lift a hand to help her.

Figures of speech. "Weeping and wailing" pairs two words of grief, *Synonymia*.

> **Revelation 18:16** *And saying, Alas, alas, that great city, that was clothed in fine linen, and purple, and scarlet, and decked with gold, and precious stones, and pearls!*

"And saying, Alas, alas, that great city, that was clothed in fine linen, and purple, and scarlet." They describe the city in the very words used of the woman: "arrayed in purple and scarlet colour" (17:4). The woman and the city are one (17:18).

"And decked with gold, and precious stones, and pearls!" The same words as 17:4. The merchants mourn her as a woman stripped of her jewels.

Figures of speech. "Alas, alas" is *Epizeuxis*. The city described as a woman dressed in finery is the *Metaphor* of 17:4, now spoken by the merchants themselves.

> **Revelation 18:17** *For in one hour so great riches is come to nought. And every shipmaster, and all the company in ships, and sailors, and as many as trade by sea, stood afar off,*

"For in one hour so great riches is come to nought." The second "in one hour." All that wealth, gone in an hour.

"And every shipmaster, and all the company in ships, and sailors, and as many as trade by sea." Now the third group: the seamen. Ship's captains, passengers, sailors, all who make their living by sea. Babylon's trade came by ship. Ezekiel wrote of Tyre:

> **Ezekiel 27:29** — *And all that handle the oar, the mariners, and all the pilots of the sea, shall come down from their ships, they shall stand upon the land;*

"Stood afar off." Like the kings and merchants, they keep their distance.

The number. *One* hour (see 18:10): the merchants say the same.

Figures of speech. "Every shipmaster, and all the company ... and sailors, and as many as trade" is *Polysyndeton*.

> **Revelation 18:18** *And cried when they saw the smoke of her burning, saying, What city is like unto this great city!*

"And cried when they saw the smoke of her burning, saying, What city is like unto this great city!" They see the smoke rising and cry out: "What city is like this great city?" Ezekiel's seamen asked the same of Tyre: "What city is like Tyrus, like the destroyed in the midst of the sea?" (Ezekiel 27:32). The world asked of the beast, "Who is like unto the beast?" (13:4); now it asks of Babylon, "What city is like unto this great city?" Both questions mock the question that belongs to God alone: "Who is like unto thee, O LORD, among the gods?" (Exodus 15:11).

Figures of speech. "What city is like unto this great city?" is *Erotesis*: a question of wonder and grief, not of information.

> **Revelation 18:19** *And they cast dust on their heads, and cried, weeping and wailing, saying, Alas, alas, that great city, wherein were made rich all that had ships in the sea by reason of her costliness! for in one hour is she made desolate.*

"And they cast dust on their heads." Throwing dust on the head was a sign of deep mourning. Ezekiel's seamen did the same for Tyre: "and shall cry bitterly, and shall cast up dust upon their heads, they shall wallow themselves in the ashes" (Ezekiel 27:30).

"And cried, weeping and wailing, saying, Alas, alas, that great city, wherein were made rich all that had ships in the sea by reason of her costliness!" They mourn, as the kings and merchants did, for what she gave them. "Costliness" (*timiotēs*) is her lavish wealth.

"For in one hour is she made desolate." The third "in one hour." Three times, by three groups, the speed of her fall is told.

The number. *One* hour (see 18:10): the seamen say it too. Three times the mourners count the time, and three times it is one hour: the suddenness of Babylon's fall is the thing every one of them remembers.

Figures of speech. "Alas, alas" is *Epizeuxis*. The threefold "in one hour" (18:10, 17, 19) is the figure *Epistrophe* across the laments: each ends on the same note.

> **Revelation 18:20** *Rejoice over her, thou heaven, and ye holy apostles and prophets; for God hath avenged you on her.*

"Rejoice over her, thou heaven." Earth weeps; heaven rejoices. The voice calls on heaven to rejoice over Babylon's fall. Jeremiah foretold it: "Then the heaven and the earth, and all that is therein, shall sing for Babylon: for the spoilers shall come unto her from the north, saith the LORD" (Jeremiah 51:48).

"And ye holy apostles and prophets." (The Majority Greek text and the critical texts read "and ye saints, and ye apostles, and ye prophets.") God's saints, apostles and prophets are called to rejoice. They had been slain by Babylon and her kind (18:24).

"For God hath avenged you on her." Literally, "God has judged your judgment on her": God has given the verdict in their favour against her. The cry of the souls under the altar, "How long ... dost thou not judge and avenge our blood?" (6:10), is answered. The rejoicing of heaven is heard in 19:1-6: "Alleluia ... for true and righteous are his judgments: for he hath judged the great whore ... and hath avenged the blood of his servants at her hand" (19:1-2).

Figures of speech. "Rejoice ... thou heaven" is an *Apostrophe*: heaven is spoken to directly. The rejoicing of heaven is set against the weeping of earth, an *Antithesis* on the scale of the chapter.

To whom. The "saints," "apostles" and "prophets" are God's people, His sent ones and His prophets, whose blood Babylon shed (18:24). Christ said of Jerusalem's leaders, "Wherefore, behold, I send unto you prophets, and wise men, and scribes: and some of them ye shall kill and crucify" (Matthew 23:34). God now judges for them (Part One, Chapter 3 §C).

> **Revelation 18:21** *And a mighty angel took up a stone like a great millstone, and cast it into the sea, saying, Thus with violence shall that great city Babylon be thrown down, and shall be found no more at all.*

"And a mighty angel took up a stone like a great millstone, and cast it into the sea." A mighty angel (see 5:2; 10:1) lifts a stone like a great millstone and hurls it into the sea. A millstone was a huge round stone, so heavy that it took a donkey to turn the larger kind. Thrown into the sea, it sinks at once, straight to the bottom, and never rises.

This is the sign Jeremiah commanded at the end of his prophecy against Babylon. He wrote all the evil that would come on Babylon in a book and gave it to Seraiah, who was going to Babylon, and told him:

> **Jeremiah 51:63-64** — *And it shall be, when thou hast made an end of reading this book, that thou shalt bind a stone to it, and cast it into the midst of Euphrates: And thou shalt say, Thus shall Babylon sink, and shall not rise from the evil that I will bring upon her: and they shall be weary. Thus far are the words of Jeremiah.*

"Saying, Thus with violence shall that great city Babylon be thrown down." "With violence" (*hormēmati*): with a rush, a sudden violent hurling. Babylon is thrown down as the millstone is thrown into the sea.

"And shall be found no more at all." Never to be found again (*ou mē*, the strong double negative). As the millstone vanishes under the waves, Babylon vanishes from the earth. Christ had said, "whoso shall offend one of these little ones which believe in me, it were better for him that a millstone were hanged about his neck, and that he were drowned in the depth of the sea" (Matthew 18:6).

Figures of speech. The angel's act is an acted sign, as Jeremiah's was: the action itself is the prophecy. "Like a great millstone" is a *Simile*.

> **Revelation 18:22** *And the voice of harpers, and musicians, and of pipers, and trumpeters, shall be heard no more at all in thee; and no craftsman, of whatsoever craft he be, shall be found any more in thee; and the sound of a millstone shall be heard no more at all in thee;*

The angel describes Babylon's silence. Six times in verses 21-23 he says "no more at all," "no more ... in thee."

"And the voice of harpers, and musicians, and of pipers, and trumpeters, shall be heard no more at all in thee." Music is silenced. Harps, singers, flutes, trumpets: the music of her feasts, her festivals, her pleasures, all gone. Ezekiel said of Tyre, "And I will cause the noise of thy songs to cease; and the sound of thy harps shall be no more heard" (Ezekiel 26:13).

"And no craftsman, of whatsoever craft he be, shall be found any more in thee." The workshops are empty. No craftsman of any kind remains.

"And the sound of a millstone shall be heard no more at all in thee." The grinding of grain, the most everyday sound of a city, the sound of bread being made, is gone. Jeremiah foretold for Judah, "I will take from them ... the sound of the millstones, and the light of the candle" (Jeremiah 25:10).

Figures of speech. The repeated "no more ... in thee" is the figure *Epistrophe*: the same words end each clause, tolling like a bell over the dead city.

> **Revelation 18:23** *And the light of a candle shall shine no more at all in thee; and the voice of the bridegroom and of the bride shall be heard no more at all in thee: for thy merchants were the great men of the earth; for by thy sorceries were all nations deceived.*

"And the light of a candle shall shine no more at all in thee." "Candle" is a lamp. No lamp will be lit in her houses at night. The city is dark.

"And the voice of the bridegroom and of the bride shall be heard no more at all in thee." No more weddings. No more joy of marriage, no more families beginning. Jeremiah:

> **Jeremiah 25:10** — *Moreover I will take from them the voice of mirth, and the voice of gladness, the voice of the bridegroom, and the voice of the bride, the sound of the millstones, and the light of the candle.*

Music, work, bread, light, marriage: every sign of life is gone. The silence is total.

"For thy merchants were the great men of the earth." Now two reasons. First, her merchants were "the great men of the earth," the nobles, the lords. Money made them great. Isaiah said of Tyre, "whose merchants are princes, whose traffickers are the honourable of the earth" (Isaiah 23:8). Wealth was her god, and her merchants were her princes.

"For by thy sorceries were all nations deceived." Second, her sorceries deceived the nations. "Sorceries" is *pharmakeia* (see 9:21): witchcraft, drugs, spells. She bewitched the nations and led them astray. Nahum said of Nineveh, "the mistress of witchcrafts, that selleth nations through her whoredoms, and families through her witchcrafts" (Nahum 3:4).

Figures of speech. "No more at all in thee" again, *Epistrophe*. The bridegroom and bride, the last sound named, set against the bride of the Lamb whose marriage is announced in the next chapter (19:7): the silence of Babylon's weddings is answered by the marriage of the Lamb.

> **Revelation 18:24** *And in her was found the blood of prophets, and of saints, and of all that were slain upon the earth.*

"And in her was found the blood of prophets, and of saints, and of all that were slain upon the earth." Here is the last reason, and the gravest. The blood of God's prophets and saints was found in her. She was "drunken with the blood of the saints" (17:6). And not only theirs: the blood "of all that were slain upon the earth." She is the mother of all the persecution and murder of the earth. Jeremiah:

> **Jeremiah 51:49** — *As Babylon hath caused the slain of Israel to fall, so at Babylon shall fall the slain of all the earth.*

Christ said to the leaders of Jerusalem, "That upon you may come all the righteous blood shed upon the earth, from the blood of righteous Abel unto the blood of Zacharias" (Matthew 23:35). The blood that cried from under the altar (6:10), like Abel's from the ground (Genesis 4:10), is found in Babylon, and God has judged her for it.

Figures of speech. "Of prophets, and of saints, and of all" is *Polysyndeton*, rising from God's servants to all the slain of the earth, a *Climax*.

In short. The seven vials of God's wrath are poured out: a foul sore on the worshippers of the beast; the sea turned to the blood of a dead man; the rivers turned to blood, while the angel of the waters and the altar declare God righteous, for those who shed the saints' blood now drink blood; the sun scorching men, who curse God and do not repent; darkness on the beast's throne and kingdom; the Euphrates dried up, and three unclean spirits like frogs, from the mouths of the dragon, the beast and the false prophet, gathering the kings of the world to Armageddon, while Christ breaks in: "Behold, I come as a thief"; and at the last, from the throne, "It is done," with the greatest earthquake in history, the cities of the nations fallen, great Babylon remembered before God, and hailstones of a talent's weight. Then one of the seven angels shows John the great harlot, Babylon the great, mother of harlots, dressed in purple and scarlet and gold, holding a golden cup of abominations, drunk with the blood of the saints, riding the scarlet beast. The angel explains: the beast was, and is not, and will rise from the abyss and go to destruction; his seven heads are seven mountains and seven kings; his ten horns are ten kings who will give their power to him, make war with the Lamb and be overcome, for He is Lord of lords and King of kings; they will turn on the harlot and burn her, for God has put it in their hearts; and the woman is that great city which reigns over the kings of the earth. A glorious angel announces her fall, and God calls His people out of her; her sins have reached to heaven, and she is repaid double for her pride. Kings, merchants and seamen stand afar off and mourn their lost wealth as she burns, crying three times that she fell in one hour; heaven, the saints, apostles and prophets are called to rejoice. A mighty angel casts a millstone into the sea: so Babylon is thrown down, never to be found again, her music, work, bread, light and weddings silenced for ever, for her merchants were the great men of the earth, her sorceries deceived the nations, and in her was found the blood of the prophets, the saints, and all the slain of the earth.

Section N — 19:1–19:16. In Heaven: The Marriage of the Lamb, and the Rider on the White Horse

Where it stands

The seventh and last scene in heaven (7H). Babylon has fallen, and heaven was called to rejoice over her (18:20). Now heaven answers with "Alleluia," announces the marriage of the Lamb, and opens to show the Rider on the white horse, the King of kings, coming with the armies of heaven. This is the moment the whole book has been moving toward since "Behold, he cometh with clouds" (1:7). It explains the last scene on earth (Section O).

Its structure

	Verses	Content
P	19:1-10	The final heavenly utterances: much people, "Alleluia," for the harlot judged; the elders and living creatures, "Amen; Alleluia"; a voice from the throne, "Praise our God"; the great multitude, "the marriage of the Lamb is come"; the bride's array; "Blessed are they which are called"; John at the angel's feet
Q	19:11-16	The final heavenly actions: the Rider on the white horse; His description and name, "The Word of God"; the armies of heaven following; His name, "KING OF KINGS, AND LORD OF LORDS"

The text

Revelation 19. 1 And after these things I heard a great voice of much people in heaven, saying, Alleluia; Salvation, and glory, and honour, and power, unto the Lord our God: **2** For true and righteous are his judgments: for he hath judged the great whore, which did corrupt the earth with her fornication, and hath avenged the blood of his servants at her hand. **3** And again they said, Alleluia. And her smoke rose up for ever and ever. **4** And the four and twenty elders and the four beasts fell down and worshipped God that sat on the throne, saying, Amen; Alleluia. **5** And a voice came out of the throne, saying, Praise our God, all ye his servants, and ye that fear him, both small and great. **6** And I heard as it were the voice of a great multitude, and as the voice of many waters, and as the voice of mighty thunderings, saying, Alleluia: for the Lord God omnipotent reigneth. **7** Let us be glad and rejoice, and give honour to him: for the marriage of the Lamb is come, and his wife hath made herself ready. **8** And to her was granted that she should be arrayed in fine linen, clean and white: for the fine linen is the righteousness of saints. **9** And he saith unto me, Write, Blessed are they which are called unto the marriage supper of the Lamb. And he saith unto me, These are the true sayings of God. **10** And I fell at his feet to worship him. And he said unto me, See thou do it not: I am thy fellowservant, and of thy brethren that have the testimony of Jesus: worship God: for the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy. **11** And I saw heaven opened, and behold a white horse; and he that sat upon him was called Faithful and True, and in righteousness he doth judge and make war. **12** His eyes were as a flame of fire, and on his head were many crowns; and he had a name written, that no man knew, but he himself. **13** And he was clothed with a vesture

dipped in blood: and his name is called The Word of God. **14** And the armies which were in heaven followed him upon white horses, clothed in fine linen, white and clean. **15** And out of his mouth goeth a sharp sword, that with it he should smite the nations: and he shall rule them with a rod of iron: and he treadeth the winepress of the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God. **16** And he hath on his vesture and on his thigh a name written, KING OF KINGS, AND LORD OF LORDS.

Verse by verse

Where we are: in heaven. Verses 19:1-10, the Alleluias and the marriage of the Lamb. This is the seventh and last scene in heaven (pair 7). Babylon has fallen, and heaven answers. Verses 19:7-9 announce the marriage of the Lamb; the bride herself is shown in full at 21:9–22:5.

> **Revelation 19:1** *And after these things I heard a great voice of much people in heaven, saying, Alleluia; Salvation, and glory, and honour, and power, unto the Lord our God:*

"And after these things I heard a great voice of much people in heaven." "After these things" (*meta tauta*): the sixth and last time the phrase opens a new vision (see 4:1). John hears the roar of a great crowd in heaven. Babylon has fallen on earth; heaven answers.

"Saying, Alleluia." "Alleluia" is Hebrew: *Hallelu-Yah*, "Praise ye Yah," "Praise ye the LORD" (*Yah* is the short form of God's name, Yahweh, the LORD). It is the word that opens and closes many of the Psalms: "Praise ye the LORD. Praise God in his sanctuary" (Psalm 150:1). In the King James Old Testament it is translated "Praise ye the LORD"; here it is left in its Hebrew form. It occurs four times in this chapter (19:1, 3, 4, 6) and nowhere else in the New Testament. Heaven answers the call of 18:20, "Rejoice over her," with the great Hebrew word of praise.

"Salvation, and glory, and honour, and power, unto the Lord our God." (The Majority Greek text reads "Salvation, and power, and glory of our God.") All belongs to God: the rescue of His people, the glory, the honour, the power.

Figures of speech. "Salvation, and glory, and honour, and power" is *Polysyndeton*: each part of the praise is given separately.

> **Revelation 19:2** *For true and righteous are his judgments: for he hath judged the great whore, which did corrupt the earth with her fornication, and hath avenged the blood of his servants at her hand.*

"For true and righteous are his judgments." Here is the reason for the praise: God's judgments are true and righteous. The altar said the same at the third vial: "Even so, Lord God Almighty, true and righteous are thy judgments" (16:7). The psalmist: "the judgments of the LORD are true and righteous altogether" (Psalm 19:9).

"For he hath judged the great whore, which did corrupt the earth with her fornication." God has judged the harlot. "Corrupt" is *phtheirō*, "to ruin, to spoil": she ruined the earth with her fornication. At

the seventh trumpet the elders said God would "destroy them which destroy the earth" (11:18). Now it is done.

"And hath avenged the blood of his servants at her hand." Here is the answer to the cry under the altar: "How long, O Lord, holy and true, dost thou not judge and avenge our blood on them that dwell on the earth?" (6:10). God has judged, and God has avenged. Moses had sung, "Rejoice, O ye nations, with his people: for he will avenge the blood of his servants" (Deuteronomy 32:43). When Jehu was anointed king, the prophet told him, "that I may avenge the blood of my servants the prophets, and the blood of all the servants of the LORD, at the hand of Jezebel" (2 Kings 9:7). The harlot of Thyatira was called Jezebel (2:20); the great harlot meets Jezebel's end.

Figures of speech. "Judged ... and hath avenged" are the two words of the martyrs' cry in 6:10, "judge and avenge," now answered word for word: the figure *Epanodos* on the scale of the book, a return to the same words at the close.

> **Revelation 19:3** *And again they said, Alleluia. And her smoke rose up for ever and ever.*

"And again they said, Alleluia." A second Alleluia.

"And her smoke rose up for ever and ever." The smoke of burning Babylon rises for ever. The kings and merchants saw "the smoke of her burning" (18:9, 18). Isaiah said of Edom's judgment, "It shall not be quenched night nor day; the smoke thereof shall go up for ever" (Isaiah 34:10). Her fall is final. She will never rise again.

Figures of speech. "For ever and ever," as in Isaiah 34:10, marks the judgment as final and lasting.

> **Revelation 19:4** *And the four and twenty elders and the four beasts fell down and worshipped God that sat on the throne, saying, Amen; Alleluia.*

"And the four and twenty elders and the four beasts fell down and worshipped God that sat on the throne." The elders and the living creatures fall down and worship, as they did in 4:10, 5:8, 5:14 and 11:16. This is the last time they appear in the book. They have been at the throne since chapter 4, leading heaven's worship at every turn of the story. Now, at the fall of Babylon, they bow once more.

"Saying, Amen; Alleluia." "Amen": so it is, so be it (see 1:6). "Alleluia": praise the LORD. The two Hebrew words together are the seal of heaven's leaders on the judgment of Babylon. Psalm 106 ends: "Blessed be the LORD God of Israel from everlasting to everlasting: and let all the people say, Amen. Praise ye the LORD" (Psalm 106:48).

The numbers. The *twenty-four* elders and the *four* beasts (see 4:4, 6), in their last appearance in the book.

Figures of speech. "Amen; Alleluia" joins two Hebrew words of worship, assent and praise.

> **Revelation 19:5** *And a voice came out of the throne, saying, Praise our God, all ye his servants, and ye that fear him, both small and great.*

"And a voice came out of the throne." A voice from the throne itself.

"Saying, Praise our God, all ye his servants, and ye that fear him, both small and great." The voice calls all God's servants to praise Him. "Our God": the speaker counts himself among those who serve God. "Ye that fear him, both small and great": the words of the elders at the seventh trumpet (11:18) and of the Psalms. The psalmist called, "Praise ye the LORD. Praise, O ye servants of the LORD, praise the name of the LORD" (Psalm 113:1), and "He will bless them that fear the LORD, both small and great" (Psalm 115:13).

Figures of speech. "Both small and great" names the two ends of every rank to mean everyone, a *Synecdoche*.

> **Revelation 19:6** *And I heard as it were the voice of a great multitude, and as the voice of many waters, and as the voice of mighty thunderings, saying, Alleluia: for the Lord God omnipotent reigneth.*

"And I heard as it were the voice of a great multitude, and as the voice of many waters, and as the voice of mighty thunderings." John hears the answer to the call: a sound like a vast crowd, like the roar of the sea, like great peals of thunder. All three comparisons together cannot describe how great it is.

"Saying, Alleluia: for the Lord God omnipotent reigneth." The fourth Alleluia. "Omnipotent" is *pantokratōr*, the same word translated "Almighty" elsewhere in the book (see 1:8). "Reigneth" is *ebasileusen*, "has begun to reign," "has taken His reign." At the seventh trumpet heaven announced, "The kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of our Lord, and of his Christ" (11:15), and the elders gave thanks that God had "taken to thee thy great power, and hast reigned" (11:17). Now, with Babylon fallen and the King about to ride out, the multitude sings it as done. The psalmist sang, "The LORD reigneth; let the earth rejoice; let the multitude of isles be glad thereof" (Psalm 97:1).

Figures of speech. "As it were the voice of a great multitude, and as the voice of many waters, and as the voice of mighty thunderings" is a triple *Simile*, piled up to describe a sound beyond describing.

> **Revelation 19:7** *Let us be glad and rejoice, and give honour to him: for the marriage of the Lamb is come, and his wife hath made herself ready.*

"Let us be glad and rejoice, and give honour to him." The multitude calls all to gladness: be glad, rejoice, give Him glory.

"For the marriage of the Lamb is come." Here is the second reason for joy. Babylon the harlot is gone; now the marriage of the Lamb has come. "Marriage" (*gamos*) is the wedding, the wedding feast.

"And his wife hath made herself ready." "His wife" (*gunē*): the Lamb's wife, His bride. She has made herself ready, as a bride prepares herself for the wedding.

Who is the wife? The book itself shows her. In 21:9-10 the angel says, "Come hither, I will shew thee the bride, the Lamb's wife," and then "shewed me that great city, the holy Jerusalem, descending out of heaven from God." The bride is shown as the holy city, and on its gates are "the names of the twelve tribes of the children of Israel" (21:12) and on its foundations "the names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb" (21:14). In the prophets, Israel is God's wife: "For thy Maker is thine husband; the LORD of hosts

is his name; and thy Redeemer the Holy One of Israel" (Isaiah 54:5); "And I will betroth thee unto me for ever; yea, I will betroth thee unto me in righteousness, and in judgment, and in lovingkindness, and in mercies" (Hosea 2:19). This study states what the text shows: the wife of the Lamb is shown as the holy city, bearing the names of Israel's tribes and the Lamb's apostles. It does not name her the church of grace, because the book does not (Appendix C, Question 14).

Notice the contrast the book has drawn. The harlot (chapter 17) and the bride (chapter 21) are shown by the same angel with the same words, "Come hither" (17:1; 21:9). The harlot is dressed in purple and scarlet; the bride in fine linen, clean and white (19:8). The harlot sits on the beast; the bride is joined to the Lamb. The harlot is the great city Babylon; the bride is the holy city, new Jerusalem.

Figures of speech. "Be glad and rejoice" pairs two words of joy, *Synonymia*. "The marriage of the Lamb" is a *Metaphor* drawn from Israel's own picture of God as husband (Isaiah 54:5; Hosea 2:19).

To whom. Paul uses the picture of marriage for Christ and the church of grace, but there the church is "his body" and its members are "members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones" (Ephesians 5:30): Christ is "the head of the church" (Ephesians 5:23). In Revelation the Lamb's wife is shown as the holy city with Israel's tribes on its gates (21:9-12), in the line of the prophets' picture of Israel as God's wife (Isaiah 54:5; Part One, Chapter 3 §C; Appendix C, Question 14).

> **Revelation 19:8** *And to her was granted that she should be arrayed in fine linen, clean and white: for the fine linen is the righteousness of saints.*

"And to her was granted that she should be arrayed in fine linen, clean and white." "Was granted": it was given to her. She did not weave her own dress; it was given. "Fine linen" (*bussinon*) was the finest, most costly linen, worn by kings and priests. "Clean and white" (in the Greek, "bright and clean"): shining, spotless. Set against the harlot's purple and scarlet and gold (17:4).

"For the fine linen is the righteousness of saints." The book explains its sign. The fine linen is "the righteousness of saints." "Righteousness" here is *dikaiōmata*, plural: "righteous acts," the just deeds of God's holy people. Their faithfulness, their endurance under the beast, their refusal of his mark, their testimony, are the bride's wedding dress. And yet "it was granted" to her: even the righteous acts of the saints were given and made possible by God. Isaiah sang:

> **Isaiah 61:10** — *I will greatly rejoice in the LORD, my soul shall be joyful in my God; for he hath clothed me with the garments of salvation, he hath covered me with the robe of righteousness, as a bridegroom decketh himself with ornaments, and as a bride adorneth herself with her jewels.*

Figures of speech. "The fine linen is the righteousness of saints" is a *Metaphor*, explained by the text.

To whom. "The righteousness of saints," their righteous acts, belongs to God's people of the Day of the Lord, whose works "do follow them" (14:13). Under grace the believer's righteousness is "the righteousness of God which is by faith of Jesus Christ" (Romans 3:22), a gift, not his own deeds (Part One, Chapter 3 §C).

> **Revelation 19:9** *And he saith unto me, Write, Blessed are they which are called unto the marriage supper of the Lamb. And he saith unto me, These are the true sayings of God.*

"And he saith unto me, Write." The angel tells John to write this down.

"Blessed are they which are called unto the marriage supper of the Lamb." This is the fourth of the book's seven blessings (Part One, Chapter 1 §D). Those invited to the wedding feast of the Lamb are blessed. Christ told parables of the marriage feast. In one, a king made a marriage for his son and sent servants to call the guests; those first invited would not come, and the king said, "The wedding is ready, but they which were bidden were not worthy. Go ye therefore into the highways, and as many as ye shall find, bid to the marriage" (Matthew 22:8-9). In another, ten virgins waited for the bridegroom, "and they that were ready went in with him to the marriage: and the door was shut" (Matthew 25:10). At the last supper Christ said, "I will not drink henceforth of this fruit of the vine, until that day when I drink it new with you in my Father's kingdom" (Matthew 26:29). That day is the marriage supper of the Lamb. Christ had promised Laodicea, "I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me" (3:20).

"And he saith unto me, These are the true sayings of God." The angel vouches for the words: they are God's own, and they are true. The reader may rely on every one of them.

Figures of speech. "The marriage supper of the Lamb" is a *Metaphor* for the joy and fellowship of the kingdom, drawn from Christ's own parables.

> **Revelation 19:10** *And I fell at his feet to worship him. And he said unto me, See thou do it not: I am thy fellowservant, and of thy brethren that have the testimony of Jesus: worship God: for the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy.*

"And I fell at his feet to worship him." John, overwhelmed by what he has heard, falls at the angel's feet to worship him. It is a very human moment. The aged apostle, who has seen so much, is so moved that he bows before the messenger.

"And he said unto me, See thou do it not." The angel stops him at once. "See thou do it not": don't! Worship belongs to God alone. When Satan asked Christ to worship him, Christ answered, "it is written, Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve" (Matthew 4:10). When Cornelius fell at Peter's feet, "Peter took him up, saying, Stand up; I myself also am a man" (Acts 10:26).

"I am thy fellowservant, and of thy brethren that have the testimony of Jesus." The angel is a servant like John, and like all who hold the testimony of Jesus. Angels and men serve the same God. The angels are "ministering spirits, sent forth to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation" (Hebrews 1:14).

"Worship God." Two words in Greek: *tō theō proskunēson*, "worship God." Only God.

"For the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy." The witness that Jesus gives is the very life and breath of all prophecy. All true prophecy bears witness to Him and comes from Him (see 2:7). The angel is only a messenger of that testimony; the honour belongs to God, whose word it is. John will do the same thing again, and be stopped again (22:8-9).

Figures of speech. "See thou do it not" is an *Ellipsis* in Greek (literally "See, not!"): the urgent shortness of the angel's word shows how quickly he stops John.

In heaven, opened toward the earth. Verses 19:11-16, the Rider on the white horse. Heaven is opened, and the King comes out of it with the armies of heaven following Him. This is the coming the book has looked to since 1:7. He is seen leaving heaven; in the next verses He arrives on the earth.

> **Revelation 19:11** *And I saw heaven opened, and behold a white horse; and he that sat upon him was called Faithful and True, and in righteousness he doth judge and make war.*

Now heaven opens, and the King comes out.

"And I saw heaven opened." In 4:1 "a door was opened in heaven," for John to look in and see the throne. Here heaven itself is thrown open, for the King to come out. Ezekiel began his book, "the heavens were opened, and I saw visions of God" (Ezekiel 1:1). At Christ's baptism "the heavens were opened unto him" (Matthew 3:16). He had told Nathanael, "Hereafter ye shall see heaven open, and the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of man" (John 1:51).

"And behold a white horse." "Behold" (*Asterismos*). A white horse: the horse of a conqueror, the horse a victorious general rode in triumph. At the first seal a false conqueror rode a white horse (6:2); now the true Conqueror comes.

"And he that sat upon him was called Faithful and True." The rider is named at once: "Faithful and True." To Laodicea Christ called Himself "the faithful and true witness" (3:14). He is faithful: He keeps every promise. He is true: He is the real King, the genuine one, against every counterfeit. The rider of 6:2 had no name; this one is named again and again (19:11, 12, 13, 16).

"And in righteousness he doth judge and make war." He judges and makes war "in righteousness": justly, rightly. Isaiah foretold the Branch of David:

> **Isaiah 11:4** — *But with righteousness shall he judge the poor, and reprove with equity for the meek of the earth: and he shall smite the earth with the rod of his mouth, and with the breath of his lips shall he slay the wicked.*

This is the coming the whole book has been looking for. "Behold, he cometh with clouds; and every eye shall see him" (1:7). Christ told the high priest, "Hereafter shall ye see the Son of man sitting on the right hand of power, and coming in the clouds of heaven" (Matthew 26:64). He went up from the mount of Olives, and the angels said, "this same Jesus ... shall so come in like manner as ye have seen him go into heaven" (Acts 1:11). Now He comes.

Figures of speech. "Behold" is *Asterismos*. "Faithful and True" is used as a name, *Antonomasia*.

To whom. This is Christ's coming to the earth in power to judge and make war: the coming of 1:7, of Matthew 24:30, and of Zechariah 14:4, "his feet shall stand in that day upon the mount of Olives." It is not the gathering of the church of grace to meet the Lord in the air (1 Thessalonians 4:17), which comes before the Day of the Lord (Part One, Chapter 3 §C).

> **Revelation 19:12** *His eyes were as a flame of fire, and on his head were many crowns; and he had a name written, that no man knew, but he himself.*

"His eyes were as a flame of fire." The eyes of 1:14 and 2:18, which see into every heart. Nothing is hidden from Him as He comes to judge.

"And on his head were many crowns." "Crowns" here are *diadēmata*, royal crowns, the crowns of kings. The dragon had seven (12:3); the beast had ten (13:1); He has "many." Every right to rule is His. When the kings of the earth are defeated, their crowns are His. The Lord had said through Ezekiel of the last king of Judah, "Remove the diadem, and take off the crown ... I will overturn, overturn, overturn, it: and it shall be no more, until he come whose right it is; and I will give it him" (Ezekiel 21:26-27). He has come whose right it is.

"And he had a name written, that no man knew, but he himself." (The Majority Greek text reads "having names written, and a name written that no man knew.") He has a name that no one knows but Himself. As the overcomer receives "a new name ... which no man knoweth saving he that receiveth it" (2:17), so the King has a name that is His alone. There is a depth to who He is that no creature can fully know. Christ said, "no man knoweth the Son, but the Father" (Matthew 11:27).

Figures of speech. "As a flame of fire" is a *Simile* (see 1:14). "Many crowns" set against the dragon's seven and the beast's ten is an *Antithesis* across the book.

> **Revelation 19:13** *And he was clothed with a vesture dipped in blood: and his name is called The Word of God.*

"And he was clothed with a vesture dipped in blood." "Vesture" is a robe, an outer garment. It is "dipped in blood": soaked, stained with blood. Whose blood? Isaiah gives the answer. He saw one coming from Edom with red garments:

> **Isaiah 63:1-3** — *Who is this that cometh from Edom, with dyed garments from Bozrah? this that is glorious in his apparel, travelling in the greatness of his strength? I that speak in righteousness, mighty to save. Wherefore art thou red in thine apparel, and thy garments like him that treadeth in the winefat? I have trodden the winepress alone; and of the people there was none with me: for I will tread them in mine anger, and trample them in my fury; and their blood shall be sprinkled upon my garments, and I will stain all my raiment.*

The blood is the blood of His enemies, trodden in the winepress of God's wrath (14:19-20; 19:15). The Lamb whose own blood was shed for the redemption of men (5:9) now comes as the Judge whose robe is stained with the blood of those who refused Him.

"And his name is called The Word of God." Here is a second name. "The Word" (*ho logos*, Strong's G3056) is the name John gave Him at the beginning of his Gospel: "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God ... And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us" (John 1:1, 14). "Word" means the expression of a mind, what a man says to make himself known. Christ is God's Word: through Him God has spoken, and in Him God has made Himself known. "God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets, Hath in these last days spoken unto us by

his Son" (Hebrews 1:1-2). Through Him God spoke at His first coming; through Him God now judges. In John's Gospel "the Word" is God's own spoken purpose, which "was with God" and was God's, as a man's word is his own; and that Word "was made flesh" in Jesus Christ (John 1:14). The Son is not a second God beside His Father: He is the one in whom God's Word became flesh, and so He bears its name. Paul wrote that the wicked one shall be consumed "with the spirit of his mouth" (2 Thessalonians 2:8).

Figures of speech. "A vesture dipped in blood" is drawn from Isaiah 63, where the blood on the garments is the blood of the trodden enemies. "The Word of God" is a *Metonymy*: He is called by what He is, the one through whom God speaks.

> **Revelation 19:14** *And the armies which were in heaven followed him upon white horses, clothed in fine linen, white and clean.*

"And the armies which were in heaven followed him upon white horses." The armies of heaven follow Him, also on white horses.

"Clothed in fine linen, white and clean." Their dress is the bride's dress: "fine linen, clean and white ... the righteousness of saints" (19:8). Who are they? The book has told us: "they that are with him are called, and chosen, and faithful" (17:14). Zechariah foretold, "and the LORD my God shall come, and all the saints with thee" (Zechariah 14:5). Enoch prophesied, "Behold, the Lord cometh with ten thousands of his saints, To execute judgment upon all" (Jude 14-15). Christ said the Son of man would come "in his glory, and all the holy angels with him" (Matthew 25:31). His armies include the holy angels and those who are His.

Notice: they are not said to fight. They wear white linen, not armour. The battle is His alone, and His weapon is the sword of His mouth (19:15, 21). "I have trodden the winepress alone; and of the people there was none with me" (Isaiah 63:3).

Figures of speech. "Armies" is plural: the hosts of heaven, as God is "the LORD of hosts."

> **Revelation 19:15** *And out of his mouth goeth a sharp sword, that with it he should smite the nations: and he shall rule them with a rod of iron: and he treadeth the winepress of the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God.*

Three Scriptures meet in this verse, each describing what He does when He comes.

"And out of his mouth goeth a sharp sword, that with it he should smite the nations." First, the sword of His mouth (see 1:16; 2:16). His weapon is His word. Isaiah: "he shall smite the earth with the rod of his mouth, and with the breath of his lips shall he slay the wicked" (Isaiah 11:4). Paul: "whom the Lord shall consume with the spirit of his mouth, and shall destroy with the brightness of his coming" (2 Thessalonians 2:8). He speaks, and His enemies fall.

"And he shall rule them with a rod of iron." Second, the rod of iron of the second psalm: "Thou shalt break them with a rod of iron; thou shalt dash them in pieces like a potter's vessel" (Psalm 2:9). Promised to the man child (12:5), shared with the overcomer (2:27), now wielded by the King.

"And he treadeth the winepress of the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God." Third, the winepress of Isaiah 63 (quoted at 19:13) and of 14:19-20. He treads it Himself. "The fierceness and wrath of Almighty God": a chain of words for the full force of God's anger, poured out at last.

Figures of speech. "The fierceness and wrath" pairs two words for anger, *Synonymia*, so that the reader feels the full weight of the judgment. The three pictures, sword, rod and winepress, are each *Metaphors* drawn from Scripture, and the book shows their meaning in 19:21.

> **Revelation 19:16** *And he hath on his vesture and on his thigh a name written, KING OF KINGS, AND LORD OF LORDS.*

"And he hath on his vesture and on his thigh a name written." The name is written where all can see it: on His robe, and on His thigh, where a rider's robe falls across his leg, where a warrior's sword hangs. It is the name of the King in battle.

"KING OF KINGS, AND LORD OF LORDS." In capitals in the King James Version, set against the name on the harlot's forehead, "BABYLON THE GREAT" (17:5). He is King over all kings and Lord over all lords. Moses called God "God of gods, and Lord of lords, a great God, a mighty, and a terrible" (Deuteronomy 10:17). Paul called God "the blessed and only Potentate, the King of kings, and Lord of lords" (1 Timothy 6:15). God has given this name to His Son: "he is Lord of lords, and King of kings" (17:14). Paul wrote, "Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name: That at the name of Jesus every knee should bow ... And that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father" (Philippians 2:9-11). By His death, His resurrection, and His ascension He was given this name; now He comes to take what it means.

Figures of speech. "King of kings, and Lord of lords" is the Hebrew way of expressing the highest of all (as "holy of holies" means "most holy"), an *Idiom* of the superlative.

In short. After Babylon's fall a great multitude in heaven cries "Alleluia": God's judgments are true and righteous, for He has judged the great harlot who corrupted the earth and avenged His servants' blood, and her smoke rises for ever. The elders and living creatures, in their last appearance, fall down and say "Amen; Alleluia." A voice from the throne calls all God's servants to praise Him, and a sound like many waters and mighty thunders answers: "Alleluia: for the Lord God omnipotent reigneth," and the marriage of the Lamb is come; His wife has made herself ready, clothed in fine linen, the righteous acts of the saints. Blessed are those called to the marriage supper of the Lamb. John falls to worship the angel and is told, "Worship God." Then heaven opens, and the Rider on the white horse comes out, called Faithful and True, judging and making war in righteousness, His eyes like fire, many royal crowns on His head, a name no one knows but He, His robe dipped in the blood of His enemies, His name The Word of God. The armies of heaven follow in white linen. From His mouth goes a sharp sword to strike the nations; He rules them with a rod of iron and treads the winepress of the wrath of Almighty God; and on His robe and thigh is written: KING OF KINGS, AND LORD OF LORDS.

Section O — 19:17–20:15. On Earth: The Last Judgments, the Thousand Years, and the Great White Throne

Where it stands

The seventh and last scene on earth (7E), explained by Section N. The King has come out of heaven on the white horse (19:11-16). Now five judgments follow, in turn on men and on Satan: the beast and the false prophet and their armies; Satan bound for a thousand years; the overcomers enthroned and the first resurrection; Satan loosed, his last rebellion and his end; and the great white throne. Here every enemy of God is dealt with, one by one, until death itself is destroyed.

