

# **The Revelation of Jesus Christ**

## **Introduction:**

What an incredible book! The book of the Revelation of Jesus Christ. This work is a study and interpretation of perhaps the most mysterious book in the entire bible. The book of Revelation has given rise to outlandish theories and speculations. I have hesitated in the past from preaching very extensively on this book for several reasons: 1) I did not believe that I was qualified to teach on the contents of the book; 2) There are so many conflicting ideas and theories concerning this book, for instance, the Antichrist has been identified as many different people throughout the ages; and 3) Although I have my own opinions and beliefs on what the book means, I did not want to influence people to accept my views.

With these points in mind, I decided that now is the right time to examine this book. I hope you will study the book and the interpretations given in this document and that this study will cause your faith in Jesus Christ to be made stronger.

## **Preliminary Observations:**

This book is entitled “The Revelation of Jesus Christ”, as such, its purpose is to reveal and show. It is not meant to be hidden from us. It is also a revelation (singular), not revelations. It is the revelation of Jesus, not the revelation of John. The purpose of this book then is to make known what Jesus would have us know. It is sometimes called the Apocalypse, and is similar in language and symbolism with other apocalyptic books in the Old Testament, primarily the books of Ezekiel and Daniel.

According to Revelation 4:1 and 22:6, this book is to reveal “things which must shortly take place”. Not in some far off future time, but things which would begin to take place in the lifetimes of those Christians who were the first to receive and read it. Revelation 6:1 tells us to “come and see”, while Revelation 22:10 tells us that “the time is at hand”. Surely these verses indicate that we can understand the meaning and timing of the prophecies. The book is full of what I term “spiral prophecies”, that is, a prophecy is given, then another prophecy of the exact events is given, but this time from a different vantage point. In much the same way, if we were to look at something from the bottom of a spiral staircase and then we were to go halfway up the staircase and look at the same

thing, we would have a different vantage point. We would be seeing the same thing but from a different view. This book is also unique in that it begins with a blessing to those who would read it (Revelation 1:3) and ends with a curse to those who would tamper with its contents (Revelation 22:18-19).

### **Methods of Interpretations:**

Throughout history various methods of interpretation have been used to try and understand the meaning of the book. It makes a difference whether you use a pre-millennial, postmillennial, or amillennial viewpoint. The premillennial viewpoint stresses that Jesus will return to earth before the beginning of the millennial reign (the 1000 year reign). The postmillennial viewpoint states that Jesus will return to earth following the millennial period, while the amillennial viewpoint states that the millennium is a spiritual reign, not necessarily encompassing a literal 1000 years.

Within the premillennial group there are tremendous differences concerning what is known as dispensational theory. This centers on what is called “the tribulation”, a period of time during which the world will suffer through terrible calamities and evil at the hand of the antichrist. Following the tribulation, Jesus will return and defeat the antichrist and then establish His kingdom. Some believe that a rapture will take place during which the faithful Christians will be removed from the earth for a time. The points of difference center around whether the rapture will be “pre-tribulation” (before the evil reign), or post-tribulation (after the evil reign). This study will not focus on dispensationalism since the Revelation says nothing about a rapture of the saints.

There are three main schools of thought concerning how the Revelation should be interpreted. These schools of thought are:

- 1) The Preterist-this viewpoint takes the position that all of the prophecies in the book of Revelation have been fulfilled.
- 2) The Futurist-this viewpoint takes the position that the book of Revelation is a forecast of universal history, that most of the prophecies are yet to be fulfilled.
- 3) The Eclectic-this viewpoint stresses the spiritual aspects of Revelation. Those who hold this viewpoint believe that there are three kinds of scripture in the book of Revelation:

- a) Those scriptures which are very clear in their spiritual teaching.
- b) Those scriptures that are more mysterious and yet contain elements of truth which are instructive.
- c) Those scriptures that are so veiled they cannot be understood and that it is useless to try.

Among members of the Churches of Christ there have been advocates of all three of three schools of thought. I personally believe that most of the prophecies have been fulfilled, which is a preterist view. In interpreting the meaning of the book I will follow a historical method for the most part, but I also believe there are some passages in Revelation which lend themselves to a spiritual interpretation, which is an eclectic view. There are those who would interpret everything in Revelation in a literal fashion, and then there are those who interpret everything in Revelation in a symbolic fashion. Neither of these approaches will work when you study Revelation, you must look at the context of the passage and decide whether it is meant in a figurative (symbolic) or literal sense.

As an example of the problems in using only a literal interpretation, look at Revelation 20:1-3. How can you interpret this literally? If you interpret Revelation literally then you must have a literal angel with a literal key to a literal bottomless pit, with a literal chain in his hand. Also, you must say that Satan is a literal dragon, a literal serpent, who can be bound with a literal chain for a literal thousand years (no more, no less). As you can see, there are tremendous difficulties in a literal interpretation of Revelation. With these preliminaries let us turn now to the Revelation of Jesus Christ.

The author of this book is Jesus Christ, the Son of God. John, an apostle of Jesus and the last surviving one of the twelve disciples is only the scribe. The book was written sometime between the years 70 A.D. and 100 A.D., most scholars place the time around the year 96 A.D. The book was written while John was in exile on the island of Patmos, in the Mediterranean Sea, off the west coast of Asia Minor (modern day Turkey). According to Revelation 1:9, John had been banished here “for the word of God and for the testimony of Jesus Christ”.

The purpose of the Revelation, no matter what interpretation you place on the book is to give hope to Christians, especially those who were being persecuted. The ultimate theme of the book is that Satan loses and Jesus wins.

**The Divisions of the Revelation:**

- 1) Letters to Seven churches-Chapters 1-3
- 2) The throne room of heaven-Chapter 4
- 3) The scroll with seven seals-Chapters 5 through the beginning of 8
- 4) The seven trumpets-Chapters 8-9 (up to the sixth trumpet)
- 5) The little book-Chapter 10
- 6) The two witnesses killed and resurrected and the seventh trumpet-Chapter 11
- 7) The woman, child, and dragon-Chapter 12
- 8) The beast from the sea and the beast from the earth-Chapter 13
- 9) The Lamb and the 144,000 along with three flying angels-Chapter 14
- 10) Seven angels with seven bowls-Chapters 15-16
- 11) The scarlet woman and the beast-Chapter 17
- 12) The fall of Babylon-Chapter 18
- 13) The conquering Christ and defeat of the beast-Chapter 19
- 14) Satan bound, the 1000 year reign, and the judgment-Chapter 20
- 15) The New Jerusalem-Chapter 21
- 16) The River of Life-Chapter 22

**Revelation Chapters 1-3:**

These three chapters give the introduction to the book. John is privileged to see and speak with Jesus. A description is given of the appearance of Jesus in 1:12-16. The attributes of Jesus are given in the letters to the seven churches. To Ephesus, Jesus is the “one who holds the seven stars in His right hand, who walks in the midst of the seven golden candlesticks” (2:1). To Smyrna, Jesus is the “First and the Last, who was dead, and came to life” (2:8). To Pergamos, Jesus is “He who has the sharp two-edged sword” (2:12). To Thyatira, Jesus is “The Son of God, who has eyes like a flame of fire, and His feet like fine brass” (2:18). To Sardis, Jesus is “He who has the seven spirits of God and the seven stars” (3:1). To Philadelphia, Jesus is “He who is holy, He who is true, “He who has the key of David, He who opens and no one shuts, and shuts and no one opens”

(3:7). And to Laodicea, Jesus is the “Amen, the Faithful and True Witness, the Beginning of the creation of God” (3:14).

These seven churches are believed by many to represent the state of the church throughout the ages. Some believe that we should see them as representative of linear history, that is, that the church would go through successive stages finally culminating in the church of Laodicea, a lukewarm church which Jesus said he would vomit out of his mouth (3:16). I believe that all seven types of churches have been found in every age and will be found in every age until Jesus comes again. Some churches will have nothing but good things said about them like Smyrna and Philadelphia, some churches will have both good and bad things said about them like Ephesus, Pergamos, Thyatira, and even Sardis. And some churches will be like Laodicea which had nothing good said about them.

It is interesting to see what Jesus said to each of these churches, “He who has an ear to hear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches” (2:7, 2:11, 2:17, 2:29, 3:6, 3:13, and 3:22). Jesus also stressed the necessity and blessings of overcoming. To Ephesus, Jesus said, “To him who overcomes I will give to eat from the tree of life, which is in the midst of the Paradise of God” (2:7). To Smyrna, Jesus said, “Be faithful until death, and I will give you the crown of life” (2:10). To Pergamos, Jesus said, “To him who overcomes I will give some of the hidden manna to eat. And I will give him a white stone, and on the stone a new name written” (2:17). To Thyatira, Jesus said, “he who overcomes, and keeps My works until the end, to him I will give power over the nations” (2:26). To Sardis, Jesus said, “He who overcomes shall be clothed in white garments, and I will not blot out his name from the Book of Life; but I will confess his name before My Father and before His angels” (3:5). To Philadelphia, Jesus said, “He who overcomes, I will make him a pillar in the temple of My God, and he shall go out no more. I will write on him the name of My God, the New Jerusalem, which comes down out of heaven from My God. And I will write on him My new name” (3:12). And to Laodicea, Jesus said, “To him who overcomes I will grant to sit with me on My throne, as I also overcame and sat down with My Father on His throne” (3:21).

It is also sobering for us to consider that Jesus said to each of the seven churches, “I know your works” (2:2, 2:9, 2:13, 2:19, 3:1, 3:8, and 3:15). We must understand that Jesus knows the works of each and every church which exists today, or which has ever

existed. We should heed the warnings given to these seven churches and also take comfort in the commendations and promises made by Jesus.

### **The Seven Seals-Revelation Chapters 4-6:**

Chapter four begins with a description of the throne room of heaven and its occupants. The door is standing open in heaven (4:1), which tells us that we are able to see what is normally hidden. A description is given of God in verses 2-3. Surrounding the throne of God were 24 lesser thrones occupied by 24 elders. The 24 elders represent all of mankind through Abraham. Abraham had two sons, Isaac and Ishmael. Isaac's son, Jacob was the progenitor of the 12 tribes of Israel. Ishmael, the eldest son of Abraham was also the father of 12 sons (Genesis 17:18-21). Another possible reason for having 24 elders would be to represent the 12 tribes of Israel along with the 12 apostles of Jesus. Whatever the symbolism, these 24 elders represent the human race.

There are also seven lamps of fire burning before the throne of God (4:5). These lamps are said to be the Spirits of God. We find in Revelation 3:1 that Jesus is the one who has the seven spirits of God. In Revelation 4:6 we find that there are four living creatures in the midst of and around the throne of God. These four living creatures represent the entire world. The living creature like a lion represents Asia, the living creature like a calf represents Africa, the living creature with the face of a man represents Europe, and the living creature like a flying eagle represents the New World, or the western hemisphere (the continents of North and South America).

The purpose of the 24 elders and the four living creatures is to give honor, glory, and praise to God (4:8-11). Since God has created the world and everything it contains, it is fitting that representatives of all mankind and the entire world give glory to God.

Chapter 5 begins with the image of a scroll having seven seals in the hand of God. God has the Revelation in His hand, yet there is no one in heaven or on earth, or under the earth who is worthy and able to open the scroll or make the contents known (5:2-3). This causes much anguish on the part of John since he surmised that the contents of the scroll were very important to mankind. There is however, one who is worthy to open the scroll. This is Jesus Christ, symbolized in verse 6 as a Lamb. Jesus is the one who is able to reveal the contents of the scroll since He is worthy (5:5-14). Jesus takes the scroll

and opens it one seal at a time. These seals will reveal the history of the church through the ages of time.

#### The First Seal-Revelation 6:1-2:

The first seal symbolizes the conquering Christ and with Him the conquering church. The white horse denotes purity and the rider of the horse is shown to be a conqueror with a bow and a crown. The church of the first century was a conquering church. It was also a pure church in doctrine and practice. The early Christians followed their leader and spread the gospel even in the face of Jewish persecution. As Jesus gave instructions to His disciples to be witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth (Acts 1:8), so the church conquered.

Zechariah chapter 6 also contains a vision with horses of different colors. In that passage they represent the spirits of heaven. In the first four seals of Revelation 6 they represent different ages of the church. White is an emblem of peace and purity while the bow is a symbol of war. What is pure in nature will also conquer. As long as the church maintained its peace and purity it grew phenomenally. After the death of the Roman emperor Domitian in 96 A.D., civil liberty and tolerance were common in the Roman Empire until Commodus ascended to the throne in 180 A.D. During this period of 84 years persecution was not the prevailing spirit of the Roman emperors.

#### The Second Seal-Revelation 6:3-4:

The second seal reveals a fiery red horse. The purpose of this horse was to take peace from the earth. During this period of time, the sword would be unleashed and people would kill one another. Persecution reigned while John was on Patmos; in fact he was placed there as a result of persecution by the Roman Empire. Then as the first seal indicates there was a period of calm, now we see a period of conflict.

Commodus was emperor from 180 to 192 A.D. and instituted a cruel and bloody persecution of the church. But it wasn't just the church which suffered, all of the Roman Empire suffered. During the 92 years following the death of Commodus (192-284 A.D.), there were 32 emperors and 27 pretenders to the throne. It was a time of constant civil war. All but 2 of these 59 emperors and pretenders died a violent death. During this time period there were severe persecutions of the church, most notably those of Decius in 249

A.D. and Diocletian in 303 A.D. Thousands of Christians were killed throughout the empire, yet the church continued to grow and expand, maintaining its purity and unity.

The Third Seal-Revelation 6:5-6:

This seal reveals a black horse carrying balance scales. This age is an age of darkness, symbolized by the black color of the horse. With the ascension of Constantine to the throne in 314 A.D., the church enjoyed rest from persecution, increased in power and influence but gradually ceased to be the light of the world. When Christianity was declared to be the state religion the purity and unity of the church began to erode.

This is symbolized in verse 6 by the comparison of wheat and barley. Wheat represents the true word of God while barley represents carnal worldliness. Since the barley was cheaper (three quarts for a denarius) than the wheat (one quart for a denarius), people began to substitute tradition, superstition, and the decision of church councils for the pure word of the gospel. The church increased in power and prestige under the protection of the empire and with this change in fortunes came an increased emphasis on worldly things, "hurt not the oil and wine" (Revelation 6:6). Thus was ushered in the darkness of the middle ages and the corruption of the church.

The Fourth Seal-Revelation 6:7-8:

The fourth seal reveals a terrible sight, a pale horse whose rider is Death. Following hard on the heels of death was Hades. The purpose of these two was to kill. When the church departed from pure doctrine and wrapped itself in the power and prestige of the Roman Empire true Christians were persecuted and killed. Death upon the earth is the symbolism of this seal. While the light was darkened in the third seal, there were still those who followed Jesus. These are the ones described in the fifth seal, slain and under the altar. The red horse of the second seal represented pagan persecution; the pale horse of the fourth seal represents persecution by an apostate church which desires to continue the power and glory of a fallen empire.

The Fifth Seal-Revelation 6:9-11:

This seal, without a horse describes the consequences of the persecution brought about during the fourth seal. Most of the true Christians were killed during the time of the fourth seal. The church, as the light of the world largely disappeared during this time. As Jesus promised in Matthew 16:18, there never will be a time when the church is

destroyed, but the true light was nearly extinguished by the forces of an apostate church during the Dark Ages.

The Sixth Seal-Revelation 6:12-17:

This seal reveals great disturbances in the heavens and on the earth. The events described here do not refer to the end of the world since there is still yet one more seal to be revealed. However, this seal describes a time of great darkness and calamity. There is a great earthquake, the sun becomes black, the moon becomes like blood, stars from heaven fall to the earth, the sky recedes, every mountain and island is moved out of its place.

This seal describes a period of time when kingdoms and rulers are shaken. It is a time of darkness because of the black sun. It is a frightening time for all men (Revelation 6:15-17). The sun represents the true gospel of Jesus which for all intents and purposes is hidden (black as sackcloth). Sackcloth also indicates mourning and sadness. The moon represents the true church which reflects the light of Jesus. Since the light is largely gone, the moon, which has no light of its own, can only reflect a bloody, reddish color. This would indicate continued persecution.