Its structure

	Verses	Who is judged	Content
A1	19:17-21	Men	The supper of the great God; the beast and the false prophet cast alive into the lake of fire; their armies slain
B1	20:1-3	Satan	Bound and shut in the bottomless pit a thousand years
A2	20:4-6	Men	Thrones and judgment; the faithful live and reign with Christ a thousand years; the first resurrection
B2	20:7-10	Satan	Loosed; Gog and Magog; fire from heaven; Satan cast into the lake of fire
A3	20:11-15	Men	The great white throne; the dead judged; death and hell cast into the lake of fire

The order of the text matters: the beast is in the lake of fire before Satan is bound (19:20; 20:10, "where the beast and the false prophet are"). The thousand years follow the coming of Christ (Appendix C, Question 16).

The text

Revelation 19. 17 And I saw an angel standing in the sun; and he cried with a loud voice, saying to all the fowls that fly in the midst of heaven, Come and gather yourselves together unto the supper of the great God; **18** That ye may eat the flesh of kings, and the flesh of captains, and the flesh of mighty men, and the flesh of horses, and of them that sit on them, and the flesh of all men, both free and bond, both small and great. **19** And I saw the beast, and the kings of the earth, and their armies, gathered together to make war against him that sat on the horse, and against his army. **20** And the beast was taken, and with him the false prophet that wrought miracles before him, with which he deceived them that had received the mark of the beast, and them that worshipped his image. These both were cast alive into a lake of fire burning with brimstone. **21** And the remnant were slain with the sword of him that sat upon the horse, which sword proceeded out of his mouth: and all the fowls were filled with their flesh.

Revelation 20. 1 And I saw an angel come down from heaven, having the key of the bottomless pit and a great chain in his hand. **2** And he laid hold on the dragon, that old serpent, which is the Devil, and Satan, and bound him a thousand years, **3** And cast him into the bottomless pit, and shut him up, and set a seal upon him, that he should deceive the nations no more, till the thousand years should be fulfilled: and after that he must be loosed a little season. **4** And I saw thrones, and they sat upon them, and judgment was given unto them: and I saw the souls of them that were beheaded for the witness of Jesus, and for the word of God, and which had not worshipped the beast, neither his image, neither had received his mark upon their foreheads, or in their hands; and they lived and reigned with Christ a thousand years. **5** But the rest of the dead lived not again until the thousand years were finished. This is the first resurrection. **6** Blessed and holy is he that hath part in the first resurrection: on such the second death hath no power, but they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with him a thousand years. **7** And when the thousand years are expired, Satan shall be loosed out of his prison, **8** And shall go out to deceive the nations which are in the four quarters of the earth, Gog and Magog, to gather them together to battle: the number of whom is as the sand of the sea. **9** And they went up on the breadth of the earth, and compassed the camp of the saints about, and the beloved city: and fire came down from God out of heaven, and devoured them. **10** And the devil that deceived them was cast into the lake of fire and brimstone, where the beast and the false prophet are, and shall be tormented day and night for ever and ever. **11** And I saw a great white throne, and him that sat on it, from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away; and there was found no place for them. **12** And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God; and the books were opened: and another book was opened, which is the book of life: and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works. **13** And the sea gave up the dead which were in it; and death and hell delivered up the dead which were in them: and they were judged every man according to their works. **14** And death and hell were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death. **15** And whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire.

Reading the thousand years. The passage that follows has been read in many ways, and whole systems have been built on it. This study keeps to what the text says: when the thousand years come (after the coming of the King, 19:11-21, and after the beast is cast into the lake), how long they last (a thousand years, stated six times), who reigns (those who lived at the first resurrection, with Christ), who is bound (Satan), and what follows (his loosing, his last rebellion, his end, and the judgment of the dead). It does not go beyond what the text states (Appendix C, Questions 16 and 17).

Verse by verse

Where we are: on earth. Verses 19:17-21, the beast and his armies. This is the seventh and last scene on earth (pair 7). The war of the Lamb, told ahead at 17:14, is now carried out: the beast and the false prophet are cast alive into the lake of fire, and their armies are slain.

> **Revelation 19:17** *And I saw an angel standing in the sun; and he cried with a loud voice, saying to all the fowls that fly in the midst of heaven, Come and gather yourselves together unto the supper of the great God;*

"And I saw an angel standing in the sun." An angel stands "in the sun," in the full blaze of the sky, where every bird can see him.

"And he cried with a loud voice, saying to all the fowls that fly in the midst of heaven." He calls to the birds of prey, the vultures and eagles that circle high in the sky. "In the midst of heaven" is the height of the sky (see 8:13).

"Come and gather yourselves together unto the supper of the great God." (The Majority Greek text and the critical texts read "the great supper of God.") He invites them to a feast: "the supper of the great God." Two suppers stand side by side in this chapter. In 19:9: "Blessed are they which are called unto the marriage supper of the Lamb." Here, the supper of God, to which the birds are called, to feed on the bodies of God's enemies. One supper is joy for those who belong to the Lamb; the other is judgment for those who made war on Him.

Ezekiel was given the same command at the end of his prophecy of Gog:

> **Ezekiel 39:17** — *And, thou son of man, thus saith the Lord GOD; Speak unto every feathered fowl, and to every beast of the field, Assemble yourselves, and come; gather yourselves on every side to my sacrifice that I do sacrifice for you, even a great sacrifice upon the mountains of Israel, that ye may eat flesh, and drink blood.*

Christ said, "For wheresoever the carcase is, there will the eagles be gathered together" (Matthew 24:28).

Figures of speech. "The supper of the great God" is set against "the marriage supper of the Lamb" (19:9), an *Antithesis* between the two feasts.

> **Revelation 19:18** *That ye may eat the flesh of kings, and the flesh of captains, and the flesh of mighty men, and the flesh of horses, and of them that sit on them, and the flesh of all men, both free and bond, both small and great.*

"That ye may eat the flesh of kings, and the flesh of captains, and the flesh of mighty men, and the flesh of horses, and of them that sit on them, and the flesh of all men, both free and bond, both small and great." The list names everyone who came against the King: kings, commanders, mighty men, horses, riders, and all men of every rank. Ezekiel: "Ye shall eat the flesh of the mighty, and drink the blood of the princes of the earth" (Ezekiel 39:18). The kings of the earth who gave their power to the beast (17:13) lie with the common soldiers. Rank means nothing now.

Figures of speech. "The flesh of ... and the flesh of ... and the flesh of" is *Polysyndeton* with repetition, *Anaphora*: each group is named, so that none is left out. "Free and bond, both small and great" names the two ends of every rank to mean all, *Synecdoche*.

> **Revelation 19:19** *And I saw the beast, and the kings of the earth, and their armies, gathered together to make war against him that sat on the horse, and against his army.*

"And I saw the beast, and the kings of the earth, and their armies, gathered together." Here are the armies gathered at Armageddon (16:14-16). The beast leads them, with the kings of the earth and their armies.

"To make war against him that sat on the horse, and against his army." They gather "to make war against him that sat on the horse": against the King of kings Himself. The angel had said, "These shall make war with the Lamb, and the Lamb shall overcome them" (17:14). The second psalm foretold it: "The kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers take counsel together, against the LORD, and against his anointed" (Psalm 2:2). That psalm goes on: "He that sitteth in the heavens shall laugh: the Lord shall have them in derision" (Psalm 2:4). Zechariah foretold it: "For I will gather all nations against Jerusalem to battle ... Then shall the LORD go forth, and fight against those nations, as when he fought in the day of battle" (Zechariah 14:2-3).

Figures of speech. "The beast, and the kings of the earth, and their armies" is *Polysyndeton*.

> **Revelation 19:20** *And the beast was taken, and with him the false prophet that wrought miracles before him, with which he deceived them that had received the mark of the beast, and them that worshipped his image. These both were cast alive into a lake of fire burning with brimstone.*

"And the beast was taken." No battle is described. The beast is simply "taken," seized, arrested. The great battle so long prepared is over before it starts. Paul foretold it: "And then shall that Wicked be revealed, whom the Lord shall consume with the spirit of his mouth, and shall destroy with the brightness of his coming" (2 Thessalonians 2:8).

"And with him the false prophet that wrought miracles before him." The false prophet, the second beast from the earth (13:11-17), is taken with him. He is described by what he did: he worked signs before the beast.

"With which he deceived them that had received the mark of the beast, and them that worshipped his image." His signs were for deception. By them he led the world to take the beast's mark and worship his image (13:13-17).

"These both were cast alive into a lake of fire burning with brimstone." Both are thrown "alive" into "a lake of fire burning with brimstone." They do not die first. They are not judged at the great white throne with the rest of the dead (20:11-15). They go straight into the lake. Daniel saw it:

> **Daniel 7:11** — *I beheld then because of the voice of the great words which the horn spake: I beheld even till the beast was slain, and his body destroyed, and given to the burning flame.*

The lake of fire is named here for the first time. It is the place of final judgment, "prepared for the devil and his angels" (Matthew 25:41). Fire and brimstone are the judgment of Sodom (Genesis 19:24). Here the beast and the false prophet are cast in; after the thousand years, the devil joins them (20:10); then death and the grave (20:14); and then all whose names are not in the book of life (20:15). The book calls it "the second death" (20:14; 21:8).

Figures of speech. "Cast alive" is to be taken as it reads: they did not die first. "A lake of fire burning with brimstone" is described as John saw it; the book itself names it "the second death" (20:14).

> **Revelation 19:21** *And the remnant were slain with the sword of him that sat upon the horse, which sword proceeded out of his mouth: and all the fowls were filled with their flesh.*

"And the remnant were slain with the sword of him that sat upon the horse." The rest, the armies of the kings, are killed "with the sword of him that sat upon the horse."

"Which sword proceeded out of his mouth." The sword is the sword of His mouth: His word (1:16; 19:15). He speaks, and they fall. No army of heaven lifts a weapon; His word is enough. "He spake, and it was done" (Psalm 33:9) at creation; He speaks, and it is done at judgment.

"And all the fowls were filled with their flesh." The supper of the great God is eaten (19:17-18).

Figures of speech. "The sword … which proceeded out of his mouth" is a *Hypocatastasis*: the sword stands for His spoken word of judgment, as the book has shown (1:16; 2:16; 19:15).

On earth. Verses 20:1-3, Satan bound. An angel comes down from heaven and binds Satan in the bottomless pit for a thousand years. The order of the text is kept: the beast is already in the lake of fire (19:20); Satan is bound after the King has come.



Albrecht Dürer, The Apocalypse (woodcut, 1498): the angel with the key of the bottomless pit binds the dragon; above, the angel shows John the holy city (20:1-3; 21:9-10).

> **Revelation 20:1** *And I saw an angel come down from heaven, having the key of the bottomless pit and a great chain in his hand.*

The beast and false prophet are in the lake of fire. Now the dragon who gave them their power is dealt with.

"And I saw an angel come down from heaven." An angel comes down. Not Michael by name, not Christ; an angel. One angel is enough to bind Satan.

"Having the key of the bottomless pit." The key of the abyss. Under the fifth trumpet it was given to a fallen star, and he opened the pit (9:1-2). Now an angel of God holds it, to shut the pit with Satan inside.

"And a great chain in his hand." A great chain, to bind. Peter wrote that God "spared not the angels that sinned, but cast them down to hell, and delivered them into chains of darkness, to be reserved unto judgment" (2 Peter 2:4).

Figures of speech. "The key" is a *Metonymy* for the authority to open and shut (see 1:18). The chain is a picture of complete restraint: whether of iron or of another kind, it holds him fast.

> **Revelation 20:2** *And he laid hold on the dragon, that old serpent, which is the Devil, and Satan, and bound him a thousand years,*

"And he laid hold on the dragon, that old serpent, which is the Devil, and Satan." The angel seizes the dragon. "Laid hold" is *ekratēsen*, "seized, gripped firmly." The four names of 12:9 are given again: the dragon, the old serpent of Eden, the Devil (the slanderer), and Satan (the adversary). There is no doubt who is bound.

"And bound him a thousand years." He is bound for "a thousand years." This is the first of six times in seven verses that "a thousand years" is stated (20:2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7). Isaiah foretold it:

> **Isaiah 24:21-22** — *And it shall come to pass in that day, that the LORD shall punish the host of the high ones that are on high, and the kings of the earth upon the earth. And they shall be gathered together, as prisoners are gathered in the pit, and shall be shut up in the prison, and after many days shall they be visited.*

"Shut up in the prison, and after many days shall they be visited": bound, and then, after a long time, brought out for judgment. That is the very order of this chapter.

When does this binding take place? The text places it after the coming of the King (19:11-21) and after the beast and false prophet are cast into the lake (19:20). When Satan is finally cast into the lake, he goes "where the beast and the false prophet are" (20:10): they are already there. So the thousand years come after Christ's coming (Appendix C, Question 16).

Christ once said, "how can one enter into a strong man's house, and spoil his goods, except he first bind the strong man?" (Matthew 12:29). Here the strong man is bound.

The number. *A thousand years.* The number is named six times in seven verses (20:2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7). A thousand is ten carried as far as it goes (see 5:11): a full and great time. The book gives it as a length of

time, says what happens before it, during it, and after it, and repeats it so that it cannot be missed. This study takes it as stated, and posits nothing beyond what the text says (Appendix C, Question 16).

Figures of speech. The four names are *Polyonymia* (see 12:9). "A thousand years" is a number stated plainly and repeated six times; the text gives no sign that it is anything other than what it says.

> **Revelation 20:3** *And cast him into the bottomless pit, and shut him up, and set a seal upon him, that he should deceive the nations no more, till the thousand years should be fulfilled: and after that he must be loosed a little season.*

"And cast him into the bottomless pit, and shut him up, and set a seal upon him." Thrown into the abyss, shut in, and sealed. The seal on the pit is like the seal on Daniel's den, "that the purpose might not be changed concerning Daniel" (Daniel 6:17), or the seal on Christ's tomb (Matthew 27:66). No one can open it. He cannot escape.

"That he should deceive the nations no more, till the thousand years should be fulfilled." Here is the purpose of the binding: "that he should deceive the nations no more." The one who "deceiveth the whole world" (12:9) is silenced. For a thousand years the nations will not be deceived by him.

"And after that he must be loosed a little season." "Must" is *dei*, the word of God's purpose (see 1:1). Even his release is part of God's plan. After the thousand years he will be loosed for "a little season," a short time. Why? The text gives what happens: he goes out and deceives the nations again (20:7-8). Even after a thousand years without his deception, under the reign of Christ, men will follow him when he is let loose. His release shows what is in the heart of man.

The number. *The thousand years* (see 20:2): Satan is shut up until they are fulfilled.

Figures of speech. "Cast ... and shut ... and set a seal" is *Polysyndeton*: each step of his imprisonment is named, so that the reader sees how complete it is.

On earth. Verses 20:4-6, the thousand years. Thrones are set, the faithful live and reign with Christ a thousand years, and this is called "the first resurrection."

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

"And I saw thrones, and they sat upon them, and judgment was given unto them." John sees thrones, and people seated on them, and judgment (the authority to judge) given to them. Who sits on these thrones? The text says "they," and does not name them separately from those described next. Daniel saw this scene:

> **Daniel 7:9** — *I beheld till the thrones were cast down, and the Ancient of days did sit, whose garment was white as snow, and the hair of his head like the pure wool: his throne was like the fiery flame, and his wheels as burning fire.*

("Cast down" in Daniel's Aramaic means "placed, set in place.") And Daniel saw who received the judgment: "Until the Ancient of days came, and judgment was given to the saints of the most High; and the time came that the saints possessed the kingdom" (Daniel 7:22). Christ promised the twelve, "ye also shall sit upon twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel" (Matthew 19:28). He promised the overcomer at Laodicea, "To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me in my throne" (3:21). Here those promises are kept.

"And I saw the souls of them that were beheaded for the witness of Jesus, and for the word of God." "Souls" here means persons (see 6:9). "Beheaded" (*pepelekismenōn*, from *pelekus*, "an axe"): put to death with the axe. These are the martyrs, killed "for the witness of Jesus, and for the word of God," the same words used of the souls under the altar (6:9) and of John himself (1:9).

"And which had not worshipped the beast, neither his image, neither had received his mark upon their foreheads, or in their hands." Among them are those who refused the beast in the days of chapter 13: they would not worship him or his image, and would not take his mark. Many of them died for it (13:15).

"And they lived." Here is the heart of the verse. "They lived" (*ezēsan*). They had died; now they live. They are raised from the dead. Verse 5 calls it "the first resurrection." The souls under the altar were told to "rest yet for a little season" (6:11); here they live. Daniel was told, "And many of them that sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life" (Daniel 12:2). The dead sleep until the resurrection; at the first resurrection, these awake (Appendix C, Questions 7 and 17).

"And reigned with Christ a thousand years." They reign with Christ for the thousand years. The promise of 5:10 is kept: "we shall reign on the earth." And of 2:26: "to him will I give power over the nations." Daniel: "And the kingdom and dominion, and the greatness of the kingdom under the whole heaven, shall be given to the people of the saints of the most High" (Daniel 7:27).

The number. *A thousand years* (see 20:2): the time of their reign with Christ.

Figures of speech. "Souls" is put for persons, *Synecdoche* (see 6:9; Bullinger names it here too). "Not worshipped ... neither ... neither" is *Paradiastole*: each refusal is named.

To whom. Those who live and reign with Christ here are the overcomers of the Day of the Lord, the martyrs of the beast's time and those who refused his mark. The promises of the seven messages, "to sit with me in my throne" (3:21) and "power over the nations" (2:26), are kept to them. How the first resurrection relates to the resurrection of the church of grace in Paul's letters (1 Thessalonians 4:16; 1 Corinthians 15:23) is not stated in this book, and this study does not decide it here (Part One, Chapter 3 §C; Appendix C, Question 17).

> **Revelation 20:5** *But the rest of the dead lived not again until the thousand years were finished. This is the first resurrection.*

"But the rest of the dead lived not again until the thousand years were finished." The rest of the dead do not come to life until the thousand years are over. They are raised at the end, for the great white throne (20:12-13).

"This is the first resurrection." "This" points back to those who "lived" in verse 4. Their coming to life is "the first resurrection." Two resurrections, a thousand years apart. Christ spoke of them:

> **John 5:28-29** — *Marvel not at this: for the hour is coming, in the which all that are in the graves shall hear his voice, And shall come forth; they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of damnation.*

Daniel was told of those who awake "some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt" (Daniel 12:2). Both resurrections in this passage are bodily: those who "lived" had been beheaded (20:4), and "the rest of the dead" who "lived not again" until later are raised to stand before the throne (20:12-13). The text gives no sign that the first is anything other than a resurrection of the body, as the second plainly is (Appendix C, Question 17).

The numbers. *The thousand years* (see 20:2), and *the first resurrection*. "First" sets this resurrection apart from the raising of "the rest of the dead" after the thousand years (20:12-13). Two resurrections, a thousand years apart: Christ spoke of "the resurrection of life" and "the resurrection of damnation" (John 5:29).

Figures of speech. "Lived ... lived not again" sets the two groups side by side with the same verb, the figure *Antithesis*.

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

"Blessed and holy is he that hath part in the first resurrection." This is the fifth of the book's seven blessings (Part One, Chapter 1 §D). Those who share in the first resurrection are "blessed" and "holy": set apart to God.

"On such the second death hath no power." The second death is the lake of fire (20:14). It has no power over them. This is the promise to Smyrna kept: "He that overcometh shall not be hurt of the second death" (2:11).

"But they shall be priests of God and of Christ." They are priests: the calling of Israel from Sinai, "ye shall be unto me a kingdom of priests" (Exodus 19:6), sung in 1:6 and 5:10, now fulfilled. Isaiah: "But ye shall be named the Priests of the LORD" (Isaiah 61:6).

"And shall reign with him a thousand years." They reign with Christ for the thousand years.

The numbers. *The first resurrection* (see 20:5); *the second death* (see 2:11); *a thousand years* (see 20:2). Those who have part in the first resurrection are untouched by the second death.

Figures of speech. "Blessed and holy" pairs two words, the blessing and the setting apart, each stated.

To whom. "Priests of God and of Christ" who "reign with him" is the fulfilment of Israel's calling (Exodus 19:6; 1:6; 5:10). It is the reward of the overcomers of the Day of the Lord (Part One, Chapter 3 §C).

On earth. Verses 20:7-10, Satan loosed and his end. When the thousand years are over, Satan is loosed, gathers the nations against the beloved city, and is cast into the lake of fire.

> **Revelation 20:7** *And when the thousand years are expired, Satan shall be loosed out of his prison,*

"And when the thousand years are expired." When the thousand years are completed.

"Satan shall be loosed out of his prison." He is let out. "Prison" (*phulakē*) is the abyss in which he was shut and sealed (20:3). This is the "little season" of verse 3. He does not escape; he is released, by God's will ("he must be loosed," 20:3).

The number. *The thousand years* (see 20:2), now expired.

> **Revelation 20:8** *And shall go out to deceive the nations which are in the four quarters of the earth, Gog and Magog, to gather them together to battle: the number of whom is as the sand of the sea.*

"And shall go out to deceive the nations which are in the four quarters of the earth." As soon as he is free, he does what he always does: he deceives. "The four quarters of the earth": the whole earth (see 7:1). After a thousand years of Christ's righteous reign, the nations are still capable of being deceived, and many are.

"Gog and Magog." The names come from Ezekiel. Gog, "the land of Magog, the chief prince of Meshech and Tubal" (Ezekiel 38:2), led a great alliance of nations from the north against Israel in the latter days, and God destroyed them on the mountains of Israel (Ezekiel 38–39). Here the names are used for the nations Satan gathers from the four quarters of the earth against God's people at the end of the thousand years. They are the same kind of rebellion, led by the same deceiver.

"To gather them together to battle." He gathers them for war, as the demons gathered the kings to Armageddon (16:14).

"The number of whom is as the sand of the sea." A vast multitude, beyond counting. God had promised Abraham descendants "as the sand which is upon the sea shore" (Genesis 22:17); here the rebels are as many.

The number. *The four quarters* of the earth (see 7:1): the whole earth. The rebellion is gathered from every side.

Figures of speech. "As the sand of the sea" is a *Simile* for a number beyond counting. "Gog and Magog" are names used for the nations who follow the same path as those in Ezekiel, *Antonomasia*.

> **Revelation 20:9** *And they went up on the breadth of the earth, and compassed the camp of the saints about, and the beloved city: and fire came down from God out of heaven, and devoured them.*

"And they went up on the breadth of the earth." They march across the whole earth.

"And compassed the camp of the saints about, and the beloved city." They surround "the camp of the saints," God's people, and "the beloved city." The beloved city is Jerusalem, the city God loves: "The LORD loveth the gates of Zion more than all the dwellings of Jacob" (Psalm 87:2).

"And fire came down from God out of heaven, and devoured them." There is no battle. Fire comes down from God out of heaven and consumes them. Ezekiel foretold of Gog: "and I will rain upon him, and upon his bands, and upon the many people that are with him, an overflowing rain, and great hailstones, fire, and brimstone" (Ezekiel 38:22); "And I will send a fire on Magog" (Ezekiel 39:6). Elijah called down fire from heaven on those sent against him (2 Kings 1:10). God ends the last rebellion in a moment.

Figures of speech. "Fire ... devoured them" is a *Prosopopoeia*: fire pictured as a devouring beast.

> **Revelation 20:10** *And the devil that deceived them was cast into the lake of fire and brimstone, where the beast and the false prophet are, and shall be tormented day and night for ever and ever.*

"And the devil that deceived them was cast into the lake of fire and brimstone." The deceiver himself is thrown into the lake of fire.

"Where the beast and the false prophet are." They are already there. They were cast in alive at Christ's coming (19:20), before the thousand years. A thousand years later, Satan joins them. (This is why the thousand years must follow Christ's coming: the beast is in the lake throughout them; Appendix C, Question 16.)

"And shall be tormented day and night for ever and ever." "Tormented" is *basanizō* (see 9:5). "Day and night for ever and ever": without end. This is the end of the serpent, promised in the garden: "it shall bruise thy head" (Genesis 3:15). Christ spoke of "everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels" (Matthew 25:41). The enemy of God and man, the deceiver from the beginning, is finished for ever.

Figures of speech. "Day and night" names the two halves of time for all time, *Synecdoche*. "For ever and ever" (literally "unto the ages of the ages") is the strongest phrase the Greek has for what has no end.

Before the great white throne. Verses 20:11-15, the last judgment. Earth and heaven flee from the face of Him who sits on the throne, and the dead, small and great, stand before God. Death and hell are cast into the lake of fire. Every enemy has now been dealt with.

> **Revelation 20:11** *And I saw a great white throne, and him that sat on it, from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away; and there was found no place for them.*

Now the last judgment.

"And I saw a great white throne." A throne, great and white. Great: there is no greater. White: pure, holy, perfectly just. Daniel saw it: "his throne was like the fiery flame" (Daniel 7:9).

"And him that sat on it." Who sits on the throne? The book has already shown "him that sitteth upon the throne": God (4:2-3; 5:1). And Christ said, "For the Father judgeth no man, but hath committed all judgment unto the Son" (John 5:22), and Paul said that God "hath appointed a day, in the which he will

judge the world in righteousness by that man whom he hath ordained" (Acts 17:31). God judges through His Son.

"From whose face the earth and the heaven fled away." Before Him, the earth and the heaven flee. The old creation passes away. Peter wrote, "But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night; in the which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up" (2 Peter 3:10). The psalmist: "They shall perish, but thou shalt endure: yea, all of them shall wax old like a garment" (Psalm 102:26).

"And there was found no place for them." Nothing of the old creation remains. Daniel saw the image broken in pieces "and the wind carried them away, that no place was found for them" (Daniel 2:35). There is nowhere to hide. Every man stands before the throne with nothing between him and his Judge.

Figures of speech. "The earth and the heaven fled away" is *Prosopopoeia*: creation pictured as fleeing in terror from the face of its Judge.

> **Revelation 20:12** *And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God; and the books were opened: and another book was opened, which is the book of life: and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works.*

"And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God." (The Majority Greek text and the critical texts read "stand before the throne.") The dead stand: they have been raised, for they stand. "Small and great": everyone, from the least to the greatest. No one is too small to be noticed, no one too great to be excused. This is "the time of the dead, that they should be judged" (11:18).

"And the books were opened." Books are opened, the records of men's lives. Daniel: "the judgment was set, and the books were opened" (Daniel 7:10). God has kept account of everything. "For God shall bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing, whether it be good, or whether it be evil" (Ecclesiastes 12:14).

"And another book was opened, which is the book of life." Another book: the book of life (see 3:5; 13:8). It is the register of those who belong to God.

"And the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works." They are judged by what is written, "according to their works." This is the rule of God's judgment throughout Scripture: "Also unto thee, O Lord, belongeth mercy: for thou renderest to every man according to his work" (Psalm 62:12); "I will give unto every one of you according to your works" (2:23). Paul: God "will render to every man according to his deeds" (Romans 2:6).

Figures of speech. "The books" and "the book of life" are *Anthropopatheia*: God's perfect knowledge pictured as written records. "Small and great" is *Synecdoche* for all.

> **Revelation 20:13** *And the sea gave up the dead which were in it; and death and hell delivered up the dead which were in them: and they were judged every man according to their works.*

"And the sea gave up the dead which were in it." Even those lost at sea, whose bodies were never buried, are raised. No one is missed.

"And death and hell delivered up the dead which were in them." Death and the grave give up their dead. "Hell" here is *hadēs*, the grave, the state of the dead (see 1:18). Christ holds "the keys of hell and of death" (1:18); now He opens them. Isaiah foretold it: "Thy dead men shall live, together with my dead body shall they arise. Awake and sing, ye that dwell in dust ... and the earth shall cast out the dead" (Isaiah 26:19).

"And they were judged every man according to their works." Each one is judged, by his works.

Figures of speech. "The sea gave up ... death and hell delivered up" is *Prosopopoeia*: the sea, death and the grave pictured as keepers who must hand over what they hold.

> **Revelation 20:14** *And death and hell were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death.*

"And death and hell were cast into the lake of fire." Death itself, and the grave, are thrown into the lake of fire. They are destroyed. There will be no more death and no more grave. Isaiah: "He will swallow up death in victory; and the Lord GOD will wipe away tears from off all faces" (Isaiah 25:8). Paul: "The last enemy that shall be destroyed is death" (1 Corinthians 15:26), and "O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory?" (1 Corinthians 15:55). In the new creation "there shall be no more death" (21:4).

"This is the second death." The book names the lake of fire: "the second death." (The Majority Greek text and the critical texts read "This is the second death, the lake of fire.") The first death is the death every man dies, from which there is a resurrection. The second death is the final death, from which there is no resurrection (see 2:11).

The number. *The second death* (see 2:11): the lake of fire. Death itself is cast into it.

Figures of speech. "Death and hell were cast into the lake" is *Prosopopoeia*: death and the grave pictured as persons who are themselves judged and destroyed.

> **Revelation 20:15** *And whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire.*

"And whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire." The book of life decides. Whoever's name is not written there is cast into the lake of fire, the second death. Those whose names are written there were promised, "I will not blot out his name out of the book of life" (3:5). Christ told His disciples, "rejoice, because your names are written in heaven" (Luke 10:20).

This is the end of the old creation and of every enemy of God: the beast and false prophet, Satan, death, the grave, and all who would not be His. What remains is the new heaven and the new earth (21:1).

Figures of speech. "Whosoever was not found written" puts the matter in the plainest possible terms: the book of life is the only question that matters.

In short. The King has come, and five judgments follow. An angel standing in the sun calls the birds to the supper of the great God. The beast, the kings of the earth and their armies gather to make war on the Rider and His army; the beast and the false prophet who deceived the world with signs are taken and cast alive into the lake of fire, and the rest are slain by the sword of His mouth. An angel with the key of the abyss and a great chain seizes the dragon, the old serpent, the Devil and Satan, binds him for a thousand years, and seals him in the pit, that he may deceive the nations no more until the thousand years are fulfilled. John sees thrones and those given judgment: the martyrs beheaded for the witness of Jesus and the word of God, and those who refused the beast and his mark, live and reign with Christ a thousand years; the rest of the dead do not live again until the thousand years are finished. This is the first resurrection; on its people the second death has no power, and they are priests of God and of Christ. After the thousand years Satan is loosed, deceives the nations from the four corners of the earth, Gog and Magog, as many as the sand of the sea, and surrounds the camp of the saints and the beloved city; fire from God consumes them, and the devil is cast into the lake of fire where the beast and the false prophet are, tormented for ever. Then a great white throne: earth and heaven flee from the face of Him who sits on it; the dead, small and great, stand before God, raised from the sea and from death and the grave; the books are opened and the book of life, and each is judged according to his works. Death and the grave are cast into the lake of fire, the second death, and whoever is not found written in the book of life is cast in with them.

Section P — 21:1–22:5. The New Heaven, the New Earth, and the Holy City

Where it stands

The second-to-last member of the book: the people of the new earth (B). Its partner is Section B, the people on the earth. Every promise made to the overcomer in chapters 2–3 is kept here. The old heaven and earth have passed away (20:11); God makes all things new. After all the judgments, the reader is shown the end for which everything was done: God dwelling with men, in a holy city, on a new earth, with no more curse, no more death, and no more tears.

Its structure

	Verses	Content
A	21:1-2	Visions: "And I saw" a new heaven and a new earth; "And I … saw" the holy city, new Jerusalem
B	21:3-8	Voices: a great voice out of heaven (good given; evil removed); He that sat on the throne (good given; evil removed)
A	21:9–22:5	Visions enlarged: the bride, the Lamb's wife. The holy city described (21:9-21); its privileges (21:22-27). The blessed country described: the river and the tree of life (22:1-2); its privileges (22:3-5)

The angel's "Come hither, I will shew thee the bride" (21:9) answers "Come hither; I will shew unto thee … the great whore" (17:1): the city of God set against the city of man.

The text

Revelation 21. 1 And I saw a new heaven and a new earth: for the first heaven and the first earth were passed away; and there was no more sea. **2** And I John saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. **3** And I heard a great voice out of heaven saying, Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and he will dwell with them, and they shall be his people, and God himself shall be with them, and be their God. **4** And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away. **5** And he that sat upon the throne said, Behold, I make all things new. And he said unto me, Write: for these words are true and faithful. **6** And he said unto me, It is done. I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end. I will give unto him that is athirst of the fountain of the water of life freely. **7** He that overcometh shall inherit all things; and I will be his God, and he shall be my son. **8** But the fearful, and unbelieving, and the abominable, and murderers, and whoremongers, and sorcerers, and idolaters, and all liars, shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone: which is the second death. **9** And there came unto me one of the seven angels which had the seven vials full of the seven last plagues, and talked with me, saying, Come hither, I will shew thee the bride, the Lamb's wife. **10** And he carried me away in the spirit to a great and high mountain, and shewed me that great city, the holy Jerusalem, descending out of heaven from God, **11** Having the glory of God: and her light was like unto a stone most precious, even like a jasper stone, clear as crystal; **12** And had a wall great and high, and had twelve gates, and at the gates twelve angels, and names written thereon, which are the names of the twelve tribes of the children of Israel: **13** On the east three gates; on the north three gates; on the south three gates; and on the west three gates. **14** And the wall of the city had twelve foundations, and in them the names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb. **15** And he that talked with me had a golden reed to measure the city, and the gates thereof, and the wall thereof. **16** And the city lieth foursquare, and the length is as large as the breadth: and he measured the city with the reed, twelve thousand furlongs. The length and the breadth and the height of it are equal. **17** And he measured the wall thereof, an hundred and forty and four cubits, according to the measure of a man, that is, of the angel. **18** And the building of the wall of it was of jasper: and the city was pure gold, like unto clear glass. **19** And the foundations of the wall of the city were garnished with all manner of precious stones. The first foundation was jasper; the second, sapphire; the third, a chalcedony; the fourth, an emerald; **20** The fifth, sardonyx; the sixth, sardius; the seventh, chrysolyte; the eighth, beryl; the ninth, a topaz; the tenth, a chrysoprasus; the eleventh, a jacinth; the twelfth, an amethyst. **21** And the twelve gates were twelve pearls: every several gate was of one pearl: and the street of the city was pure gold, as it were transparent glass. **22** And I saw no temple therein: for the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are the temple of it. **23** And the city had no need of the sun, neither of the moon, to shine in it: for the glory of God did lighten it, and the Lamb is the light thereof. **24** And the nations of them which are saved shall walk in the light of it: and the kings of the earth do bring their glory and honour into it. **25** And the gates of it shall not be shut at all by day: for there shall be no night there. **26** And they shall bring the glory and honour of the nations into it. **27** And there shall in no wise enter into it any thing that

defileth, neither whatsoever worketh abomination, or maketh a lie: but they which are written in the Lamb's book of life.

Revelation 22. 1 And he shewed me a pure river of water of life, clear as crystal, proceeding out of the throne of God and of the Lamb. **2** In the midst of the street of it, and on either side of the river, was there the tree of life, which bare twelve manner of fruits, and yielded her fruit every month: and the leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations. **3** And there shall be no more curse: but the throne of God and of the Lamb shall be in it; and his servants shall serve him: **4** And they shall see his face; and his name shall be in their foreheads. **5** And there shall be no night there; and they need no candle, neither light of the sun; for the Lord God giveth them light: and they shall reign for ever and ever.

The promises kept. The reader who remembers the seven messages (chapters 2–3) will find every promise to the overcomer kept in these chapters: the tree of life (2:7; 22:2), no hurt of the second death (2:11; 21:7-8), the hidden manna and new name (2:17; 22:4), power over the nations (2:26; 22:5), white raiment and the book of life (3:5; 21:27), the name of the city of God, new Jerusalem (3:12; 21:2, 10), and a place with Christ in His throne (3:21; 22:3, 5). And the book ends where the Bible began: with a garden, a river, the tree of life, and God with men (Part One, Chapter 9 §A).

Verse by verse

Where we are: the new heaven and the new earth. Verses 21:1-8. The first heaven and the first earth have passed away (20:11). John sees the new creation and the holy city coming down from God (21:1-2), and hears two voices, a great voice from heaven (21:3-4) and the voice of Him that sits on the throne (21:5-8). This is the people of the new earth, the partner of the seven messages (Section B).

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

"And I saw a new heaven and a new earth." "New" is *kainos* (Strong's G2537): new in kind, fresh, not merely recent (see 5:9). It is not the old heaven and earth patched up, but a new creation. God promised it through Isaiah:

> **Isaiah 65:17** — *For, behold, I create new heavens and a new earth: and the former shall not be remembered, nor come into mind.*

Peter wrote, "Nevertheless we, according to his promise, look for new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness" (2 Peter 3:13). The Bible began, "In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth" (Genesis 1:1). It ends with God making them new (Part One, Chapter 9 §A).

"For the first heaven and the first earth were passed away." The old creation is gone. At the great white throne "the earth and the heaven fled away; and there was found no place for them" (20:11). Christ said, "Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my words shall not pass away" (Matthew 24:35).

"And there was no more sea." The sea is gone. In this book the sea was the place from which the beast rose (13:1), and the waters on which the harlot sat were "peoples, and multitudes, and nations, and

tongues" (17:15), the restless nations: "the wicked are like the troubled sea, when it cannot rest" (Isaiah 57:20). It was the sea that kept John from the assemblies he loved, an exile on an island. On the new earth there is no more sea. Nothing restless, nothing that divides, nothing out of which evil can rise.

The number. *The first* heaven and *the first* earth: the old creation of Genesis 1:1, now passed away. "First" implies a second: the new heaven and new earth that take their place.

Figures of speech. "A new heaven and a new earth" names the two parts of creation to mean all of it. "No more sea," set against the sea of the beast and the harlot, is an *Antithesis* across the book.

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

"And I John saw the holy city, new Jerusalem." (The words "I John" are in the Received Text; the Majority and critical texts read simply "And I saw.") John sees "the holy city." Jerusalem in the prophets was "the holy city": "Awake, awake; put on thy strength, O Zion; put on thy beautiful garments, O Jerusalem, the holy city" (Isaiah 52:1). Now he sees "new Jerusalem," the new Jerusalem promised to the overcomer at Philadelphia: "I will write upon him ... the name of the city of my God, which is new Jerusalem, which cometh down out of heaven from my God" (3:12).

"Coming down from God out of heaven." The city does not rise from the earth, like Babel's tower, built by men to reach heaven (Genesis 11:4). It comes down from God. It is His work, not man's. Abraham "looked for a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God" (Hebrews 11:10). The writer to the Hebrews said of the faithful, "God ... hath prepared for them a city" (Hebrews 11:16).

"Prepared as a bride adorned for her husband." The city is dressed like a bride on her wedding day, beautiful, made ready for her husband. The marriage of the Lamb was announced in 19:7; here the bride appears, and she is shown as the city. Isaiah: "as a bride adorneth herself with her jewels" (Isaiah 61:10). "For as a young man marrieth a virgin, so shall thy sons marry thee: and as the bridegroom rejoiceth over the bride, so shall thy God rejoice over thee" (Isaiah 62:5).

Figures of speech. "As a bride adorned for her husband" is a *Simile*: the city is like a bride. In 21:9-10 the angel shows "the bride, the Lamb's wife," and what John sees is the city. The bride is shown as the holy city (Appendix C, Questions 14 and 18).

> **Revelation 21:3** *And I heard a great voice out of heaven saying, Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and he will dwell with them, and they shall be his people, and God himself shall be with them, and be their God.*

"And I heard a great voice out of heaven saying, Behold." A great voice, and "Behold" (*Asterismos*): look at this! What follows is the goal of the whole Bible.

"The tabernacle of God is with men." "Tabernacle" (*skēnē*) is God's dwelling, His tent. In the wilderness God told Moses, "And let them make me a sanctuary; that I may dwell among them" (Exodus 25:8). The tabernacle was God's dwelling in the middle of Israel's camp. Now His dwelling is "with men," all His people, for ever.

"And he will dwell with them." "Dwell" is *skēnōsei*, "will tabernacle," "will pitch His tent" (see 7:15). God will live with them.

"And they shall be his people, and God himself shall be with them, and be their God." This is the promise God made to Israel again and again through the whole Old Testament:

> **Leviticus 26:11-12** — *And I will set my tabernacle among you: and my soul shall not abhor you. And I will walk among you, and will be your God, and ye shall be my people.*

Ezekiel: "My tabernacle also shall be with them: yea, I will be their God, and they shall be my people" (Ezekiel 37:27). Jeremiah, of the new covenant: "I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts; and will be their God, and they shall be my people" (Jeremiah 31:33). In the garden, God walked with man "in the cool of the day" (Genesis 3:8). Man sinned and was driven out. All of Scripture since has been the story of God bringing man back. Here it is done. "God himself shall be with them."

Figures of speech. "Behold" is *Asterismos*. "Tabernacle" and "dwell" (tabernacle) are the same root, *Polyptoton*: the dwelling and the dwelling-in, so that God's presence is stressed. "They shall be his people ... and be their God" is the covenant formula of the Old Testament, given in full.

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

"And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes." God Himself wipes away every tear (see 7:17). Isaiah: "He will swallow up death in victory; and the Lord GOD will wipe away tears from off all faces" (Isaiah 25:8). Every tear ever shed by God's people, for sin, for loss, for the dead, for the cruelty of the world, is wiped away by His own hand.

"And there shall be no more death." Death entered the world with the fall: "for dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return" (Genesis 3:19). "Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin" (Romans 5:12). Death has been cast into the lake of fire (20:14). There is no more death. Never again a grave, never again a funeral, never again a parting.

"Neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain." No grief, no crying out, no pain. Isaiah: "and the voice of weeping shall be no more heard in her, nor the voice of crying" (Isaiah 65:19). "And the ransomed of the LORD shall return, and come to Zion with songs and everlasting joy upon their heads: they shall obtain joy and gladness, and sorrow and sighing shall flee away" (Isaiah 35:10).

"For the former things are passed away." "The former things": the whole order of the old creation under the curse, with its death and pain and tears. It is gone.

Figures of speech. "No more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither ... pain" is *Paradiastole* ("neither ... nor"): each grief of the old world is named, and each is ended. "God shall wipe away all tears" is *Anthropopatheia*: God's comfort pictured as a hand wiping tears from a face.

> **Revelation 21:5** *And he that sat upon the throne said, Behold, I make all things new. And he said unto me, Write: for these words are true and faithful.*

"And he that sat upon the throne said." For the first time since 1:8, God Himself, the One on the throne, speaks directly in the book.

"Behold, I make all things new." "Behold" (*Asterismos*). "I make all things new": not "I make all new things," but "all things new." God does not throw away His creation; He makes it new. Isaiah: "Behold, I will do a new thing; now it shall spring forth; shall ye not know it?" (Isaiah 43:19). Paul wrote that "the creature itself also shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God" (Romans 8:21).

"And he said unto me, Write: for these words are true and faithful." John is told to write it down, because these words are "true and faithful": real, and to be relied on. The promise is to be kept in writing, so that it cannot be lost or changed.

Figures of speech. "Behold" is *Asterismos*. "True and faithful" pairs two words of certainty, *Synonymia*.

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

"And he said unto me, It is done." (The Majority Greek text reads *Gegona*, "I am become," joined to what follows: "I am become the Alpha and the Omega"; the critical texts read *Gegonan*, "They are done.") "It is done" was spoken at the seventh vial, when God's wrath was complete (16:17). Now it is spoken when His new creation is complete. Everything God purposed has come to pass.

"I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end." God's title from 1:8. He who began all things has brought them to their end. The first and the last letter: everything, from the first word of Genesis to the last of Revelation, is His.

"I will give unto him that is athirst of the fountain of the water of life freely." "Freely" (*dōrean*): as a gift, without payment. The water of life is given, not earned. Isaiah: "Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters, and he that hath no money; come ye, buy, and eat; yea, come, buy wine and milk without money and without price" (Isaiah 55:1). Christ cried in the temple, "If any man thirst, let him come unto me, and drink" (John 7:37). The river of the water of life flows in 22:1, and the last invitation of the book repeats this one: "whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely" (22:17).

Figures of speech. "The fountain of the water of life" is a *Metaphor* for eternal life itself, given as water to the thirsty.

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

"He that overcometh shall inherit all things." (The Majority Greek text and the critical texts read "shall inherit these things.") The seven promises "to him that overcometh" in the seven messages (2:7, 11, 17, 26; 3:5, 12, 21) are gathered here into one: he shall inherit all these things. An "inheritance" is what a son receives from his father. The meek "shall inherit the earth" (Matthew 5:5).

"And I will be his God, and he shall be my son." This is the promise God made to David about his son: "I will be his father, and he shall be my son" (2 Samuel 7:14). Here God makes it to every overcomer. To be God's son is to be His heir; and the heir inherits all.

Figures of speech. "I will be his God, and he shall be my son" is the covenant formula (see 21:3), now made personal to each one.

To whom. "He that overcometh" is the overcomer of the seven messages, who held fast through the Day of the Lord (2:7; 3:21). The promises to him are kept here (Part One, Chapter 3 §C).

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

"But the fearful." Now the other side. "The fearful" (*deiloi*) are the cowardly: those who, out of fear, turned back. In the days of the beast, they took the mark rather than face death (13:15-17). Christ had said, "But whosoever shall deny me before men, him will I also deny before my Father which is in heaven" (Matthew 10:33).

"And unbelieving." Those who would not believe.

"And the abominable." Those who made themselves detestable, by joining in the abominations of Babylon (17:4-5).

"And murderers, and whoremongers, and sorcerers, and idolaters." The sins of the beast's world, named in 9:20-21: murders, fornication, sorceries, idolatry.

"And all liars." All who loved and lived the lie. The beast's whole kingdom rested on a lie (2 Thessalonians 2:11); the 144,000 had "no guile" in their mouth (14:5).

"Shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone: which is the second death." Their portion is the lake of fire, the second death (20:14-15). The overcomer inherits all things; these inherit the lake.

The number. *The second death* (see 2:11), named for the last time.

Figures of speech. The long list joined by "and" is *Polysyndeton*: each kind of sinner named, each one counted. Set against the promise of verse 7, an *Antithesis*: the overcomer's inheritance against the sinner's portion.

On the new earth. Verses 21:9–22:5. The book draws close. Verse 21:2 told in one sentence that John saw the holy city coming down. Now an angel carries him "in the spirit to a great and high mountain" (21:10) and shows him the city closely: its light, wall, gates, foundations and measure (21:9-21), what it has and has not (21:22-27), and the river and the tree of life (22:1-5). This is the bride announced at 19:7, now shown in full, and set against the harlot city of 17:1–18:24.

> **Revelation 21:9** *And there came unto me one of the seven angels which had the seven vials full of the seven last plagues, and talked with me, saying, Come hither, I will shew thee the bride, the Lamb's wife.*

"And there came unto me one of the seven angels which had the seven vials full of the seven last plagues." One of the same seven angels who poured out the plagues. In 17:1 "one of the seven angels which had the seven vials" came to show John the harlot. Now one of them comes to show him the bride (Appendix A).

"And talked with me, saying, Come hither, I will shew thee the bride, the Lamb's wife." The very words of 17:1, "Come hither; I will shew unto thee," but now "the bride, the Lamb's wife." "Bride" is *numphē*; "wife" is *gunē* (as in 19:7). The book sets the two scenes against each other on purpose: the great harlot and the bride; Babylon the great city and the holy Jerusalem; the woman on the scarlet beast and the bride of the Lamb (Appendix C, Question 14).

The numbers. *One* of the *seven* angels which had the *seven* vials full of the *seven* last plagues. Seven, four times over (see 15:1). The same company of angels that poured out the last wrath now shows the bride, and one of them showed John the harlot (17:1).

Figures of speech. The repeated words "Come hither, I will shew" (17:1; 21:9) are the figure *Epanodos* on the scale of the book: the same introduction to two opposite sights, so that the reader compares them.

> **Revelation 21:10** *And he carried me away in the spirit to a great and high mountain, and shewed me that great city, the holy Jerusalem, descending out of heaven from God,*

"And he carried me away in the spirit." The fourth and last time John is "in the spirit" (1:10; 4:2; 17:3; 21:10). Each time a great vision opens. This is the last.

"To a great and high mountain." For the harlot, John was carried "into the wilderness" (17:3). For the bride, to "a great and high mountain." Ezekiel was brought in vision to such a mountain to see the city and temple of the age to come:

> **Ezekiel 40:2** — *In the visions of God brought he me into the land of Israel, and set me upon a very high mountain, by which was as the frame of a city on the south.*

"And shewed me that great city, the holy Jerusalem." (The Majority Greek text reads "that great city, the holy Jerusalem"; the critical texts, "the holy city Jerusalem.") The angel said, "I will shew thee the bride," and what he shows is the city. The bride is shown as the holy city, Jerusalem. As in the prophets, Jerusalem is both a city and its people: "Speak ye comfortably to Jerusalem, and cry unto her, that her warfare is accomplished" (Isaiah 40:2) (Appendix C, Questions 14 and 18).

"Descending out of heaven from God." As in 21:2: it comes from God.

Figures of speech. The bride shown as a city is the book's own explanation of its *Metaphor*: "the bride, the Lamb's wife" is the holy Jerusalem.

> **Revelation 21:11** *Having the glory of God: and her light was like unto a stone most precious, even like a jasper stone, clear as crystal;*

"Having the glory of God." The city has the glory of God. It shines with His presence. Isaiah: "Arise, shine; for thy light is come, and the glory of the LORD is risen upon thee" (Isaiah 60:1). Ezekiel saw the glory of God depart from Jerusalem in his day (Ezekiel 10:18; 11:23), and in his last vision he saw it return: "And the glory of the LORD came into the house by the way of the gate whose prospect is toward the east" (Ezekiel 43:4). Here the city is filled with it.

"And her light was like unto a stone most precious, even like a jasper stone, clear as crystal." "Light" here is *phōstēr*, "light-giver, radiance." The city's radiance is like the most precious stone, "a jasper stone, clear as crystal." The one on the throne looked "like a jasper" (4:3). The city shines with His own glory. The jasper John means was clear and brilliant (see 4:3).

Figures of speech. "Like unto a stone most precious, even like a jasper ... clear as crystal": a chain of *Similes*, each one trying to describe a brightness beyond words.

> **Revelation 21:12** *And had a wall great and high, and had twelve gates, and at the gates twelve angels, and names written thereon, which are the names of the twelve tribes of the children of Israel:*

"And had a wall great and high." The city has a great, high wall. A wall gives security: nothing can get in that should not. In the ancient world a city without walls was at the mercy of its enemies. This city's wall is great and high; but its gates are never shut (21:25), for there are no enemies.

"And had twelve gates." Twelve gates, three on each side (21:13).

"And at the gates twelve angels." An angel at each gate, as guardians. The cherubim once guarded the way to the tree of life to keep man out (Genesis 3:24); now angels stand at the gates of the city where the tree of life grows, and the gates are open.

"And names written thereon, which are the names of the twelve tribes of the children of Israel." On the twelve gates are the names of the twelve tribes of Israel. Ezekiel saw the same in his city:

> **Ezekiel 48:31** — *And the gates of the city shall be after the names of the tribes of Israel: three gates northward; one gate of Reuben, one gate of Judah, one gate of Levi.*

Everyone who enters the city of God enters through a gate that bears the name of a tribe of Israel. God's promises to Israel are written on the very entrances of the holy city. As Christ told the woman at the well, "salvation is of the Jews" (John 4:22).

The numbers. *Twelve* gates, *twelve* angels, *twelve* tribes. Twelve is the number of governmental perfection (see 4:4): God's people under His rule, rightly ordered for ever. The city is Israel's city, as Ezekiel saw it, with "the gates of the city ... after the names of the tribes of Israel" (Ezekiel 48:31).

Figures of speech. "Great and high" pairs two words, *Synonymia*. The names on the gates are a *Metonymy*: the names stand for the tribes themselves.

To whom. The names on the gates are the names of the twelve tribes of Israel. The holy city carries Israel's names (Ezekiel 48:31). It is the fulfilment of God's promises to Israel (Part One, Chapter 3 §C; Appendix C, Question 14).

> **Revelation 21:13** *On the east three gates; on the north three gates; on the south three gates; and on the west three gates.*

"On the east three gates; on the north three gates; on the south three gates; and on the west three gates." Three gates on each of four sides. The city is open in every direction, to the whole earth. Ezekiel's city had the same (Ezekiel 48:31-34). In the wilderness, the twelve tribes camped around the tabernacle, three on each side (Numbers 2). Here the gates of the tribes surround the city where God dwells.

The numbers. *Three* gates on each of the *four* sides. Four is the number of the earth, its four quarters (see 4:6); three is the number of divine completeness (see 4:8). Three times four is twelve (see 21:12). So the gates open to every quarter of the earth, three to each. Ezekiel saw the same, three gates on each side, each named for a tribe (Ezekiel 48:31-34), and Israel's camp in the wilderness was set out the same way, three tribes on each side of the tabernacle (Numbers 2:1-31).

Figures of speech. "On the east ... on the north ... on the south ... on the west" names the four sides to mean the whole, a *Synecdoche*.

> **Revelation 21:14** *And the wall of the city had twelve foundations, and in them the names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb.*

"And the wall of the city had twelve foundations." The wall stands on twelve foundation stones.

"And in them the names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb." On the foundations are the names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb. Christ chose twelve to be with Him (Mark 3:14), and promised them, "ye also shall sit upon twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel" (Matthew 19:28). The gates bear the twelve tribes; the foundations bear the twelve apostles. The city is built on both: on Israel, and on the apostles the Lamb sent to Israel.

The numbers. *Twelve* foundations and the *twelve* apostles of the Lamb (see 21:12). Twelve tribes on the gates, twelve apostles on the foundations: the city bears both twelves. Christ promised the twelve, "ye also shall sit upon twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel" (Matthew 19:28).

Figures of speech. "Twelve foundations ... twelve apostles" sets the twelve against the twelve tribes of verse 12: the two twelves of God's dealings with Israel, joined in one city.

> **Revelation 21:15** *And he that talked with me had a golden reed to measure the city, and the gates thereof, and the wall thereof.*

"And he that talked with me had a golden reed to measure the city, and the gates thereof, and the wall thereof." The angel has a measuring rod of gold. John was given a reed to measure the temple (11:1); Ezekiel's guide had "a line of flax in his hand, and a measuring reed" (Ezekiel 40:3). What God measures, He owns and protects (see 11:1). This reed is gold: everything about this city is precious.

Figures of speech. "The city, and the gates thereof, and the wall thereof" is *Polysyndeton*: each part to be measured is named.

> **Revelation 21:16** *And the city lieth foursquare, and the length is as large as the breadth: and he measured the city with the reed, twelve thousand furlongs. The length and the breadth and the height of it are equal.*

"And the city lieth foursquare, and the length is as large as the breadth." The city is square.

"And he measured the city with the reed, twelve thousand furlongs." Twelve thousand furlongs (*stadia*). A furlong was about 607 feet; twelve thousand furlongs is about 1,380 miles. The city is about 1,380 miles on each side. (Whether this is the length of each side or the distance all round, readers differ; the plain reading is the length of each side, as the next words show.)

"The length and the breadth and the height of it are equal." Length, breadth and height are equal. The city is a perfect cube. Here the study gathers what it has learned about this shape, for the cube is not an accident. It runs through Scripture from the wilderness to the new earth, and the study of Genesis 1:1 that belongs with this one (*A Son Have I Established*) traced it at length.

The cube in the tabernacle. In the wilderness tabernacle the innermost room, the most holy place, where the ark of the covenant stood and where God met with Moses "from above the mercy seat, from between the two cherubims" (Exodus 25:22), was ten cubits long, ten wide and ten high, by the measure of its boards and curtains (Exodus 26). A veil divided it from everything else:

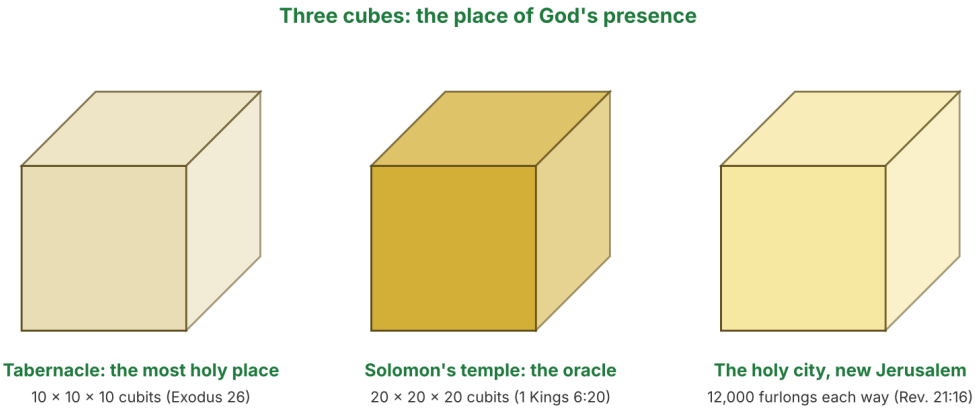
> **Exodus 26:33** — *And thou shalt hang up the vail under the taches, that thou mayest bring in thither within the vail the ark of the testimony: and the vail shall divide unto you between the holy place and the most holy.*

The cube in the temple. When Solomon built the temple, the most holy place was again a perfect cube, twice the size, overlaid with pure gold:

> **1 Kings 6:20** — *And the oracle in the forepart was twenty cubits in length, and twenty cubits in breadth, and twenty cubits in the height thereof: and he overlaid it with pure gold; and so covered the altar which was of cedar.*

The cube in the holy city. Now, at the end of Scripture, the shape appears a third time: not a small room, but a whole city, twelve thousand furlongs in length, breadth and height. And it too is gold, "pure gold, like unto clear glass" (21:18), as the most holy place was overlaid with pure gold. The one shape Scripture chose for the place nearest to God's presence is the shape of the city where God will dwell with men.

The number. *Twelve thousand* furlongs, about 1,380 miles: twelve, God's governmental perfection (see 4:4), times a thousand, a full and great measure (see 5:11), given in each of three equal measures, length, breadth and height. Three is the number of divine perfection, and of the solid (see above).



The three cubes of Scripture (shown alike, not to scale): the most holy place of the tabernacle (10 cubits each way), of Solomon's temple (20 cubits each way), and the holy city (12,000 furlongs each way, about 1,380 miles).

What has changed. The most holy place was entered once a year, by one man, the high priest, with blood, behind a veil that shut everyone else out: "into the second went the high priest alone once every year, not without blood" (Hebrews 9:7). When Christ died, "the veil of the temple was rent in twain from the top to the bottom" (Matthew 27:51). In the holy city there is no veil, and no temple at all: "I saw no temple therein: for the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are the temple of it" (21:22). God's people do not visit the most holy place once a year; they live in it, in His presence, for ever, and "they shall see his face" (22:4). A cube of stone, shut away and entered once a year by one man, was the best the old covenant could build. A cube of light, a whole city, entered freely by all God's people for ever, is what God Himself brings down from heaven (21:2). Solomon's oracle did not fail; it stated, in gold and cedar, a shape whose full size and open access it could never give. The holy city is that shape, completed.

Three equal measures. Three is the number of divine perfection (see Part One, Chapter 5 §D), and Bullinger points out that it is also the number of the solid: two lines cannot enclose a space, but three dimensions, length, breadth and height, make a solid, and the cube is the simplest solid of all, three measures equal. A city whose three measures are equal is complete in every direction. Twelve thousand is twelve, the number of God's ordered rule, multiplied by a thousand: and the twelve is given in all three directions.

Salt. The Genesis 1:1 study noted a third cube that stands between the temple of the past and the city of the future, in the speech of the present. Common salt, sodium chloride, forms crystals in the shape of cubes; looked at closely, every grain of table salt is a tiny cube. Salt runs through Scripture as the sign of what lasts and does not decay. Every offering on God's altar was to be salted: "neither shalt thou suffer the salt of the covenant of thy God to be lacking from thy meat offering: with all thine offerings thou shalt offer salt" (Leviticus 2:13). God's lasting covenants were called "a covenant of salt for ever before the LORD" (Numbers 18:19), and the kingdom was given "to David for ever, even to him and to his sons

by a covenant of salt" (2 Chronicles 13:5). Christ said to His disciples, "Ye are the salt of the earth" (Matthew 5:13). The most holy place, the grain of salt, and the holy city: the same shape stands in the past of Scripture, in its figures of speech, and in its promised future, and each time it is joined with what belongs to God and does not pass away.

The numbers of the cube. The Genesis 1:1 study found one more thing, and it is set down here as that study set it down: as a witness alongside the text, not as its proof. A cube has 8 corners, 12 edges and 6 faces, and 8 + 12 + 6 = 26. In Hebrew, where letters are also numbers, the name of God, the LORD (*YHWH*), adds up to 26: yod (10) + he (5) + vav (6) + he (5). And 26 has a place of its own among numbers: it is the only number that stands between a square and a cube, between 25 (five times five) and 27 (three times three times three). Fermat proposed it in the seventeenth century, and it was later proved: no other square and cube in all of arithmetic differ by exactly two. The shape God chose for His dwelling counts, in its own parts, the number of His name. The holy city is where "the tabernacle of God is with men" (21:3), and Ezekiel's last words about the city of the end are its name: "The LORD is there" (Ezekiel 48:35).

Figures of speech. "The length and the breadth and the height" is *Polysyndeton*, each measure named and declared equal.

> **Revelation 21:17** *And he measured the wall thereof, an hundred and forty and four cubits, according to the measure of a man, that is, of the angel.*

"And he measured the wall thereof, an hundred and forty and four cubits." The wall is 144 cubits: twelve times twelve. A cubit was the length of a man's forearm, about a foot and a half; 144 cubits is about 216 feet. Whether this is the wall's height or its thickness, the text does not say. Twelve, the number of God's ordered rule and of Israel's tribes, multiplied by itself: the number of the sealed (7:4), the number of the wall.

"According to the measure of a man, that is, of the angel." The angel used an ordinary human measure: the cubit as men count it. The measurements are real, not mystical; John is given them in units he can understand.

The number. *An hundred and forty and four* cubits: twelve times twelve (see 21:12), about 216 feet. It is the number of the sealed (7:4) without the thousand: the wall itself is built to Israel's number made full.

Figures of speech. "Of a man, that is, of the angel" is an explanatory addition, the figure Bullinger calls *Epexegesis* in effect: the angel's measure is the same as a man's.

> **Revelation 21:18** *And the building of the wall of it was of jasper: and the city was pure gold, like unto clear glass.*

"And the building of the wall of it was of jasper." The wall is built of jasper, the clear, brilliant stone that shone like the glory of God (4:3; 21:11).

"And the city was pure gold, like unto clear glass." The city is pure gold, so pure it is transparent, like clear glass. Gold of this kind is beyond anything men know. In the tabernacle the most holy things were

overlaid with pure gold; here the whole city is gold. And it is clear as glass: nothing hidden, nothing dark, nothing false. Light passes through all of it.

Figures of speech. "Like unto clear glass" is a *Simile*.

> **Revelation 21:19** *And the foundations of the wall of the city were garnished with all manner of precious stones. The first foundation was jasper; the second, sapphire; the third, a chalcedony; the fourth, an emerald;*

"And the foundations of the wall of the city were garnished with all manner of precious stones." "Garnished" means adorned, decorated. Isaiah foretold it of Jerusalem:

> **Isaiah 54:11-12** — *O thou afflicted, tossed with tempest, and not comforted, behold, I will lay thy stones with fair colours, and lay thy foundations with sapphires. And I will make thy windows of agates, and thy gates of carbuncles, and all thy borders of pleasant stones.*

"The first foundation was jasper; the second, sapphire; the third, a chalcedony; the fourth, an emerald." The twelve foundations are each a different precious stone. Jasper, the clear stone of God's glory. Sapphire, a deep blue. Chalcedony, generally taken as a greenish or milky stone. Emerald, green, the colour of the rainbow around the throne (4:3).

These stones recall the high priest's breastplate, which held twelve precious stones, each engraved with the name of one of the tribes of Israel: "And the stones shall be with the names of the children of Israel, twelve, according to their names, like the engravings of a signet; every one with his name shall they be according to the twelve tribes" (Exodus 28:21). Several of the stones in this list have the same names as stones on the breastplate (jasper, sapphire, emerald, sardius, beryl, topaz, amethyst). The ancient names of some of the others cannot now be matched with certainty to the stones we know.

The numbers. The *first*, *second*, *third*, *fourth* foundations: the twelve foundations counted one by one (see 21:14), each with its stone.

Figures of speech. The list of twelve stones names each one separately, so that the reader sees the city's foundations in all their colours.

> **Revelation 21:20** *The fifth, sardonyx; the sixth, sardius; the seventh, chrysolyte; the eighth, beryl; the ninth, a topaz; the tenth, a chrysoprasus; the eleventh, a jacinth; the twelfth, an amethyst.*

"The fifth, sardonyx; the sixth, sardius; the seventh, chrysolite; the eighth, beryl; the ninth, a topaz; the tenth, a chrysoprasus; the eleventh, a jacinth; the twelfth, an amethyst." The rest of the twelve. Sardonyx, a banded red and white stone. Sardius, the deep red stone that shone with the jasper on the throne (4:3). Chrysolite, "golden stone," a yellow stone. Beryl, sea-green. Topaz, yellow-green. Chrysoprasus, a golden-green. Jacinth, the hyacinth colour, a dark blue or violet (see 9:17). Amethyst, purple.

The twelve foundations bear the twelve names of the apostles (21:14). The foundation of the city is beautiful beyond imagining: every colour of the precious stones, shining with the light of God's glory.

The numbers. The *fifth* to the *twelfth* foundations. Twelve stones in twelve foundations recall the twelve stones of the high priest's breastplate, "with the names of the children of Israel, twelve, according to their names" (Exodus 28:21). Several of the stones are the same. The names once carried on the high priest's heart into the holy place are now the foundations of the city.

Figures of speech. The list continues, each stone named in order: the full beauty of the foundations set before the reader one stone at a time.

> **Revelation 21:21** *And the twelve gates were twelve pearls: every several gate was of one pearl: and the street of the city was pure gold, as it were transparent glass.*

"And the twelve gates were twelve pearls; every several gate was of one pearl." Each gate is a single pearl. "Every several gate" means "each one of the gates." A pearl is formed in an oyster around a wound, layer upon layer, until something beautiful grows from the injury. The harlot wore pearls (17:4), and the merchants mourned the loss of their pearls (18:12, 16). Here pearls are the gates of the city, and no one buys or sells them.

"And the street of the city was pure gold, as it were transparent glass." The street, the broad open way of the city, is pure gold, transparent as glass. What men treasure most, gold, is paving stone here.

The numbers. *Twelve* gates, *twelve* pearls, and "every several gate was of *one* pearl": each gate a single pearl. Twelve gates (see 21:12), each one whole.

Figures of speech. "As it were transparent glass" is a *Simile*. The Companion Bible notes that "street" is singular for plural here, *Heterosis* of number: "the street" stands for all the streets of the city.

> **Revelation 21:22** *And I saw no temple therein: for the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are the temple of it.*

Now the privileges of the city: what it does not have, and what it does.

"And I saw no temple therein." John looks for a temple, and there is none. In the old Jerusalem the temple was the centre of everything: the place where God met His people, where sacrifices were offered, where the priests went in and the people stood outside. In the new Jerusalem there is no temple building at all.

"For the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are the temple of it." Why? Because God Himself and the Lamb are its temple. A temple was the place where God dwelt among His people. Now He dwells with them everywhere in the city, and no building is needed. "The Lord God Almighty and the Lamb" are named together, and distinctly, as in 5:13 ("unto him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb") and 22:1, 3 ("the throne of God and of the Lamb"). Christ told the woman at the well, "the hour cometh, when ye shall neither in this mountain, nor yet at Jerusalem, worship the Father" (John 4:21).

Figures of speech. "The Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are the temple" is a *Metaphor*: their presence is what the temple only pictured.

> **Revelation 21:23** *And the city had no need of the sun, neither of the moon, to shine in it: for the glory of God did lighten it, and the Lamb is the light thereof.*

"And the city had no need of the sun, neither of the moon, to shine in it." The city does not need sun or moon.

"For the glory of God did lighten it, and the Lamb is the light thereof." God's glory is its light, and the Lamb is its lamp. "Light" here is *luchnos*, "lamp": the Lamb is the lamp that holds and gives out the light of God's glory. Isaiah foretold it:

> **Isaiah 60:19-20** — *The sun shall be no more thy light by day; neither for brightness shall the moon give light unto thee: but the LORD shall be unto thee an everlasting light, and thy God thy glory. Thy sun shall no more go down; neither shall thy moon withdraw itself: for the LORD shall be thine everlasting light, and the days of thy mourning shall be ended.*

On the first day God said, "Let there be light" (Genesis 1:3), before He made the sun on the fourth day (Genesis 1:16). In the new creation God's own glory is the light, as it was before the sun.

Figures of speech. "The Lamb is the light thereof" (the lamp thereof) is a *Metaphor*: the Lamb gives out the glory of God, as a lamp gives out light.

> **Revelation 21:24** *And the nations of them which are saved shall walk in the light of it: and the kings of the earth do bring their glory and honour into it.*

"And the nations of them which are saved shall walk in the light of it." (The words "of them which are saved" are in the Received Text but lacking in the Majority and critical texts, which read simply "And the nations shall walk in the light of it.") There are nations on the new earth, and they walk by the city's light. Isaiah foretold:

> **Isaiah 60:3** — *And the Gentiles shall come to thy light, and kings to the brightness of thy rising.*

Who are these nations? The text shows that there are peoples living on the new earth outside the city, walking in its light and coming into it (21:24-26). The city is not the whole of the redeemed, nor the whole of the new earth. It is the dwelling place of God at the centre, with the nations around it (Appendix C, Question 18). The text says no more than this about them, and this study does not go beyond it.

"And the kings of the earth do bring their glory and honour into it." Kings bring their glory and honour into the city. The kings of the earth once committed fornication with Babylon and brought her their trade (18:3, 9). On the new earth kings bring their glory to the city of God. Isaiah: "Thy gates shall be open continually … that men may bring unto thee the forces of the Gentiles, and that their kings may be brought" (Isaiah 60:11).

Figures of speech. "The kings of the earth … into it" is set against the kings who brought their trade to Babylon, an *Antithesis* across the book.

To whom. The holy city with its gates named for Israel's tribes, and the nations walking in its light, is the fulfilment of Isaiah 60, God's promise to Zion. The church of grace is not named in this picture, and this study does not place it there (Part One, Chapter 3 §C; Appendix C, Questions 14 and 18).

> **Revelation 21:25** *And the gates of it shall not be shut at all by day: for there shall be no night there.*

"And the gates of it shall not be shut at all by day." The gates are never shut. City gates in the ancient world were shut at night, and in time of war, against enemies. These are never shut, because there are no enemies. Isaiah: "Therefore thy gates shall be open continually; they shall not be shut day nor night" (Isaiah 60:11).

"For there shall be no night there." There is no night. Night, the time of darkness, danger, and fear, is gone. Zechariah foretold, "But it shall be one day which shall be known to the LORD, not day, nor night: but it shall come to pass, that at evening time it shall be light" (Zechariah 14:7).

Figures of speech. "Not ... shut at all" uses the strong double negative in Greek (*ou mē*): never, ever shut.

> **Revelation 21:26** *And they shall bring the glory and honour of the nations into it.*

"And they shall bring the glory and honour of the nations into it." The glory and honour of all the nations are brought into the city. Everything good and noble the nations have, they bring as gifts to God's city. Isaiah: "the forces of the Gentiles shall come unto thee" (Isaiah 60:5). Haggai: "And I will shake all nations, and the desire of all nations shall come: and I will fill this house with glory, saith the LORD of hosts" (Haggai 2:7).

Figures of speech. "Glory and honour" pairs two words, *Synonymia*.

> **Revelation 21:27** *And there shall in no wise enter into it any thing that defileth, neither whatsoever worketh abomination, or maketh a lie: but they which are written in the Lamb's book of life.*

"And there shall in no wise enter into it any thing that defileth." The gates are always open, but nothing unclean can enter. "In no wise" is the strong double negative: never. Isaiah: "for henceforth there shall no more come into thee the uncircumcised and the unclean" (Isaiah 52:1).

"Neither whatsoever worketh abomination, or maketh a lie." Nothing that does abomination, the idolatry of Babylon (17:4-5), and nothing that makes a lie, the deception of the beast (13:14), can come in.

"But they which are written in the Lamb's book of life." Only those whose names are in the Lamb's book of life may enter. The book of life decides again, as at the great white throne (20:15). The promise to Sardis is kept: "I will not blot out his name out of the book of life" (3:5).

Figures of speech. "Any thing that defileth, neither whatsoever worketh abomination, or maketh a lie" names each kind of uncleanness and excludes it, *Paradiastole*.

On the new earth. Verses 22:1-5, the river and the tree of life. The close look at the city ends at its centre, the throne of God and of the Lamb, from which the river of life flows.

> **Revelation 22:1** *And he shewed me a pure river of water of life, clear as crystal, proceeding out of the throne of God and of the Lamb.*

"And he shewed me a pure river of water of life." The angel shows John a river. "Water of life": living water, water that gives life. "Pure": clean, unpolluted.

"Clear as crystal." Shining, transparent, like crystal.

"Proceeding out of the throne of God and of the Lamb." The river flows out from the throne. Notice the words: "the throne of God and of the Lamb." One throne, and two named. Christ sits with His Father in His Father's throne (3:21).

The Bible began with a river: "And a river went out of Eden to water the garden; and from thence it was parted, and became into four heads" (Genesis 2:10). The prophets saw a river flowing from God's house in the age to come. Ezekiel saw water issuing "out from under the threshold of the house eastward," growing deeper until it was "a river that I could not pass over," and "every thing shall live whither the river cometh" (Ezekiel 47:1, 5, 9). Zechariah: "And it shall be in that day, that living waters shall go out from Jerusalem" (Zechariah 14:8). The psalmist: "There is a river, the streams whereof shall make glad the city of God" (Psalm 46:4). Christ said, "He that believeth on me, as the scripture hath said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water" (John 7:38).

Figures of speech. "Clear as crystal" is a *Simile*. "The water of life" is real in the vision, and it stands for the life God gives, as in 21:6.

> **Revelation 22:2** *In the midst of the street of it, and on either side of the river, was there the tree of life, which bare twelve manner of fruits, and yielded her fruit every month: and the leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations.*

"In the midst of the street of it, and on either side of the river, was there the tree of life." The tree of life stands in the middle of the city's street, and on both banks of the river. Ezekiel saw trees on both sides of his river:

> **Ezekiel 47:12** — *And by the river upon the bank thereof, on this side and on that side, shall grow all trees for meat, whose leaf shall not fade, neither shall the fruit thereof be consumed: it shall bring forth new fruit according to his months, because their waters they issued out of the sanctuary: and the fruit thereof shall be for meat, and the leaf thereof for medicine.*

The tree of life was last seen in Genesis 3, when man was driven out of the garden "lest he put forth his hand, and take also of the tree of life, and eat, and live for ever" (Genesis 3:22), and the cherubim and a flaming sword guarded "the way of the tree of life" (Genesis 3:24). Now it stands in the open, in the middle of the street, by the river, where everyone can reach it. The way is open again. The promise to Ephesus is kept: "To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the tree of life, which is in the midst of the

paradise of God" (2:7). This is the paradise of God: the garden restored, in the holy city, on the new earth (see 2:7).

"Which bare twelve manner of fruits, and yielded her fruit every month." Twelve kinds of fruit, a new crop every month. It never runs out, and it never fails.

"And the leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations." The leaves are for the "healing" (*therapeia*, from which we get "therapy") of the nations. The nations who walk in the city's light (21:24) are kept in health by the tree's leaves. Whatever the leaves do exactly, the text does not explain further; but the curse that brought sickness and death is gone (22:3), and the nations live by what God gives.

The numbers. *Twelve* manner of fruits, yielded every month: twelve fruits for the twelve months of the year. The tree of life never stops bearing. Twelve, God's ordered rule (see 4:4), here the ordered round of the year with no season of want.

Figures of speech. "Twelve manner of fruits ... every month" uses twelve twice: the number of God's ordered people, and the months of the year. The tree's fruitfulness is complete and unending.

> **Revelation 22:3** *And there shall be no more curse: but the throne of God and of the Lamb shall be in it; and his servants shall serve him:*

"And there shall be no more curse." "Curse" here is *katathema*, "anything accursed, any curse." When man sinned, God said, "cursed is the ground for thy sake; in sorrow shalt thou eat of it all the days of thy life; Thorns also and thistles shall it bring forth to thee" (Genesis 3:17-18). Ever since, the whole creation has lived under the curse: "For we know that the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now" (Romans 8:22). Here the curse is ended. Zechariah foretold, "And men shall dwell in it, and there shall be no more utter destruction; but Jerusalem shall be safely inhabited" (Zechariah 14:11), where "utter destruction" is the Hebrew word for a curse, a ban.

"But the throne of God and of the Lamb shall be in it." The throne of God and of the Lamb is in the city. The throne John saw in heaven in chapter 4, from which every judgment came, is now on the new earth, in the city, among men.

"And his servants shall serve him." Two are named, "God and ... the Lamb," but the pronouns are singular: "*his* servants shall serve *him*." They are God's servants, and they serve God, whose throne it is and who has set the Lamb with Him in it (3:21). "His servants" (*douloi*): the word of the book's first verse, "to shew unto his servants" (1:1). The servants to whom the book was given now serve Him. "Serve" is *latreuō*, the service of priests in worship (see 7:15). They serve Him as priests in His presence.

Figures of speech. "No more curse," set against "cursed is the ground" (Genesis 3:17), is an *Antithesis* across the whole Bible: the last word on the curse answers the first.

To whom. "His servants" here are those for whom the book was written from its first verse (1:1): God's people of the Day of the Lord, now serving Him in the holy city (Part One, Chapter 3 §C).

> **Revelation 22:4** *And they shall see his face; and his name shall be in their foreheads.*

"And they shall see his face." They will see God's face. Moses asked to see God's glory, and God answered, "Thou canst not see my face: for there shall no man see me, and live" (Exodus 33:20). No man has seen God at any time (John 1:18). Every man since Adam has hidden from His face (Genesis 3:8; Revelation 6:16). But Christ promised, "Blessed are the pure in heart: for they shall see God" (Matthew 5:8). The psalmist hoped, "As for me, I will behold thy face in righteousness: I shall be satisfied, when I awake, with thy likeness" (Psalm 17:15). Here the promise is kept. They see His face. There is nothing greater in all of Scripture.

"And his name shall be in their foreheads." His name on their foreheads marks them as His (see 7:3; 14:1). The promise to Philadelphia is kept: "I will write upon him the name of my God" (3:12). They bore His seal in the days of the beast; they bear His name for ever.

Figures of speech. "See his face" is *Anthropopatheia* in form (God spoken of as having a face), and it means full, direct fellowship with God, without anything between.

> **Revelation 22:5** *And there shall be no night there; and they need no candle, neither light of the sun; for the Lord God giveth them light: and they shall reign for ever and ever.*

"And there shall be no night there." No night, as in 21:25.

"And they need no candle, neither light of the sun." No lamp, no sun.

"For the Lord God giveth them light." God Himself is their light (21:23). The Aaronic blessing is fulfilled: "The LORD make his face shine upon thee, and be gracious unto thee" (Numbers 6:25).

"And they shall reign for ever and ever." They reign for ever. The reign of a thousand years (20:4-6) becomes a reign "for ever and ever." Daniel:

> **Daniel 7:18** — *But the saints of the most High shall take the kingdom, and possess the kingdom for ever, even for ever and ever.*

The promise to the overcomer at Laodicea is kept: "To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me in my throne" (3:21). The vision of the holy city ends with God's servants seeing His face, bearing His name, living in His light, and reigning for ever.

Figures of speech. "No night ... no candle, neither light of the sun" is *Paradiastole*: every lesser light is named and set aside. "For ever and ever" (unto the ages of the ages) is the strongest phrase Greek has for what has no end.

To whom. "The saints of the most High shall take the kingdom" (Daniel 7:18): the reign for ever is the fulfilment of God's promise to His people of the Day of the Lord (Part One, Chapter 3 §C).