The western Roman Empire fell in 476 A.D., being overrun by tribes of uncivilized tribes. As a result, all forms of government fell and society was largely destroyed. This prolonged and intensified the Dark Ages, an age of approximately 1000 years (476-1500 A.D.) when learning and science came to a halt. Advancements in knowledge and scientific discoveries were unknown during this time, ignorance and superstition reigned supreme.

The eastern Roman Empire continued in existence until the fall of Constantinople in 1453 A.D. when the Turks occupied it. Beginning in the seventh century, the Moslems conquered the Middle East, North Africa, and threatened to overrun all of Europe. No wonder everyone was scared. Christianity in the east was almost totally wiped out by the advancing Moslems, while superstition, tradition, and ecclesiasticism reigned supreme in the west. The true church still existed, but the very foundations of society seemed destroyed. It was a time of terror for mankind, as John recorded the people of the earth saying, "Fall on us and hide us from the face of Him who sits on the throne and from the

wrath of the Lamb! For the great day of His wrath has come, and who is able to stand?” (Revelation 6:16-17).

### **The Seven Trumpets-Revelation Chapters 7-9:**

In chapter 7 we find the first mention of the 144,000. This group is also mentioned in chapter 14. They represent the saved kingdom of Christ, not a literal number, but a symbolic one. To the Hebrews, the number 12 represented “concrete completeness”, that is, everyone or everything is accounted for. In the case of persons, 12 stands for the whole group. The number 1000 is the ultimate degree of perfection and represents Christ’s kingdom. The number 144,000 is 12 (everybody) times 12 (out of all 12 tribes) times 1000 (Christ’s kingdom). It is the symbolic total of the saved from every nation. It is not meant as the literal number of those who will be saved. There is a prominent religious group which claims that only 144,000 will enter heaven and that the rest of the saved will inherit the earth. As we shall see in this chapter and particularly in chapter 14, this number cannot be taken literally.

The first three verses of chapter seven reveal four angels standing at the four corners of the earth with power over the winds. Another angel is seen flying through from the east telling the four angels not to hurt the earth, the sea, or the trees until the servants of God are sealed. This denotes the period of gospel opportunity, the time when people can believe and obey Jesus and be saved. The four angels will not be restrained at the end of time.

The 144,000 are described in Revelation 7:4-8. Then a great multitude is mentioned beginning in verse 9. I believe these two groups are synonymous. The characteristics of these groups are: 1) they follow Christ (Revelation 14:4); 2) they bear God’s seal (Revelation 7:4); 3) they are dressed in white (Revelation 7:14); and 4) they serve God day and night (Revelation 7:15). In verses 5-8, the naming of the twelve tribes of Israel is given and it is said that 12,000 out of each tribe are sealed.

Both the 144,000 and the great multitude are said to have “come out of the great tribulation, and washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb” (Revelation 7:14). Their abode is described in Revelation 7:15-17, the imagery is that of heaven. These verses show the final abode of the faithful Christians from all ages.

#### The Seventh Seal-Revelation 8:1-7:

This is the final seal of the scroll which was described in Revelation 5:1. When the seal is opened there is silence in heaven. No voice is heard from God, people will not listen to the voice of God anyway. The events of the first six seals have taken us up to the time of the Dark Ages. During this time period ignorance, tradition, and superstition instead of the word of God determined how mankind lived and worshipped.

The opening of the seventh seal ushers in another view of history this time through seven trumpets. Prior to the sounding of the first trumpet, an angel takes a censer and fills it with fire from the altar of God and throws it to the earth (Revelation 8:5). This represents the truth of God being delivered to the earth in the apostolic age. The noises represent a plurality of tongues, while the thunderings, lightnings, and an earthquake indicate a force that couldn't be stopped. This shows the revolutionary nature of the kingdom of God and describes the spread of the gospel throughout the first century.

#### The First Trumpet-Revelation 8:7:

During the sounding of the first trumpet the vegetation of the earth is struck. The hail and fire mingled with blood which followed shows the persecution of the church by the Roman Empire. The trees which were burned and the green grass show that none but true Christians were killed. During this time period, the Roman emperors did not really care what god or gods their subjects worshipped as long as their subjects were willing to also offer sacrifice to the emperor. The early Christians refused to do this and as a result were persecuted.

#### The Second Trumpet-Revelation 8:8-9:

The burning mountain cast into the sea represents the declining fortunes of the Roman Empire. The union of church and state during the time of Constantine resulted in a loss of at least a third of the spiritual life and prosperity of the church. The seas represent people and when the burning mountain was cast into it damage was done. The second angel describes a turn of events which affected the church for the worse, especially in Europe.

#### The Third Trumpet-Revelation 8:10-11:

During the sounding of the third trumpet the fresh water was struck and a great star falls from heaven. This trumpet reveals details of events in the eastern Roman

Empire. In Asia and North Africa the church received a staggering blow from the followers of Mohammad. Wormwood is a symbol of Mohammad, the leader of the Muslims. He appears as a lamp passing himself off as a bearer of truth through the Koran, which are the scriptures of the Islamic religion. Wormwood appears only after the union of church and state is complete, in the seventh century. The bitter, poisonous water represents the conquest of the Arabian peninsula, the Middle East, and North Africa. The light of the church is becoming very dim.

#### The Fourth Trumpet-Revelation 8:12-13:

During the sounding of the fourth trumpet the heavens are struck. A great darkness prevails upon the earth since a third of the sun, moon, and stars did not shine. The spiritual darkness which occurred following the rise of the apostate church in the west and the rise of the Muslims in the east had a terrible effect upon mankind. During this trumpet an angel of God is seen flying through heaven proclaiming “Woe, woe, woe to the inhabitants of the earth, because of the remaining blasts of the trumpet of the three angels who are about to sound!” (Revelation 8:13). Just when you think things couldn’t get any worse, they are about to.

#### The Fifth Trumpet-Revelation 9:1-12:

The next two trumpets are described in much more detail. During the sounding of the fifth trumpet a swarm of locusts is released upon the earth. The falling star represents a great ruling spirit while the bottomless pit represents darkness and iniquity. Who is this star? The one who unleashes great darkness upon the earth.

If we compare this passage with Revelation 16:10-11, we find that the Beast is identified as the power that opened the pit. This beast is described in Revelation 13:1-2, “And I saw a beast rising up out of the sea, having seven heads and ten horns, and on his horns ten crowns, and on his heads a blasphemous name. Now the beast which I saw was like a leopard, his feet were like the feet of a bear, and his mouth like the mouth of a lion. The dragon gave him his power, his throne, and great authority”. Can we find some entity in history that fits this description?

The seven heads of the beast refer to Rome, as a kingdom, under the consuls, under dictators, under the Decimvirs, under military tribunes, as an empire, and as a dukedom. These are the seven heads. In Revelation 17:10, John wrote that, “There are

also seven kings. Five have fallen, one is, and the other has not yet come. And when he comes, he must continue a short time”. John wrote during the time of the one that “is”, that is, the Roman Empire. The western Roman Empire fell in 476 A.D., it was succeeded by a dukedom and according to Revelation 17:11, an eighth, “The beast that was, and is not, is himself also the eighth, and is of the seven, and is going to perdition”. This can refer to nothing else but the apostate church that took its power from the fallen Roman Empire and tried to replicate pagan Rome in a religious sense.

This was accomplished in 755 A.D., when Pepin, king of the Franks, at the wish of Pope Stephen II marched into Italy, took over the Dukedom of Rome and gave civil power to the Pope. His son, Charlemagne (Charles, the Great), continued and enlarged this grant in 774 A.D. He was subsequently crowned by the Pope as the Holy Roman Emperor, on December 25, 800 A.D. with ten countries under his rule.

Temporal (worldly) power made it possible for a false bishop to enshroud the world in darkness by legalizing traditions, superstitions, and the decisions of religious councils. The result was a completely apostate church.