In short. John sees a new heaven and a new earth, for the first have passed away, and there is no more sea; and the holy city, new Jerusalem, comes down from God out of heaven, adorned as a bride for her husband. A great voice proclaims that God's tabernacle is with men: He will dwell with them, they will be His people, and He will wipe away every tear; there will be no more death, sorrow, crying or pain. He who sits on the throne says, "Behold, I make all things new," and "It is done": He is Alpha and Omega,

and gives the water of life freely to the thirsty; the overcomer will inherit all things and be His son, while the fearful, the unbelieving, the murderers, sorcerers, idolaters and liars have their part in the lake of fire. Then one of the seven angels who showed John the harlot shows him the bride, the Lamb's wife: the holy Jerusalem, shining with the glory of God like clear jasper, with a great high wall, twelve gates of pearl bearing the names of Israel's twelve tribes, and twelve foundations of precious stones bearing the names of the Lamb's twelve apostles. The angel measures it with a golden reed: a perfect cube, like the most holy place of the tabernacle and the temple, about 1,380 miles each way, of pure gold clear as glass, a most holy place with no veil, where all God's people live in His presence. There is no temple, for the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are its temple, and no sun or moon, for God's glory is its light and the Lamb its lamp. The nations walk in its light and kings bring their glory into it; its gates are never shut, and nothing unclean enters, but only those written in the Lamb's book of life. From the throne of God and of the Lamb flows the river of the water of life, and by it grows the tree of life, with twelve fruits and leaves for the healing of the nations. There is no more curse; His servants serve Him, see His face, bear His name, live in His light, and reign for ever and ever.

Section Q — 22:6–22:21. The Conclusion: "Behold, I Come Quickly"

Where it stands

The last member of the book: the Conclusion (A). Its partner is the Introduction, Section A, and it is built on the same plan: four times someone testifies, and four times the Advent of the Lord is set before the reader, each time with a blessing or a promise (Part One, Chapter 8 §A). The visions are over. What remains are the last words: that the sayings are true, that the book must not be sealed, that the Lord is coming quickly, an invitation to all who thirst, a warning to all who would change the book, and grace.

Its structure

	Verses	Who testifies	The Advent, and the blessing
1	22:6-7	The angel: "These sayings are faithful and true"	"Behold, I come quickly": blessed is he that keepeth the sayings
2	22:8-13	John, and the angel: "Seal not the sayings"	"Behold, I come quickly; and my reward is with me"
3	22:14-17	Jesus: "I Jesus have sent mine angel"	Blessed are they that do His commandments; "the bright and morning star"; "Come"
4	22:18-21	Jesus: "I testify"	"Surely I come quickly"; the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ

The text

Revelation 22. 6 And he said unto me, These sayings are faithful and true: and the Lord God of the holy prophets sent his angel to shew unto his servants the things which must shortly be done. **7** Behold, I come quickly: blessed is he that keepeth the sayings of the prophecy of this book. **8** And I John saw these things, and heard them. And when I had heard and seen, I fell down to worship before the feet of the angel which shewed me these things. **9** Then saith he unto me, See thou do it not: for I am thy fellowservant, and of thy brethren the prophets, and of them which keep the sayings of this book: worship God. **10** And he saith unto me, Seal not the sayings of the prophecy of this book: for the time is at hand. **11** He that is unjust, let him be unjust still: and he which is filthy, let him be filthy still: and he that is righteous, let him be righteous still: and he that is holy, let him be holy still. **12** And, behold, I come quickly; and my reward is with me, to give every man according as his work shall be. **13** I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end, the first and the last. **14** Blessed are they that do his commandments, that they may have right to the tree of life, and may enter in through the gates into the city. **15** For without are dogs, and sorcerers, and whoremongers, and murderers, and idolaters, and whosoever loveth and maketh a lie. **16** I Jesus have sent mine angel to testify unto you these things in the churches. I am the root and the offspring of David, and the bright and morning star. **17** And the Spirit and the bride say, Come. And let him that heareth say, Come. And let him that is athirst come. And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely. **18** For I testify unto every man that heareth the words of the prophecy of this book, If any man shall add unto these things, God shall add unto him the plagues that are written in this book: **19** And if any man shall take away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part out of the book of life, and out of the holy city, and from the things which are written in this book. **20** He which testifieth these things saith, Surely I come quickly. Amen. Even so, come, Lord Jesus. **21** The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all. Amen.

Verse by verse

Where we are: back with John, on earth. Verses 22:6-21, the conclusion. The visions are over. The angel, Jesus Christ, and John speak in turn, and four times the coming of the Lord is set before the reader (22:7, 12, 17, 20), as in the Introduction (1:1-8).

> **Revelation 22:6** *And he said unto me, These sayings are faithful and true: and the Lord God of the holy prophets sent his angel to shew unto his servants the things which must shortly be done.*

"And he said unto me, These sayings are faithful and true." The angel speaks. "These sayings": everything John has heard and seen in the book. They are "faithful" (they can be relied on) and "true" (they are so). God said the same from the throne: "these words are true and faithful" (21:5). The reader who has followed the book through all its terrors and glories is assured at the end: every word of it will come to pass.

"And the Lord God of the holy prophets sent his angel." (The Majority Greek text and the critical texts read "the Lord God of the spirits of the prophets.") The God who spoke through the prophets of Israel, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Daniel, Zechariah and the rest, is the God who sent this prophecy. Revelation is the completion of what they began (Part One, Chapter 7). Peter wrote, "For the prophecy came not in

old time by the will of man: but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost" (2 Peter 1:21).

"To shew unto his servants the things which must shortly be done." These are almost the very words of the first verse of the book: "to shew unto his servants things which must shortly come to pass" (1:1). The book ends where it began. The purpose of the whole book, stated at the start, is stated again at the close: God sent it to show His servants what must soon take place.

Figures of speech. The repetition of the words of 1:1 is the figure *Epanadiplosis* ("encircling") on the scale of the whole book: it begins and ends with the same words, closing like a ring.

> **Revelation 22:7** *Behold, I come quickly: blessed is he that keepeth the sayings of the prophecy of this book.*

"Behold, I come quickly." "Behold": mark this (*Asterismos*). Now Christ Himself speaks. "I come quickly": He is coming soon, and when He comes, it will be swift (see 1:1, "shortly"). This is the first of three times in this chapter that He says it (22:7, 12, 20).

"Blessed is he that keepeth the sayings of the prophecy of this book." This is the sixth of the book's seven blessings, and it is nearly the same as the first: "Blessed is he that readeth, and they that hear the words of this prophecy, and keep those things which are written therein" (1:3). "Keepeth": holds fast, guards, obeys (see 1:3). The book was not given to satisfy curiosity, but to be kept. The first blessing and the sixth stand at the two ends of the book like bookends.

Figures of speech. "Behold" is *Asterismos*. The blessing of 1:3 returning here is again the figure *Epanadiplosis* across the book.

> **Revelation 22:8** *And I John saw these things, and heard them. And when I had heard and seen, I fell down to worship before the feet of the angel which shewed me these things.*

"And I John saw these things, and heard them." John signs his testimony. "I John": the same words he used at the start, "I John, who also am your brother" (1:9). Like a witness at the end of a trial, he declares: I saw these things, and I heard them. He is not passing on rumours or his own ideas; he is a witness (see 1:2). (The Majority Greek text reads "And I John am he who heard and saw these things.")

"And when I had heard and seen, I fell down to worship before the feet of the angel which shewed me these things." Overwhelmed again, as in 19:10, John falls at the angel's feet to worship him. Even an apostle, even after being told once, can be carried away by the glory of what he has seen and the messenger who showed it.

Figures of speech. "Saw ... and heard," then "heard and seen": the two senses named twice, in reverse order, the figure Bullinger calls *Epanodos* (a return in reverse), which fixes John's testimony as complete.

> **Revelation 22:9** *Then saith he unto me, See thou do it not: for I am thy fellowservant, and of thy brethren the prophets, and of them which keep the sayings of this book: worship God.*

"Then saith he unto me, See thou do it not." The angel stops him, as before (19:10): Don't!

"For I am thy fellowservant, and of thy brethren the prophets, and of them which keep the sayings of this book." The angel is a fellow servant: of John, of the prophets, and of everyone who keeps the words of this book. Angels and men serve the same God. Every reader who keeps the sayings of this book stands, in this, beside the angels and the prophets as a servant of God.

"Worship God." The angel's last word to John is "worship God." Only God is to be worshipped (Matthew 4:10). It is the right last word for any messenger of God.

Figures of speech. "Worship God," two words in Greek (*tō theō proskunēson*), is the shortest and plainest command, set against John's mistaken act.

> **Revelation 22:10** *And he saith unto me, Seal not the sayings of the prophecy of this book: for the time is at hand.*

"And he saith unto me, Seal not the sayings of the prophecy of this book." "Seal not": do not close it up, do not hide it. Daniel was told the opposite at the end of his book:

> **Daniel 12:4** — *But thou, O Daniel, shut up the words, and seal the book, even to the time of the end: many shall run to and fro, and knowledge shall be increased.*

And again: "Go thy way, Daniel: for the words are closed up and sealed till the time of the end" (Daniel 12:9). What was sealed in Daniel's day is opened in John's. The book in God's right hand was sealed with seven seals until the Lamb opened it (5:1-7). The book John writes is to be left open, for anyone to read (Part One, Chapter 9 §B).

"For the time is at hand." The same words as 1:3: "the time is at hand." "Time" is *kairos*, the appointed season. Daniel's time was far off; John's is near.

Figures of speech. "Seal not," set against Daniel's "seal the book," is an *Antithesis* across the Scriptures: the end of the Old Testament prophecy and the end of the New.

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

"He that is unjust, let him be unjust still." These words sound strange, but they are a solemn warning. When the end comes, each person will be found as he is, and will stay as he is. "Unjust" (*adikōn*) means doing wrong. Let him go on doing wrong: the time to change is running out.

"And he which is filthy, let him be filthy still." "Filthy" (*rhuparos*) means morally dirty, defiled. Let him stay defiled.

"And he that is righteous, let him be righteous still." The righteous will go on being righteous.

"And he that is holy, let him be holy still." The holy will go on being holy.

Daniel was told the same about the end:

> **Daniel 12:10** — *Many shall be purified, and made white, and tried; but the wicked shall do wickedly: and none of the wicked shall understand; but the wise shall understand.*

There comes a point when the door is shut, as in the parable of the ten virgins: "and they that were ready went in with him to the marriage: and the door was shut" (Matthew 25:10). When the Lord comes, there is no more time to change. Each will be found as he is. The verse is a call to the reader: be found righteous and holy when He comes.

Figures of speech. The four clauses, each ending in "still," are the figure *Epistrophe*: the same word at the end of each, tolling the finality. Two evil and two good are set against each other, *Antithesis*. The commands are not commands to sin; they are a solemn declaration, put in the form of a command, that the time to change has passed.

> **Revelation 22:12** *And, behold, I come quickly; and my reward is with me, to give every man according as his work shall be.*

"And, behold, I come quickly." The second time (22:7). "Behold" (*Asterismos*).

"And my reward is with me." He brings His reward with Him. Isaiah foretold it:

> **Isaiah 40:10** — *Behold, the Lord GOD will come with strong hand, and his arm shall rule for him: behold, his reward is with him, and his work before him.*

And again: "Behold, thy salvation cometh; behold, his reward is with him, and his work before him" (Isaiah 62:11). At the seventh trumpet the elders spoke of "the time of the dead, that they should be judged, and that thou shouldest give reward unto thy servants the prophets, and to the saints" (11:18).

"To give every man according as his work shall be." Each will be rewarded according to his work. This is the rule of judgment throughout Scripture (see 2:23; 20:12). Christ said, "For the Son of man shall come in the glory of his Father with his angels; and then he shall reward every man according to his works" (Matthew 16:27).

Figures of speech. "Behold" is *Asterismos*.

To whom. "To give every man according as his work shall be" is the rule of reward in the Day of the Lord and at the judgment (11:18; 20:12). The believer under grace is saved "not of works" (Ephesians 2:9), though Paul too speaks of rewards for service (1 Corinthians 3:14). The setting here is the coming of Christ to the earth with His reward, as Isaiah foretold (Part One, Chapter 3 §C).

> **Revelation 22:13** *I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end, the first and the last.*

"I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end, the first and the last." Christ speaks, and He joins titles from the beginning of the book. "Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end" was said by "the Lord … the Almighty" in 1:8 and from the throne in 21:6. "The first and the last" was Christ's own title in 1:17 and 2:8. Here He says all three together. God has given His Son to be the beginning and the end of His purpose: the one for whom all things were planned before the foundation of the world (1 Peter 1:20), and the one in whom all things are brought to their end. He sits with His Father in His Father's throne (3:21), and bears the titles His Father has given Him (see 1:8, 17).

The number. *The first and the last* (see 1:17), joined here with "Alpha and Omega" and "the beginning and the end": three titles, all counting words.

Figures of speech. "Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end, the first and the last" says the same thing three ways, the figure *Synonymia*, so that the reader cannot miss it: He is the whole of God's purpose, from first to last.

> **Revelation 22:14** *Blessed are they that do his commandments, that they may have right to the tree of life, and may enter in through the gates into the city.*

"Blessed are they that do his commandments." This is the seventh and last of the book's seven blessings (Part One, Chapter 1 §D). (The Majority Greek text reads, with the King James Version, "that do his commandments"; the critical texts read "that wash their robes," as in 7:14.) Those who do God's commandments are blessed. The remnant of the woman's seed "keep the commandments of God" (12:17); the saints "keep the commandments of God, and the faith of Jesus" (14:12).

"That they may have right to the tree of life." "Right" is *exousia*, "authority, the right to." They have the right to the tree of life. Since Eden the way to it was guarded by the cherubim and the flaming sword (Genesis 3:24). Now the way is open (22:2), and those who do His commandments have the right to it. The promise to Ephesus is kept (2:7).

"And may enter in through the gates into the city." They may go in through the gates of pearl (21:21), which bear the names of Israel's tribes (21:12), into the holy city.

Figures of speech. "Right to the tree of life" and "enter in through the gates" name two privileges of the city, joined by "and."

To whom. "Blessed are they that do his commandments" belongs to the people of the Day of the Lord, who "keep the commandments of God" (12:17; 14:12). Under grace "a man is not justified by the works of the law, but by the faith of Jesus Christ" (Galatians 2:16). The blessing of this verse is given in the terms of the Day of the Lord (Part One, Chapter 3 §C).

> **Revelation 22:15** *For without are dogs, and sorcerers, and whoremongers, and murderers, and idolaters, and whosoever loveth and maketh a lie.*

"For without are dogs." "Without": outside the city. "Dogs" in the East were not household pets but wild scavengers, unclean animals. In Scripture the word is used of the impure and the shameless. The law forbade bringing "the price of a dog" into the house of the LORD (Deuteronomy 23:18), where "dog" means a male temple prostitute. Paul warned, "Beware of dogs, beware of evil workers" (Philippians 3:2).

"And sorcerers, and whoremongers, and murderers, and idolaters." The sins of the beast's world (9:21; 21:8): sorcery, fornication, murder, idolatry.

"And whosoever loveth and maketh a lie." Everyone who loves a lie and lives it. The beast's kingdom was built on a lie (2 Thessalonians 2:11).

All these are outside the city. The list is the list of 21:8 again. Those who refused God are shut out of His city for ever.

Figures of speech. "Dogs" is a *Metaphor* for the shameless and impure. The list joined by "and" is *Polysyndeton*: each is named, each is outside.

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

"I Jesus have sent mine angel to testify unto you these things in the churches." Here Jesus names Himself: "I Jesus." The chain of the first verse of the book is closed. "The Revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave unto him ... and he sent and signified it by his angel unto his servant John" (1:1). Here Jesus Himself signs the book: I sent my angel to testify these things to you, for the assemblies (Part One, Chapter 3 §A). "In the churches": for the assemblies, the seven assemblies to which the book was first sent (1:4, 11).

"I am the root and the offspring of David." Jesus is both "the root" of David and "the offspring" of David. "Root" here, as at 5:5, is the shoot that springs up from the root when the tree has been cut down: "there shall come forth a rod out of the stem of Jesse, and a Branch shall grow out of his roots" (Isaiah 11:1). When David's royal line seemed dead, Christ sprang from its root. "Offspring" says the same plainly: He was born of David's line. He is David's Son by birth and David's Lord because God made Him so: "God hath made that same Jesus, whom ye have crucified, both Lord and Christ" (Acts 2:36). Christ once asked the Pharisees, "What think ye of Christ? whose son is he? They say unto him, The Son of David. He saith unto them, How then doth David in spirit call him Lord, saying, The LORD said unto my Lord, Sit thou on my right hand ... If David then call him Lord, how is he his son?" (Matthew 22:42-45). Here is the answer: He is both. He is "the Root of David" (5:5), "a rod out of the stem of Jesse" (Isaiah 11:1), and "a root of Jesse, which shall stand for an ensign of the people" (Isaiah 11:10).

"And the bright and morning star." He is the morning star, the star that shines just before dawn and announces that the night is over (see 2:28). Balaam foretold Him: "there shall come a Star out of Jacob, and a Sceptre shall rise out of Israel" (Numbers 24:17). The overcomer at Thyatira was promised, "I will give him the morning star" (2:28); here Jesus says who that star is: Himself. The night of the Day of the Lord is ending; the morning star has risen; the day of His kingdom is about to dawn.

Figures of speech. "The root and the offspring" joins two pictures of one truth, the figure *Synonymia*: He is the new shoot of David's root and the true descendant of David's line. "The bright and morning star" is a *Metaphor* for Christ Himself, as 2:28 promised.

To whom. "The root and the offspring of David" and "a Star out of Jacob" are the titles of Israel's King. The book was sent "in the churches," to the seven assemblies of John's day (1:4, 11), in the terms of the Day of the Lord (Part One, Chapter 3 §C).

> **Revelation 22:17** *And the Spirit and the bride say, Come. And let him that heareth say, Come. And let him that is athirst come. And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely.*

"And the Spirit and the bride say, Come." "The Spirit" is God, who is Spirit, speaking by revelation through His Son (see 2:7). "The bride" is the Lamb's wife, shown as the holy city and its people (19:7; 21:9-10). Together they say, "Come." To whom? The next words show that the first "Come" is said to the Lord: they long for His coming, as John prays in 22:20, "Even so, come, Lord Jesus."

"And let him that heareth say, Come." Everyone who hears this book is invited to join in the cry: "Come!" The reader who has heard the whole prophecy is to add his voice to the Spirit and the bride, longing for the Lord's return.

"And let him that is athirst come." Now the invitation turns outward. "Let him that is athirst come": whoever is thirsty, let him come. Thirst is the picture of the soul's need for God. "As the hart panteth after the water brooks, so panteth my soul after thee, O God. My soul thirsteth for God, for the living God" (Psalm 42:1-2).

"And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely." "Whosoever will": anyone who wants it. "Freely" (*dōrean*): as a gift, without price (see 21:6). This is the last invitation of the Bible. Isaiah gave it long before:

> **Isaiah 55:1** — *Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters, and he that hath no money; come ye, buy, and eat; yea, come, buy wine and milk without money and without price.*

Christ gave it in the temple: "If any man thirst, let him come unto me, and drink" (John 7:37). Even here, at the very end of a book of judgment, the door is open. The water of life (21:6; 22:1) is offered to whoever will take it.

Figures of speech. "Come ... Come ... come": the word repeated three times, the figure *Epizeuxis* and *Polyptoton* together (in Greek, "Come" twice as a command, then "let him come"): the longing for Christ's coming and the invitation to the thirsty are joined in one word. "Athirst" and "water of life" are *Metaphors*: the soul's need, and the life God gives.

> **Revelation 22:18** *For I testify unto every man that heareth the words of the prophecy of this book, If any man shall add unto these things, God shall add unto him the plagues that are written in this book:*

"For I testify unto every man that heareth the words of the prophecy of this book." "I testify": Jesus speaks (22:16, 20). He gives a solemn warning to everyone who hears the book.

"If any man shall add unto these things, God shall add unto him the plagues that are written in this book." Whoever adds to the words of this prophecy, God will add to him the plagues written in it: the seals, the trumpets, the vials. The warning echoes Moses at the giving of the law:

> **Deuteronomy 4:2** — *Ye shall not add unto the word which I command you, neither shall ye diminish ought from it, that ye may keep the commandments of the LORD your God which I command you.*

And again: "What thing soever I command you, observe to do it: thou shalt not add thereto, nor diminish from it" (Deuteronomy 12:32). Solomon: "Add thou not unto his words, lest he reprove thee,

and thou be found a liar" (Proverbs 30:6). The warning that stood at the giving of the law stands at the close of the written Word (Part One, Chapter 4 §C).

Figures of speech. "Add unto these things … add unto him the plagues" uses "add" twice, the figure *Polyptoton*: the punishment matches the sin word for word.

> **Revelation 22:19** *And if any man shall take away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part out of the book of life, and out of the holy city, and from the things which are written in this book.*

"And if any man shall take away from the words of the book of this prophecy." Whoever takes away from the words of this book.

"God shall take away his part out of the book of life." God will take away his part. (The King James Version reads "the book of life." The Greek manuscripts read "the tree of life." The King James reading comes from Erasmus, who had no Greek manuscript of these last verses and translated them back into Greek from the Latin; Part One, Chapter 10 §B; Appendix E.) The tree of life (22:2, 14) and the book of life (20:12, 15; 21:27) are both promised in this book, and both are lost to the one who takes away from its words.

"And out of the holy city, and from the things which are written in this book." He loses his part in the holy city, and in all the promises written in the book.

Why such a strong warning? Because this book is God's word, "the Revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave unto him" (1:1). To add to it is to put words in God's mouth; to take from it is to silence Him. The prophecy is complete. Nothing is to be added, and nothing is to be taken away.

Figures of speech. "Take away from the words … take away his part" uses "take away" twice, *Polyptoton*, matching verse 18: the punishment fits the sin.

> **Revelation 22:20** *He which testifieth these things saith, Surely I come quickly. Amen. Even so, come, Lord Jesus.*

"He which testifieth these things saith, Surely I come quickly." "He which testifieth these things" is Jesus (22:16, 18). His last words in the Bible are a promise: "Surely I come quickly." "Surely" is *nai*, "Yes!" (see 1:7). It is the third time in this chapter (22:7, 12, 20).

"Amen." "So it is" (see 1:6).

"Even so, come, Lord Jesus." And John answers. "Even so" is *nai*, "Yes!" again. "Come, Lord Jesus." The Lord says, "Yes, I come"; His servant says, "Yes, come!" The last words of the Lord in the Bible are a promise; the last words of His servant are the answer to it. The book that began, "Behold, he cometh with clouds" (1:7), ends with the prayer that He will. In the earliest assemblies believers prayed in Aramaic, *Maranatha*, "O Lord, come" or "the Lord cometh" (1 Corinthians 16:22).

Figures of speech. The promise "Surely I come" and the prayer "Even so, come" answer each other with the same words, "Yes … come," the figure Bullinger calls *Amoebaeon* in its simplest form (an answering refrain).

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

"The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all. Amen." The book ends as it began, like a letter. It opened, "Grace be unto you, and peace" (1:4), and it closes with grace. (The Majority Greek text reads "be with all the saints. Amen.") "Grace" (*charis*) is God's favour freely given. After all the judgments, the wrath, the plagues, the fall of Babylon, the lake of fire, the last word of the book, and of the whole Bible, is grace.

Figures of speech. The book closes with the greeting of a letter, framing the whole prophecy between "Grace be unto you" (1:4) and "The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all" (22:21): *Epanadiplosis* on the scale of the book.

To whom. The closing grace is the usual close of a letter among God's people, as the opening greeting was (1:4). It does not place the book under the administration of grace; the book was sent to real assemblies of John's day, in the terms of the Day of the Lord (Part One, Chapter 3 §C). But it is fitting that the last word of God's written revelation should be His grace, the grace that every reader, in every administration, depends on.

In short. The Conclusion answers the Introduction. The angel declares that the sayings are faithful and true, sent by the God of the prophets to show His servants what must shortly be done, and Christ says, "Behold, I come quickly: blessed is he that keepeth the sayings of the prophecy of this book." John testifies that he saw and heard these things, falls before the angel, and is told once more, "Worship God." He is told not to seal the book, for the time is at hand; each will be found as he is, unjust or righteous, filthy or holy. Christ comes quickly with His reward for every man according to his work: He is Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end, the first and the last. Blessed are those who do His commandments, with right to the tree of life and the gates of the city; outside are the dogs, sorcerers, fornicators, murderers, idolaters and liars. Jesus signs the book: He sent His angel to testify these things for the assemblies; He is the root and the offspring of David, the bright and morning star. The Spirit and the bride say "Come," every hearer is to say "Come," and whoever is thirsty may take the water of life freely. A solemn warning guards the book against any addition or loss. The Lord's last words are a promise, "Surely I come quickly"; His servant's answer is a prayer, "Amen. Even so, come, Lord Jesus"; and the last word of the Bible is grace.

Part Three — Closing

Part One opened the book and Part Two read it, verse by verse. Part Three draws it together: first a conclusion that answers the book's own title, then a reference guide to everything learned, each point tied to the section and page where it is found.

Chapter 11 — Conclusion: The Revelation of Jesus Christ

A. What the book has revealed of Him

The book began by naming itself "The Revelation of Jesus Christ" (1:1), and it has kept its word. From first page to last it shows Him.

- **As the risen Son of man**, standing among the lampstands, with eyes of fire and a voice like many waters, who was dead and is alive for evermore and holds the keys of death and the grave (1:12-18).
- **As the Lord of the assemblies**, who knows their works, rebukes and counsels them, knocks at the door, and promises the overcomer a share in His throne (2–3).
- **As the Lamb**, slain and standing in the midst of the throne, the only one worthy to take the book from the hand of God and open its seals (5).
- **As the child** born of Israel and caught up to God and to His throne, whom the dragon could not devour (12:5).
- **As the Son of man on the cloud**, reaping the harvest of the earth (14:14).
- **As the Rider on the white horse**, Faithful and True, the Word of God, KING OF KINGS, AND LORD OF LORDS, who takes the beast and binds the dragon (19:11-16).
- **As the Bridegroom** of the holy city, and the light of it (21:9, 23).
- **As the root and the offspring of David, the bright and morning star**, who says at the last, "Surely I come quickly" (22:16, 20).

And through all of it He is the one to whom God gave the revelation (1:1), who sits with His Father in His Father's throne (3:21), and through whom God is glorified: "unto him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb" (5:13).

B. What the book has revealed of God's purpose

The book is the last chapter of the Bible's one story.

1. **The throne rules.** Before any judgment falls on earth, John is shown the throne in heaven (4). Nothing in the book happens apart from it.
2. **Evil is judged.** The seals, trumpets and vials fall in order, each seventh opening into the next, until "It is done" (16:17). Babylon falls, the beast and false prophet are taken, Satan is bound and at last cast into the lake of fire, and the dead are judged before the great white throne (17–20).
3. **God's people are kept.** The 144,000 are sealed before the winds are released (7:3). The great multitude comes out of the great tribulation into the presence of God (7:14-17). The overcomers live and reign with Christ (20:4-6).

4. **All things are made new.** What was lost in Genesis is restored: the tree of life, the river, the presence of God with men. There is no more curse, no more death, no more tears (21–22).

C. What the book asks of the reader

Revelation was given "to shew unto his servants" (1:1), and it blesses those who read, hear and keep it (1:3; 22:7). Its instructions to "overcome" and to "keep" are fitted to those who will live in the Day of the Lord (Part One, Chapter 3). But it is written for every reader, and it asks of every reader at least these three things:

- **To know who is coming.** "Behold, he cometh with clouds; and every eye shall see him" (1:7).
- **To worship God.** Twice John fell before an angel, and twice he was told, "worship God" (19:10; 22:9).
- **To come.** "Let him that is athirst come. And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely" (22:17).

D. The last word

The book ends with a promise, an answer, and grace.

> **Revelation 22:20** *He which testifieth these things saith, Surely I come quickly. Amen. Even so, come, Lord Jesus.*
>
> **Revelation 22:21** *The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all. Amen.*

In short. The Revelation of Jesus Christ shows Him as the risen Son of man, the Lord of the assemblies, the Lamb on the throne, the conquering King, and the Bridegroom of the holy city. It shows God's throne ruling over all, evil judged, His people kept, and all things made new. And it ends where the reader must begin: "Surely I come quickly. Amen. Even so, come, Lord Jesus."

Chapter 12 — What We Learned: A Reference Guide

Each point gives the section of Part Two where it is treated, and the page on which that section begins.

A. Who Jesus Christ is in Revelation

- The Revelation is His, given Him by God (§A, p. 35).
- "The faithful witness, and the first begotten of the dead, and the prince of the kings of the earth" (1:5; §A, p. 35).
- "One like unto the Son of man" among the lampstands (1:13; §A, p. 35).
- "The first and the last," who was dead and is alive for evermore, and has the keys of hell and of death (1:17-18; §A, p. 35).
- Each of the seven messages opens with one of His titles from chapter 1 (§B, p. 61).

- "The Son of God" (2:18) and "the Amen, the faithful and true witness, the beginning of the creation of God" (3:14; §B, p. 61).
- The Lion of the tribe of Juda, the Root of David, seen as a Lamb as it had been slain (5:5-6; §C, p. 111).
- The man child, caught up unto God and to His throne (12:5; §H, p. 215).
- The Son of man on the white cloud (14:14; §K, p. 249).
- Faithful and True; The Word of God; KING OF KINGS, AND LORD OF LORDS (19:11-16; §N, p. 302).
- The root and the offspring of David, and the bright and morning star (22:16; §Q, p. 345).

B. God and His throne

- "Him which is, and which was, and which is to come"; "the Almighty" (1:4, 8; §A, p. 35).
- The throne set in heaven, the rainbow, the sea of glass, the four living creatures and the twenty-four elders (4; §C, p. 111).
- Worship for creation (4:11) and for redemption (5:9-14; §C, p. 111).
- "It is done" at the seventh vial (16:17; §M, p. 266) and again when all things are made new (21:6; §P, p. 325).
- The great white throne (20:11; §O, p. 312).
- "The throne of God and of the Lamb" in the holy city (22:1, 3; §P, p. 325).

C. The seven messages

- Ephesus: works and patience, but "thou hast left thy first love" (2:1-7; §B, p. 61).
- Smyrna: tribulation and poverty, "but thou art rich"; no fault found (2:8-11; §B, p. 61).
- Pergamos: held fast where Satan's seat is, but tolerated Balaam's teaching (2:12-17; §B, p. 61).
- Thyatira: last works more than the first, but suffered Jezebel (2:18-29; §B, p. 61).
- Sardis: a name to live, but dead; a few undefiled (3:1-6; §B, p. 61).
- Philadelphia: a little strength, an open door; no fault found (3:7-13; §B, p. 61).
- Laodicea: lukewarm; "I stand at the door, and knock" (3:14-22; §B, p. 61).
- Three and four: the call to hear before the promise in the first three, after it in the last four (§B, p. 61).

D. The judgments

- The seals: a false conqueror, war, famine, death, the martyrs, the great earthquake; following the Olivet discourse in order (6; §D, p. 138).
- The seventh seal opens into the seven trumpets (8:1-2; §E, p. 161).

- The trumpets: earth, sea, rivers, heavens; the locusts from the abyss; the army from the Euphrates (8:7–9:21; §F, p. 175).
- The seventh trumpet: "The kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of our Lord, and of his Christ" (11:15; §G, p. 209).
- The harvest and the vintage (14:14-20; §K, p. 249).
- The vials: sores, the sea and rivers turned to blood, scorching, darkness, the Euphrates dried, "It is done" (16; §M, p. 266).
- Side by side, with the plagues of Egypt: Appendix G.

E. The persons and powers

- The twenty-four elders and the four living creatures (4:4-8; §C, p. 111).
- The 144,000, sealed from the twelve tribes (7:4-8; §D, p. 138; 14:1-5; §J, p. 244).
- The great multitude from all nations (7:9-17; §E, p. 161).
- The two witnesses in Jerusalem (11:3-13; §F, p. 175).
- The woman (Israel), the man child (Christ), and the dragon (12; §H, p. 215).
- Michael and his angels (12:7; §H, p. 215).
- The beast from the sea and the beast from the earth, the false prophet (13; §I, p. 228).
- Babylon the great, the woman on the scarlet beast, "that great city" (17–18; §M, p. 266).
- The bride, the Lamb's wife, shown as the holy city (19:7-8; §N, p. 302; 21:9-10; §P, p. 325).

F. Numbers and times

- Seven: assemblies, Spirits, seals, trumpets, vials, thunders, blessings (Part One, Chapter 5).
- Forty-two months, 1,260 days, and "a time, and times, and half a time": the same three and a half years (11:2-3; 12:6, 14; 13:5; §F, p. 175; §H, p. 215; §I, p. 228).
- 144,000: twelve thousand from each of twelve tribes (7:4-8; §D, p. 138).
- 666, "the number of a man," not solved (13:18; §I, p. 228).
- The thousand years, after the coming of the King (20:1-7; §O, p. 312).
- The holy city, twelve thousand furlongs each way, a cube (21:16; §P, p. 325).

G. Symbols the book explains itself

- Stars = angels of the assemblies; candlesticks = the assemblies (1:20; §A, p. 35).
- Seven lamps, seven eyes = the seven Spirits of God (4:5; 5:6; §C, p. 111).
- Odours = the prayers of saints (5:8; §C, p. 111).
- The dragon = that old serpent, the Devil, and Satan (12:9; §H, p. 215).

- Heads = mountains and kings; horns = ten kings; waters = peoples; the woman = that great city (17:9-18; §M, p. 266).
- Fine linen = the righteousness of saints (19:8; §N, p. 302).
- Full table: Appendix I.

H. The Old Testament in Revelation

- Revelation never quotes with "as it is written," but is woven from the Old Testament: 362 allusions on 244 verses (Appendix F).
- The throne: Isaiah 6 and Ezekiel 1 (§C, p. 111). The seals: Zechariah's horses and Matthew 24 (§D, p. 138). The trumpets and vials: the plagues of Egypt (§F, p. 175; §M, p. 266). The beast: Daniel 7 (§I, p. 228). Babylon's fall: Isaiah 13, 21, 47, Jeremiah 50–51, Ezekiel 26–27 (§M, p. 266). Gog and Magog: Ezekiel 38–39 (§O, p. 312). The holy city: Isaiah 60 and 65, Ezekiel 40–48 (§P, p. 325).

I. The promises kept

Promised to the overcomer	Kept
The tree of life (2:7; §B, p. 61)	22:2, 14 (§P, p. 325; §Q, p. 345)
Not hurt of the second death (2:11)	20:6 (§O, p. 312)
A new name (2:17)	19:12; 22:4 (§N, p. 302; §P, p. 325)
Power over the nations; the rod of iron (2:26-27)	19:15; 20:4 (§N, p. 302; §O, p. 312)
The morning star (2:28)	22:16 (§Q, p. 345)
White raiment; the book of life (3:5)	19:8; 20:12, 15 (§N, p. 302; §O, p. 312)
The new Jerusalem; God's name (3:12)	21:2, 10; 22:4 (§P, p. 325)
To sit with Him in His throne (3:21)	20:4 (§O, p. 312)
All things (21:7)	21–22 (§P, p. 325)

J. What Revelation means for the believer now

- It is written for us, though its instructions belong to the Day of the Lord (Part One, Chapter 3).
- It shows who is coming, and how the story ends (§N, p. 302; §P, p. 325).
- It shows that God's throne rules over all that happens on earth (§C, p. 111).
- It calls every reader to worship God alone (19:10; 22:9; §N, p. 302; §Q, p. 345).
- It ends with an invitation, a promise, and grace (22:17, 20-21; §Q, p. 345).

In short. This guide gathers the study under ten headings, each point tied to the section and page where it is treated.

Appendices

The appendices carry the evidence behind the plain answers of the narrative. They are arranged as the narrative points to them.

Appendix	Title
A	The Structure Tested
B	To Whom It Was Written: The Seven Assemblies
C	The Contested Questions
D	How Others Have Read Revelation
E	The Text of Revelation
F	The Old Testament in Revelation, Verse by Verse
G	Seals, Trumpets and Vials Side by Side, with the Plagues of Egypt
H	The Order of the Book and the Order of Events
I	Symbols, Numbers, Heavenly Voices, and the Titles of Christ
J	The Claims of This Study, Their Weight, and What Would Change Its Mind
K	Glossary of Greek and Hebrew Words

Appendix A — The Structure Tested

A. The question

This study follows the structure E. W. Bullinger set out in *The Apocalypse* (1909) and in the Companion Bible: an introduction and a conclusion that match; the people on the earth and the people of the new earth; and between them seven scenes in heaven, each followed by a scene on earth. A structure is a claim about the text, and it was tested against the text before it was adopted.

B. The whole book

Member	Verses	Where	Content
A	1:1-20	—	Introduction
B	2:1–3:22	—	The people on the earth: the seven messages
1	4:1–5:14	Heaven	The throne, the book, and the Lamb
1	6:1–7:8	Earth	The six seals; the 144,000 sealed
2	7:9–8:6	Heaven	The great multitude; the seventh seal
2	8:7–11:14	Earth	The six trumpets (the sixth = the second woe, 9:13–11:14)
3	11:15-19a	Heaven	The seventh trumpet; the temple opened
3	11:19b	Earth	Lightnings, voices, thunderings, earthquake, hail

Member	Verses	Where	Content
4	12:1-12	Heaven	The woman, the child, and the dragon
4	12:13–13:18	Earth	The dragon and the two beasts
5	14:1-5	Heaven	The Lamb and the 144,000 on mount Sion
5	14:6-20	Earth	The six angels; the harvest and the vintage
6	15:1-8	Heaven	The seven angels with the seven last plagues
6	16:1–18:24	Earth	The seven vials; Babylon judged (17–18 the seventh vial expanded)
7	19:1-16	Heaven	The marriage of the Lamb; the Rider on the white horse
7	19:17–20:15	Earth	The final judgments; the thousand years; the great white throne
B	21:1–22:5	—	The people of the new earth
A	22:6-21	—	Conclusion

The seven pairs balance around the centre. Pairs 2 and 6, the trumpets and the vials, are the longest (68 and 71 verses). Pairs 3 and 5 are the shortest (5 and 20 verses). Pair 4, the woman and the dragon, stands at the centre.

C. What supports it

1. **The introduction answers the conclusion** in at least seven features: "things which must shortly come to pass" (1:1) and "be done" (22:6); "his angel" (1:1; 22:6, 16); the blessing on those who keep (1:3; 22:7); "the time is at hand" (1:3; 22:10); "I John" (1:9; 22:8); "Alpha and Omega" (1:8; 22:13); and His coming (1:7; 22:7, 12, 20). Both are built on the same plan of four testimonies and four statements of the Advent (Sections A and Q).
2. **The people on the earth answer the people of the new earth.** Every promise to the overcomer in chapters 2–3 is kept in 20:4–22:5 (Chapter 12 §I).
3. **"After this" markers.** The phrase opens a new sight six times: 4:1; 7:1; 7:9; 15:5; 18:1; 19:1. Three open heavenly members exactly (4:1; 7:9; 19:1). Three mark new scenes within members (7:1, the sealing; 15:5, the temple opened; 18:1, the angel announcing Babylon's fall).
4. **The woes.** Announced at 8:13, closed at 9:12 and 11:14. They frame the fifth and sixth trumpets exactly.
5. **The seven messages divide three and four** by their own wording, as the structure groups them (Section B).

D. Five questions, and how the text answers them

1. **Is 11:19 really divided between heaven and earth?** Yes, by its own contents. It begins in heaven, "the temple of God was opened in heaven," and ends with "lightnings, and voices, and thunderings,

and an earthquake, and great hail": the same signs that fall on the earth at 8:5 and 16:18-21. Section G keeps the verse whole and shows the division in its structure.

2. **Is mount Sion in 14:1 in heaven or on earth?** In heaven. The voice is "from heaven" (14:2), the song is sung "before the throne, and before the four beasts, and the elders" (14:3), and Hebrews 12:22 names "mount Sion ... the heavenly Jerusalem." The other reading, the earthly Zion of Psalm 2:6, is fairly stated in Section J.
3. **Voices from heaven inside the earthly members?** They are there (9:13; 10:4, 8; 11:12; 14:13; 16:17; 18:4), but they do not break the pattern. "On earth" names where the action falls, not the source of every sound.
4. **"In the spirit" at 17:3 and 21:10, and "Come hither" at 17:1 and 21:9.** These open close-ups within members, not new members. Both are given by "one of the seven angels which had the seven vials," and they set the harlot city against the bride city as a matched pair (Sections M and P).
5. **Do chapters 10–11 and 17–18 belong where the structure puts them?** Yes, by the book's own markers. The sixth trumpet sounds at 9:13 and is not closed until "The second woe is past" (11:14), so 10:1–11:13 lies inside it. Under the seventh vial "great Babylon came in remembrance before God" (16:19), and chapters 17–18 give that judgment in full.

E. Verdict

The frame is strongly supported by the text, the seven pairs hold at their seams and in their proportions, and each of the five questions is answered from the text itself. The structure is adopted for the book as a whole and for its seventeen sections. Alternative structures are set out in Appendix D.

Appendix B — To Whom It Was Written: The Seven Assemblies

The narrative's answer (Part One, Chapter 3): **Revelation was sent to real assemblies of John's day, but Christ spoke to them in the terms of the Day of the Lord, not of grace.** This appendix sets out the four readings held, the evidence from the text, and how each point weighs.

The four readings, stated at full strength

Reading 1 — Seven real assemblies of John's day. The seven are named cities on one road in one province (1:11). The book was sent to them. The messages are full of things that fit each city: Antipas, a martyr known to Pergamos (2:13); the Nicolaitans at Ephesus and Pergamos (2:6, 15); a false prophetess at Thyatira (2:20); Laodicea's boast of wealth (3:17). Classic works: Ramsay, *The Letters to the Seven Churches of Asia* (1904); Trench, *Commentary on the Epistles to the Seven Churches* (1886).

Reading 2 — Seven periods of church history. Ephesus stands for the apostolic church, and so on to Laodicea, the church of the last days. Larkin (1919): chapters 2–3 "must be a description or prophetic outline of the 'Spiritual History' of the Church from the time when John wrote the Book in A.D. 96, down

to the taking out of the Church". His periods: Ephesus 70–170; Smyrna 170–312; Pergamos 312–606; Thyatira 606–1520; Sardis 1520–c. 1750; Philadelphia 1750–1900; Laodicea after that. Its best arguments: the church is not named on earth after chapter 3; 1:20 calls the stars and candlesticks a "mystery"; and some messages fit some periods (Smyrna's persecution; Thyatira's Jezebel matching the medieval Papacy, for Protestant readers). Larkin grants that this meaning "was hidden to the early Church, because time was required for Church History to develop."

Reading 3 — Seven assemblies of the future (Bullinger). These are assemblies of believers on the earth during the Day of the Lord, after the church of grace has been gathered, and largely Jewish in character. Bullinger: "If these 'churches' are future assemblies of Jewish believers on the earth, after the Church has been 'caught up to meet the Lord,' then all is clear, consistent, and easy to be understood." His best arguments:

1. The terms are not the terms of grace: "I know thy works" (seven times), promises only "to him that overcometh," the threat of a candlestick removed (2:5) and of a name blotted out (3:5).
2. The references are to Israel: Balaam and Balac "before the children of Israel" (2:14), Jezebel (2:20), the hidden manna (2:17), the key of David (3:7), "them which say they are Jews, and are not" (2:9; 3:9).
3. The messages are tied to the rest of the book. Bullinger: the people on earth in the Day of the Lord "will need some special instruction. Where is such instruction, if it be not that which is given to them in these seven Epistles?"
4. 1:10, "in the Spirit on the Lord's day," means carried in the spirit into the Day of the Lord, so what John saw there, including the assemblies, belongs to that day.
5. 1:19, "the things which are," should be read "what they are" (signify), as *eisin* is translated in the next verse ("the seven stars *are* the angels"). So 1:19 does not place the assemblies in John's present.
6. Antipas (2:13) is unknown to history and is a martyr of that day; prophecy can name a man before his time (Josiah, 1 Kings 13:2; Cyrus, Isaiah 44:28).
7. Bullinger does not deny the first readers a use of the messages. He separates interpretation from application: the interpretation "belongs to that day," but "that does not shut out such application as may have been made by those who read them in John's day; or as may be made by us who read them in our own day".

Reading 4 — Seven kinds of assembly found in every age. Seven is the number of spiritual perfection: what God does, made complete. Each message ends with a call to "the churches" (plural) and to any individual who "hath an ear." So each message describes a condition that recurs wherever its marks appear. This reading is often held alongside Reading 1.

The evidence from the text

A. Who received the book

1. **"John to the seven churches which are in Asia" (1:4).** They exist ("which are") in a named Roman province. (In 1:11 the words "which are in Asia" are lacking in the critical texts, Bullinger note 87; in 1:4 they stand in all texts.)
2. **"What thou seest, write in a book, and send it unto the seven churches ... unto Ephesus, and unto Smyrna, ..." (1:11).** A real book, sent to real addresses. Bullinger's answer, that John was in spirit in the Day of the Lord, does not touch the sending: John was to send a book from Patmos.
3. **"I John, who also am your brother, and companion in tribulation, and in the kingdom and patience of Jesus Christ, was in the isle that is called Patmos" (1:9).** John speaks to his readers as fellow-sufferers *now*, while he is in Patmos.
4. **The order of the seven names is a road.** Ephesus, then north to Smyrna and Pergamos, then southeast to Thyatira, Sardis, Philadelphia, Laodicea: the order a messenger leaving Ephesus would take round the circuit. Ramsay: "all the Seven Cities stand on the great circular road that bound together the most populous, wealthy, and influential part of the Province" (Ramsay ch. XIV; he credits Hort with the same principle for the order of provinces in 1 Peter 1:1). A list of future assemblies, or of ages, has no need of a postal route.
5. **"I Jesus have sent mine angel to testify unto you these things in the churches" (22:16).** The whole book, not only chapters 2–3, was for the churches that received it.
6. **Some of these assemblies are known in Paul's time.** Ephesus (Acts 19; 20:17-38; the epistle to the Ephesians). Laodicea: "the church of the Laodiceans" (Colossians 4:15-16). Thyatira was the home city of Lydia (Acts 16:14), though no assembly there is named in Acts. "All they which dwelt in Asia heard the word of the Lord Jesus" (Acts 19:10).
7. **Continuity at Ephesus.** Paul warned the Ephesian elders that "grievous wolves" would come and that men would arise "speaking perverse things" (Acts 20:29-30); he wrote of "false apostles" (2 Corinthians 11:13). Christ praises Ephesus because "thou hast tried them which say they are apostles, and are not, and hast found them liars" (2:2). This is the same assembly still dealing with what Paul foretold.
8. **Antipas "was" slain (2:13).** "Even in those days wherein Antipas was my faithful martyr, who was slain among you." Christ refers the assembly to a past event they remember. Bullinger's parallels (Josiah, Cyrus) are announcements of what is still to come ("a child shall be born unto the house of David, Josiah by name," 1 Kings 13:2); 2:13 reminds the assembly of what has already happened. A prophetic past is possible in Scripture, but nothing in 2:13 marks it as one.
9. **Local fit.** Laodicea says, "I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing" (3:17). Laodicea was ruined by an earthquake in AD 60 and, in Tacitus's words, "without any relief from us, recovered itself by its own resources" (*Annals* 14.27; cited by Ramsay, notes to ch. XIV). Laodicea was the medical centre of Phrygia, where "Phrygian powder" for the eyes was known (Ramsay, from Galen and Aristotle); Christ counsels "eyesalve" (3:18). Such details are supporting evidence only: they show the messages fit real cities but do not prove that this is all they mean.

B. How the messages speak

1. **The terms are the terms of the Day of the Lord, not of grace.**

- "I know thy works": 7 times (2:2, 9, 13, 19; 3:1, 8, 15).
- Promises only "to him that overcometh": 7 times in chs 2–3 (2:7, 11, 17, 26; 3:5, 12, 21), and once more at 21:7.
- "Keepeth my works unto the end" (2:26).
- A candlestick removed (2:5); a name that could be blotted out of the book of life (3:5).

2. **But conditional warnings are not unknown in Paul.** "Thou standest by faith. Be not highminded, but fear ... otherwise thou also shalt be cut off" (Romans 11:20-22, to Gentile believers). "If ye continue in the faith grounded and settled" (Colossians 1:23). The *tone* of conditional warning is therefore not decisive by itself. What *is* distinctive is the whole combination: the overcomer formula, "keep my works unto the end," the coming of the Lord held over each assembly, and rewards located in the kingdom and the new earth.
3. **The coming of the Lord is held before the assemblies.** "I will come unto thee quickly" (2:5, 16); "hold fast till I come" (2:25); "I will come on thee as a thief" (3:3; cf. 16:15); "Behold, I come quickly" (3:11). Under Reading 2, "hold fast till I come" was said to a period (Thyatira, 606–1520) that ended without His coming.
4. **The references to Israel are real.** Balaam (2:14), Jezebel (2:20), the manna (2:17), the key of David (3:7), "them which say they are Jews, and are not" (2:9; 3:9). But Paul also distinguishes a true Jew from a false one: "he is not a Jew, which is one outwardly ... But he is a Jew, which is one inwardly" (Romans 2:28-29). These references show the *colour* of the messages; they do not prove that the assemblies were Jewish.
5. **The call "He that hath an ear"** occurs elsewhere only in Christ's teaching to Israel in the Gospels, never in Paul (Part One, Chapter 6).

C. How the messages are tied to the rest of the book

Every promise and many warnings in chapters 2–3 reach forward into the visions:

Message	Words	Fulfilled or echoed
Ephesus 2:7	the tree of life	22:2, 14
Smyrna 2:11	not hurt of the second death	20:6, 14; 21:8
Pergamos 2:13	"where Satan's seat is"	13:2 ("the dragon gave him ... his seat"); 16:10
Pergamos 2:17	a new name no man knoweth	19:12 ("a name written, that no man knew")
Thyatira 2:22	"great tribulation"	7:14
Thyatira 2:26-27	power over the nations, rule with a rod of iron	12:5; 19:15; 20:4
Thyatira 2:28	the morning star	22:16
Sardis 3:3	"I will come on thee as a thief"	16:15
Sardis 3:5	white raiment; the book of life	7:9, 14; 19:8; 13:8; 20:12, 15; 21:27

Message	Words	Fulfilled or echoed
Philadelphia 3:10	"the hour of temptation, which shall come upon all the world, to try them that dwell upon the earth"	"them that dwell on the earth": 6:10; 11:10; 13:8, 14; 14:6; 17:8
Philadelphia 3:12	new Jerusalem; the name of my God	21:2, 10; 22:4
Laodicea 3:21	to sit with me in my throne	20:4

This is the strongest evidence in Bullinger's favour, and it is direct: the messages look forward to the Day of the Lord and are fulfilled in it. **But it proves what the messages are about, not when the assemblies lived.** A real assembly in John's day can be told of an hour "which shall come upon all the world" (3:10), as Thessalonica was told of the day of the Lord (1 Thessalonians 5:1-9).

D. What the selection and the address show

1. **Seven chosen out of more.** Other assemblies existed in the same province in Paul's day: Colossae and Hierapolis (Colossians 4:13), and Troas (Acts 20:5-12). Ramsay notes that the seven were not even the province's most important cities. The choice of seven, and of these seven, points to a purpose beyond the seven cities themselves.
2. **"What the Spirit saith unto the churches."** Each message ends with this call (2:7, 11, 17, 29; 3:6, 13, 22). Every assembly was to hear all seven messages.
3. **"All the churches shall know" (2:23).** The judgment on Thyatira's Jezebel is to be seen by the other assemblies. The seven exist at the same time, not one after another, against Reading 2.
4. **1:20 explains its own mystery at once.** "The seven stars are the angels of the seven churches: and the seven candlesticks which thou sawest are the seven churches." Reading 2 needs a second, hidden layer that the verse does not give. Bullinger: "how can a Place be a symbol of Time?"
5. **The ages schemes do not agree with each other.** Trench (Excursus, pp. 246-249) sets out Vitringa's scheme (Philadelphia = the first century of the Reformation; Laodicea = the Reformed Church of Vitringa's own day). He notes that most seventeenth-century Protestants instead claimed Philadelphia for themselves and made Sardis the Reformation, and shows that "the interpreters of the historico-prophetical school … have also an intestine strife among themselves." Larkin puts the Reformation in Sardis and makes Laodicea his own century. Each scheme places the last assembly in its own author's day.

E. Bullinger's two textual arguments, checked

- **1:10 "the Lord's day."** The Greek is the adjective *kuriakē* ("belonging to the Lord"), found elsewhere in the New Testament only at 1 Corinthians 11:20, "the Lord's supper." The usual phrase for the Day of the Lord is *hēmera kuriou* (e.g., 1 Thessalonians 5:2; 2 Peter 3:10). This study reads 1:10 as the day of the Lord, into which John was carried in spirit (Appendix C, Question 1). **Whichever way it is decided, it does not settle the assemblies question:** John could be carried in vision into that day and still be commanded to send what he saw to assemblies of his own time (1:11).

- **1:19 "the things which are."** Bullinger's rendering "what they are (signify)" is a fair translation of *ha eisin*, as 1:20 shows. It removes 1:19 as an argument *for* Reading 2's "church age" division (Larkin builds on it), but it does not remove 1:4, 1:9 and 1:11, which place the assemblies in John's time independently. **Do not use 1:19 as evidence either way.**

The evidence weighed

Scale: Direct statement / Strong inference / Reasonable inference / Corroboration only / Neutral. Each row says which way the point points.

#	Point	Where	Weight and direction	What the other side fairly answers
1	The book was sent to seven named, existing assemblies	1:4, 11	Direct statement, for real assemblies of John's day	Bullinger: sent then for application; interpretation future
2	John is their brother and fellow-sufferer now, in Patmos	1:9	Strong inference, for John's day	Could address all readers generally
3	The names follow the road circuit from Ephesus	1:11; Ramsay	Strong inference, for real geography then	A future assembly in the same cities would follow the same road
4	Antipas "was" slain among them	2:13	Reasonable inference, for John's day	Prophetic past; Antipas unknown to history
5	Ephesus still deals with false apostles Paul foretold	2:2; Acts 20:29-30	Reasonable inference, for John's day	False apostles can arise in any age
6	Local details (Laodicea's wealth, eyesalve)	3:17-18	Corroboration only, for John's day	Commonplace images; the identifications are Ramsay's
7	Works, overcoming, the Lord's coming, rewards in the kingdom	throughout 2–3	Strong inference, for Day-of-the-Lord character of the messages	Paul also warns conditionally (Rom 11:22; Col 1:23)
8	Every promise fulfilled in chapters 7–22	Chapter 12 §I	Direct statement, for Day-of-the-Lord content	Proves the subject, not the date of the readers
9	Israel's history and "say they are Jews"	2:9, 14, 20; 3:7, 9	Reasonable inference, for an Israel-coloured message	Paul too distinguishes true and false Jews (Rom 2:28-29)
10	"He that hath an ear" never in Paul	Gospels; Rev 2–3	Reasonable inference, for a kingdom setting	An argument from silence in Paul
11	"Unto the churches" and "all the churches shall know"	2:7 etc.; 2:23	Strong inference, for concurrent assemblies and a wider audience; against Reading 2	Reading 2 holders: periods overlap and continue
12	Seven chosen out of more	Col 4:13; Acts 20:5	Reasonable inference, for a purpose beyond the seven cities	Reading 1: the seven were district centres on the road

#	Point	Where	Weight and direction	What the other side fairly answers
13	1:20 explains the mystery at once	1:20	Strong inference, against Reading 2	"Mystery" may hold more than is stated
14	Ages schemes disagree; each ends in its author's day	Trench; Larkin	Corroboration only, against Reading 2	Disagreement in detail does not disprove a principle
15	"Hold fast till I come" to an age that ended	2:25	Strong inference, against Reading 2	The command applies to the remnant of each age
16	"The Lord's day" = the Day of the Lord	1:10	Neutral on this question	—
17	"The things which are"	1:19	Neutral on this question	—

Result.

- Reading 1 is established as to *who received the messages* (rows 1–6).
- Reading 3 is established as to *what the messages concern* (rows 7–10), but not in its claim that the assemblies addressed do not yet exist. No text requires that, and 1:4, 9, 11 and 2:13 stand against it.
- Reading 2 has no support in the text and three points against it (rows 11, 13, 15).
- Reading 4 is a sound *application*, carried by the refrain "unto the churches" (row 11) and the selection of seven (row 12). It is an application, not a separate meaning.

The two strong lines of evidence do not conflict: real assemblies of John's day received a message whose terms and fulfilment belong to the Day of the Lord. On the evidence of the text, that combination is the answer.

What would change this answer

- A textual reading that removed "which are in Asia" from 1:4 as well as 1:11, *and* evidence that "send it unto" (1:11) could mean something other than dispatching the book. Neither exists.
- A plain marker in 2:13 that Antipas's death is foreseen rather than remembered. None is present.
- For Reading 2: any verse in chapters 1–3 that relates the seven to periods of time. None is present; 2:23 shows them existing together.

Appendix C — The Contested Questions

At nineteen places honest readers divide. For each, this appendix gives the readings held and who holds them, what the text says, this study's answer with its weight, and its status. The scale of weight is: **Direct statement** (Scripture says it in so many words); **Strong inference** (the alternative strains against the text); **Reasonable inference** (the more natural reading, though careful readers may differ); **Corroboration only** (consistent with the answer, but not proof); **Neutral** (settles nothing). Status is

Settled (the text decides it), **Provisional** (the answer stands unless further study shows otherwise), or **Held in abeyance** (the text does not decide it, and the study says so).

Part 1. Questions that govern the whole book

Question 1. "The Lord's day" (1:10)

The question. "I was in the Spirit on the Lord's day" (1:10). Does this mean the first day of the week, or that John was carried in spirit into the Day of the Lord?

Readings.

1. *The first day of the week*. This is the usual reading. Early Christian writers after John used "the Lord's day" for Sunday, and the reason usually given is that it was the day on which Christ rose.
2. *The Day of the Lord*. John was carried in spirit into that day. Bullinger argues that there is no evidence the first day was called "the Lord's day" before Revelation was written, and that its later use for Sunday came from this verse.

What the text says.

- The Greek is the adjective *kuriakē*, "belonging to the Lord." It appears in the New Testament only here and at 1 Corinthians 11:20, "the Lord's supper." The prophets' phrase "the day of the LORD" is usually rendered *hēmera kuriou* (1 Thessalonians 5:2; 2 Peter 3:10). The adjective is unusual, but it means the same thing: a day that belongs to the Lord.
- Scripture never calls the first day of the week "the Lord's day." Every time the New Testament names it, it calls it "the first day of the week," in Greek "the first of the sabbaths" (Matthew 28:1; Mark 16:2; Luke 24:1; John 20:1, 19; Acts 20:7; 1 Corinthians 16:2). The use of "the Lord's day" for Sunday comes from writers after John.
- The Sunday reading rests on the belief that Christ rose on Sunday morning. But Christ gave the sign of Jonas: "so shall the Son of man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth" (Matthew 12:40). He died at the ninth hour on the fourteenth of Nisan, the Passover, and was buried before sunset; the next day was a high day, a sabbath of the feast (John 19:31). Three days and three nights from His burial bring the resurrection to the late afternoon of the seventeenth, before sunset, at the close of the weekly sabbath. When the women came at dawn on the first day of the week, the tomb was already empty: "He is not here: for he is risen" (Matthew 28:6; Mark 16:2-6; Luke 24:1-3; John 20:1). No Gospel says that He rose on Sunday morning. So the reason given for calling Sunday "the Lord's day" falls away.
- The whole book is a vision of the Day of the Lord (6:17; 16:14), and John is "in the Spirit" four times (1:10; 4:2; 17:3; 21:10), each time to be shown something. The phrase in 1:10 introduces the first of these.

Answer. John was carried in spirit, by revelation, into the day of the Lord, the subject of the book: "the great day of his wrath is come" (6:17). The adjective *kuriakē* means "belonging to the Lord," and the day that belongs to the Lord in the prophets is His day of judgment and of His kingdom. **Strong inference.**

Status. Settled. (In earlier drafts this question was held in abeyance, because the Sunday reading seemed to rest on firm ground. It does not; see the third point above.)

Question 2. Sequence or recapitulation (the seals, trumpets and vials)

The question. Do the seven seals, seven trumpets and seven vials follow one another in time? Or do they tell the same period over again from different angles?

Readings.

1. *Sequence, by telescoping (Bullinger; Seiss; Larkin).* The seventh seal contains the seven trumpets, and the seventh trumpet contains the seven vials.
2. *Recapitulation (Victorinus, the earliest surviving commentary on Revelation).* "Nor must we look for order in the Apocalypse; but we must follow the meaning of those things which are prophesied" (on the trumpets and vials), and "not the order of the reading, but the order of the discourse, must be understood" (on 11:8-19) (ANF vol. 7, Victorinus, *Commentary on the Apocalypse*). Many later commentators hold this (Milligan; Swete in part).

What the text says.

1. **The seventh seal opens into the trumpets.** "When he had opened the seventh seal ... I saw the seven angels which stood before God; and to them were given seven trumpets" (8:1-2).
2. **The seventh trumpet brings the end.** "The kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of our Lord, and of his Christ" (11:15). The vials are "the seven last plagues; for in them is filled up the wrath of God" (15:1).
3. **The three series end alike.** The seventh seal's close has "voices, and thunderings, and lightnings, and an earthquake" (8:5). The seventh trumpet's has "lightnings, and voices, and thunderings, and an earthquake, and great hail" (11:19). The seventh vial's has "voices, and thunders, and lightnings; and there was a great earthquake ... and there fell upon men a great hail" (16:18-21). The same signs at the end of each series could mean the same end told three times. They also grow at each step, which suits a sequence building to a climax.
4. **The book itself steps back in places.** Chapter 12 begins with the birth of the man child, and chapters 12–14 stand between the trumpets and the vials as an "episode" (Bullinger's own term). Chapters 17–18 expand the seventh vial (16:19). So the book does tell some things out of time order. That is Victorinus's point, and the structure test (04-Structure-Tested) confirmed it.

Provisional answer. Sequence for the three series of judgments, with parentheses that step back or zoom in. The text links the series end to start (8:1-2; 15:1, "last"), which recapitulation must explain away. The parenthetical sections (7; 10:1–11:13; 12–14; 17–18) are not repeats of the series; they explain them. Weight: **Strong inference** for sequence of the seals, trumpets and vials (from 8:1-2 and "the seven last plagues," 15:1); **Direct statement** that some sections are not in time order (12:1-5 goes back to the birth of the man child).

Status. Provisional (Part One, Chapter 8 §D).

Question 3. Is the church caught up at 4:1?

The question. "After this I looked, and, behold, a door was opened in heaven: and the first voice which I heard … said, Come up hither" (4:1). Some take this as a picture of the gathering of the church before the Day of the Lord.

Readings.

1. *A picture of the church's gathering (Larkin; many futurists).* The church is named nineteen times in chs 1–3 and then not on earth again.
2. *John's own call into the vision.* The words are spoken to John, who is taken "in the spirit" (4:2) to see what follows.

What the text says. The command is singular, "Come up hither, and I will shew thee" (4:1), and John is the one shown. The church is indeed not named between 4:1 and 22:16 (machine count).

Provisional answer. Direct statement that 4:1 is John's call. That it pictures the church's gathering is at most **Corroboration only**. This study does not lean on it. When the gathering of the church happens is taught in Paul's epistles (1 Thessalonians 4:13-18), not in Revelation.

Status. Settled.

Part 2. Persons and figures

Question 4. The twenty-four elders (4:4)

The question. Who are "four and twenty elders sitting, clothed in white raiment; and they had on their heads crowns of gold" (4:4)?

Readings.

1. *The redeemed, often the church in glory (Kelly; Larkin; many futurists).*
2. *The twelve patriarchs and twelve apostles, or the twenty-four books of the Old Testament (Victorinus).*
3. *Heavenly beings, the elders of heaven who lead its worship (Bullinger, his commentary on 4:4).* David's twenty-four courses of priests (1 Chronicles 24) and of singers (1 Chronicles 25) were patterned on the heavenly order.

What the text says.

- They are already seated and crowned when John first sees the throne (4:4), before any seal is opened and before the great tribulation (7:14). The book places the resurrection of the faithful later: "they lived and reigned with Christ a thousand years … This is the first resurrection" (20:4-5).
- Twenty-four is the number of David's courses of priests (1 Chronicles 24:1-19) and of singers (1 Chronicles 25:9-31). The elders do the work of both: they hold harps, and golden vials of incense

(5:8). David received "the pattern of all that he had by the spirit" (1 Chronicles 28:12); the earthly things were "the example and shadow of heavenly things" (Hebrews 8:5).

- One of them speaks of the redeemed as others: "What are these which are arrayed in white robes? ... These are they which came out of great tribulation" (7:13-14).
- The book explains its other signs (1:20; 4:5; 5:8), but never says the elders "are" the redeemed.
- **The text of 5:9-10.** The singers are "the four beasts and four and twenty elders" together (5:8). The King James Version reads "hast redeemed **us** to God ... hast made **us** unto our God kings and priests: and **we** shall reign on the earth." The Majority (Byzantine) text, in the Robinson-Pierpont edition, reads "us" in 5:9 but "**them** ... **they** shall reign" in 5:10. The critical texts read neither: "hast redeemed to God ... men" in 5:9 and "them ... they" in 5:10. On every reading the singers include the four beasts, who are cherubim and not redeemed men; and in 5:10 nearly all copies speak of the redeemed as "them."

Answer. Strong inference: the elders are heavenly beings, the elders of heaven who lead its worship, the order after which David patterned the twenty-four courses; they are not risen saints. The KJV wording of 5:9-10 does not outweigh the rest of the evidence: the song is sung by the cherubim and the elders together, and in nearly every copy it speaks of the redeemed as "them." The study prints the KJV text and notes the readings at 5:9-10 (Section C; Appendix E). This study does not identify the elders with the church of grace, which the book does not name in heaven (Question 3).

Weight: **Strong inference.**

Status. Provisional (decided in this edition; see Section C at 4:4 and 5:9-10).

Question 5. The four beasts (4:6-8)

The question. What are the "four beasts full of eyes" (4:6)?

Readings. Cherubim (Bullinger: "Zoa," living ones; most commentators). Victorinus makes them the four Gospels (lion = Mark, man = Matthew, and so on).

What the text says.

- They match Ezekiel's "living creatures," whom Ezekiel himself calls cherubim: "I knew that they were the cherubims" (Ezekiel 10:20).
- They also match Isaiah's seraphim: "each of them six wings" and "Holy, holy, holy" (4:8; Isaiah 6:2-3). See Appendix F.
- They are beings who speak, worship, and give the vials to the seven angels (15:7).

Provisional answer. Strong inference: heavenly beings of the cherubim order, described in Ezekiel's and Isaiah's terms. The Gospels reading has no support in the text.

Status. Settled.

Question 6. The rider on the white horse (6:2)

The question. Is the first seal's rider, "he that sat on him had a bow; and a crown was given unto him: and he went forth conquering, and to conquer" (6:2), Christ, or a false Christ?

Readings.

1. *Christ, or the gospel going forth* (many older commentators). The basis is the white horse of 19:11.
2. *A false Christ, the beginning of the judgments (Bullinger, set beside Matthew 24:4-5).*

What the text says.

- He is the first of four riders who belong together (6:1-8; Zechariah 6:1-8). The other three bring war, famine and death.
- He is *given* a crown (*stephanos*, a victor's wreath). The rider of 19:12 wears "many crowns" (*diadēmata*, royal crowns).
- In 19:11-16 the rider is named ("Faithful and True," "The Word of God," "KING OF KINGS"). In 6:2 he is not named.
- In Matthew 24 the first sign is "many shall come in my name, saying, I am Christ; and shall deceive many" (24:5), followed by wars, famines and pestilences (24:6-7). This is the same order as the seals (Section D).

Provisional answer. Strong inference: not Christ, but the first of four judgments, a conqueror who imitates Christ. The 19:11 parallel is real but is a contrast: a different crown, no name, and in company with war, famine and death. The Lamb is the one *opening* the seal (6:1). He is not its contents.

Status. Provisional (Section D).

Question 7. The souls under the altar (6:9-11)

The question. "I saw under the altar the souls of them that were slain ... And they cried with a loud voice" (6:9-10). Does this show the dead conscious before the resurrection? Elsewhere Scripture speaks of death as a sleep until the resurrection (Daniel 12:2; John 11:11-14; 1 Thessalonians 4:13-16).

Readings.

1. *The conscious dead in heaven* (the common reading).
2. *Vision language (Bullinger, his commentary on 6:9).* "Souls" means simply the persons slain, "I saw those who had been slain." What John sees is a vision of their blood crying out, like Abel's (Genesis 4:10).

What the text says.

- This is a vision. John is shown things in symbol throughout, and the scene is set at an altar, where a sacrifice's blood was poured "at the bottom of the altar" (Leviticus 4:7; Appendix F).

- They are told to "rest yet for a little season" (6:11). "Rest" is the word Revelation uses of the dead elsewhere: "Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord … that they may rest from their labours" (14:13).
- They are not yet raised: "the souls of them that were beheaded … lived and reigned with Christ" only at "the first resurrection" (20:4-5).
- The cry for blood to be avenged is the language of Genesis 4:10, "the voice of thy brother's blood crieth unto me from the ground." Hebrews 12:24 sets Christ's blood, "that speaketh better things than that of Abel," beside it.

Provisional answer.

- **Reasonable inference:** this is a vision of the slain, pictured at the altar of sacrifice, whose blood cries for justice as Abel's did.
- **Direct statement** (20:4-5): these same people live at the first resurrection, not before. That fits Scripture's description of death as a sleep until the resurrection.
- What the opposing reading fairly answers: they speak, are given robes, and are told to wait. The reply is that a vision can give a voice to blood, as Genesis 4:10 does.

Status. Provisional (Section D).

Question 8. The 144,000 and the great multitude (7:4-17; 14:1-5)

The questions. Are the 144,000 literally Israelites from twelve tribes, or a symbol of the whole people of God? Are they the same as the "great multitude" of 7:9?

Readings.

1. *Literal Israelites, a remnant sealed for the Day of the Lord (Bullinger; Seiss; Larkin).*
2. *Symbolic of the whole church, the multitude seen from another angle* (Milligan and many idealist commentators).

What the text says.

- The number is given tribe by tribe, twelve times, "Of the tribe of Juda were sealed twelve thousand" and so on (7:5-8), "of all the tribes of the children of Israel" (7:4).
- **Then John sees a different group:** "After this I beheld, and, lo, a great multitude, which no man could number, of all nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues" (7:9). A counted group from Israel's tribes is set against an uncountable one from all nations.
- The 144,000 are sealed on earth "in their foreheads" so that they are not hurt (7:3; 9:4). The multitude stand "before the throne" (7:9), and "came out of great tribulation" (7:14).
- In 14:1-5 the 144,000 stand with the Lamb on mount Sion, "redeemed from among men, being the firstfruits unto God and to the Lamb" (14:4).

- The tribe list is unusual: Dan and Ephraim are missing; Joseph and Levi are named (7:5-8). Commentators have explained the omission of Dan in many ways. The text gives no reason, and this study does not supply one.

Provisional answer.

- **Strong inference:** the 144,000 are Israelites by tribe.
- **Strong inference:** they are distinct from the multitude, since the text sets the counted against the uncountable and Israel against all nations, and the second group is introduced with "After this I beheld."
- Whether the number is exact or round, the text does not say. Hold that in abeyance and do not build on it.
- The missing Dan: **held in abeyance.**

Status. Provisional (Sections D, E, J).

Question 9. The two witnesses (11:3-12)

The question. Who are the "two witnesses" who prophesy 1,260 days in sackcloth?

Readings.

1. *Elijah and Moses (Larkin).* This is based on their powers: shutting heaven, and turning waters to blood (11:6).
2. *Enoch and Elijah (Seiss, Vol. 2).* These are the two who did not die (Genesis 5:24; 2 Kings 2:11), since "it is appointed unto men once to die" (Hebrews 9:27).
3. *Elijah and Jeremiah (Victorinus, who says "all our ancients" believed it).* Victorinus rejects Moses because Moses died.
4. *Symbolic of the church's or Israel's witness* (Milligan and idealist commentators).

What the text says.

- They are two persons who prophesy, are killed, lie in the street three and a half days, rise and ascend (11:3-12). Their bodies lie "in the street of the great city ... where also our Lord was crucified" (11:8), so the city is Jerusalem.
- "These are the two olive trees, and the two candlesticks standing before the God of the earth" (11:4). This is Zechariah 4:3, 14, where the two are "the two anointed ones" of Zechariah's day (Joshua and Zerubbabel; Zechariah 3–4).
- Their powers are those of Elijah (fire, 2 Kings 1:10; no rain, 1 Kings 17:1) and of Moses (waters to blood, Exodus 7:19-20). Revelation says they *have power* "to shut heaven" and "over waters to turn them to blood" (11:6). It does not say they *are* Elijah and Moses.

- Malachi 4:5 promises "Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the LORD." Christ said of John the Baptist, "this is Elias, which was for to come" (Matthew 11:14), and also "Elias truly shall first come, and restore all things" (Matthew 17:11).

Provisional answer.

- **Direct statement:** two real prophets, killed and raised, in Jerusalem, with powers like Elijah's and Moses'.
- **Their names are held in abeyance.** The text never names them, and each identification rests on matching powers or on reasoning from other texts (Hebrews 9:27 for Enoch).
- Reading 4 (symbolic) strains against their death, the public display of their bodies, and the three and a half days.

Status. Settled as to what they are; held in abeyance as to who.

Question 10. The woman, the man child and the dragon (12:1-6)

The question. Who is the woman "clothed with the sun, and the moon under her feet, and upon her head a crown of twelve stars" (12:1)? Who is the man child?

Readings.

1. The woman is Israel (Bullinger; Seiss; Larkin).
2. The woman is Mary (the traditional Roman Catholic reading).
3. The woman is the church (many idealist commentators).

What the text says.

- **The picture is Joseph's dream.** "The sun and the moon and the eleven stars made obeisance to me" (Genesis 37:9), where sun, moon and stars are Jacob, his wife, and the sons who became Israel's tribes. The Old Testament supplies the key (Appendix F, 12:1).
- **The man child is Christ.** He is "to rule all nations with a rod of iron" (12:5), the words of Psalm 2:9 used of Christ in 19:15. "Her child was caught up unto God, and to his throne" (12:5).
- The woman then flees into the wilderness for 1,260 days (12:6, 14). That rules out Mary, and rules out the church, from which Christ was not born.
- The mother in travail is Israel's own picture of itself (Micah 4:10; Isaiah 66:7-8, "as soon as Zion travailed, she brought forth her children").

Provisional answer. Strong inference: the woman is Israel; the man child is Christ; the dragon is named outright as "that old serpent, called the Devil, and Satan" (12:9, **Direct statement**). The verses jump from Christ's birth to his being "caught up" (12:5) and pass over his whole life on earth. This study will note this as one of the book's steps back in time (Question 2).

Status. Settled.

Question 11. The beast and his wounded head (13:1-8; 17:8-11)

The question. Who or what is the beast "rise up out of the sea, having seven heads and ten horns" (13:1)? What is the head "as it were wounded to death; and his deadly wound was healed" (13:3)?

Readings.

1. *A future individual ruler, with a kingdom behind him (Bullinger; Seiss; Larkin).*
2. *The Roman Empire and a returning Nero, "Nero redivivus" (Charles, Vol. 1, Introduction; preterists).*
3. *The persecuting state power in every age* (idealists).

What the text says.

- He combines Daniel's four beasts: leopard, bear and lion (13:2; Daniel 7:4-6).
- He is a "he" who speaks, makes war on the saints, and is worshipped (13:5-8). In 19:20 he is "cast alive into a lake of fire," with the false prophet, a person.
- "The beast that thou sawest was, and is not; and shall ascend out of the bottomless pit" (17:8). The seven heads are "seven mountains" and "seven kings: five are fallen, and one is, and the other is not yet come ... And the beast that was, and is not, even he is the eighth, and is of the seven" (17:9-11).
- The angel says this needs "the mind which hath wisdom" (17:9).

Provisional answer. Strong inference: a person, a king, at the head of a kingdom, who is destroyed at Christ's coming (19:19-20). Which historical kings the heads count, and what the healed wound is, are **held in abeyance**. The text's own counting (17:10) is given as a riddle needing wisdom. This study will set out the words without forcing a list of emperors onto them.

Status. Settled as to what he is; held in abeyance as to the heads and the wound.

Question 12. The number of the beast (13:18)

The question. "Here is wisdom. Let him that hath understanding count the number of the beast: for it is the number of a man; and his number is Six hundred threescore and six" (13:18).

Readings.

1. *A name whose letters add up to 666 (gematria).* Candidates since the second century: Teitan, Lateinos (Victorinus, from Irenaeus); Nero Caesar spelled in Hebrew (Charles; many moderns).
2. *A symbol: six falling short of seven, three times (Briggs, cited by Swete).*
3. *Bullinger:* 666 is the sum of 1 to 36 (6 × 6), and the mark of the ancient pagan mysteries.

What the text says.

- "Count the number" and "the number of a man" (13:18): it is to be counted, and it belongs to a man.

- Some ancient copies read 616. Irenaeus knew copies that had "vitiated the middle number in the name, deducting the amount of fifty from it," and kept 666, "found in all the most approved and ancient copies" (*Against Heresies* 5.30.1; verified 2026-10-02, see 10-Verify-Results). Swete notes the 616 reading too (Introduction, ch. XII).
- Swete's verdict: "no solution hitherto offered commands general assent," and "It is possible that the Number of the Beast holds its secret still" (Introduction, ch. XII).

Provisional answer. Held in abeyance. The text says the number will be countable by those with understanding, and it does not say they live in John's day. This study lists the main proposals briefly in the appendix, adopt none, and say why: each requires choosing a language, a spelling and a title that the text does not give.

Status. Held in abeyance.

Question 13. Babylon the great (14:8; 16:19; 17–18)

The question. Is Babylon a literal city? If so, Babylon on the Euphrates rebuilt, Rome, or Jerusalem? Or is it a world system?

Readings.

1. *Rome (Swete; Charles; most older Protestant commentators, who read Papal Rome).* This rests on the "seven mountains" (17:9) and the city "which reigneth over the kings of the earth" (17:18).
2. *Babylon on the Euphrates, rebuilt (Bullinger; Seiss).* Isaiah 13 and Jeremiah 50–51 have not been fulfilled as written ("it shall never be inhabited," Isaiah 13:20).
3. *Jerusalem* (some preterists). This is based on "the great city" of 11:8.
4. *The world system of commerce and false religion* (idealists).

What the text says.

- The angel *names* it: "MYSTERY, BABYLON THE GREAT" (17:5), and calls it "that great city, which reigneth over the kings of the earth" (17:18). "Mystery" here means a secret now explained: "I will tell thee the mystery of the woman" (17:7).
- Chapters 17–18 are built from the Old Testament oracles against Babylon (Isaiah 13, 21, 47; Jeremiah 50–51) and against Tyre (Ezekiel 26–27). See Appendix F. Those oracles were about real cities.
- It has merchants, ships, a millstone cast into the sea, and kings who stand "afar off" (18:10-19).
- **The Euphrates is named twice in the build-up** (9:14; 16:12).
- The seven mountains (17:9) are also called "seven kings" (17:10). So the text itself gives the mountains a second meaning, which weakens the step from "seven mountains" to the seven hills of Rome.

Provisional answer.

- **Strong inference:** a real city, called Babylon, judged as the Old Testament oracles against Babylon described.
- **Reasonable inference** that it is Babylon itself. This study will set out readings 1–3 fairly and give its answer plainly: the text calls it Babylon, builds its fall from the prophecies about Babylon, and points twice to the Euphrates.
- Do not identify it with any present-day city or institution. That would go beyond what the text states.

Status. Provisional (Section M).

Question 14. The bride, the Lamb's wife (19:7-9; 21:2, 9-10)

The question. Who is the bride? Is she the church of grace, Israel, or the city?

Readings.

1. *The church (most futurists, e.g., Larkin; Kelly).*
2. *Israel in 19:7, and "of Israel" in 21:9.* Bullinger distinguishes the *wife* (*gunē*) of 19:7 from the *bride* (*numphē*) of 21:9, and argues that the church of grace is part of the Bridegroom, not the bride (Ephesians 5:25-33).

What the text says.

- In 21:9-10 the angel says "I will shew thee the bride, the Lamb's wife" and then shows "that great city, the holy Jerusalem." The bride *is shown as* the city.
- The city bears "the names of the twelve tribes of the children of Israel" on its gates (21:12) and "the names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb" on its foundations (21:14).
- The wife's fine linen "is the righteousness of saints" (19:8).
- Israel is God's wife in the prophets: "thy Maker is thine husband" (Isaiah 54:5); compare Hosea 2:19-20.