The locusts of the fifth trumpet represent the barbarian invasions which hastened the fall of Rome. According to Revelation 9:5, the locusts were given authority to torment for five months. If you calculate 30 days to a month times five months it equals 150 days. Typically, in symbolic writings, a day represents a year and this would mean 150 years. This is the approximate time period during which the barbarian invasions of Rome took place.

The Visigoths (Western Goths) under Alaric sacked the city of Rome in 410 A.D. The Huns, who attacked in the middle of the fifth century under Attila the Hun, followed them. He is thought by many to be Abaddon, or Apollyon (The Destroyer) of Revelation 9:11. The Vandals attacked next, followed by the Ostrogoths (Eastern Goths) and the Lombards. There were five waves of barbarian invasion covering a time period of approximately 150 years. At the end of this time, Rome was reduced to a former shell of her glory and might.

Some of the characteristics of these locusts are interesting to look at. In Revelation 9:4, they were not to hurt living things. The barbarians were not interested in religious conquest, they were only seeking gold. The true Christians were unharmed.

They are like locusts in that they took money and food but didn't kill large numbers of people. According to Revelation 9:7, they were like horses prepared for battle. The Huns always fought on horseback. According to Revelation 9:10, they had stingers which could represent the lances, arrows, and spears that were used in the conquest. In Revelation 9:7 it is said that the locusts had crowns like gold and faces like humans. The Goths wore bronze helmets which would shine like gold in the sun. The Romans were generally clean-shaven while the barbarians were invariably bearded. This would explain why they looked like men, but not like the Romans.

In Revelation 9:8 we find that the locusts had hair like women and teeth like a lion. The Romans typically kept their hair short while the barbarians had long hair. The Huns were known as a people with prominent front teeth that they sometimes filed to a point. Finally, in Revelation 9:9, we see that the locusts had breastplates of iron and that the sounds they made were like many horses running into battle. Both the Goths and the Huns wore iron breastplates and were known to use huge herds of horses in mounting their attacks.

#### The Sixth Trumpet-Revelation 9:13-21:

The sounding of the sixth trumpet focuses our attention on events in the eastern Roman Empire. The angels bound at the Euphrates are released and proceed for an hour, a day, a month, and a year. If you take 365 days for a year, 30 days for a month, 1 day for a day, and a short time period for an hour it equals 396 days and an hour. Taking the days for years we would expect a time period of 396 years and a few months. This represents the time period of the Saracen invasion which wiped out Christianity in the east and established the Islamic religion firmly in the Middle East.

The Tartars moved from east of the Caspian Sea conquering India and Persia but were stopped on the east bank of the Euphrates River in modern day Iraq. They subsequently became Muslims, were known as Turkomans, or Turks and in the year 1057, they crossed the Euphrates River and marched on the eastern Roman Empire. The four angels bound at the Euphrates were released.

The prince commissioned by the Caliph of Baghdad to attack the eastern Roman Empire was named Togrul. He died and his son, Alp Arslan led the Turks across the Euphrates where he was killed in battle. His successor was Malek Shah whose four sons

inherited his empire upon his death (Persia, India, Syria, and Asia Minor). These events are all recorded by Gibbons in his classic work, “Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire”. According to Revelation 9:17-19, these invaders used revolutionary methods of warfare. From the nations of the far East these invaders had learned about gunpowder and they used this effectively in their assault on the eastern Roman Empire.

The invasion started in 1057 A.D., the Crusades intervened, but finally the Turks reorganized as the Ottoman Empire and 200,000 Turks using cannon successfully captured Constantinople on May 29, 1453. With the fall of Constantinople, the eastern Roman Empire ceased to exist. The fall of Constantinople occurred 396 years and four months after the Turks first crossed the Euphrates River in January 1057.

With the fall of the eastern Roman Empire, the light of the church was extinguished in the east. So the apostate church reigned in the west and the Muslims reigned in the east. What about the faithful Christians? They were still here and there during this time, but had to hide and the light of the gospel became dim.

These events, Catholicism arrayed against Islam set the stage for the revolutions and reformations of the 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> centuries, but for now an uneasy equilibrium was established with the apostate church unable to hold onto their possession of the Middle East during the Crusades and the Muslims unable to advance any further into Europe. As John records, “But the rest of mankind, who were not killed by these plagues, did not repent of the works of their hands, that they should not worship demons, and idols of gold, silver, brass, stone, and wood, which can neither see nor hear nor walk. And they did not repent of their murders or their sorceries or their sexual immorality or their thefts” (Revelation 9:20-21).

### **The Two Witnesses-Revelation Chapters 10-11:**

The symbols of chapters ten and eleven describe what will happen after the sixth trumpet sounds and before the seventh trumpet sounds. In these chapters we will see an angel with a little book, the two witnesses, their prophecies, death and resurrection, and also the final victory of Jesus during the sounding of the seventh trumpet.

The angel with the little book is described in verses one and two. The angel appears in the darkest period of the world’s history. A time when the papacy had unrestricted control in Europe, when the Pope and all of the kings of Europe were at their

most intolerant. A time also when the Ottoman Empire, upholding the religion of Islam was no less intolerant. These two religions had gained full control of temporal power and religious toleration was unknown. Ignorance and superstition were widespread. However, there were always some who worshipped in Spirit and truth.

This angel indicates that the present state of things would not continue, but would soon give way to a better and brighter future. This is seen in the rainbow and radiant face (Revelation 10:1). He has a book in his hand. The angel sets his feet on the sea and on the land indicating that what he is to reveal will affect the entire world.

Verse three shows us that the angel roared with a loud voice followed by the voices of seven thunders. In verse four, John is told to seal up the things uttered by the seven thunders. He is not allowed to write the things that the seven thunders uttered. God did not intend for us to know these things. In Deuteronomy 29:29, Moses wrote, “The secret things belong to the Lord our God, but those things which are revealed belong to us and to our children forever, that we may do all the words of this law”. After the utterings of the seven thunders, the angel with the book proclaims that there will be no more delay (verse 6) and that in the sounding of the seventh trumpet, when he is about to sound, the mystery of God would be finished. All things will be revealed (verse 7).

John is commanded to eat the little book just prior to the measuring mentioned in Revelation 11:1-2, it must have some connection to it. In Ezekiel 3:1-3, we find another account where a man of God was commanded to eat a book, “Moreover He said to me, Son of man, eat what you find; eat this scroll, and go, speak to the house of Israel.” So I opened my mouth, and He caused me to eat that scroll. And he said to me, “Son of man, feed your belly, and fill your stomach with this scroll that I give you.” So I ate, and it was in my mouth like honey in sweetness”. In both books, the prophets are told to eat and then go and preach.

As John ate the book, it was sweet in his mouth but bitter in his stomach. The angel told John that he must testify again about many peoples, nations, tongues, and kings (Revelation 10:11). The gospel message is a message of joy and hope to those who embrace it (the taste of honey), but it is a message of condemnation to those who reject it (the bitter taste). As we shall see in chapter 11, the measuring rod is the word of God.

### The Two Witnesses-Revelation 11:1-14:

John is told to measure the temple, the altar, and the worshippers. He is specifically told not to measure the outside court. Here, John uses symbols which would be very familiar to Jewish readers. This vision is based upon the temple of God which was built in Jerusalem.

Believers in Jesus are divided into two parts: 1) the true church, those whose sins have been truly forgiven and who are truly born again. These are those who comprise the temple, the altar, and the worshippers; 2) the apostate church, those who claim to be Christians, but have not been truly born again. These are those in the outside court. Those who have not been truly born again dominate the outside court.

This outer court had been given to the Gentiles to dominate for forty-two months. If you take 30 days for a month, forty-two months equals 1260 days. Using the day for a year method that is common in prophetic literature, we see a time period of 1260 years. It is also interesting that forty-two months is exactly 3 and one-half years which is indicated by the three and one-half days of Revelation 11:11.

The number seven is considered to represent perfect salvation while three and one-half would represent false salvation. John is told to measure the church, its worship, and those who worship. During this time period there is also a group which considers itself the church, with worship, and worshippers, but it is an apostate church. The measuring rod will reveal what is true and what is false. This measuring rod is the word of God.