Provisional answer.

- **Direct statement:** in chapter 21 the bride is shown as the holy city, whose gates and foundations carry Israel's tribes and the apostles of the Lamb.
- **Strong inference:** the book itself does not name the church of grace here (Question 3).
- **Reasonable inference** that the marriage picture comes from Israel's own (Isaiah 54:5).
- This study does not say "the bride is the church." It says what the text shows, and leaves Ephesians 5 to Paul's own setting.

Status. Provisional (Sections N and P).

Part 3. Times and numbers

Question 15. The 1,260 days, forty-two months, and "time, times, and half a time"

The question. Are these periods literal?

What the text says.

- 42 months (11:2; 13:5) = 1,260 days (11:3; 12:6) = "a time, and times, and half a time" (12:14). Revelation itself gives the three forms for the same length, and 12:6 and 12:14 describe the same flight of the woman.
- They come from Daniel: "a time and times and the dividing of time" (Daniel 7:25); "a time, times, and an half" (Daniel 12:7).
- Victorinus already took the two witnesses' 1,260 days as "three years and six months."

Provisional answer. Direct statement that the three forms are equal. **Strong inference** that they are a literal three and a half years: Revelation counts them in days, then months, then "times," and each count agrees. A symbol would not need to be counted three ways. Bullinger argues the same.

Status. Settled.

Question 16. The thousand years (20:1-7)

The question. Is the thousand years a literal period after Christ's coming (premillennial)? The present age, symbolically (amillennial, Milligan)? Or a golden age before his coming (postmillennial)?

Readings.

1. *A literal thousand years after Christ's coming (Bullinger; Seiss; Larkin; Kelly; also the earliest fathers, whom Victorinus reports).*
2. *A symbol for the present age between Christ's first and second comings (Milligan: "the overthrow of Satan, and not the reign of a thousand years, is the main theme,").*
3. *A golden age of the gospel before his coming* (postmillennial).

What the text says.

- "A thousand years" is stated six times in seven verses (20:2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7).
- **The order of the text.** The beast and false prophet are cast into the lake (19:20). *Then* Satan is bound "that he should deceive the nations no more, till the thousand years should be fulfilled" (20:3). After the thousand years he is "loosed" (20:7) and "cast into the lake of fire ... where the beast and the false prophet are" (20:10).
- "They lived and reigned with Christ a thousand years. But the rest of the dead lived not again until the thousand years were finished. This is the first resurrection" (20:4-5).

Provisional answer.

- **Direct statement:** the binding follows the coming of 19:11-21 in the text's order, and its length is a thousand years.
- **Strong inference** that it follows that coming in time, because the beast is already in the lake before Satan is bound (19:20; 20:10, "where the beast and the false prophet *are*"). Reading 2 must take 20:1-3 back to the first coming against the order of 19:20–20:10.
- **Nothing is posited beyond the text.** This study states what the text says (when, how long, who reigns, who lives) and does not build a detailed millennial programme beyond it.

Status. Settled on the text's order. Anything beyond the text: not posited.

Question 17. The first resurrection and "the rest of the dead" (20:4-6)

The question. Is "the first resurrection" a bodily resurrection, or the new birth (amillennial reading)?

What the text says.

- "They lived" (20:4) is set against "the rest of the dead lived not again until the thousand years were finished" (20:5), and both together are called "the first resurrection" (20:5). The second group's living again is plainly bodily, at the judgment of 20:12-13. (Textual note: the Received Text behind the KJV reads the compound *anezēsan*, "lived again," in 20:5; the critical texts read *ezēsan*, the same verb as 20:4. Either way the contrast is between two groups of the dead coming to life at two times.)
- Those who "lived" were "beheaded for the witness of Jesus" (20:4). They had died.

Provisional answer. Strong inference: bodily resurrection in both verses. The two statements are set side by side, of people already dead, and the text gives no signal that the first is spiritual and the second bodily. How the first resurrection relates to the resurrections in Paul (1 Corinthians 15:23; 1 Thessalonians 4:16) is not decided here.

Status. Settled (bodily); its relation to Paul's resurrection order is provisional.

Question 18. The new Jerusalem: a city or a people? (21:9–22:5)

The question. Is the new Jerusalem a real city, or a picture of the redeemed?

What the text says.

- It is measured: "twelve thousand furlongs. The length and the breadth and the height of it are equal" (21:16); the wall is "an hundred and forty and four cubits" (21:17).
- It has gates, foundations, a street, and a river and a tree (21:12-22:2).
- It is also called "the bride, the Lamb's wife" (21:9).
- The nations walk in its light, and kings bring their glory into it (21:24). So there are people *outside* it as well as in it.

Provisional answer. Strong inference: a real city, given in measured detail. It is also the bride, as Jerusalem is often both a city and its people in the prophets. The nations outside it (21:24-26) show it is not simply the whole body of the redeemed. The city is a cube (21:16), like the most holy place (1 Kings 6:20): the dwelling of God with men, the end toward which Genesis 1:1 began.

Status. Provisional (Section P).

Question 19. The Nicolaitans (2:6, 15)

The question. Who were the Nicolaitans, whose "deeds" Ephesus hated (2:6) and whose "doctrine" some at Pergamos held (2:15)?

Readings.

1. *Followers of Nicolas of Antioch*, "a proselyte of Antioch," one of the seven chosen in Acts 6:5. Irenaeus says so (*Against Heresies* 1.26.3), followed by Hippolytus (*Refutation* 7.36). Clement of Alexandria knew of people in his day who claimed to follow Nicolas, but he acquits Nicolas himself of any part in their teaching (*Miscellanies* 2.20; 3.4; quoted by Eusebius, *Church History* 3.29). Victorinus describes them as men who, "under the name of Nicolaus," taught that meat offered to idols might be eaten and fornication forgiven.
2. *A party named by its meaning*, not by a founder. The Greek name joins *nikaō*, "to conquer," and *laos*, "the people": "conquerors of the people." Trench reads the Nicolaitans as the Balaamites under a Greek name: "The Nicolaitans, as we have seen, are the Balaamites ... those who in the New Dispensation repeated the sin of Balaam."

What the text says.

- The name occurs only at 2:6 and 2:15. The text never connects it with Nicolas of Acts 6:5.
- At Pergamos the Nicolaitans are set beside the teaching of Balaam: "So hast thou also them that hold the doctrine of the Nicolaitanes" (2:15), after "them that hold the doctrine of Balaam, who taught Balac to cast a stumblingblock before the children of Israel" (2:14). Balaam's Hebrew name is generally explained as "destroyer (swallower) of the people." The two names say much the same thing.
- The first half of the name is the word of every promise in the seven messages: "To him that overcometh" (*nikaō*, 2:7).
- At Ephesus there are "deeds" (2:6); at Pergamos, "doctrine" (2:15): a practice that became a teaching.

Answer. Reasonable inference: the name tells what they were, men who lorded it over God's people and led them into Balaam's sins for their own gain (Ezekiel 34:2-4; Matthew 20:25-26; 1 Peter 5:3). The tradition about Nicolas is late, is denied for Nicolas himself by Clement, and is not needed to understand the messages; Christ meant to be understood by the assemblies who heard Him. Whether a later sect took the name from these verses or from Nicolas does not change the meaning of the text.

Weight: **Reasonable inference** (meaning of the name); **Neutral** (the Nicolas tradition).

Status. Provisional.

Summary

#	Question	Verses	Provisional answer	Weight	Status
1	The Lord's day	1:10	The day of the Lord, into which John was carried in spirit; Scripture never calls the first day "the Lord's day," and Christ rose late on the sabbath	Strong inference	Settled
2	Sequence or recapitulation	8:1-2; 11:15; 15:1	Sequence of the three series, with parentheses	Strong inference	Provisional
3	Church caught up at 4:1?	4:1	John's own call; no more	Direct statement	Settled
4	The twenty-four elders	4:4; 5:9-10	Heavenly elders who lead heaven's worship; not risen saints	Strong inference	Provisional
5	The four beasts	4:6-8	Cherubim, in Ezekiel's and Isaiah's terms	Strong inference	Settled
6	Rider on the white horse	6:2	Not Christ; first of four judgments	Strong inference	Provisional
7	Souls under the altar	6:9-11	Vision of the slain; they live at the first resurrection	Reasonable inference / Direct statement	Provisional
8	The 144,000 and the multitude	7; 14:1-5	Israelites by tribe; a separate group from the multitude	Strong inference	Provisional
9	The two witnesses	11:3-12	Two real prophets; names not given	Direct statement / Abeyance	Settled / Abeyance
10	The woman and the man child	12:1-6	Israel; Christ	Strong inference	Settled
11	The beast	13; 17:8-11	A king and his kingdom; heads and wound held open	Strong inference / Abeyance	Settled / Abeyance
12	666	13:18	No solution adopted	—	Abeyance
13	Babylon	17–18	A real city called Babylon, judged as the prophets foretold	Strong / Reasonable inference	Provisional
14	The bride	19:7; 21:9	Shown as the city bearing Israel's tribes and the apostles; not named as the church of grace	Direct statement / Strong inference	Provisional
15	1,260 days and parallels	11:2-3; 12:6, 14; 13:5	Equal; literal three and a half years	Direct statement / Strong inference	Settled

#	Question	Verses	Provisional answer	Weight	Status
16	The thousand years	20:1-7	After the coming of 19:11-21; a thousand years; nothing posited beyond	Direct statement / Strong inference	Settled
17	The first resurrection	20:4-6	Bodily	Strong inference	Settled
18	The new Jerusalem	21:9–22:5	A real city, also the bride; nations outside it	Strong inference	Provisional
19	The Nicolaitans	2:6, 15	"Conquerors of the people," set beside Balaam; the Nicolas tradition not needed	Reasonable inference	Provisional

Appendix D — How Others Have Read Revelation

A. The four schools

Almost every commentary on Revelation belongs to one of four schools, or mixes them.

School	What it holds	Its best verses	Representative works
Preterist	Most of the book was fulfilled in the first century, in the fall of Jerusalem (A.D. 70) or of pagan Rome	"things which must shortly come to pass" (1:1); "the time is at hand" (1:3); an early date under Nero	Moses Stuart, *A Commentary on the Apocalypse* (1845)
Historicist	A continuous forecast of church history from John to the end; the days taken as years	the seven churches as eras; the 1,260 "days"	E. B. Elliott, *Horae Apocalypticae* (1844–62)
Futurist	From chapter 4 the book describes events still future: the Day of the Lord, the return of Christ, His reign	4:1; the Day of the Lord in the prophets; 1:7	Seiss, Kelly, Bullinger, Larkin, Ironside; Walvoord; R. L. Thomas
Idealist	The timeless conflict of God and evil, not particular events	the heavy symbolism; comfort for every generation	William Milligan, *The Book of Revelation* (1895)

Many modern scholars (G. K. Beale, Grant Osborne) call themselves eclectic: idealist in principle, futurist at the end. Steve Gregg, *Revelation: Four Views* (1997; revised 2013), sets the four side by side.

Where this study stands. Futurist from chapter 4. But it is the text, not the school, that decides each contested point (Appendix C), and the answers sometimes differ from those of other futurists. For example, this study does not take 4:1 as the gathering of the church (Question 3), nor the seven assemblies as ages of history (Appendix B).

B. The date

Two dates are argued. Irenaeus (about A.D. 180) says the vision was seen "towards the end of Domitian's reign" (*Against Heresies* 5.30.3), about A.D. 95. Others, especially preterists, argue for a date before A.D. 70, under Nero, from the measuring of the temple (11:1-2) and the count of seven kings (17:10). Some read Irenaeus's sentence as saying that *John* was seen, not the vision. This study follows the testimony of Irenaeus. Its reading of the book does not depend on the date, since it does not read the book as fulfilled in A.D. 70.

C. Structures others have proposed

Scheme	Proposed by	How this study uses it
Heaven and earth alternation	Bullinger	Adopted after testing (Appendix A)
"Seen, are, hereafter" (1:19)	Many futurists	Compatible at a coarser scale; not used as the structure (see 1:19 in Section A)
"In the spirit" (1:10; 4:2; 17:3; 21:10)	Bauckham and others	Kept as close-ups within members; the harlot and bride cities shown as a pair
Septets	Many	The numbered sevens are the backbone of the seals, trumpets and vials
Recapitulation	Victorinus, Augustine	True of the sections that step back; not of the three series, which follow one another (Appendix H)
Chiasm centred on chapter 12	Several modern scholars	Agrees that chapter 12 stands at the centre

D. The commentaries consulted

Public domain, consulted in full:

- **Futurist:** E. W. Bullinger, *The Apocalypse, or "The Day of the Lord"* (1909); J. A. Seiss, *The Apocalypse* (1913 edition); William Kelly, *Lectures on the Book of Revelation* (1861); Clarence Larkin, *The Book of Revelation* (1919); H. A. Ironside, *Lectures on the Book of Revelation* (1920).
- **Critical and Greek:** H. B. Swete, *The Apocalypse of St. John* (3rd ed., 1911); R. H. Charles, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Revelation of St. John* (1920); Henry Alford, *The Greek Testament*, vol. 4 (1874); H. C. Hoskier, *Concerning the Text of the Apocalypse* (1929).
- **Preterist and idealist:** Moses Stuart, *A Commentary on the Apocalypse* (1845); William Milligan, *The Book of Revelation* (1895).
- **Early church:** Victorinus, *Commentary on the Apocalypse* (in *Ante-Nicene Fathers*, vol. 7).
- **The seven churches:** R. C. Trench, *Commentary on the Epistles to the Seven Churches in Asia* (1886); W. M. Ramsay, *The Letters to the Seven Churches of Asia* (1904).
- **Notes and structures:** E. W. Bullinger, *The Companion Bible*, Revelation.

Modern works, for reference: John F. Walvoord, *The Revelation of Jesus Christ* (Moody, 1966); Robert L. Thomas, *Revelation 1–7* and *Revelation 8–22* (Moody, 1992, 1995); Robert H. Mounce, *The Book of*

Revelation (Eerdmans, 1977; revised 1998); G. K. Beale, *The Book of Revelation* (Eerdmans, 1999); David E. Aune, *Revelation* (Word, 1997–98); Grant R. Osborne, *Revelation* (Baker, 2002); Richard Bauckham, *The Climax of Prophecy* (T&T Clark, 1993); Henry M. Morris, *The Revelation Record* (Tyndale House and Creation-Life, 1983).

Appendix E — The Text of Revelation

A. The manuscripts

Revelation survives in about three hundred Greek manuscripts; the most recent survey (G. V. Allen, *Manuscripts of the Book of Revelation*, 2020) counts 314 containing all or part of it. The Gospels and Paul's letters survive in thousands. In 1929 H. C. Hoskier spoke of "the two hundred (plus) catalogued" in his day.

B. Erasmus and the last six verses

The Greek text behind the King James Version goes back, for Revelation, to the printed Greek New Testament of Erasmus (1516). Erasmus had only one Greek manuscript of Revelation (minuscule 2814), and its last leaf was missing. For 22:16b-21 he translated the Latin Vulgate into Greek. All Greek manuscripts before his printed text read "tree of life" at 22:19, where the King James Version, following his text, reads "book of life."

C. Readings noted in this study

Where the King James text differs from the Greek texts most modern translations follow, and the difference bears on understanding, the commentary notes it. The notes are gathered here.

Verse	King James reading	Many Greek texts	Where noted
1:11	"I am Alpha and Omega, the first and the last"; "which are in Asia"	both lacking	Section A
6:1, 3, 5, 7	"Come and see"	"Come"	Section D
1:5	"loved us, and washed us"	"loveth us"; the critical texts "loosed us"	Section A
1:6	"kings and priests"	"a kingdom, priests"	Section A
1:18	"Amen"	lacking in the critical texts	Section A
2:20	"that woman Jezebel"	the Majority text "thy wife Jezebel"	Section B
5:9	"hast redeemed us to God"	the Majority text "us"; the critical texts no "us"	Section C; Appendix C, Question 4
5:10	"made us … we shall reign"	Majority and critical texts "made them … they shall reign"	Section C; Appendix C, Question 4
6:17	"the great day of his wrath"	the critical texts "their wrath"	Section D

Verse	King James reading	Many Greek texts	Where noted
9:16	"two hundred thousand thousand"	the Majority text "ten thousand times ten thousand"	Section F
8:13	"an angel flying"	"an eagle flying"	Section F
11:15	"The kingdoms of this world are become"	"The kingdom of this world is become"	Section G
11:17	"and art to come"	lacking	Section G
11:19	"and an earthquake"	lacking in the Majority text	Section G
13:1	"I stood upon the sand of the sea"	the critical texts "he stood"	Section I
14:1	"his Father's name"	"his name and his Father's name"	Section J
14:5	"guile"; "before the throne of God"	"lie"; the words lacking	Section J
15:2	"and over his mark"	lacking	Section L
15:3	"King of saints"	"King of the nations"	Section L
16:5	"and shalt be"	"the Holy One"	Section M
16:7	"another out of the altar say"	"the altar say"	Section M
17:8	"and yet is"	"and shall be present" (or "shall come")	Section M
18:20	"ye holy apostles and prophets"	"ye saints, and ye apostles, and ye prophets"	Section M
21:24	"of them which are saved"	lacking	Section P
22:6	"the Lord God of the holy prophets"	"of the spirits of the prophets"	Section Q
22:14	"Blessed are they that do his commandments"	"Blessed are they that wash their robes"	Section Q
22:19	"the book of life"	"the tree of life"	Section Q; Part One, Chapter 10
22:21	"be with you all"	the Majority text "be with all the saints"	Section Q

"Many Greek texts" means the critical texts (the SBL Greek New Testament) and, unless the table says otherwise, the Majority (Byzantine) text as well, read in the Robinson-Pierpont edition. Where the two differ, the table names which one is meant.

D. How this study handles them

The King James text is printed as it stands throughout. Where another reading matters, the commentary says so in a sentence. None of these readings changes the message of the book.

Appendix F — The Old Testament in Revelation, Verse by Verse

How this list was made

1. **What Revelation does with the Old Testament.** Revelation never quotes the Old Testament with a formula ("as it is written"), yet Swete (1911, Introduction ch. XIII) judges that "no writer of the Apostolic age makes larger use of his predecessors," and notes that on Westcott and Hort's count 278 of the 404 verses contain references to the Jewish Scriptures. The book speaks in the Old Testament's own words without saying so; this list makes those words visible.
2. **Starting list.** The 2,296 Old Testament references the Treasury of Scripture Knowledge gives for Revelation. TSK lists parallels of every kind, many of them only a shared word.
3. **Test.** An entry is kept only where Revelation and the Old Testament passage share **distinctive wording or a distinctive image** that a reader can see in the KJV. Shared common words ("Lord," "day," "earth") and general themes were not enough. Allusions TSK lacks were added (marked "added" in the last column).
4. **Verified.** Every Old Testament reference was checked to exist and to contain the key wording; every phrase quoted in the third column was checked against the 1769 KJV text of both books by script (2026-10-02). Two quoted phrases come from a neighbouring verse and were checked by hand (Ps 79:5 at 6:10; Ps 2:5 at 11:18).
5. **Two grades.**

- **C — Clear.** The same distinctive words, or the same unusual image in the same combination (e.g., 1:14-15 and Daniel 10:6; 18:21 and Jeremiah 51:63-64).
- **P — Probable.** A shared image or phrase that fits well but is less distinctive, or where the wording differs in English (e.g., 1:4 and Exodus 3:14).

Weaker parallels were left out. A verse with no entry is not a verse without Old Testament background; it is a verse where no single passage stands out.

6. **What an entry claims.** That Revelation uses the Old Testament passage's words or picture. It does not claim that Revelation is fulfilling that passage, or that the two speak of the same event. Those questions belong to the commentary on each verse.

Totals

- **362 entries** on **244 verses** of Revelation: 282 clear, 80 probable.
- 291 are among TSK's references; 71 were added.
- By Old Testament book: Isaiah 85; Daniel 53; Ezekiel 49; Psalms 32; Jeremiah 27; Exodus 25; Zechariah 14; Genesis 14; Deuteronomy 9; Joel 8; 1 Kings 7; Numbers 6; Leviticus 5; Hosea 4; 2

Kings 4; Nahum 3; Zephaniah 3; Judges 2; Proverbs 2; Job 2; Song of Solomon 1; Nehemiah 1; Malachi 1; Joshua 1; Amos 1; Micah 1; Lamentations 1; 2 Samuel 1.

What the totals show. Revelation draws most from Isaiah, Daniel, Ezekiel, the Psalms, Jeremiah and Exodus, and the sources follow the subject:

- **The vision of Christ and the throne (chs 1, 4–5):** Daniel 7 and 10, Ezekiel 1, Isaiah 6.
- **The trumpets and vials (chs 8–9, 16):** the plagues of Egypt (Exodus 7–10).
- **The beast (chs 13, 17):** Daniel 7.
- **Babylon's fall (chs 17–18):** the oracles against Babylon (Isaiah 13, 21, 47; Jeremiah 50–51) and against Tyre (Ezekiel 26–27).
- **Gog and Magog (ch 20):** Ezekiel 38–39.
- **The new Jerusalem (chs 21–22):** Isaiah 60 and 65, Ezekiel 40–48, Genesis 2–3.

Credit for the starting list: *Cross-references adapted from the Treasury of Scripture Knowledge via CrossReferences.org (CC BY 4.0)*.

Section A — 1:1–1:20. The Introduction

Rev	Old Testament	What is shared (KJV: Revelation / Old Testament)	Grade	TSK
1:1	Daniel 2:28-29	"things which must shortly come to pass" / "what shall be in the latter days ... what should come to pass hereafter"; God "revealeth secrets"	C	yes
1:4	Exodus 3:14	"him which is, and which was, and which is to come" unfolds the divine name / "I AM THAT I AM"	P	yes
1:4	Zechariah 4:10	"the seven Spirits which are before his throne" / "those seven; they are the eyes of the LORD" (cf. 5:6)	P	yes
1:5	Psalms 89:27	"the first begotten ... the prince of the kings of the earth" / "my firstborn, higher than the kings of the earth"	C	yes
1:5	Psalms 89:37	"the faithful witness" / "as a faithful witness in heaven"	P	yes
1:6	Exodus 19:6	"made us kings and priests" / "a kingdom of priests"	C	yes
1:6	Isaiah 61:6	"priests unto God" / "ye shall be named the Priests of the LORD"	P	yes
1:7	Daniel 7:13	"he cometh with clouds" / "one like the Son of man came with the clouds of heaven"	C	yes
1:7	Zechariah 12:10	"they also which pierced him: and all kindreds of the earth shall wail" / "they shall look upon me whom they have pierced, and they shall mourn for him"	C	yes
1:8	Isaiah 41:4	"Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the ending" / "I the LORD, the first, and with the last"	P	yes
1:12	Zechariah 4:2	"seven golden candlesticks" / "a candlestick all of gold ... and his seven lamps"	P	yes
1:13	Daniel 7:13	"one like unto the Son of man" / "one like the Son of man"	C	yes

Rev	Old Testament	What is shared (KJV: Revelation / Old Testament)	Grade	TSK
1:13	Daniel 10:5	"girt about the paps with a golden girdle" / "clothed in linen, whose loins were girded with fine gold"	C	yes
1:14	Daniel 7:9	"his hairs were white like wool" / "the hair of his head like the pure wool"	C	yes
1:14	Daniel 10:6	"his eyes were as a flame of fire" / "his eyes as lamps of fire"	C	yes
1:15	Daniel 10:6	"his feet like unto fine brass" / "his feet like in colour to polished brass"	C	yes
1:15	Ezekiel 43:2	"his voice as the sound of many waters" / "his voice was like a noise of many waters"	C	yes
1:16	Isaiah 49:2	"out of his mouth went a sharp twoedged sword" / "he hath made my mouth like a sharp sword"	C	yes
1:16	Judges 5:31	"his countenance was as the sun shineth in his strength" / "as the sun when he goeth forth in his might"	P	added
1:17	Daniel 10:12	John falls as dead; "Fear not" / Daniel on his face, then "Fear not, Daniel" (10:9-12)	P	yes
1:17	Isaiah 44:6	"I am the first and the last" / "I am the first, and I am the last"	C	yes
1:17	Isaiah 48:12	same title	C	yes
1:18	Hosea 13:14	"the keys of hell and of death" / "I will ransom them from the power of the grave"	P	added

Section B — 2:1–3:22. The Seven Messages

Rev	Old Testament	What is shared (KJV: Revelation / Old Testament)	Grade	TSK
2:7	Genesis 2:9	"the tree of life, which is in the midst of the paradise of God" / "the tree of life also in the midst of the garden"	C	yes
2:10	Daniel 1:12	"ye shall have tribulation ten days" / "Prove thy servants … ten days"	P	added
2:14	Numbers 31:16	"the doctrine of Balaam, who taught Balac" / "through the counsel of Balaam"	C	yes
2:14	Numbers 25:1-2	"to eat things sacrificed unto idols, and to commit fornication" / "commit whoredom … the people did eat, and bowed down to their gods"	C	yes
2:17	Exodus 16:33	"the hidden manna" / the manna laid up before the LORD	P	added
2:17	Isaiah 62:2	"a new name written" / "thou shalt be called by a new name"	C	added
2:18	Daniel 10:6	"eyes like unto a flame of fire, and his feet are like fine brass" / "eyes as lamps of fire … polished brass"	C	added
2:20	1 Kings 16:31	"that woman Jezebel" / Ahab "took to wife Jezebel … and served Baal"	C	yes
2:20	2 Kings 9:22	"to commit fornication" / "the whoredoms of thy mother Jezebel and her witchcrafts"	C	added

Rev	Old Testament	What is shared (KJV: Revelation / Old Testament)	Grade	TSK
2:23	Jeremiah 17:10	"he which searcheth the reins and hearts" / "I the LORD search the heart, I try the reins"	C	yes
2:23	Psalms 62:12	"unto every one of you according to your works" / "thou renderest to every man according to his work"	C	yes
2:27	Psalms 2:9	"rule them with a rod of iron; as the vessels of a potter shall they be broken" / "break them with a rod of iron; thou shalt dash them in pieces like a potter's vessel"	C	yes
2:28	Numbers 24:17	"the morning star" (cf. 22:16) / "there shall come a Star out of Jacob"	P	added
3:5	Exodus 32:32-33	"I will not blot out his name out of the book of life" / "blot me, I pray thee, out of thy book"	C	yes
3:5	Daniel 12:1	"the book of life" / "every one that shall be found written in the book"	P	added
3:7	Isaiah 22:22	"he that hath the key of David, he that openeth, and no man shutteth" / "the key of the house of David … he shall open, and none shall shut"	C	yes
3:9	Isaiah 60:14	"come and worship before thy feet" / "bow themselves down at the soles of thy feet"	C	yes
3:9	Isaiah 43:4	"to know that I have loved thee" / "and I have loved thee"	P	added
3:12	Ezekiel 48:35	"the name of the city of my God" / "the name of the city … shall be, The LORD is there"	C	added
3:12	Isaiah 65:15	"my new name" / "call his servants by another name"	P	yes
3:14	Isaiah 65:16	"the Amen, the faithful and true witness" / "the God of truth" (Hebrew: the God of Amen)	P	yes
3:14	Proverbs 8:22	"the beginning of the creation of God" / "The LORD possessed me in the beginning of his way"	P	added
3:17	Hosea 12:8	"I am rich, and increased with goods" / "Yet I am become rich, I have found me out substance"	C	yes
3:18	Isaiah 55:1	"buy of me gold … white raiment … eyesalve" / "come, buy wine and milk without money"	P	yes
3:19	Proverbs 3:12	"As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten" / "whom the LORD loveth he correcteth"	C	yes
3:20	Song of Solomon 5:2	"I stand at the door, and knock" / "the voice of my beloved that knocketh, saying, Open to me"	P	yes

Section C — 4:1–5:14. In Heaven: the Throne, the Book, and the Lamb

Rev	Old Testament	What is shared (KJV: Revelation / Old Testament)	Grade	TSK
4:1	Ezekiel 1:1	"a door was opened in heaven" / "the heavens were opened, and I saw visions of God"	P	added

Rev	Old Testament	What is shared (KJV: Revelation / Old Testament)	Grade	TSK
4:2	1 Kings 22:19	"a throne was set in heaven, and one sat on the throne" / "I saw the LORD sitting on his throne, and all the host of heaven"	C	added
4:2	Isaiah 6:1	same scene / "I saw also the Lord sitting upon a throne"	C	yes
4:2	Ezekiel 1:26	same scene / "the likeness of a throne ... the likeness as the appearance of a man above upon it"	C	yes
4:3	Ezekiel 1:28	"a rainbow round about the throne" / "As the appearance of the bow that is in the cloud ... round about"	C	yes
4:5	Exodus 19:16	"lightnings and thunderings and voices" / "thunders and lightnings ... and the voice of the trumpet" at Sinai	C	yes
4:5	Ezekiel 1:13	"seven lamps of fire burning" / "like the appearance of lamps ... the fire was bright, and out of the fire went forth lightning"	P	yes
4:6	Ezekiel 1:22	"a sea of glass like unto crystal" / "the firmament ... as the colour of the terrible crystal"	C	yes
4:6	Ezekiel 1:5	"four beasts" (Greek: living ones) / "four living creatures"	C	yes
4:6	Ezekiel 1:18	"full of eyes before and behind" / "their rings were full of eyes round about"	C	yes
4:7	Ezekiel 1:10	lion, calf, man, eagle / "the face of a man, and the face of a lion ... ox ... eagle"	C	yes
4:8	Isaiah 6:2	"each of them six wings" / "each one had six wings"	C	yes
4:8	Isaiah 6:3	"Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty" / "Holy, holy, holy, is the LORD of hosts"	C	yes
4:9	Daniel 4:34	"to him ... who liveth for ever and ever" / "I praised and honoured him that liveth for ever"	P	added
4:11	Nehemiah 9:6	"thou hast created all things" / "thou hast made heaven ... the earth, and all things that are therein"	P	added
5:1	Ezekiel 2:9-10	"a book written within and on the backside" / "a roll of a book ... written within and without"	C	yes
5:1	Isaiah 29:11	"sealed with seven seals" / "as the words of a book that is sealed"	C	yes
5:1	Daniel 12:4	sealed book / "shut up the words, and seal the book, even to the time of the end"	C	yes
5:5	Genesis 49:9	"the Lion of the tribe of Juda" / "Judah is a lion's whelp ... as an old lion"	C	yes
5:5	Isaiah 11:10	"the Root of David" / "there shall be a root of Jesse"	C	yes
5:6	Isaiah 53:7	"a Lamb as it had been slain" / "he is brought as a lamb to the slaughter"	C	yes
5:6	Zechariah 4:10	"seven eyes, which are the seven Spirits of God sent forth into all the earth" / "those seven; they are the eyes of the LORD, which run to and fro through the whole earth"	C	yes
5:8	Psalms 141:2	"golden vials full of odours, which are the prayers of saints" / "Let my prayer be set forth before thee as incense"	C	yes
5:9	Psalms 33:3	"they sung a new song" / "Sing unto him a new song"	C	yes

Rev	Old Testament	What is shared (KJV: Revelation / Old Testament)	Grade	TSK
5:9	Psalms 144:9	same / "I will sing a new song unto thee, O God"	C	yes
5:9	Isaiah 42:10	same / "Sing unto the LORD a new song, and his praise from the end of the earth"	C	yes
5:10	Exodus 19:6	"kings and priests" / "a kingdom of priests"	C	yes
5:11	Daniel 7:10	"ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousands of thousands" / "thousand thousands ministered unto him, and ten thousand times ten thousand stood before him"	C	yes

Section D — 6:1–7:8. On Earth: the Six Seals and the Sealing

Rev	Old Testament	What is shared (KJV: Revelation / Old Testament)	Grade	TSK
6:2	Zechariah 6:3	white, red, black and pale horses / "in the third chariot white horses; and in the fourth chariot grisled and bay horses" (6:2-3; cf. 1:8)	C	yes
6:4	Zechariah 6:2	red horse / "In the first chariot were red horses; and in the second chariot black horses"	C	yes
6:8	Ezekiel 14:21	"to kill with sword, and with hunger, and with death, and with the beasts of the earth" / "my four sore judgments … the sword, and the famine, and the noisome beast, and the pestilence"	C	yes
6:9	Leviticus 4:7	"under the altar the souls of them that were slain" / blood poured "at the bottom of the altar"	P	yes
6:10	Psalms 79:10	"How long … dost thou not judge and avenge our blood" / "the revenging of the blood of thy servants which is shed" (cf. 79:5 "How long, LORD?")	C	added
6:10	Deuteronomy 32:43	same / "he will avenge the blood of his servants"	C	yes
6:12	Joel 2:31	"the sun became black … the moon became as blood" / "The sun shall be turned into darkness, and the moon into blood"	C	yes
6:13	Isaiah 34:4	"the stars … fell … as a fig tree casteth her untimely figs" / "all their host shall fall down … as a falling fig from the fig tree"	C	yes
6:14	Isaiah 34:4	"the heaven departed as a scroll when it is rolled together" / "the heavens shall be rolled together as a scroll"	C	yes
6:15	Isaiah 2:19	"hid themselves in the dens and in the rocks of the mountains" / "they shall go into the holes of the rocks … for fear of the LORD"	C	yes
6:16	Hosea 10:8	"said to the mountains and rocks, Fall on us, and hide us" / "they shall say to the mountains, Cover us; and to the hills, Fall on us"	C	yes
6:17	Joel 2:11	"the great day of his wrath is come; and who shall be able to stand?" / "the day of the LORD is great and very terrible; and who can abide it?"	C	yes
6:17	Malachi 3:2	same / "who may abide the day of his coming? and who shall stand when he appeareth?"	C	yes
6:17	Nahum 1:6	same / "Who can stand before his indignation?"	C	added

Rev	Old Testament	What is shared (KJV: Revelation / Old Testament)	Grade	TSK
7:1	Ezekiel 7:2	"four angels standing on the four corners of the earth" / "the end is come upon the four corners of the land"	C	yes
7:1	Daniel 7:2	"holding the four winds of the earth" / "the four winds of the heaven strove upon the great sea"	P	yes
7:3	Ezekiel 9:4	"till we have sealed the servants of our God in their foreheads" / "set a mark upon the foreheads of the men that sigh and that cry"	C	added

Section E — 7:9–8:6. In Heaven: the Great Multitude and the Seventh Seal

Rev	Old Testament	What is shared (KJV: Revelation / Old Testament)	Grade	TSK
7:14	Daniel 12:1	"they which came out of great tribulation" / "a time of trouble, such as never was"	P	added
7:14	Genesis 49:11	"washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb" / "he washed his garments in wine" (Judah)	P	added
7:15	Leviticus 26:11	"he that sitteth on the throne shall dwell among them" (Greek: tabernacle) / "I will set my tabernacle among you"	P	added
7:16	Isaiah 49:10	"They shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more; neither shall the sun light on them, nor any heat" / "They shall not hunger nor thirst; neither shall the heat nor sun smite them"	C	yes
7:17	Isaiah 49:10	"shall lead them unto living fountains of waters" / "by the springs of water shall he guide them"	C	yes
7:17	Isaiah 25:8	"God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes" / "the Lord GOD will wipe away tears from off all faces"	C	yes
7:17	Psalms 23:2	"the Lamb … shall feed them" / "he leadeth me beside the still waters"	P	yes
7:17	Ezekiel 34:23	same / "one shepherd over them … he shall feed them"	P	yes
8:1	Zephaniah 1:7	"there was silence in heaven" / "Hold thy peace at the presence of the Lord GOD: for the day of the LORD is at hand"	P	added
8:2	Joshua 6:4	"to them were given seven trumpets" / "seven priests shall bear before the ark seven trumpets"	P	added
8:3	Exodus 30:1	"the golden altar which was before the throne" / "thou shalt make an altar to burn incense upon" (overlaid with gold, 30:3)	P	yes
8:5	Leviticus 16:12	"the angel took the censer, and filled it with fire of the altar" / "a censer full of burning coals of fire from off the altar"	C	added
8:5	Ezekiel 10:2	"cast it into the earth" / "fill thine hand with coals of fire … and scatter them over the city"	C	yes

Section F — 8:7–11:14. On Earth: the Six Trumpets

Rev	Old Testament	What is shared (KJV: Revelation / Old Testament)	Grade	TSK
8:7	Exodus 9:23-24	"hail and fire mingled with blood" / "fire mingled with the hail"	C	yes
8:8	Exodus 7:20-21	"the third part of the sea became blood; and the third part of the creatures … died" / "the waters … were turned to blood. And the fish … died"	C	yes
8:8	Jeremiah 51:25	"a great mountain burning with fire" / "will make thee a burnt mountain" (Babylon)	P	yes
8:10	Isaiah 14:12	"there fell a great star from heaven" / "How art thou fallen from heaven, O Lucifer"	P	yes
8:11	Jeremiah 9:15	"the name of the star is called Wormwood … many men died of the waters, because they were made bitter" / "I will feed them … with wormwood, and give them water of gall to drink"	C	yes
8:12	Exodus 10:21-23	the third part of sun, moon and stars darkened / "darkness over the land of Egypt"	C	yes
9:2	Genesis 19:28	"a smoke out of the pit, as the smoke of a great furnace" / "the smoke of the country went up as the smoke of a furnace"	C	yes
9:3	Exodus 10:12-15	"there came out of the smoke locusts upon the earth" / the plague of locusts on Egypt	C	yes
9:4	Ezekiel 9:4	"only those men which have not the seal of God in their foreheads" / "set a mark upon the foreheads"	C	yes
9:6	Job 3:21	"men seek death, and shall not find it; and shall desire to die, and death shall flee from them" / "Which long for death, but it cometh not"	C	yes
9:7	Joel 2:4	"the shapes of the locusts were like unto horses prepared unto battle" / "The appearance of them is as the appearance of horses"	C	yes
9:8	Joel 1:6	"their teeth were as the teeth of lions" / "whose teeth are the teeth of a lion"	C	yes
9:9	Joel 2:5	"the sound of their wings was as the sound of chariots" / "Like the noise of chariots on the tops of mountains"	C	yes
9:11	Job 26:6	"Abaddon" / "destruction (Hebrew abaddon) hath no covering"	P	added
9:14	Genesis 15:18	"the great river Euphrates" / "the great river, the river Euphrates"	P	added
9:20	Daniel 5:23	"idols of gold, and silver, and brass, and stone, and of wood: which neither can see, nor hear, nor walk" / "the gods of silver, and gold, of brass, iron, wood, and stone, which see not, nor hear"	C	yes
9:20	Psalms 115:4-7	same / "Their idols are silver and gold … eyes have they, but they see not"	C	yes
9:20	Deuteronomy 32:17	"that they should not worship devils" / "They sacrificed unto devils, not to God"	P	yes
10:1	Ezekiel 1:28	"a rainbow was upon his head" / "the bow that is in the cloud"	P	yes

Rev	Old Testament	What is shared (KJV: Revelation / Old Testament)	Grade	TSK
10:3	Hosea 11:10	"cried with a loud voice, as when a lion roareth" / "he shall roar like a lion"	P	added
10:4	Daniel 8:26	"Seal up those things which the seven thunders uttered" / "wherefore shut thou up the vision"	C	yes
10:5	Daniel 12:7	"lifted up his hand to heaven, and sware by him that liveth for ever and ever" / "held up his right hand and his left hand unto heaven, and sware by him that liveth for ever"	C	yes
10:6	Exodus 20:11	"who created heaven ... the earth ... and the sea, and the things which are therein" / "the LORD made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that in them is"	C	yes
10:7	Amos 3:7	"as he hath declared to his servants the prophets" / "he revealeth his secret unto his servants the prophets"	C	added
10:9	Ezekiel 3:1-3	"Take it, and eat it up ... in thy mouth sweet as honey" / "eat this roll ... it was in my mouth as honey for sweetness"	C	yes
10:10	Ezekiel 3:14	"my belly was bitter" / "I went in bitterness, in the heat of my spirit"	P	yes
10:11	Jeremiah 1:10	"prophesy again before many peoples, and nations" / "I have this day set thee over the nations and over the kingdoms"	P	yes
11:1	Ezekiel 40:3	"there was given me a reed like unto a rod ... measure the temple" / "a line of flax in his hand, and a measuring reed"	C	yes
11:1	Zechariah 2:1-2	same / "a man with a measuring line in his hand ... To measure Jerusalem"	C	yes
11:2	Daniel 8:13	"the holy city shall they tread under foot" / "to give both the sanctuary and the host to be trodden under foot"	P	added
11:4	Zechariah 4:3	"These are the two olive trees, and the two candlesticks" / "two olive trees by it"	C	yes
11:4	Zechariah 4:14	"standing before the God of the earth" / "the two anointed ones, that stand by the Lord of the whole earth"	C	yes
11:5	2 Kings 1:10	"fire proceedeth out of their mouth, and devoureth their enemies" / "let fire come down from heaven, and consume thee" (Elijah)	C	yes
11:5	Jeremiah 5:14	same / "I will make my words in thy mouth fire ... and it shall devour them"	C	yes
11:6	1 Kings 17:1	"power to shut heaven, that it rain not" / "there shall not be dew nor rain these years" (Elijah)	C	yes
11:6	Exodus 7:19-20	"power over waters to turn them to blood" / Moses: "that they may become blood"	C	added
11:7	Daniel 7:21	"the beast ... shall make war against them, and shall overcome them" / "the same horn made war with the saints, and prevailed against them"	C	yes
11:8	Isaiah 1:10	"the great city, which spiritually is called Sodom" / Jerusalem addressed: "ye rulers of Sodom"	P	yes

Rev	Old Testament	What is shared (KJV: Revelation / Old Testament)	Grade	TSK
11:11	Ezekiel 37:10	"the Spirit of life from God entered into them, and they stood upon their feet" / "the breath came into them, and they lived, and stood up upon their feet"	C	yes
11:12	2 Kings 2:11	"they ascended up to heaven in a cloud" / "Elijah went up by a whirlwind into heaven"	C	yes

Section G — 11:15–11:19. In Heaven: the Seventh Trumpet

Rev	Old Testament	What is shared (KJV: Revelation / Old Testament)	Grade	TSK
11:15	Exodus 15:18	"he shall reign for ever and ever" / "The LORD shall reign for ever and ever"	C	yes
11:15	Daniel 2:44	"The kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of our Lord" / "the God of heaven set up a kingdom … it shall stand for ever"	C	yes
11:15	Daniel 7:14	same / "his dominion is an everlasting dominion"	C	yes
11:15	Psalms 2:2	"our Lord, and of his Christ" / "against the LORD, and against his anointed"	P	added
11:17	Psalms 99:1	"thou hast taken to thee thy great power, and hast reigned" / "The LORD reigneth; let the people tremble"	P	added
11:18	Psalms 2:1	"the nations were angry, and thy wrath is come" / "Why do the heathen rage" (and 2:5 "his wrath")	C	yes
11:18	Psalms 115:13	"them that fear thy name, small and great" / "He will bless them that fear the LORD, both small and great"	C	yes
11:19	1 Kings 8:6	"there was seen in his temple the ark of his testament" / "the ark of the covenant of the LORD unto his place, into the oracle"	P	added

Section H — 12:1–12:12. In Heaven: the Woman, the Child, and the Dragon

Rev	Old Testament	What is shared (KJV: Revelation / Old Testament)	Grade	TSK
12:1	Genesis 37:9	"a woman clothed with the sun, and the moon under her feet, and upon her head a crown of twelve stars" / Joseph's dream: "the sun and the moon and the eleven stars"	C	added
12:2	Micah 4:10	"she … cried, travailing in birth, and pained to be delivered" / "Be in pain, and labour to bring forth, O daughter of Zion"	C	added
12:2	Isaiah 26:17	same / "Like as a woman with child … is in pain, and crieth out in her pangs"	P	added
12:3	Daniel 7:7	"a great red dragon, having seven heads and ten horns" / the fourth beast "had ten horns"	C	yes

Rev	Old Testament	What is shared (KJV: Revelation / Old Testament)	Grade	TSK
12:4	Daniel 8:10	"his tail drew the third part of the stars of heaven, and did cast them to the earth" / "it cast down some of the host and of the stars to the ground"	C	yes
12:5	Isaiah 66:7	"she brought forth a man child" / "she was delivered of a man child"	C	added
12:5	Psalms 2:9	"who was to rule all nations with a rod of iron" / "Thou shalt break them with a rod of iron"	C	yes
12:7	Daniel 10:13	"Michael and his angels fought" / "Michael, one of the chief princes, came to help me"	C	yes
12:7	Daniel 12:1	same / "shall Michael stand up, the great prince"	C	yes
12:9	Genesis 3:1	"that old serpent, called the Devil, and Satan" / "Now the serpent was more subtil"	C	yes
12:10	Zechariah 3:1	"the accuser of our brethren … which accused them before our God" / "Satan standing at his right hand to resist him" (Hebrew: to accuse); cf. Job 1:9-11	C	yes
12:12	Isaiah 44:23	"Therefore rejoice, ye heavens" / "Sing, O ye heavens; for the LORD hath done it"	C	added

Section I — 12:13–13:18. On Earth: the Dragon and the Two Beasts

Rev	Old Testament	What is shared (KJV: Revelation / Old Testament)	Grade	TSK
12:14	Exodus 19:4	"to the woman were given two wings of a great eagle, that she might fly into the wilderness" / "I bare you on eagles' wings"	C	yes
12:14	Daniel 7:25	"for a time, and times, and half a time" / "until a time and times and the dividing of time"	C	yes
12:14	Daniel 12:7	same / "for a time, times, and an half"	C	yes
12:16	Numbers 16:32	"the earth opened her mouth, and swallowed up the flood" / "the earth opened her mouth, and swallowed them up"	P	added
12:17	Genesis 3:15	"the dragon was wroth with the woman … the remnant of her seed" / "I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed"	P	yes
13:1	Daniel 7:3	"a beast rise up out of the sea, having seven heads and ten horns" / "four great beasts came up from the sea"	C	yes
13:2	Daniel 7:6	"like unto a leopard" / "another, like a leopard"	C	yes
13:2	Daniel 7:5	"his feet were as the feet of a bear" / "another beast … like to a bear"	C	yes
13:2	Daniel 7:4	"his mouth as the mouth of a lion" / "The first was like a lion"	C	yes
13:5	Daniel 7:8	"a mouth speaking great things and blasphemies" / "a mouth speaking great things"	C	yes
13:5	Daniel 7:25	same; "forty and two months" / "speak great words against the most High … until a time and times and the dividing of time"	C	yes

Rev	Old Testament	What is shared (KJV: Revelation / Old Testament)	Grade	TSK
13:7	Daniel 7:21	"to make war with the saints, and to overcome them" / "made war with the saints, and prevailed against them"	C	yes
13:8	Psalms 69:28	"whose names are not written in the book of life" / "Let them be blotted out of the book of the living"	P	added
13:10	Jeremiah 15:2	"He that leadeth into captivity shall go into captivity: he that killeth with the sword must be killed with the sword" / "such as are for the sword, to the sword … such as are for the captivity, to the captivity"	C	yes
13:13	1 Kings 18:38	"he maketh fire come down from heaven" / "Then the fire of the LORD fell" (cf. 2 Kgs 1:10)	P	yes
13:14	Deuteronomy 13:1-3	"deceiveth them … by the means of those miracles" / a prophet who "giveth thee a sign or a wonder" to lead after other gods	C	yes
13:15	Daniel 3:5-6	"as many as would not worship the image of the beast should be killed" / "worship the golden image … whoso falleth not down and worshippeth shall … be cast into … a burning fiery furnace"	C	added
13:18	1 Kings 10:14	"his number is Six hundred threescore and six" / Solomon's gold: "six hundred threescore and six talents" (same number; no allusion shown)	P	added

Section J — 14:1–14:5. In Heaven: the Lamb and the 144,000

Rev	Old Testament	What is shared (KJV: Revelation / Old Testament)	Grade	TSK
14:1	Psalms 2:6	"a Lamb stood on the mount Sion" / "Yet have I set my king upon my holy hill of Zion"	C	yes
14:1	Joel 2:32	same / "in mount Zion and in Jerusalem shall be deliverance"	P	yes
14:2	Ezekiel 43:2	"as the voice of many waters" / "his voice was like a noise of many waters"	C	yes
14:5	Zephaniah 3:13	"in their mouth was found no guile: for they are without fault" / "The remnant of Israel shall not do iniquity, nor speak lies; neither shall a deceitful tongue be found in their mouth"	C	yes
14:5	Isaiah 53:9	same / "neither was any deceit in his mouth"	P	yes

Section K — 14:6–14:20. On Earth: the Six Angels

Rev	Old Testament	What is shared (KJV: Revelation / Old Testament)	Grade	TSK
14:7	Exodus 20:11	"worship him that made heaven, and earth, and the sea" / "the LORD made heaven and earth, the sea"	C	yes
14:8	Isaiah 21:9	"Babylon is fallen, is fallen" / "Babylon is fallen, is fallen"	C	yes

Rev	Old Testament	What is shared (KJV: Revelation / Old Testament)	Grade	TSK
14:8	Jeremiah 51:7	"she made all nations drink of the wine … of her fornication" / "Babylon hath been a golden cup … the nations have drunken of her wine"	C	yes
14:10	Psalms 75:8	"the wine of the wrath of God, which is poured out without mixture into the cup" / "in the hand of the LORD there is a cup, and the wine is red; it is full of mixture"	C	yes
14:10	Isaiah 51:17	same / "which hast drunk at the hand of the LORD the cup of his fury"	C	yes
14:10	Genesis 19:24	"tormented with fire and brimstone" / "the LORD rained upon Sodom … brimstone and fire"	C	yes
14:11	Isaiah 34:10	"the smoke of their torment ascendeth up for ever and ever: and they have no rest day nor night" / "It shall not be quenched night nor day; the smoke thereof shall go up for ever"	C	yes
14:14	Daniel 7:13	"upon the cloud one sat like unto the Son of man" / "one like the Son of man came with the clouds of heaven"	C	yes
14:15	Joel 3:13	"Thrust in thy sickle, and reap … the harvest of the earth is ripe" / "Put ye in the sickle, for the harvest is ripe"	C	yes
14:18	Joel 3:13	"gather the clusters of the vine of the earth; for her grapes are fully ripe" / "come, get you down; for the press is full, the fats overflow"	C	yes
14:19	Isaiah 63:3	"the great winepress of the wrath of God" / "I have trodden the winepress alone … I will tread them in mine anger"	C	yes
14:19	Lamentations 1:15	same / "the Lord hath trodden the virgin … as in a winepress"	C	yes
14:20	Isaiah 63:3	"blood came out of the winepress" / "their blood shall be sprinkled upon my garments"	P	yes

Section L — 15:1–15:8. In Heaven: the Seven Last Plagues

Rev	Old Testament	What is shared (KJV: Revelation / Old Testament)	Grade	TSK
15:1	Leviticus 26:21	"seven angels having the seven last plagues" / "I will bring seven times more plagues upon you"	P	added
15:3	Exodus 15:1	"they sing the song of Moses the servant of God" / "Then sang Moses and the children of Israel this song unto the LORD"	C	yes
15:3	Psalms 139:14	"Great and marvellous are thy works" / "marvellous are thy works"	C	yes
15:3	Deuteronomy 32:4	"just and true are thy ways" / "all his ways are judgment … just and right is he"	C	yes
15:3	Psalms 145:17	same / "The LORD is righteous in all his ways"	C	yes
15:4	Jeremiah 10:7	"Who shall not fear thee, O Lord" / "Who would not fear thee, O King of nations?"	C	yes

Rev	Old Testament	What is shared (KJV: Revelation / Old Testament)	Grade	TSK
15:4	Psalms 86:9	"all nations shall come and worship before thee" / "All nations whom thou hast made shall come and worship before thee"	C	yes
15:5	Numbers 1:50	"the temple of the tabernacle of the testimony" / "the tabernacle of testimony"	C	yes
15:8	Exodus 40:34-35	"the temple was filled with smoke from the glory of God ... no man was able to enter into the temple" / "the glory of the LORD filled the tabernacle. And Moses was not able to enter"	C	yes
15:8	1 Kings 8:10-11	same / "the cloud filled the house ... the priests could not stand to minister"	C	yes
15:8	Isaiah 6:4	same / "the house was filled with smoke"	C	yes

Section M — 16:1–18:24. On Earth: the Seven Vials and the Fall of Babylon

Rev	Old Testament	What is shared (KJV: Revelation / Old Testament)	Grade	TSK
16:1	Zephaniah 3:8	"pour out the vials of the wrath of God upon the earth" / "to pour upon them mine indignation, even all my fierce anger"	C	added
16:1	Psalms 69:24	same / "Pour out thine indignation upon them"	C	added
16:1	Jeremiah 10:25	same / "Pour out thy fury upon the heathen"	C	added
16:2	Exodus 9:10-11	"a noisome and grievous sore upon the men" / "a boil breaking forth with blains upon man"	C	yes
16:3	Exodus 7:20-21	"the sea ... became as the blood of a dead man: and every living soul died in the sea" / "the waters ... were turned to blood. And the fish ... died"	C	yes
16:4	Exodus 7:19	"the rivers and fountains of waters; and they became blood" / "upon their streams, upon their rivers ... that they may become blood"	C	yes
16:5	Psalms 119:137	"Thou art righteous, O Lord ... because thou hast judged thus" / "Righteous art thou, O LORD, and upright are thy judgments"	C	added
16:6	Isaiah 49:26	"thou hast given them blood to drink" / "they shall be drunken with their own blood"	C	yes
16:7	Psalms 19:9	"true and righteous are thy judgments" / "the judgments of the LORD are true and righteous altogether"	C	added
16:10	Exodus 10:21-22	"his kingdom was full of darkness" / "a thick darkness in all the land of Egypt"	C	yes
16:12	Jeremiah 50:38	"the great river Euphrates; and the water thereof was dried up" / "A drought is upon her waters; and they shall be dried up" (Babylon)	C	yes
16:12	Isaiah 11:15	same / "with his mighty wind shall he shake his hand over the river, and shall smite it in the seven streams"	C	yes
16:12	Isaiah 44:27	same / "That saith to the deep, Be dry, and I will dry up thy rivers" (before Cyrus, 44:28)	P	yes

Rev	Old Testament	What is shared (KJV: Revelation / Old Testament)	Grade	TSK
16:13	Exodus 8:6	"three unclean spirits like frogs" / "the frogs came up, and covered the land of Egypt"	P	yes
16:16	Zechariah 12:11	"Armageddon" (Hebrew: mount of Megiddo) / "the mourning … in the valley of Megiddon"	C	yes
16:16	Judges 5:19	same / "fought the kings of Canaan in Taanach by the waters of Megiddo"	P	yes
16:18	Daniel 12:1	"a great earthquake, such as was not since men were upon the earth" / "a time of trouble, such as never was since there was a nation"	P	yes
16:19	Jeremiah 25:15	"the cup of the wine of the fierceness of his wrath" / "Take the wine cup of this fury at my hand"	C	yes
16:21	Exodus 9:23-25	"a great hail out of heaven … the plague of the hail" / the hail on Egypt, "very grievous"	C	yes
17:1	Jeremiah 51:13	"the great whore that sitteth upon many waters" / "O thou that dwellest upon many waters" (Babylon)	C	yes
17:1	Nahum 3:4	same / "the whoredoms of the wellfavoured harlot, the mistress of witchcrafts" (Nineveh)	C	yes
17:2	Isaiah 23:17	"the kings of the earth have committed fornication" / "shall commit fornication with all the kingdoms of the world" (Tyre)	C	added
17:2	Jeremiah 51:7	"made drunk with the wine of her fornication" / "a golden cup … that made all the earth drunken"	C	yes
17:3	Daniel 7:7	"a scarlet coloured beast … having seven heads and ten horns" / "it had ten horns"	C	added
17:4	Jeremiah 51:7	"having a golden cup in her hand" / "Babylon hath been a golden cup in the LORD's hand"	C	yes
17:5	Daniel 4:30	"BABYLON THE GREAT" / "Is not this great Babylon, that I have built"	P	added
17:12	Daniel 7:24	"the ten horns which thou sawest are ten kings" / "the ten horns out of this kingdom are ten kings"	C	yes
17:14	Deuteronomy 10:17	"he is Lord of lords, and King of kings" / "God of gods, and Lord of lords"	C	yes
17:14	Daniel 2:47	same / "a God of gods, and a Lord of kings"	P	yes
17:15	Isaiah 8:7	"The waters which thou sawest … are peoples, and multitudes, and nations" / "the waters of the river, strong and many, even the king of Assyria"	P	yes
17:16	Ezekiel 23:29	"shall make her desolate and naked, and shall eat her flesh, and burn her with fire" / "shall leave thee naked and bare"	C	added
17:16	Ezekiel 16:39	same / "they shall strip thee also of thy clothes … and leave thee naked and bare"	P	yes
18:1	Ezekiel 43:2	"the earth was lightened with his glory" / "the earth shined with his glory"	C	yes

Rev	Old Testament	What is shared (KJV: Revelation / Old Testament)	Grade	TSK
18:2	Isaiah 21:9	"Babylon the great is fallen, is fallen" / "Babylon is fallen, is fallen"	C	yes
18:2	Isaiah 13:21	"the habitation of devils, and the hold of every foul spirit, and a cage of every unclean and hateful bird" / "wild beasts of the desert shall lie there ... owls shall dwell there, and satyrs shall dance there" (Babylon)	C	yes
18:2	Jeremiah 50:39	same / "the wild beasts of the desert ... and the owls shall dwell therein"	C	yes
18:2	Isaiah 34:14	same / "the satyr shall cry to his fellow; the screech owl also shall rest there"	P	yes
18:3	Jeremiah 51:7	"all nations have drunk of the wine of the wrath of her fornication" / "the nations have drunken of her wine; therefore the nations are mad"	C	yes
18:4	Jeremiah 51:45	"Come out of her, my people" / "My people, go ye out of the midst of her"	C	yes
18:4	Isaiah 48:20	same / "Go ye forth of Babylon, flee ye from the Chaldeans"	C	yes
18:4	Jeremiah 50:8	same / "Remove out of the midst of Babylon"	C	yes
18:4	Isaiah 52:11	same / "Depart ye, depart ye, go ye out from thence, touch no unclean thing"	C	yes
18:5	Jeremiah 51:9	"her sins have reached unto heaven" / "her judgment reacheth unto heaven"	C	yes
18:6	Jeremiah 50:29	"Reward her even as she rewarded you, and double unto her double according to her works" / "according to all that she hath done, do unto her"	C	yes
18:6	Jeremiah 50:15	same / "take vengeance upon her; as she hath done, do unto her"	C	yes
18:6	Psalms 137:8	same / "O daughter of Babylon ... happy shall he be, that rewardeth thee as thou hast served us"	C	yes
18:7	Isaiah 47:8	"I sit a queen, and am no widow, and shall see no sorrow" / "I shall not sit as a widow, neither shall I know the loss of children" (Babylon)	C	yes
18:7	Isaiah 47:7	same / "I shall be a lady for ever"	C	yes
18:8	Isaiah 47:9	"her plagues come in one day, death, and mourning, and famine" / "these two things shall come to thee in a moment in one day, the loss of children, and widowhood"	C	yes
18:8	Jeremiah 50:34	"strong is the Lord God who judgeth her" / "Their Redeemer is strong; the LORD of hosts is his name"	C	yes
18:9	Ezekiel 26:16-17	"the kings of the earth ... shall bewail her, and lament for her" / "the princes of the sea ... shall take up a lamentation for thee" (Tyre)	C	yes
18:11	Ezekiel 27:36	"the merchants of the earth shall weep and mourn over her" / "The merchants among the people shall hiss at thee"	C	yes

Rev	Old Testament	What is shared (KJV: Revelation / Old Testament)	Grade	TSK
18:12	Ezekiel 27:12	"merchandise of gold, and silver, and precious stones" / Tyre's trade: "with silver, iron, tin, and lead" (the list continues 27:13-24)	C	yes
18:13	Ezekiel 27:13	"slaves, and souls of men" / "they traded the persons of men and vessels of brass"	C	yes
18:17	Ezekiel 27:29	"every shipmaster, and all the company in ships, and sailors" / "all that handle the oar, the mariners, and all the pilots of the sea"	C	yes
18:18	Ezekiel 27:32	"What city is like unto this great city!" / "What city is like Tyrus"	C	yes
18:19	Ezekiel 27:30	"they cast dust on their heads, and cried, weeping and wailing" / "shall cast up dust upon their heads"	C	yes
18:20	Jeremiah 51:48	"Rejoice over her, thou heaven" / "the heaven and the earth, and all that is therein, shall sing for Babylon"	C	yes
18:21	Jeremiah 51:63-64	"a mighty angel took up a stone like a great millstone, and cast it into the sea, saying, Thus with violence shall that great city Babylon be thrown down" / "bind a stone to it, and cast it into the midst of Euphrates: And thou shalt say, Thus shall Babylon sink"	C	yes
18:22	Ezekiel 26:13	"the voice of harpers ... shall be heard no more at all in thee" / "the sound of thy harps shall be no more heard" (Tyre)	C	yes
18:22	Jeremiah 25:10	"the sound of a millstone shall be heard no more at all in thee" / "the sound of the millstones, and the light of the candle"	C	yes
18:23	Jeremiah 25:10	"the light of a candle ... the voice of the bridegroom and of the bride shall be heard no more at all in thee" / "the voice of the bridegroom, and the voice of the bride ... and the light of the candle"	C	yes
18:23	Isaiah 23:8	"thy merchants were the great men of the earth" / Tyre, "whose traffickers are the honourable of the earth"	C	yes
18:23	Nahum 3:4	"by thy sorceries were all nations deceived" / "that selleth nations through her whoredoms, and families through her witchcrafts"	C	yes
18:24	Jeremiah 51:49	"in her was found the blood of prophets, and of saints, and of all that were slain upon the earth" / "so at Babylon shall fall the slain of all the earth"	C	yes

Section N — 19:1–19:16. In Heaven: the Marriage of the Lamb, and the Rider

Rev	Old Testament	What is shared (KJV: Revelation / Old Testament)	Grade	TSK
19:2	Deuteronomy 32:43	"hath avenged the blood of his servants at her hand" / "he will avenge the blood of his servants"	C	yes

Rev	Old Testament	What is shared (KJV: Revelation / Old Testament)	Grade	TSK
19:2	2 Kings 9:7	same / "that I may avenge the blood of my servants the prophets … at the hand of Jezebel"	C	added
19:3	Isaiah 34:10	"her smoke rose up for ever and ever" / "the smoke thereof shall go up for ever"	C	yes
19:5	Psalms 134:1	"Praise our God, all ye his servants" / "bless ye the LORD, all ye servants of the LORD"	C	yes
19:5	Psalms 115:13	"ye that fear him, both small and great" / "them that fear the LORD, both small and great"	C	added
19:6	Psalms 97:1	"Alleluia: for the Lord God omnipotent reigneth" / "The LORD reigneth; let the earth rejoice"	C	yes
19:6	Ezekiel 1:24	"as the voice of many waters" / "like the noise of great waters"	C	yes
19:7	Isaiah 61:10	"his wife hath made herself ready" / "as a bride adorneth herself with her jewels"	P	yes
19:8	Isaiah 61:10	"arrayed in fine linen, clean and white: for the fine linen is the righteousness of saints" / "he hath covered me with the robe of righteousness"	C	yes
19:8	Psalms 132:9	same / "Let thy priests be clothed with righteousness"	P	yes
19:11	Isaiah 11:4	"in righteousness he doth judge and make war" / "with righteousness shall he judge the poor"	C	yes
19:11	Ezekiel 1:1	"I saw heaven opened" / "the heavens were opened"	P	added
19:12	Daniel 10:6	"His eyes were as a flame of fire" / "his eyes as lamps of fire"	C	added
19:13	Isaiah 63:2-3	"a vesture dipped in blood" / "Wherefore art thou red in thine apparel … their blood shall be sprinkled upon my garments"	C	yes
19:15	Isaiah 11:4	"out of his mouth goeth a sharp sword, that with it he should smite the nations" / "he shall smite the earth with the rod of his mouth"	C	yes
19:15	Psalms 2:9	"he shall rule them with a rod of iron" / "Thou shalt break them with a rod of iron"	C	yes
19:15	Isaiah 63:3	"he treadeth the winepress of the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God" / "I have trodden the winepress alone"	C	yes
19:16	Deuteronomy 10:17	"KING OF KINGS, AND LORD OF LORDS" / "God of gods, and Lord of lords"	C	added

Section O — 19:17–20:15. On Earth: the Final Five Judgments

Rev	Old Testament	What is shared (KJV: Revelation / Old Testament)	Grade	TSK
19:17	Ezekiel 39:17	"he cried … to all the fowls that fly … Come and gather yourselves together unto the supper of the great God" / "Speak unto every feathered fowl … Assemble yourselves … to my sacrifice"	C	yes

Rev	Old Testament	What is shared (KJV: Revelation / Old Testament)	Grade	TSK
19:18	Ezekiel 39:18	"eat the flesh of kings, and the flesh of captains, and the flesh of mighty men" / "Ye shall eat the flesh of the mighty, and drink the blood of the princes"	C	yes
19:19	Psalms 2:2	"the kings of the earth, and their armies, gathered together to make war against him" / "The kings of the earth set themselves … against the LORD, and against his anointed"	C	added
19:20	Daniel 7:11	"These both were cast alive into a lake of fire burning with brimstone" / "the beast was slain, and his body destroyed, and given to the burning flame"	C	yes
19:20	Isaiah 30:33	same / Tophet: "the breath of the LORD, like a stream of brimstone, doth kindle it"	P	yes
19:21	Ezekiel 39:4	"all the fowls were filled with their flesh" / "I will give thee unto the ravenous birds of every sort"	P	added
20:2	Isaiah 24:22	"bound him a thousand years, and cast him into the bottomless pit, and shut him up" / "as prisoners are gathered in the pit, and shall be shut up in the prison, and after many days shall they be visited"	C	added
20:2	Genesis 3:1	"that old serpent, which is the Devil, and Satan" / "Now the serpent was more subtil"	C	added
20:4	Daniel 7:9	"I saw thrones, and they sat upon them" / "I beheld till the thrones were cast down" (Aramaic: set in place)	C	yes
20:4	Daniel 7:22	"judgment was given unto them … they lived and reigned with Christ" / "judgment was given to the saints of the most High; and the time came that the saints possessed the kingdom"	C	yes
20:6	Isaiah 61:6	"they shall be priests of God and of Christ" / "ye shall be named the Priests of the LORD"	P	yes
20:8	Ezekiel 38:2	"Gog and Magog, to gather them together to battle" / "Gog, the land of Magog"	C	yes
20:8	Genesis 22:17	"the number of whom is as the sand of the sea" / "as the sand which is upon the sea shore"	P	added
20:9	Ezekiel 38:22	"fire came down from God out of heaven, and devoured them" / "I will rain upon him … an overflowing rain, and great hailstones, fire, and brimstone"	C	yes
20:9	Ezekiel 39:6	same / "I will send a fire on Magog"	C	yes
20:11	Daniel 7:9	"a great white throne, and him that sat on it" / "his throne was like the fiery flame"	C	added
20:11	Daniel 2:35	"the earth and the heaven fled away; and there was found no place for them" / "no place was found for them"	C	yes
20:12	Daniel 7:10	"the books were opened" / "the judgment was set, and the books were opened"	C	yes
20:13	Isaiah 26:19	"the sea gave up the dead which were in it; and death and hell delivered up the dead" / "the earth shall cast out the dead"	P	added

Rev	Old Testament	What is shared (KJV: Revelation / Old Testament)	Grade	TSK
20:14	Isaiah 25:8	"death and hell were cast into the lake of fire" / "He will swallow up death in victory"	P	added

Section P — 21:1–22:5. The People of the New Earth

Rev	Old Testament	What is shared (KJV: Revelation / Old Testament)	Grade	TSK
21:1	Isaiah 65:17	"a new heaven and a new earth: for the first heaven and the first earth were passed away" / "I create new heavens and a new earth: and the former shall not be remembered"	C	yes
21:1	Isaiah 66:22	same / "the new heavens and the new earth, which I will make"	C	yes
21:2	Isaiah 52:1	"the holy city, new Jerusalem" / "O Jerusalem, the holy city"	C	yes
21:2	Isaiah 61:10	"prepared as a bride adorned for her husband" / "as a bride adorneth herself with her jewels"	C	yes
21:3	Ezekiel 37:27	"the tabernacle of God is with men, and he will dwell with them, and they shall be his people" / "My tabernacle also shall be with them: yea, I will be their God, and they shall be my people"	C	yes
21:3	Leviticus 26:11-12	same / "I will set my tabernacle among you … I will walk among you, and will be your God, and ye shall be my people"	C	yes
21:4	Isaiah 25:8	"God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death" / "He will swallow up death in victory; and the Lord GOD will wipe away tears from off all faces"	C	yes
21:4	Isaiah 35:10	"neither sorrow, nor crying" / "sorrow and sighing shall flee away"	C	yes
21:4	Isaiah 65:19	same / "the voice of weeping shall be no more heard in her, nor the voice of crying"	C	yes
21:5	Isaiah 43:19	"Behold, I make all things new" / "Behold, I will do a new thing"	C	yes
21:6	Isaiah 55:1	"I will give unto him that is athirst of the fountain of the water of life freely" / "Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters … without money"	C	yes
21:7	2 Samuel 7:14	"I will be his God, and he shall be my son" / "I will be his father, and he shall be my son"	C	added
21:10	Ezekiel 40:2	"he carried me away in the spirit to a great and high mountain, and shewed me that great city" / "In the visions of God brought he me … and set me upon a very high mountain, by which was as the frame of a city"	C	yes
21:11	Isaiah 60:1	"Having the glory of God" / "the glory of the LORD is risen upon thee"	P	yes
21:12	Ezekiel 48:31	"twelve gates … names written thereon, which are the names of the twelve tribes" / "the gates of the city shall be after the names of the tribes of Israel" (48:31-34)	C	yes
21:15	Ezekiel 40:3	"a golden reed to measure the city" / "a measuring reed"	C	added

Rev	Old Testament	What is shared (KJV: Revelation / Old Testament)	Grade	TSK
21:16	Ezekiel 48:20	"the city lieth foursquare" / "ye shall offer the holy oblation foursquare"	C	yes
21:18	Isaiah 54:11-12	"the foundations of the wall ... garnished with all manner of precious stones" / "lay thy foundations with sapphires ... thy gates of carbuncles, and all thy borders of pleasant stones"	C	yes
21:19	Exodus 28:17-20	twelve stones (jasper, sapphire, ... amethyst) / the twelve stones of the high priest's breastplate, one for each tribe (28:21)	P	yes
21:23	Isaiah 60:19-20	"the city had no need of the sun, neither of the moon ... for the glory of God did lighten it, and the Lamb is the light thereof" / "The sun shall be no more thy light by day ... the LORD shall be unto thee an everlasting light"	C	yes
21:24	Isaiah 60:3	"the nations ... shall walk in the light of it: and the kings of the earth do bring their glory and honour into it" / "the Gentiles shall come to thy light, and kings to the brightness of thy rising"	C	yes
21:25	Isaiah 60:11	"the gates of it shall not be shut at all by day: for there shall be no night there" / "thy gates shall be open continually; they shall not be shut day nor night"	C	yes
21:25	Zechariah 14:7	same / "it shall come to pass, that at evening time it shall be light"	P	yes
21:26	Isaiah 60:5	"they shall bring the glory and honour of the nations into it" / "the forces of the Gentiles shall come unto thee" (cf. 60:11)	C	added
21:27	Isaiah 52:1	"there shall in no wise enter into it any thing that defileth" / "there shall no more come into thee the uncircumcised and the unclean"	C	yes
22:1	Ezekiel 47:1	"a pure river of water of life ... proceeding out of the throne" / "waters issued out from under the threshold of the house"	C	yes
22:1	Zechariah 14:8	same / "living waters shall go out from Jerusalem"	C	yes
22:2	Ezekiel 47:12	"the tree of life, which bare twelve manner of fruits, and yielded her fruit every month: and the leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations" / "it shall bring forth new fruit according to his months ... the fruit thereof shall be for meat, and the leaf thereof for medicine"	C	yes
22:2	Genesis 2:9	"the tree of life" / "the tree of life also in the midst of the garden"	C	yes
22:3	Zechariah 14:11	"there shall be no more curse" / "there shall be no more utter destruction (Hebrew: curse, ban)"	C	yes
22:3	Genesis 3:17	same / "cursed is the ground for thy sake"	P	added
22:4	Psalms 17:15	"they shall see his face" / "I will behold thy face in righteousness" (contrast Exod 33:20)	P	yes
22:5	Isaiah 60:19	"they need no candle, neither light of the sun; for the Lord God giveth them light" / "the LORD shall be unto thee an everlasting light"	C	yes
22:5	Daniel 7:18	"they shall reign for ever and ever" / "the saints of the most High shall take the kingdom, and possess the kingdom for ever"	C	yes

Section Q — 22:6–22:21. The Conclusion

Rev	Old Testament	What is shared (KJV: Revelation / Old Testament)	Grade	TSK
22:10	Daniel 12:4	"Seal not the sayings of the prophecy of this book: for the time is at hand" / Daniel told: "shut up the words, and seal the book, even to the time of the end" (contrast)	C	yes
22:11	Daniel 12:10	"He that is unjust, let him be unjust still" / "the wicked shall do wickedly: and none of the wicked shall understand"	C	yes
22:12	Isaiah 40:10	"my reward is with me, to give every man according as his work shall be" / "behold, his reward is with him, and his work before him"	C	yes
22:12	Isaiah 62:11	same / "Behold, thy salvation cometh; behold, his reward is with him"	C	yes
22:13	Isaiah 44:6	"Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end, the first and the last" / "I am the first, and I am the last"	C	yes
22:14	Genesis 3:22	"that they may have right to the tree of life" / "lest he … take also of the tree of life, and eat, and live for ever" (the way reopened)	C	added
22:16	Isaiah 11:1	"I am the root and the offspring of David" / "there shall come forth a rod out of the stem of Jesse, and a Branch shall grow out of his roots" (cf. 11:10)	C	yes
22:16	Numbers 24:17	"the bright and morning star" / "there shall come a Star out of Jacob"	C	yes
22:17	Isaiah 55:1	"let him that is athirst come. And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely" / "Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters … without money and without price"	C	yes
22:18	Deuteronomy 4:2	"If any man shall add unto these things … if any man shall take away" / "Ye shall not add unto the word which I command you, neither shall ye diminish ought from it"	C	yes
22:18	Deuteronomy 12:32	same / "thou shalt not add thereto, nor diminish from it"	C	yes

Appendix G — Seals, Trumpets and Vials Side by Side, with the Plagues of Egypt

The three series follow one another: the seventh seal opens into the seven trumpets (8:1-2), and the seventh trumpet leads on to the seven vials, "the seven last plagues" (15:1). The trumpets strike a third; the vials strike the whole. Many of the trumpets and vials repeat the plagues of Egypt.

	Seals (6:1–8:1)	Trumpets (8:7–11:19)	Vials (16)	Plagues of Egypt
1	White horse: a conqueror (6:2)	Hail and fire mingled with blood on the earth; a third of trees burnt (8:7)	On the earth: a grievous sore on the beast's worshippers (16:2)	Hail and fire (7th plague, Exodus 9:23-24); boils (6th, Exodus 9:10)
2	Red horse: war (6:4)	A burning mountain cast into the sea; a third of the sea blood (8:8-9)	On the sea: all of it blood (16:3)	Water to blood (1st, Exodus 7:20-21)
3	Black horse: famine (6:5-6)	Wormwood falls on a third of the rivers (8:10-11)	On the rivers: blood (16:4-7)	Water to blood (1st)
4	Pale horse: death, a fourth of the earth (6:8)	A third of sun, moon and stars darkened (8:12)	On the sun: men scorched (16:8-9)	Darkness (9th, Exodus 10:21-23)
5	The souls under the altar (6:9-11)	First woe: locusts from the abyss (9:1-12)	On the beast's throne: darkness (16:10-11)	Locusts (8th, Exodus 10:12-15); darkness (9th)
6	Earthquake; sun black, moon as blood, stars fall (6:12-17)	Second woe: the Euphrates angels; the horsemen; a third of men killed (9:13-21)	On the Euphrates: dried up; the kings gathered to Armageddon (16:12-16)	Frogs (2nd, Exodus 8:6) in 16:13
7	Silence; the seven trumpets given (8:1-2)	Third woe: "The kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of our Lord" (11:15-19)	Into the air: "It is done"; the great earthquake; great hail (16:17-21)	Hail (7th)

The close of each series. Each seventh ends with the signs of Sinai, each time greater: voices, thunderings, lightnings and an earthquake (8:5); with great hail added (11:19); and "a great earthquake, such as was not since men were upon the earth" and hail of a talent's weight (16:18-21).

The response of men. After the trumpets, "the rest of the men … repented not" (9:20-21). After the vials, men "blasphemed God" and "repented not of their deeds" (16:9, 11, 21).

Appendix H — The Order of the Book and the Order of Events

The book is told in the order of its message. The three series of judgments follow one another in time; around them, some sections pause, look back, announce ahead, or look closer (Part One, Chapter 8 §D).

In the book	What happens	How it relates to the order of events
1–3	The vision of Christ; the seven messages	John's own day
4–5	The throne; the Lamb takes the book	In heaven, before the judgments begin
6:1–7:8	Six seals; 144,000 sealed	The judgments begin, in order

In the book	What happens	How it relates to the order of events
7:9-17	The great multitude	A pause between the sixth and seventh seals; shows those who came out of the great tribulation, already before the throne
8:1–9:21	The seventh seal opens into the trumpets; trumpets 1–6	In order, following the seals
10:1–11:13	The little book; the two witnesses	A pause within the sixth trumpet; the witnesses' 1,260 days run during the time of trouble
11:15-19	The seventh trumpet	In order; the kingdom announced ahead of its coming in chapter 19
12:1-6	The woman and the man child	Looks back to the birth and ascension of Christ
12:7–13:18	The war in heaven; the dragon cast down; the two beasts	The background of the last three and a half years
14	The Lamb on Sion; the angels; Babylon's fall announced; harvest and vintage	Announces ahead what chapters 16–19 tell in full
15–16	The seven vials	In order, following the seventh trumpet
17–18	The whore and the fall of Babylon	A close-up of the seventh vial (16:19)
19:1-10	Heaven's Alleluias; the marriage of the Lamb	Follows the fall of Babylon
19:11-21	The Rider on the white horse; the beast taken	The coming of the King
20:1-10	Satan bound; the thousand years; Satan loosed and judged	After the coming, in order
20:11-15	The great white throne	After the thousand years
21:1–22:5	The new heaven and the new earth; the holy city	After the judgment of the dead
22:6-21	The conclusion	Returns to John and the reader

Appendix I — Symbols, Numbers, Heavenly Voices, and the Titles of Christ

A. Symbols the book explains itself

Verse	The sign	What the book says it is
1:20	Seven stars	"the angels of the seven churches"
1:20	Seven golden candlesticks	"the seven churches"
4:5	Seven lamps of fire	"the seven Spirits of God"
5:6	Seven horns and seven eyes of the Lamb	"the seven Spirits of God sent forth into all the earth"
5:8	Golden vials full of odours	"the prayers of saints"

Verse	The sign	What the book says it is
11:4	Two olive trees, two candlesticks	the two witnesses, "standing before the God of the earth"
12:9	The great dragon	"that old serpent, called the Devil, and Satan"
16:14	Three unclean spirits like frogs	"the spirits of devils, working miracles"
17:9	Seven heads	"seven mountains, on which the woman sitteth"
17:10	Seven heads	"seven kings"
17:12	Ten horns	"ten kings"
17:15	The waters	"peoples, and multitudes, and nations, and tongues"
17:18	The woman	"that great city, which reigneth over the kings of the earth"
19:8	Fine linen, clean and white	"the righteousness of saints"
20:14	The lake of fire	"the second death"
21:9-10	The bride, the Lamb's wife	shown as "that great city, the holy Jerusalem"

B. Numbers

Meanings follow E. W. Bullinger, *Number in Scripture*, where Scripture's own use bears them out (Part One, Chapter 5 §D). Each number is explained again where it stands in Part Two, in the paragraph headed *The number*.