During the previous centuries, tradition had replaced the word of God. No bibles were available to the people in their own language. Few people could read and the bible was written in Latin which even fewer people knew. In the east the Koran was read instead of the word of God. For 1260 years, the church was as an abandoned temple, a relic of what it once was. But the word of God, the measuring reed and the two witnesses (the old and new testaments), also known as the two olive trees and the two lamps continued to exist.

In verses 7-10, the beast is said to make war against the two witnesses and to overcome them. Satan conspired to try and eradicate the word of God. People rejoiced because they didn't have to do what the word said. This was because the word was

locked up in a dead language and unavailable to common people. Those who worshipped in the outside court would attend services where someone would tell them what the word said, but they couldn't read it for themselves. For all intents and purposes the two witnesses were dead.

After the three and one-half days (42 months or 1260 days which equals 1260 years), a dramatic change took place. Martin Luther, a catholic monk disgusted by the hypocrisy of indulgences and superstition, nailed ninety-five theses on the church door of Wittenberg castle in Germany. This occurred in the year 1517 A.D. and the Reformation began. The bible was given back to the people in their own language. Churches began to look more like what they should according to the word of God. These events are described in Revelation 11:11-14.

The world was never again the same. The false church lost its power. The second woe was past. Many wars were fought over the principles of the Reformation. There is still one more woe (11:14) and it is coming quickly. We should pause here to remember the warning of the angel in Revelation 8:13.

#### The Seventh Trumpet-Revelation 11:15-19:

This trumpet reveals the kingdom of Christ. There are two ways we can understand this trumpet. The first is that we can see the ultimate victory of Jesus at the end of time. The second is that we can see the spread of the gospel upon the earth from the time of the Reformation until now. The church came out of hiding and has been in visible form upon the earth since the sounding of the seventh trumpet.

This is particularly evident when you look at the history of the North American continent. Remember that the Dark Ages ended in the late fifteenth century, Christopher Columbus discovered America in 1492, less than 100 years later, Martin Luther made the break with the apostate church, and by 1607, we find the first permanent English settlement in North America at Jamestown, Virginia. In 1620, the Pilgrims landed in Plymouth, Massachusetts in an attempt to worship freely. By 1649, religious toleration was granted by the colony of Maryland.

The religious freedoms we enjoy today had their beginning in the sounding of the seventh trumpet after the two witnesses (the word of God) were resurrected after such a long period of darkness. We should always be thankful that we have the word of God in

our own language and the freedom to study it and follow the will of God. We should also be mindful of the fact that we are to be measured by the word of God. Our worship must be in Spirit and truth.

### **The Woman and the Beasts-Revelation Chapters 12 and 13:**

After seeing the history of the world down through the Reformation, John now sees a new vision that shows the same time period from a new perspective. In these chapters John sees a vision of a woman, a Child, the Dragon, and two beasts.

The woman clothed with the sun is a symbol of physical and spiritual Israel. The sun represents the gospel, the moon which reflects the light of another more powerful light represents the old testament scriptures, and the garland of twelve stars represents the twelve patriarchs of the old testament and the 12 apostles of the new testament. The woman is also said to be with child. This can only refer to the nation of Israel from whom Jesus came.

John then saw another sign in heaven, that of a great, fiery red dragon with seven heads and ten horns. This fiery red dragon is Satan. His tail drew one third of the stars (angels) of heaven and threw them to the earth. Satan is the leader of the rebellious angels. In Jude 6-9, we read, “And the angels who did not keep their proper domain, but left their own abode, He has reserved in everlasting chains under darkness for the judgment of the great day; as Sodom and Gomorrah, and the cities around them in a similar manner to these, having given themselves over to sexual immorality and gone after strange flesh, are set forth as an example, suffering the vengeance of eternal fire. Likewise also these dreamers defile the flesh, reject authority, and speak evil of dignitaries. Yet Michael the archangel in contending with the devil, when he disputed about the body of Moses, dared not bring a railing accusation, but said, “The Lord rebuke you!”

Another passage dealing with Satan is found in Ezekiel 28:11-17, where he is called the King of Tyre. The person described in Ezekiel 28 could not possibly be a mortal human, but the passage fits Satan perfectly. In Job 1:6, Satan is shown to be among the “sons of God”. Satan is the adversary who is waiting to devour the Child (Jesus) as soon as He is born. In fact, Satan tried at least three times to destroy Jesus. In Matthew 2:13, he used Herod the King to try to kill Him soon after His birth. In Matthew

4:5-6, Satan tempted Jesus to throw himself off the pinnacle of the temple in Jerusalem. Finally, in Matthew 27:35, Satan succeeded in having Jesus put to death. What Satan did not realize was that his victory over Jesus at Calvary was actually his ultimate defeat, because with the death of Jesus salvation was purchased for all who believe.

In Revelation 12:5, the male child who was born is destined to rule all nations with a rod of iron, this is Jesus. He is also said to have been caught up to God and His throne. This is seen in the ascension of Jesus in Acts chapter one. Beginning in verse six, the woman becomes the symbol of the church. The woman flees into the wilderness, where God has prepared a place for her. This wilderness sojourn is said to last for 1260 days. Using the day for a year method, we would expect the church to be in hiding for 1260 years. As we have seen in previous chapters this is exactly what happened during the reign of the apostate church.

#### War in Heaven-Revelation 12:7-12:

The events of this passage obviously happened in the distant past. John is here allowed to see into the past in order to understand better the power that ultimately allows the two beasts to arise. The dragon and serpent represents Satan, the Devil. The blood of the Lamb overcomes him. Satan had been cast out of heaven at an earlier time but now his defeat is complete. The loud voice in Heaven is heard to proclaim, "Woe to the inhabitants of the earth and the sea! For the devil has come down to you, having great wrath, because he knows he has a short time." This wrath is shown in the subsequent persecution of the church.

#### The Woman is Persecuted-Revelation 12:13-17:

The woman represents the true church of God that was hidden in the wilderness for 1260 years. The time, times, and half a time equals three and one half. There are 1260 days in three and one half years, so this represents the same time period as denoted in Revelation 12:6. The church was in hiding during the Dark Ages. Satan tried numerous ways to destroy the true church, but as verse 15 indicates the earth helped the woman. As verse 17 indicates, only those who keep the commandments of God and have the testimony of Jesus Christ were persecuted. This is the true church throughout the ages.

#### The Beast from the Sea-Revelation 13:1-10:

This beast represents pagan Rome, the old Roman Empire which was the first persecutor of the church. We have seen that the western Roman Empire fell in 476 A.D., it received a deadly wound in verse three, yet it did not die. The power of imperial Rome was taken up by the second beast (the apostate church) during the Dark Ages.

Blasphemies were spoken by the beast for forty-two months, this is the same time period as three and one half years, time, times, and half a time, or 1260 days. More detail is given of the working of the beast in the description of the second beast. There is a stark contrast between the apostate church and the true church given in verses 7-9. Everyone will worship the beast whose name is not written in the Book of Life of the Lamb.

#### The Beast from the Earth-Revelation 13:11-18:

This beast is very similar in appearance and mission as the beast described by the prophet Daniel in Daniel chapter eight. This beast represents papal Rome, or the apostate church that exercised the power and authority of imperial Roma.

The apostate church is said to be able to do great signs and wonders in verses 13-15. The beast gives its followers a mark in the hand or in the forehead. The mark in the hand stands for the false religious practices that are carried on by the apostate church. The mark in the forehead stands for the false belief that is inherent when mankind will not believe in Jesus Christ. No one is able to buy and sell except with permission of the beast. During the Dark Ages the apostate church controlled all facets of life including commerce. All heretics (those who refused to worship the beast or his image) were kept from participating in buying and selling.

Verse eighteen gives us a clue to the identity of the beast. John says that anyone with understanding can calculate the number of the beast, for it is the number of a man. We must remember that the book of Revelation was delivered to persecuted Christians in the first century A.D. The symbol must have had significance to them. It must have referred to an organization that they could easily identify. When John said that the number was 666, they must have been able to know who or what it was. While many different individuals have been identified as the beast, examples would be Adolf Hitler,

Saddam Hussein, and Napoleon; there is only one organization that makes sense. That organization was the Latin Kingdom, the Roman Empire. By taking the numeric value of the letters in the original Greek language, the Latin Kingdom equals 666. As we have seen already in the Revelation, the Roman Empire was the first persecutor of the church. After it fell in 476 A.D., the power and authority of the Roman Empire was assumed by the apostate church and they continued the persecution of true believers. No other organization in history fits the descriptions of the two beasts better than the Roman Empire and the apostate church.

### **The Lamb and the 144,000-Revelation Chapters 14 and 15:**

After seeing yet again in chapters 12 and 13, the history of the church, John now sees a great army and the glorious image of the Lamb. We will see in these two chapters the church triumphant over persecution and superstition.

#### **The Lamb and the 144,000-Revelation 14:1-5:**

The Lamb represents Jesus. He is shown standing on Mount Zion with an army of 144,000. The 144,000 represent the saved, all the true believers who are engaged in the Lord's battle against evil. Those who make up the 144,000 have a mark, that is, the Father's name written on their foreheads. We can compare this passage with Revelation 13:16 where we saw that the followers of the beast are also marked, but with the mark of the beast.

The number 12 in prophetic writings stands for concrete completeness (everyone or everything is present and accounted for). The number 1000 in prophetic writing stands for ultimate perfection. Thus we find the number 144,000 computed as follows: 12 (complete) times 1000 (perfection) times 12 (the 12 tribes of Israel symbolically representing the saved). The 144,000 represent the symbolic total of the saved from every nation throughout the gospel age. It is not to be taken as the literal number of those who will be saved. Likewise, it does not represent those who will inhabit heaven while the rest of the saved inhabit earth. As we shall see, the 144,000 are standing on Mount Zion, not in heaven. This symbol pictures the great army of the church with Jesus at the head waging war against the forces of Satan.

The 144,000 are synonymous with the armies of heaven in Revelation 19:14, and with the great multitude of Revelation 7:9. The number is not meant to be taken literally.

If the number is taken literally, then according to verse 4, the only ones who make up the 144,000 are virgin men. There are no women mentioned at all. The 144,000 are privileged to sing the song of Moses and the Lamb, and no they and only they can sing it. It is the right of all believers in Christ to sing the song of Moses and the Lamb. Likewise, all Christians have been redeemed.

The Lamb and His army are standing on Mount Zion. Out of the approximately 150 times the term “Mount Zion” is used in the Old Testament, it almost always refers to Jerusalem, or to the Kingdom of Christ. It never refers to heaven. This passage shows the church as it returned to its original pristine condition after the reformation.

#### The Three Angels-Revelation 14:6-13:

The first angel has the gospel to preach to the whole world. After the Reformation, the scriptures were returned to people in their native language. Beginning with the work of early reformers and continuing through to the present day, the gospel is being spread to every nation, tribe, tongue, and people.

The second angel declares the fall of superstition and apostate religion. Babylon is fallen. Babylon is mentioned in the New Testament only in Revelation and in First Peter 5:13. It can be identified as the beast and his image. In Revelation 17:5, it is the woman (harlot) with seven heads and ten horns. In Revelation chapter 18, the fall of Babylon is given in more detail.

The third angel gives more details about the fall of superstition and apostate religion. Following the reformation of the church is a time to follow God and rejoice if you do. It is also a time to fear if you don't follow God.

#### Reaping the Harvest-Revelation 14:14-20:

John now sees two more angels giving commands. These commands are to reap the harvest of the earth and to reap the grapes of God's wrath. These angels announce a harvest of souls by the Son of Man (Jesus) and a harvest of bodies (those who reject Jesus). Jesus is given the opportunity to save all who will turn to Him in faith. During this same time period, the winepress of the wrath of God is being filled with the vine of the earth (false Christians). The blood is said to flow up to the height of a horse's bridle and extend for 1600 furlongs (about 200 miles). This symbolic language represents the terrible price of sin and the danger of forsaking God.

### Prelude to the Seven Bowls of Judgment-Revelation Chapter 15:

In this vision John sees into the very presence of God, the temple of the tabernacle of testimony. He sees the four living creatures who represent the four corners of the world giving to seven angels bowls containing plagues. The saved are shown here in heaven, not on Mount Zion. They are standing on a sea of glass and are singing the song of Moses and the Servant of God (The Lamb). This group of people, playing upon their harps is singing the same song that chapter 14 said was reserved for the 144,000. This is yet another example of the fact that these groups are synonymous. The last days are about to be described.

### The Seven Bowls-Revelation Chapter 16:

In this chapter we see seven bowls of judgment poured out upon the earth (Revelation 16:1). The bowls are not poured upon the beast at first, but rather upon the earth and upon those who have the mark of the beast.

#### The First Bowl-Revelation 16:2:

The first bowl is poured out upon the earth. This should be compared with Revelation 8:7. The beast is not directly affected by the bowl judgments until Revelation 16:10. The mark of the beast represents human will being followed instead of the word of God. Compare Daniel 7:23-27. During the first bowl judgment, God uses events on the earth to prepare the minds and hearts of those who have been in spiritual darkness for a long time to accept Jesus Christ under the influence of the gospel. This is indicated by the song described in Revelation 15:4. The effects of the first bowl are world-wide.

#### The Second Bowl-Revelation 16:3:

The second bowl is poured out upon the sea. This should be compared with the second trumpet of Revelation 8:8. In this bowl, the Lord abandons the great apostate church. It now appears dead, the blood does not flow. When the call is made in Revelation 18:4, "Come out of her, my people", what remains will be dead. This began with the reign of Constantine early in the 4<sup>th</sup> century. There were faithful Christians even in the apostate church.

#### The Third Bowl-Revelation 16:4-7:

The third bowl is poured out upon the rivers. This should be compared with Revelation 8:10-11. If Wormwood represents the appearance of Mohammed, the third bowl represents the decline of Mohammedism (Islamic religion) as the result of bloody wars and revolutions. The nations that follow Mohammed have been largely reduced to cowardly acts of terrorism rather than constituting a military threat.

#### The Fourth Bowl-Revelation 16:8-9:

The fourth bowl is poured out upon the sun. This should be compared with Revelation 8:12. While the fourth trumpet shows the sun darkened, the fourth bowl reveals the sun in its strength. This shows that the word of God is restored to its proper place. Ever since the black horse started out (Revelation 6:5), the word of God had been suppressed. Now the word of truth shines!

#### The Fifth Bowl-Revelation 16:10-11:

The fifth bowl shows that judgment now is rendered on the power of the beast, the contents of the bowl are poured out on the throne (power, or authority) of the beast. This should be compared with Revelation 9:1-12. The apostate church was aided and protected by what the beast represents-the power of Rome. The apostate church lost its temporal power when Napoleon annexed the Papal States to the French Empire in 1808 A.D. With the death of Napoleon in 1815 A.D., the Papal States again assumed temporal power until September 20, 1870, when Victor Emanuel unified Italy, and Rome was declared to be the capital city. No longer was any territory under the temporal power of the apostate church. Yet, the spiritual head of the apostate church lives and promotes great darkness.

#### The Sixth Bowl-Revelation 16:12-16:

The sixth bowl is poured out on the Euphrates River. This should be compared with Revelation 9:13-21. The Christianity of the east was overthrown by the Turks and the Saracens and had become completely corrupt. The sixth bowl represents the overthrow of the Ottoman Empire-the main supporter of the religion of the false prophet, Mohammed. With the end of World War 1 in 1918, the Ottoman Empire was destroyed. Three unclean spirits symbolized by frogs appear out of the mouths of the dragon (paganism), beast (apostate church), and false prophet (religion of Islam). These frogs

are able to work wonders and they gather forces to fight against Jesus and His followers. They gathered at a place called Armageddon. This place is known as the mountain of Megiddo. The battle of Armageddon is spiritual, not physical. It is the decisive victory of Jesus over the forces of the three unclean spirits. This will be revealed again in Revelation chapters 19 and 20.