Number	Where	What is counted	Meaning
One	4:2; 17:13; 18:8, 10, 17, 19	One on the throne; one mind; one day; one hour	Unity; the one God. "One hour": sudden and short
Two	1:16; 11:3-4, 10; 12:14; 13:11	Two edges; two witnesses, olive trees, candlesticks; two wings; two horns	Witness (Deuteronomy 19:15); difference, division
Three	4:8; 8:13; 16:13, 19; 21:13	"Holy" thrice; three woes; three unclean spirits; the city in three parts; three gates each side	Divine perfection: what is complete, solid, entire
Four	4:6-8; 5:13; 6:1-8; 7:1; 9:13-15; 20:8	Living creatures; four ascriptions; horsemen; corners, winds, angels; horns of the altar; quarters of the earth	The earth and all created things
Five	9:5, 10; 17:10	Five months of the locusts; five kings fallen	A measured, limited time (the 150 days of Genesis 7:24)
Six	4:8; 13:18	Six wings; 666	Six wings: the pattern of the seraphim (Isaiah 6:2). Six: man, falling short of seven

Number	Where	What is counted	Meaning
Seven	54 times: assemblies, Spirits, stars, lamps, seals, horns, eyes, angels, trumpets, thunders, heads, crowns, plagues, vials, mountains, kings; 7,000 slain (11:13)		Spiritual perfection: what God does, made full and complete (Genesis 2:2)
Eight	17:11; 21:20	"The eighth" king; the eighth foundation	A new beginning: the beast's is a counterfeit
Ten	2:10; 12:3; 13:1; 17:3, 7, 12, 16	Ten days; ten horns; ten crowns; ten kings	Ordinal perfection: a full round; a complete time of testing
Twelve	7:5-8; 12:1; 21:12-21; 22:2	Tribes; stars; gates, angels, foundations, apostles, pearls; fruits	Governmental perfection: God's rule rightly ordered
Twenty-four	4:4, 10; 5:8, 14; 11:16; 19:4	Elders and thrones	The ordered worship of heaven (1 Chronicles 24–25)
42 months; 1,260 days; time, times and half	11:2-3; 12:6, 14; 13:5	The time of the trouble	Three years and a half: half of seven, Daniel's half-week (Daniel 9:27); 42 = 6 × 7
Three and a half days	11:9, 11	The witnesses unburied	The same broken half, a day for a year
A fourth part	6:8	Of the earth	A measured share: the limit God sets
A third part	8:7-12; 9:15, 18; 12:4	Of trees, sea, ships, rivers, lights; of men; of stars	A measured share: warning judgments, partial (Zechariah 13:8; Ezekiel 5:12)
A tenth part	11:13	Of the city	A measured share; the tithe
Half an hour	8:1	Silence in heaven	A short, counted stillness
Hour, day, month, year	9:15	The appointed moment	One fixed moment, prepared by God
A thousand; ten thousand times ten thousand	5:11; 9:16	Angels; horsemen	Ten carried as far as it goes: beyond counting (Daniel 7:10)
144,000	7:4; 14:1, 3	The sealed of Israel	12 × 12 × 1,000: Israel's twelve made full
1,600 furlongs	14:20	The blood of the winepress	About 184 miles; 40 × 40, or 4 × 4 × 100: the whole land
666	13:18	The number of the beast	"The number of a man"; not solved (Appendix C, Question 12)
A thousand years	20:2-7 (six times)	Satan bound; the reign with Christ	A full and great time, taken as stated; after the coming of the King
12,000 furlongs	21:16	Each measure of the city: length, breadth, height	About 1,380 miles; twelve made great, in three equal measures: the cube

Number	Where	What is counted	Meaning
144 cubits	21:17	The wall	12 × 12; about 216 feet

C. The heavenly voices and songs

Verse	Who	What they say or sing
4:8	The four living creatures	"Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty, which was, and is, and is to come"
4:11	The twenty-four elders	"Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honour and power: for thou hast created all things"
5:9-10	The living creatures and elders	The new song: "Thou art worthy to take the book ... for thou wast slain"
5:12	Many angels	"Worthy is the Lamb that was slain"
5:13	Every creature	"Blessing, and honour, and glory, and power, be unto him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb"
7:10	The great multitude	"Salvation to our God which sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb"
7:12	All the angels	"Amen: Blessing, and glory, and wisdom, and thanksgiving, and honour, and power, and might, be unto our God"
11:15	Great voices in heaven	"The kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of our Lord, and of his Christ"
11:17-18	The elders	"We give thee thanks, O LORD God Almighty"
12:10-12	A loud voice in heaven	"Now is come salvation, and strength, and the kingdom of our God"
14:3	The 144,000	A new song no one else could learn
15:3-4	The victors over the beast	The song of Moses and of the Lamb: "Great and marvellous are thy works"
16:5-7	The angel of the waters; the altar	"Thou art righteous, O Lord"; "true and righteous are thy judgments"
19:1-3	Much people in heaven	"Alleluia; Salvation, and glory, and honour, and power, unto the Lord our God"
19:4	The elders and living creatures	"Amen; Alleluia"
19:6-7	A great multitude	"Alleluia: for the Lord God omnipotent reigneth ... the marriage of the Lamb is come"

D. The titles of Jesus Christ in Revelation

Title	Verse
The faithful witness	1:5
The first begotten of the dead	1:5
The prince of the kings of the earth	1:5
One like unto the Son of man	1:13; 14:14

Title	Verse
The first and the last	1:17; 2:8; 22:13
He that liveth, and was dead	1:18; 2:8
He that holdeth the seven stars	2:1
He which hath the sharp sword with two edges	2:12
The Son of God	2:18
He that hath the seven Spirits of God	3:1
He that is holy, he that is true	3:7
He that hath the key of David	3:7
The Amen, the faithful and true witness	3:14
The beginning of the creation of God	3:14
The Lion of the tribe of Juda	5:5
The Root of David	5:5
The Lamb	5:6 and twenty-seven more times
His Christ (the Lord's Anointed)	11:15; 12:10
The man child	12:5
Lord of lords, and King of kings	17:14; 19:16
Faithful and True	19:11
The Word of God	19:13
Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end	22:13 (with 1:11 in the King James text)
The root and the offspring of David	22:16
The bright and morning star	22:16

Appendix J — The Claims of This Study, Their Weight, and What Would Change Its Mind

A. The claims

#	Claim	Weight	What the other readings fairly answer
1	Revelation is the revelation *of Jesus Christ*: given by God to Him, and about Him (1:1).	Direct statement	—
2	From chapter 4 the book describes events still future.	Strong inference, from 1:19, 4:1 ("things which must be hereafter"), and the absence of any fulfilment matching the vials, the white throne, or the new creation	Preterists read "shortly" (1:1) and "at hand" (1:3) as requiring first-century fulfilment
3	Bullinger's heaven-and-earth structure is the book's own design.	Strong inference (Appendix A)	Other structures fit parts of the book (Appendix D)
4	The book interprets itself first, then the rest of Scripture.	Direct statement for the sixteen signs it explains (Appendix I)	Some signs are left unexplained, and there outside help is sought
5	Revelation was sent to real assemblies of John's day, but spoken to them in the terms of the Day of the Lord, not of grace.	Direct statement (sent to them, 1:4, 11); strong inference (the terms)	Bullinger: the assemblies are future; others: the terms are simply warnings to any church (Appendix B)
6	The three series of judgments follow one another; other sections pause, look back, announce ahead, or look closer.	Strong inference, from 8:1-2 and 15:1 ("last")	Recapitulation: the series tell the same period three times (Appendix C, Question 2)
7	Revelation completes what Genesis began and the prophets foretold.	Strong inference (Part One, Chapter 9; Appendix F)	—

B. What would change this study's mind

- **On the recipients:** a text showing that "send it unto the seven churches which are in Asia" (1:11) did not mean real assemblies of John's day, or that Antipas's death (2:13) is foreseen rather than remembered. None exists.
- **On the order of the judgments:** a text showing the vials happening before or alongside the trumpets, against "the seven last plagues" (15:1). None exists.
- **On the thousand years:** a text placing the binding of Satan before the beast is cast into the lake of fire, against the order of 19:20 and 20:10. None exists.
- **On the woman of chapter 12:** a text in which the woman is born of the child, rather than the child of the woman. None exists.

- **On Babylon:** an explicit statement in the text that Babylon is another named city. None exists; the angel names her Babylon (17:5).

Appendix K — Glossary of Greek and Hebrew Words

Word	Language	Meaning	Where
Abaddon	Hebrew	Destruction; the name of the angel of the abyss	9:11; Job 26:6
abussos	Greek	The abyss, the bottomless pit	9:1; 11:7; 17:8; 20:1, 3
Alleluia	Hebrew	"Praise ye the LORD"	19:1, 3, 4, 6
Alpha, Omega	Greek	The first and last letters of the Greek alphabet	1:8; 21:6; 22:13
Amen	Hebrew	Truly; so be it	1:6-7; 3:14; 22:20-21
angelos	Greek	Messenger; angel	1:20 and throughout
apokalupsis	Greek	Unveiling; revelation	1:1
Apollyon	Greek	Destroyer	9:11
Armageddon	Hebrew	The mount of Megiddo	16:16
chlōros	Greek	Pale, greenish-grey	6:8
diadēma	Greek	A royal crown	12:3; 13:1; 19:12
dēnarion	Greek	A penny; a day's wage	6:6
ekklēsia	Greek	Assembly; church	1:4 and chapters 2–3
hadēs	Greek	The grave; the state of the dead (Hebrew *sheol*)	1:18; 6:8; 20:13-14
kuriakē	Greek	Belonging to the Lord	1:10
nikaō	Greek	To overcome, to conquer	2–3; 21:7
pantokratōr	Greek	The Almighty, ruler over all	1:8 and eight more times
pharmakeia	Greek	Sorcery	9:21; 18:23
psuchē	Greek	Soul; life; person	6:9; 20:4
Satan	Hebrew	Adversary	12:9; 20:2
sēmainō	Greek	To signify, to show by a sign	1:1
sēmeion	Greek	A sign	12:1, 3; 15:1
skēnoō	Greek	To dwell as in a tent; to tabernacle	7:15; 21:3
stephanos	Greek	A victor's crown, a wreath	2:10; 6:2
zōon	Greek	Living creature ("beast" in the King James Version)	4:6-9

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Images. The map was drawn for this study from Natural Earth public-domain map data. The woodcuts are from Albrecht Dürer's *Apocalypse* (Nuremberg, 1498), in the public domain.

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Scripture Index

Every passage outside Revelation quoted in this study, with where it is quoted (Ch = chapter of Part One or Three; § = section of Part Two; App = appendix).

Genesis 1:1 §C, §P
Genesis 1:3 §P
Genesis 1:17 §F
Genesis 2:7 §F
Genesis 2:9 §B
Genesis 2:10 §P
Genesis 2:15 §G
Genesis 3:1 §F, §H
Genesis 3:7 §B
Genesis 3:8 §D, §P
Genesis 3:13 §H
Genesis 3:15 Ch 7, §H, §I, §O
Genesis 3:17 §P
Genesis 3:19 §P
Genesis 3:22 §B, §P
Genesis 3:24 §C, §P
Genesis 4:10 §D
Genesis 5:24 §B
Genesis 7:24 §F
Genesis 8:1 §M
Genesis 9:13 §C
Genesis 11:4 §M
Genesis 11:9 §M
Genesis 12:3 §C
Genesis 14:22 §F
Ezekiel 39:17 §O
Ezekiel 39:18 §O
Ezekiel 40:2 §P
Ezekiel 40:3 §P
Ezekiel 43:2 §A, §D, §J, §M
Ezekiel 43:4 §P
Ezekiel 47:1 §P
Ezekiel 47:12 §P
Ezekiel 48:1 §D
Ezekiel 48:31 §P
Ezekiel 48:35 §B, §P
Daniel 1:12 §B
Daniel 2:28 §A, §C
Daniel 2:35 §M, §O
Daniel 2:44 §F, §G
Daniel 3:1 §I
Daniel 3:5 §I
Daniel 3:18 §I
Daniel 3:19 §A
Daniel 4:30 §K, §M
Daniel 4:34 §C
Daniel 5:23 §F
Daniel 6:17 §O
Daniel 7:2 §D, §I
Daniel 7:4 §I

Genesis 15:1 §A
Genesis 15:5 §E
Genesis 15:16 §K
Genesis 15:18 §F
Genesis 17:1 §A
Genesis 19:15 §M
Genesis 19:24 §F, §K
Genesis 19:28 §F
Genesis 22:7 Ch 9
Genesis 22:17 §O
Genesis 28:17 §C
Genesis 29:35 §B, §C
Genesis 30:13 §D
Genesis 37:9 §H, App C
Genesis 41:32 §B
Genesis 48:5 §D
Genesis 49:7 §D
Genesis 49:9 §C
Genesis 49:13 §D
Genesis 49:17 §D
Genesis 49:19 §D
Genesis 49:21 §D
Exodus 1:5 §D
Exodus 3:14 §A
Exodus 5:2 §F
Exodus 7:20 §F
Exodus 7:21 §M
Exodus 8:15 §M
Exodus 9:4 §F
Exodus 9:10 §M
Exodus 9:23 §F
Exodus 9:24 §M
Exodus 10:14 §F
Exodus 10:21 §F
Exodus 10:22 §D, §M
Exodus 11:7 §F
Daniel 7:7 §H
Daniel 7:8 §I
Daniel 7:9 §A, §C, §O
Daniel 7:10 §C, §O
Daniel 7:11 §O
Daniel 7:13 Ch 7, §A, §C, §K
Daniel 7:14 Ch 7, §C
Daniel 7:15 §A
Daniel 7:17 §I, §M
Daniel 7:18 §C, §P
Daniel 7:21 §F, §I
Daniel 7:22 §B, §O
Daniel 7:24 §H, §M
Daniel 7:25 §F, §I, App C
Daniel 7:27 §B, §C, §O
Daniel 8:10 §H
Daniel 8:25 §D
Daniel 8:26 §F
Daniel 9:2 §A
Daniel 9:21 §A
Daniel 9:27 §F
Daniel 10:5 §A, §L
Daniel 10:6 §A
Daniel 10:8 §A
Daniel 10:10 §A
Daniel 10:12 §A
Daniel 10:13 §A, §H
Daniel 10:21 §A, §H
Daniel 11:36 §I
Daniel 12:1 §A, §B, §E, §H, §M
Daniel 12:2 §D, §G, §O
Daniel 12:4 Ch 9, §A, §C, §F, §Q
Daniel 12:6 §F
Daniel 12:7 §F, §I, App C
Daniel 12:9 §Q
Daniel 12:10 §I, §Q

Exodus 12:12 §F
Exodus 12:13 §C
Exodus 14:21 §M
Exodus 14:31 §L
Exodus 15:1 §L
Exodus 15:6 §A
Exodus 15:11 §I, §M
Exodus 15:18 §G
Exodus 15:23 §F
Exodus 16:15 §B
Exodus 16:33 §B
Exodus 19:4 §I
Exodus 19:5 §A
Exodus 19:6 Ch 7, §C, §O
Exodus 19:9 §A
Exodus 19:15 §J
Exodus 19:16 §A, §C
Exodus 19:18 §F
Exodus 20:11 §F, §K
Exodus 20:18 §C
Exodus 24:10 §C
Exodus 24:12 §C
Exodus 25:8 Ch 9, §P
Exodus 25:16 §L
Exodus 25:22 §C, §G, §P
Exodus 25:31 §A
Exodus 25:37 §A
Exodus 25:40 §G
Exodus 26:33 §P
Exodus 27:21 §B
Exodus 28:4 §A
Exodus 28:17 §C
Exodus 28:20 §C
Exodus 28:21 §P
Exodus 28:36 §B
Daniel 12:13 §K
Hosea 2:19 §N
Hosea 10:8 §D
Hosea 12:8 §B
Hosea 13:14 §A
Joel 1:6 §F
Joel 1:15 §A
Joel 2:1 §A, §C
Joel 2:2 §F
Joel 2:4 §F
Joel 2:5 §F
Joel 2:11 §D
Joel 2:31 Ch 7, §D, §M
Joel 3:2 §K
Joel 3:9 §M
Joel 3:12 §K
Joel 3:13 §K
Joel 3:16 §F
Amos 3:7 Ch 4, §A, §C, §F
Amos 3:8 §F
Amos 5:20 §F
Jonah 2:9 §E
Jonah 3:5 §F
Micah 4:10 §H
Micah 5:2 §H
Nahum 3:4 §M
Habakkuk 2:2 §A
Habakkuk 2:3 §F
Habakkuk 2:20 §E
Zephaniah 1:7 §E
Zephaniah 1:14 §D
Zephaniah 1:16 §A
Zephaniah 3:8 §M
Zephaniah 3:13 §J
Haggai 2:6 §D

Exodus 28:39 §L
Exodus 30:3 §F
Exodus 30:8 §C
Exodus 32:32 §B
Exodus 33:17 §B
Exodus 33:20 §P
Exodus 40:34 §L
Leviticus 2:13 §P
Leviticus 4:7 §D, App C
Leviticus 16:12 §E
Leviticus 17:11 §A
Leviticus 18:28 §B
Leviticus 23:10 §J
Leviticus 23:40 §E
Leviticus 24:3 §A
Leviticus 26:11 §E, §P
Leviticus 26:18 §L
Leviticus 26:21 §L
Leviticus 26:26 §D
Numbers 1:50 §L
Numbers 6:24 §A
Numbers 6:25 §P
Numbers 10:2 §C, §E
Numbers 10:9 §E
Numbers 14:22 §B
Numbers 16:32 §I
Numbers 18:19 §P
Numbers 21:9 §A
Numbers 24:17 Ch 7, §B, §Q
Numbers 25:1 §B
Numbers 31:8 §B
Numbers 31:16 §B
Deuteronomy 4:2 Ch 4, §Q
Deuteronomy 6:4 §B
Deuteronomy 6:8 §I
Haggai 2:7 §P
Zechariah 1:10 §D
Zechariah 2:2 §F
Zechariah 2:5 §F
Zechariah 2:13 §E
Zechariah 3:1 §H
Zechariah 3:2 §H
Zechariah 3:3 §B
Zechariah 3:9 §C
Zechariah 4:2 §A
Zechariah 4:3 §F
Zechariah 4:5 §E
Zechariah 4:6 §A, §F
Zechariah 4:10 §A, §C
Zechariah 4:14 §F
Zechariah 6:2 §D
Zechariah 11:6 §D
Zechariah 12:10 §A, §F
Zechariah 12:11 §M
Zechariah 12:12 §A
Zechariah 13:1 §A
Zechariah 13:8 §F
Zechariah 14:2 §M, §O
Zechariah 14:4 §M
Zechariah 14:5 §N
Zechariah 14:7 §P
Zechariah 14:8 §P
Zechariah 14:11 §P
Malachi 3:2 §D
Malachi 4:1 §M
Malachi 4:2 §A
Malachi 4:5 Ch 7, §F
Matthew 1:21 §A
Matthew 2:16 §H
Matthew 3:8 §B

Deuteronomy 8:2 §B
Deuteronomy 10:17 §M, §N
Deuteronomy 12:32 §Q
Deuteronomy 13:1 §I
Deuteronomy 13:2 §B
Deuteronomy 18:22 §B
Deuteronomy 19:15 Ch 5, §B, §F
Deuteronomy 29:18 §F
Deuteronomy 29:20 §D
Deuteronomy 29:29 §F
Deuteronomy 32:1 §L
Deuteronomy 32:4 §L
Deuteronomy 32:11 §I
Deuteronomy 32:17 §F
Deuteronomy 32:32 §K
Deuteronomy 32:43 §D, §N
Deuteronomy 33:25 §D
Joshua 1:1 §L
Joshua 1:3 §F
Joshua 3:10 §A
Joshua 3:17 §M
Joshua 6:20 §E, §G
Joshua 10:11 §M
Joshua 13:33 §D
Judges 5:19 §M
Judges 5:31 §A
Judges 7:2 §B
Judges 18:30 §D
1 Samuel 2:2 §L
1 Samuel 2:10 §C
1 Samuel 17:4 §I
1 Samuel 17:7 §I
1 Samuel 21:5 §J
2 Samuel 7:14 §P
2 Samuel 7:16 Ch 9, §C
Matthew 3:16 §N
Matthew 4:5 §F
Matthew 4:8 §H
Matthew 4:10 §N
Matthew 4:15 §D
Matthew 4:19 §J
Matthew 4:20 §B
Matthew 5:3 §A
Matthew 5:5 Ch 6, §C, §P
Matthew 5:8 Ch 6, §P
Matthew 5:9 Ch 6
Matthew 5:13 §P
Matthew 5:15 §A
Matthew 6:10 §C, §E, §G
Matthew 6:20 §B
Matthew 7:15 §I
Matthew 10:22 §B
Matthew 10:28 §B, §K
Matthew 10:32 §B
Matthew 10:33 §P
Matthew 11:14 App C
Matthew 11:27 §N
Matthew 12:29 §O
Matthew 12:40 App C
Matthew 13:9 §B
Matthew 13:30 §K
Matthew 13:39 Ch 7, §K
Matthew 13:43 §B
Matthew 15:24 Ch 6
Matthew 16:27 §B, §Q
Matthew 17:2 §A
Matthew 17:6 §A
Matthew 17:11 App C
Matthew 18:6 §M
Matthew 18:10 §A

1 Kings 1:50 §F
1 Kings 6:20 Ch 9, §P
1 Kings 7:23 §C
1 Kings 8:11 §L
1 Kings 10:14 §I
1 Kings 11:7 §M
1 Kings 16:31 §B
1 Kings 17:1 §F
1 Kings 18:17 §F
1 Kings 18:21 §B
1 Kings 18:38 §I
1 Kings 18:39 §I
1 Kings 19:9 §E
1 Kings 19:18 §B, §F
1 Kings 21:29 §B
1 Kings 22:19 §C
2 Kings 1:8 §F
2 Kings 1:10 §F
2 Kings 2:11 §F
2 Kings 9:7 §N
2 Kings 9:22 §B
2 Kings 9:36 §M
2 Kings 23:29 §M
1 Chronicles 5:2 §D
1 Chronicles 12:32 §D
1 Chronicles 25:1 §C
1 Chronicles 28:12 §C, App C
1 Chronicles 29:11 §C
1 Chronicles 29:13 §E
2 Chronicles 13:5 §P
Nehemiah 8:5 Front, §A
Nehemiah 8:8 Front, §A
Nehemiah 9:6 §C
Esther 3:6 §I
Esther 9:22 §F
Matthew 19:28 §B, §O, §P
Matthew 20:2 §D
Matthew 20:25 §B
Matthew 20:28 §C
Matthew 22:8 §N
Matthew 22:37 §B
Matthew 22:42 §Q
Matthew 23:25 §M
Matthew 23:27 §B
Matthew 23:34 §M
Matthew 23:35 §M
Matthew 24:3 Ch 7, §D
Matthew 24:4 §D
Matthew 24:6 §A, §D
Matthew 24:7 §D
Matthew 24:8 §D
Matthew 24:9 §D
Matthew 24:12 §B
Matthew 24:13 §A, §B
Matthew 24:14 §K
Matthew 24:15 §F, §H, §I, §M
Matthew 24:16 §H
Matthew 24:19 §J
Matthew 24:21 §B, §E, §H, §M
Matthew 24:22 §F
Matthew 24:24 §I, §M
Matthew 24:27 §A
Matthew 24:28 §F, §O
Matthew 24:29 §D
Matthew 24:30 §A
Matthew 24:31 §D, §K
Matthew 24:35 §P
Matthew 24:42 §B
Matthew 24:43 §B, §M
Matthew 24:46 §B

Job 1:6 §H
Job 1:9 §H
Job 1:11 §H
Job 3:21 §F
Job 26:6 §F
Job 38:22 §M
Job 39:19 §D
Job 39:25 §D
Job 39:27 §C
Psalm 2:1 Ch 7, §G
Psalm 2:2 §A, §D, §G, §M, §O
Psalm 2:4 §O
Psalm 2:6 §G, §J
Psalm 2:7 §B
Psalm 2:8 §B
Psalm 2:9 §H, §N
Psalm 2:12 §D
Psalm 3:8 §E
Psalm 17:15 §P
Psalm 18:4 §I
Psalm 18:6 §E
Psalm 18:13 §C
Psalm 19:1 §K
Psalm 19:9 §M, §N
Psalm 23:1 §E
Psalm 24:3 §E
Psalm 26:5 §B
Psalm 27:4 §B
Psalm 29:3 §C, §F
Psalm 33:2 §C
Psalm 33:9 §C, §O
Psalm 37:19 §D
Psalm 42:1 §Q
Psalm 46:4 §P
Psalm 51:2 §A
Matthew 25:10 §N, §Q
Matthew 25:31 §N
Matthew 25:41 §O
Matthew 26:29 §N
Matthew 26:52 §I
Matthew 26:64 §K, §N
Matthew 27:45 §D
Matthew 27:51 §G, §P
Matthew 28:1 App C
Matthew 28:3 §C
Matthew 28:6 App C
Matthew 28:18 §B, §C
Mark 1:24 §B
Mark 6:7 §F
Mark 8:38 §K
Mark 13:12 §D
Mark 13:32 §A, §K
Luke 1:10 §E
Luke 1:13 §E
Luke 1:19 §E
Luke 1:32 §B, §C
Luke 1:33 §G
Luke 2:19 §A
Luke 4:5 §I
Luke 4:7 §I
Luke 4:8 §I
Luke 4:16 §B
Luke 8:31 §F
Luke 9:31 §F
Luke 10:18 §F, §H
Luke 10:20 §O
Luke 11:28 §A
Luke 12:8 §B
Luke 12:19 §B
Luke 13:33 §F

Psalm 51:7 §E
Psalm 62:12 §B, §O
Psalm 69:24 §M
Psalm 69:28 §B
Psalm 75:8 §K
Psalm 78:24 §B
Psalm 78:53 §H
Psalm 79:2 §F
Psalm 79:5 §D
Psalm 79:10 §D
Psalm 80:1 §C
Psalm 86:9 §L
Psalm 87:2 §O
Psalm 89:27 §A
Psalm 89:37 §A
Psalm 92:14 §B
Psalm 93:1 §G
Psalm 93:4 §A
Psalm 97:1 §N
Psalm 97:10 §B
Psalm 98:1 §C
Psalm 99:1 §G
Psalm 102:26 §O
Psalm 103:19 §C
Psalm 104:3 §A
Psalm 106:48 §N
Psalm 110:1 §B
Psalm 111:2 §L
Psalm 113:1 §N
Psalm 115:4 §F
Psalm 115:13 §G, §N
Psalm 116:15 §K
Psalm 119:103 §F
Psalm 119:137 §M
Psalm 130:3 §D
Luke 13:34 §F
Luke 15:10 §E
Luke 18:7 §C, §D
Luke 18:8 §A
Luke 19:10 §F
Luke 21:19 §A
Luke 21:24 §F
Luke 22:29 §B
Luke 23:28 §D
Luke 23:42 §B
John 1:1 §N
John 1:14 §E, §N
John 1:29 Ch 9, §C
John 1:51 §N
John 4:14 §E
John 4:21 §P
John 4:22 §P
John 4:24 §B
John 5:22 §A, §D, §O
John 5:23 §C
John 5:27 §A
John 5:28 §A, §O
John 5:29 Ch 7, §O
John 6:32 §B
John 6:35 §E
John 6:37 §B
John 6:48 §B
John 6:51 §B
John 6:63 §B
John 7:16 §A
John 7:30 §F
John 7:37 §P, §Q
John 7:38 §P
John 8:39 §B
John 8:44 §B, §H

Psalm 130:8 §A
Psalm 137:8 §M
Psalm 139:14 §L
Psalm 141:2 §C, §E
Psalm 144:9 §J
Psalm 145:17 §L
Psalm 150:1 §N
Psalm 150:6 §C
Proverbs 3:11 §B
Proverbs 4:18 §B
Proverbs 6:16 §B
Proverbs 9:10 §K
Proverbs 15:11 §F
Proverbs 16:31 §A
Proverbs 21:1 §M
Proverbs 30:6 §Q
Proverbs 30:27 §F
Proverbs 30:30 §C
Ecclesiastes 12:14 §O
Song of Solomon 5:2 §B
Song of Solomon 5:6 §B
Isaiah 1:10 §F
Isaiah 1:18 §A, §E
Isaiah 2:8 §F
Isaiah 2:19 §D
Isaiah 5:7 §K
Isaiah 6:1 Ch 7, §C
Isaiah 6:2 §C
Isaiah 6:3 Ch 5, §C
Isaiah 6:4 §L
Isaiah 6:5 §A
Isaiah 6:9 §B
Isaiah 6:13 §F
Isaiah 8:8 §I
Isaiah 8:20 §B
John 9:39 §B
John 9:40 §B
John 10:10 §F
John 10:11 §E
John 10:27 §B, §J
John 10:28 §A
John 12:13 §E
John 12:25 §H
John 12:31 §H
John 12:32 §A
John 12:49 §A, §B
John 13:23 §A
John 14:15 §B
John 14:23 §B
John 15:1 §B, §K
John 16:33 §B
John 17:15 §B
John 18:37 §A
John 19:30 §M
John 19:35 §A
John 19:36 §A
John 20:17 §A, §B
John 20:27 §C
John 21:15 §C
Acts 1:9 §F, §H
Acts 1:10 §C
Acts 1:11 §A, §N
Acts 2:27 §A
Acts 2:32 §A
Acts 2:36 §Q
Acts 2:41 §D
Acts 5:11 §B
Acts 6:1 §B
Acts 7:38 §A
Acts 7:56 §A

Isaiah 9:6 §H
Isaiah 10:5 §M
Isaiah 10:7 §M
Isaiah 11:1 §C, §Q
Isaiah 11:2 §C
Isaiah 11:4 §A, §N
Isaiah 11:5 §A
Isaiah 11:10 §C, §Q
Isaiah 11:12 §D
Isaiah 13:19 §M
Isaiah 14:12 §F
Isaiah 14:13 §I
Isaiah 17:12 §M
Isaiah 21:1 §M
Isaiah 21:9 §K
Isaiah 22:22 §A, §B
Isaiah 23:8 §M
Isaiah 23:17 §M
Isaiah 24:21 §O
Isaiah 24:23 §C
Isaiah 25:8 §E, §O, §P
Isaiah 26:17 §H
Isaiah 26:19 §O
Isaiah 27:1 §H
Isaiah 29:13 §B
Isaiah 34:4 §D
Isaiah 34:10 §K, §N
Isaiah 35:10 §P
Isaiah 40:2 §P
Isaiah 40:4 §M
Isaiah 40:10 §Q
Isaiah 40:31 §B
Isaiah 41:4 §A
Isaiah 41:10 §A
Isaiah 42:3 §B
Acts 10:26 §N
Acts 13:45 §B
Acts 14:15 §K
Acts 14:22 §A
Acts 15:28 §B
Acts 16:14 §B
Acts 17:31 §O
Acts 19:10 Ch 3, §A, App B
Acts 19:19 §B
Acts 19:26 §B
Acts 19:34 §B
Acts 20:24 §K
Acts 20:29 §B, App B
Acts 20:30 §B
Acts 20:31 §B
Romans 1:7 §A
Romans 2:6 §O
Romans 2:28 §B, App B
Romans 3:22 §N
Romans 5:12 §P
Romans 6:9 §A
Romans 6:14 §I
Romans 6:23 §B
Romans 7:24 §B
Romans 8:21 Ch 7, §P
Romans 8:22 §P
Romans 8:33 §H
Romans 8:37 §B
Romans 8:39 §B
Romans 9:4 §H
Romans 9:5 §H
Romans 9:6 §B
Romans 11:20 App B
Romans 11:25 §B, §H
Romans 11:26 §D, §J

Isaiah 42:10 §C
Isaiah 43:3 §B
Isaiah 43:4 §B
Isaiah 43:19 §P
Isaiah 44:6 §A, §B
Isaiah 44:23 §H
Isaiah 45:5 §M
Isaiah 47:7 §M
Isaiah 47:9 §M
Isaiah 48:20 §M
Isaiah 49:2 §A
Isaiah 49:10 §E
Isaiah 49:26 §M
Isaiah 51:3 §B
Isaiah 51:17 §K
Isaiah 52:1 §P
Isaiah 52:7 §G
Isaiah 53:7 Ch 9, §C
Isaiah 53:9 §J
Isaiah 54:5 §N, App C
Isaiah 54:11 §P
Isaiah 55:1 §B, §P, §Q
Isaiah 57:1 §K
Isaiah 57:20 §I, §P
Isaiah 59:19 §I
Isaiah 60:1 §P
Isaiah 60:3 §P
Isaiah 60:5 §P
Isaiah 60:11 §P
Isaiah 60:14 §B
Isaiah 60:19 §P
Isaiah 61:2 §D
Isaiah 61:6 §A, §C, §O
Isaiah 61:10 §N, §P
Isaiah 62:2 §B
Romans 12:19 §D, §I, §M
Romans 15:4 Ch 3
Romans 16:25 Ch 1, §A
1 Corinthians 1:27 §B
1 Corinthians 2:10 §B
1 Corinthians 4:7 §C
1 Corinthians 10:20 §F
1 Corinthians 11:20 §A
1 Corinthians 13:3 §B
1 Corinthians 15:20 §A, §J
1 Corinthians 15:24 §G
1 Corinthians 15:26 §O
1 Corinthians 15:28 §G
1 Corinthians 15:55 §O
1 Corinthians 16:9 §B
1 Corinthians 16:22 §Q
2 Corinthians 1:20 §B
2 Corinthians 4:4 §H
2 Corinthians 6:16 §F
2 Corinthians 6:18 §A
2 Corinthians 7:10 §B
2 Corinthians 8:9 §C
2 Corinthians 11:13 §B, App B
2 Corinthians 11:14 §D
2 Corinthians 11:23 §B
2 Corinthians 12:1 §B
2 Corinthians 12:4 §F
2 Corinthians 12:9 Ch 6
2 Corinthians 13:4 §C
Galatians 2:16 §Q
Galatians 3:28 §B, §D
Galatians 6:2 §B
Ephesians 1:3 §B
Ephesians 1:13 §B, §D
Ephesians 1:22 §A

Isaiah 62:5 §P
Isaiah 62:11 §Q
Isaiah 63:1 §N
Isaiah 63:3 §K, §N
Isaiah 65:17 §P
Isaiah 65:19 §P
Isaiah 66:7 §H
Isaiah 66:21 §E
Isaiah 66:23 §L
Jeremiah 1:10 §F
Jeremiah 2:2 §B
Jeremiah 2:3 §J
Jeremiah 2:13 §E
Jeremiah 3:1 §B, §J
Jeremiah 3:16 §G
Jeremiah 5:14 §F
Jeremiah 8:3 §F
Jeremiah 9:1 §F
Jeremiah 9:15 §F
Jeremiah 10:7 §L
Jeremiah 15:2 §I
Jeremiah 15:16 §F
Jeremiah 16:18 §M
Jeremiah 17:10 §B
Jeremiah 19:11 §B
Jeremiah 23:18 §C
Jeremiah 25:10 §M
Jeremiah 25:15 §K, §M
Jeremiah 25:26 §M
Jeremiah 30:2 §A
Jeremiah 30:7 §E
Jeremiah 31:3 §A
Jeremiah 31:33 §P
Jeremiah 32:11 §C
Jeremiah 49:22 §F
Ephesians 2:2 §M
Ephesians 2:6 §B
Ephesians 2:8 Ch 3, §B
Ephesians 2:9 §B, §Q
Ephesians 3:2 Ch 3
Ephesians 3:3 §K
Ephesians 3:5 §F
Ephesians 3:9 §F
Ephesians 4:30 §B
Ephesians 5:23 §N
Ephesians 5:30 §N
Ephesians 6:12 §H
Philippians 2:9 §N
Philippians 2:10 §C
Philippians 2:11 §C
Philippians 3:2 §Q
Philippians 3:20 §C
Colossians 1:2 §B
Colossians 1:16 §C
Colossians 1:18 §A, §B
Colossians 1:23 App B
Colossians 1:27 §B
Colossians 2:1 §A, §B
Colossians 3:11 §F
Colossians 4:13 §B
Colossians 4:15 App B
Colossians 4:16 §A, §B
1 Thessalonians 1:10 §B
1 Thessalonians 4:16 §C
1 Thessalonians 4:17 Ch 3, Ch 7, §A, §B, §F
1 Thessalonians 4:18 §A
1 Thessalonians 5:2 Ch 7, §B
1 Thessalonians 5:4 §B, §M
1 Thessalonians 5:9 Ch 3, §A, §B, §C
2 Thessalonians 2:3 Ch 7, §I, §M

Jeremiah 49:36 §D
Jeremiah 50:15 §M
Jeremiah 50:34 §M
Jeremiah 50:38 §M
Jeremiah 50:39 §M
Jeremiah 51:7 §K, §M
Jeremiah 51:9 §M
Jeremiah 51:13 §M
Jeremiah 51:25 §F, §M
Jeremiah 51:45 Ch 7, §M
Jeremiah 51:48 §M
Jeremiah 51:49 §M
Jeremiah 51:63 §M
Lamentations 5:10 §D
Ezekiel 1:1 §C, §N
Ezekiel 1:5 §C
Ezekiel 1:7 §A
Ezekiel 1:10 §C
Ezekiel 1:13 §C
Ezekiel 1:18 §C
Ezekiel 1:22 §C
Ezekiel 1:26 §C
Ezekiel 1:28 §A, §C
Ezekiel 2:9 §C
Ezekiel 2:10 §C
Ezekiel 3:1 §F
Ezekiel 3:12 §A
Ezekiel 3:14 §A, §F
Ezekiel 4:16 §D
Ezekiel 7:2 §D
Ezekiel 8:3 §A, §C
Ezekiel 9:4 §D
Ezekiel 9:10 §B
Ezekiel 10:2 §E
Ezekiel 10:20 §C, App C
2 Thessalonians 2:4 §F
2 Thessalonians 2:8 §N, §O
2 Thessalonians 2:9 §I, §M
2 Thessalonians 2:11 §I
1 Timothy 6:13 §A
1 Timothy 6:15 §M, §N
2 Timothy 1:9 §B
2 Timothy 4:6 §D
2 Timothy 4:8 §B
Titus 2:13 §B
Hebrews 1:1 §N
Hebrews 1:4 §E
Hebrews 1:14 §N
Hebrews 4:12 §A
Hebrews 4:13 §A
Hebrews 6:16 §F
Hebrews 7:14 §C
Hebrews 8:1 §H
Hebrews 8:5 §C, App C
Hebrews 9:7 §P
Hebrews 9:23 §G
Hebrews 9:27 App C
Hebrews 11:10 §P
Hebrews 11:16 §P
Hebrews 12:2 §B
Hebrews 12:22 §C, §J
Hebrews 12:24 §D
Hebrews 12:29 §C
Hebrews 13:12 §K
James 1:12 §B
James 1:18 §J
James 1:22 §A
James 2:5 §B
James 5:17 §F
1 Peter 1:1 §A

Ezekiel 14:21 §D
Ezekiel 21:26 §N
Ezekiel 23:29 §M
Ezekiel 23:37 §B
Ezekiel 26:13 §M
Ezekiel 26:16 §M
Ezekiel 27:13 §M
Ezekiel 27:29 §M
Ezekiel 27:30 §M
Ezekiel 27:32 §M
Ezekiel 27:36 §M
Ezekiel 29:3 §H
Ezekiel 34:2 §B
Ezekiel 37:3 §E
Ezekiel 37:5 §F
Ezekiel 37:10 §F
Ezekiel 37:27 §P
Ezekiel 38:2 §O
Ezekiel 38:22 §F, §O
Ezekiel 39:6 §O
1 Peter 1:2 §A
1 Peter 1:7 §B
1 Peter 1:18 §C
1 Peter 1:19 §I, §J
1 Peter 1:20 §A
1 Peter 2:9 §A
1 Peter 2:22 §J
1 Peter 5:3 §B
2 Peter 1:19 §B
2 Peter 1:21 §Q
2 Peter 2:4 §O
2 Peter 2:15 §B
2 Peter 3:8 §A
2 Peter 3:9 §B
2 Peter 3:10 Ch 7, §O
2 Peter 3:13 §P
1 John 1:3 §A
1 John 2:18 §I
1 John 4:1 §B