#### **The Seventh Bowl-Revelation 16:17-21:**

The seventh bowl is poured out into the air. At the end of this pouring, a voice from heaven said, "It is done". The great city represents false religion (Babylon). The fall of Babylon is described in Revelation chapter 18. The islands and mountains represent kingdoms and powers on the earth which are uprooted and affected during the seventh bowl judgment. Christ's kingdom is over all, triumphant. The hailstones are said to be the weight of a talent. A talent weighed 75 pounds while a royal talent weighed 150 pounds. This must be symbolic since any person who was hit by a falling hailstone weighing 75 or 150 pounds would die as a result. The hailstones represent the severity of God's judgment upon the earth.

#### **The Woman on the Beast-Revelation Chapter 17:**

In this chapter we see Satan, in the form of civil government infiltrating the true church and bringing about the great apostate church. Once more, John sees the future of the world, this time focusing specifically on the great Harlot.

The two beasts of Revelation chapter 13 show how Satan used the governing authorities of the world to persecute the church. The first beast was symbolized as a wild, man-eating predator with seven heads representing the seven stages of Roman power. For 250 years, imperial Rome persecuted the church. Then the pagan Roman Empire vanished and Constantine the Great united the temporal power of Rome with the spiritual. The first beast was dead, or was it? The wounded head was healed. The second beast was represented as a lamb with two horns. This symbolizes the union of secular and religious power. The apostate church began with the reign of Constantine. It looked like a lamb but spoke with Satan's voice. The second beast was more brilliant and powerful than the first.

### The Falling Away Predicted:

There are several references in the bible to a great apostasy or falling away from the truth. Specifically, 2 Thessalonians 2:2-3 and also 2 Thessalonians 2:12 show the falling away. The great fall is described in Revelation chapters 13 and 17. There is a warning to faithful Christians in Revelation 18:4-5. The apostle Paul gave warnings to the elders of the church at Ephesus concerning this in Acts 20:29-31. Satan is still at work today!

### The Great Harlot-Revelation 17:1-6:

These verses describe the development of the apostate church. In this vision, John still sees a beast with seven heads and ten horns, but now there is also a woman riding on the beast. The beast is now scarlet in color representing the red dragon (Satan), as described in Revelation 12:3 and Revelation 12:9. Red (or scarlet) is also the color of warfare. The woman on the beast is dressed in royal robes and wears gold and jewels. The woman is also said to be sitting on many waters, this represents different people and nations (Revelation 17:15). The writing on her forehead identifies her as “MYSTERY, BABYLON THE GREAT, THE MOTHER OF HARLOTS AND OF THE ABOMINATIONS OF THE EARTH”. Just as the priests under the law of Moses were mediators between God and man, this woman claims to be the mediator. Her true purpose is to persecute the church of God. Certainly, this woman can only represent the apostate church, especially during the Middle Ages. This will be clearly shown in the following section of verses. John marveled at the sight of the woman because of her beauty and power, yet the judgment of Babylon is certain as revealed in Revelation chapter 18.

### The Harlot's Meaning Revealed-Revelation 17:7-18:

The beast which carries the woman is described as an entity which was and is not, and comes out of the pit. The city of Babylon is said to sit on seven hills, the city of Rome is also known as the city sitting on seven hills. The seven heads of the beast are also kings (Revelation 17:10). At the time of the vision, five had passed, one was, and one was yet to come. The seven heads of the beast refer to Rome, as a kingdom, under the consuls, under dictators, under the Decimvirs, under military tribunes, as an empire, and as a dukedom. These are the seven heads. In Revelation 17:10, John wrote that,

“There are also seven kings. Five have fallen, one is, and the other has not yet come. And when he comes, he must continue a short time”. John wrote during the time of the one that “is”, that is, the Roman Empire. The western Roman Empire fell in 476 A.D., it was succeeded by a dukedom and according to Revelation 17:11, an eighth, “The beast that was, and is not, is himself also the eighth, and is of the seven, and is going to perdition”. This can refer to nothing else but the apostate church that took its power from the fallen Roman Empire and tried to replicate pagan Rome in a religious sense.

There are also ten horns on the beast. These represent ten kings in the future, who will reign at the same time along with the beast. Their time is relatively short (symbolized by one hour). These horns represent the kingdoms of western Europe which developed after the fall of the Roman Empire. These kingdoms persecute the Lamb and His followers, but the Lamb will overcome them. During the time of the Inquisition, the European kingdoms carried out the sentences imposed by the religious courts. The kings that reigned with the beast were active persecutors of those whom the apostate church labeled as heretics.

The Holy Roman Empire began when the Pope crowned Charlemagne (Charles the Great) as Emperor on December 25, 800 A.D. The names and boundaries of the countries involved in the Holy Roman Empire changed through the years, but ten was the typical number. These kingdoms served the interests of Rome for a time. In the end, these ten kingdoms turned on and virtually destroyed the apostate church.

The German emperor, Henry IV, who reigned from 1056 until 1106, rebelled. This precipitated a war that weakened both Rome and Germany. Then, Philip, the Fair of France who reigned from 1285 until 1314, arrested and imprisoned the Pope, and moved the seat of the papacy from Rome to Avignon, France. The Popes were held at Avignon from 1309 until 1417 A.D. For over a century, various men set themselves up as Pope and various countries acknowledged one or the other as the real Pope. There were as many as three competing Popes reigning at one time. Finally, Henry VIII of England who reigned from 1509 until 1547 cut ties between his kingdom and Rome over a disagreement about divorcing one of his wives. This resulted in the establishment of the Episcopal Church in 1534 and the loss to Rome of one of the most populous and wealthy kingdoms. This rift still exists today.

### Summary of Revelation Chapter 17:

Rome is the great city ruling over the earth, built on seven hills, and representing the fourth phase of the great world kingdoms predicted by Daniel the prophet (Daniel chapters 7 and 8). Spiritual Rome, the apostate church was built upon the ruins of the pagan Roman Empire. The apostate church looks like a lamb (a religious institution). The false church sets up a man as the symbol of the church and persecutes those who will not worship him (Revelation 13:15). Rome fought the true church and prevailed except for those whose names are written in the book of life (Revelation 17:8). The woman described in this chapter rules a super kingdom which controls the thoughts and actions of other kings (Revelation 17:13) and is also a wealthy organization (Revelation 17:4). These symbols point to only one institution, the apostate church, headquartered in Rome. Even though this woman is very powerful and beautiful, the next chapter reveals the utter destruction of this power and beauty.

### **The Fall of Babylon-Revelation Chapter 18:**

This chapter records the fall of the city of Babylon (Imperial and Spiritual Rome). While chapter 17 gave the vision and interpretation of the great harlot, in this chapter we see the overthrow of the apostate church. This chapter gives details of the fall of something symbolized by a great city. This great city represents the same thing symbolized by the woman in chapter 17. Chapters 17 and 18 provide supplementary material to the pouring out of the seventh bowl of judgment from chapter 16.

In chapter 17, the union of church and state is shown clearly at a time when the church was the superior partner. The overthrow of the false church is recorded in vivid detail in chapter 18, especially verses 1-4. The earth is illuminated by the glory of the angel, representing the preaching of the true gospel. People are urged to come out of the apostate church so they will not share in her judgment. This judgment is deserved because of her sins and persecution of the true church. Revelation 18:5-8 gives a very graphic description of the judgment soon to fall on Babylon. This should be compared with Revelation 3:17-22. In both passages, reference is made to wealth and a lack of humility.

### The Reaction of the World to Babylon's Fall-Revelation 18:9-20:

Merchants and kings will mourn when they see the destruction of the power, glory, beauty, and authority of Babylon (See Jeremiah 50:46). A long list of merchandise is given in these verses. The most important to look at is "the bodies and souls of men" (verse 13). For so many centuries, the apostate church had kept people in spiritual ignorance and bondage, now things will be different. No more riches are to be had at the expense of truth. Heaven will rejoice over the fall of Babylon, the true church also rejoices (Revelation 18:20), see also Jeremiah 51:48. More details of the rejoicing over Babylon's fall will be found in chapter 19.

### The Finality of Babylon's Fall-Revelation 18:21-24:

A great millstone is cast into the sea. Seas represent people and nations, so this symbolizes a worldwide event. No more joy, music, or crafts will be found in Babylon. No light will be found there, Babylon will be dark spiritually once all faithful Christians come out of her. Babylon gained its power by sorcery and deceit, it has all been a lie. What is worse is that in Babylon was found the blood of the saints. Truly, the judgment is deserved, see Jeremiah 51:36-58 for a description of the destruction of physical Babylon. Now, we have seen the destruction of spiritual Babylon.

### **The Triumph of Jesus and the Church-Revelation Chapter 19:**

This chapter describes the preparation for the final battle between good and evil (Revelation 20). This chapter shows Jesus and the church triumphant over the beast and the false prophet. These events take place after the fall of Babylon is pronounced (Revelation 18) and before the final overthrow of the Satan (Revelation 20). Taken together, these three chapters (Revelation 18-20) illustrate the grand theme of the book of Revelation, Jesus wins and Satan loses!

### The Marriage of the Lamb-Revelation 19:1-10:

A great multitude is seen giving praise to God and revealing the judgment of Babylon. This multitude is the same as the one found in chapters 7 and 14. The church is seen prepared as the bride of Christ. The symbol of the church as the bride of Christ is found in several other passages (Revelation 21:2; Revelation 21:9-21; Romans 7:4; and 2 Corinthians 11:2). Jesus gave an excellent parable on this theme in Matthew 22:1-14.

The church is to be pure (Revelation 19:8); this purity is symbolized by the righteous acts of the saints. Jesus had already given instruction to the church at Sardis (Revelation 3:4-6) and the church at Laodicea (Revelation 3:17-18) concerning this very thing. Blessed are those who are called to the wedding supper of the Lamb.

John falls down at the feet of the one speaking to him. He is told not to worship anyone except God. The testimony of Jesus is the important thing to keep in mind. The speaker said that the “testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy”. Everything centers on Jesus and the testimony about Him. We should focus on this and not on things which are irrelevant. Many times we are like John, we want to fall down and worship the one speaking to us, because we are so enraptured by the message, rather than focusing on what is really important-the testimony of Jesus. We cannot let anything come between Jesus and us.

#### Christ on the White Horse-Revelation 19:11-16:

White denotes purity. Jesus comes in total purity and judges in righteousness. However, Jesus also makes war against sin (Revelation 6:1-2). Jesus will not accept sin, He is totally opposed to it. He wears a robe dipped in blood, His own blood which was shed on Calvary and which takes away the sin of the world.

His name in verse 12 is unknown to all but Himself, but we can identify Him because of verse 13, where His name is revealed as “The Word of God”. Several other passages expand upon this name, in particular, John 1:1-18 and 1 John 1:1-4. Jesus is also pictured as leading armies dressed in white (purity) and riding on white horses (purity).

He has a sword coming out from His mouth. This sword is the word of God. Jesus refers to this sword also in Revelation 1:16 and Revelation 2:16. Other passages showing the use of this sword are 2 Thessalonians 2:8 and Hebrews 4:12. Jesus is shown in this chapter as the one who conquers and rules. He is said to rule with a rod of iron and that He is the one who treads the winepress of the wrath of God (Revelation 14:19-20). His name is further revealed in verse 16, “KING OF KINGS AND LORD OF LORDS”. Paul tells us in Romans 14:11 that there is coming a time when everyone will confess this name. We must be certain that we are confessing the name of Jesus now while the door of opportunity stands open.

### The Defeat of the Beast and the False Prophet-Revelation 19:17-21:

We have here a glimpse of the defeat of the beast and false prophet. More details about the defeat of Satan, who is the real power behind the beast and the false prophet, will be given in chapter 20. The sword in the mouth of Jesus kills the beast and the false prophet. This is a spiritual sword, not a physical one; nevertheless, the carnage seen by John symbolizes the great battle between good and evil. The final result is that the beast and the false prophet are cast into the lake of fire where Satan will join them shortly (Revelation 20:10).

### **The Final Defeat of Satan-Revelation 20:**

This chapter has been the cause of much debate and speculation. While the thousand-year reign is prominent in many end-time writings and is predicted by many, the word of God does not support such wild speculations and theories. The thousand-year reign is not a specific period in time but rather symbolizes the spiritual kingdom of Christ where God dwells with His people. I believe the thousand-year reign is occurring now in the church of Jesus Christ. We are in the thousand-year reign. Remember that Revelation chapter 18 shows the fall of Babylon (false religion), Revelation chapter 19 shows the fall of the beast and the false prophet, and now Revelation chapter 20 shows the fall of Satan, the real power behind Babylon, the beast, and the false prophet.

### The Conflict Between Kingdoms-Revelation 20:1-6:

There is warfare going on between the kingdom of light under the reign of Jesus Christ and the kingdom of darkness under Satan. This warfare is incessant and will continue until such time as described in this chapter when Satan is ultimately and finally defeated. This warfare is known as the battle of Armageddon, not a physical warfare fought with physical weapons, but a spiritual battle, the battle for your soul and mine.

The angel described in this chapter represents Jesus; the key in His possession represents His authority. In Revelation 1:18, Jesus said, "I am He who lives, and was dead, and behold, I am alive forevermore, Amen. And I have the keys of Hades and of Death". In Revelation 3:7, Jesus said, "And to the angel of the church in Philadelphia write, 'These things says He who is holy, He who is true, 'He who has the key of David, He who opens and no one shuts, and shuts and no one opens'". From these passages and

also Isaiah 22:22, we can clearly see that Jesus is the one with the key and with the power and authority to defeat and bind Satan.

The chain used to bind Satan represents the blood of Christ, which was shed for our sins and it also represents the gospel message of salvation, see Revelation 12:10-11. Through His death, Jesus destroyed Satan's power over mankind if men and women will accept the message of the gospel. Chapter 20 shows the advent of Jesus to the earth to shed His blood. The cross sets men free and binds Satan.

The thousand-year reign is God's reign in the lives of faithful Christians. Satan's power is broken as verse 3 indicates. Outside of the thousand-year reign (the kingdom of God), Satan still has power. The short time he is released represents a limitation on his power.

Judging takes place in this chapter. The apostles of Jesus reign and judge in fulfillment of Matthew 19:28. The word of God is the standard for judgment as Jesus warned in John 12:48 and also as we find in Hebrews 4:12. The important thing to know is that we reign with Christ as Christians. Paul said in Ephesians 2:6, "and raised us up together, and made us sit together in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus,". Jesus Himself promised in Revelation 3:21, "To him who overcomes, I will grant to sit with me on My throne, as I also overcame and sat down with My Father on His throne".

In verse 4, we find those who were said to have been beheaded. This cannot be taken literally since it would exclude all those martyred for Christ in other ways. It has a symbolic meaning, as Paul explains in 2 Timothy 2:11-12, "This is a faithful saying: For if we died with Him, We shall also live with Him. If we endure, We shall also reign with Him. If we deny Him, He also will deny us". It includes those who have died to themselves by following Christ, and also the ones who refused to compromise with Satan.

The first resurrection is mentioned in verse 5. Those who died to themselves (by becoming followers of Jesus) came back to life in God's kingdom, the thousand-year reign. All of us were dead in sin according to the Apostle Paul in Ephesians 2:1-2, but some of us are raised by the grace of God through the gospel of Jesus (Ephesians 2:5-6; Galatians 2:20). This raising again is symbolized by our baptism into Christ (Romans 6:1-4; John 3:3-5).

There are a lot of things in these verses that are hard to understand, but what we will not find in these first six verses is an earthly reign by Jesus in the future, a kingdom ruled by Jesus centered in Jerusalem, or a reign over fleshly Israelites. All of these things figure prominently in current prophetic commentaries and all of these commentaries claim that Revelation 20:1-6 supports their theories. The problem is that none of these things are mentioned or even hinted at in these verses. The thousand-year reign must be a spiritual reign which we are blessed by enjoying now with God and Jesus in the church.

#### The Final Battle-Revelation 20:7-10:

The name Armageddon is mentioned only in Revelation 16:16, it appears nowhere in this passage detailing the final defeat of Satan. In these verses, Satan is released outside the kingdom of Jesus and deceives all who will follow him. Gog is the leader of Magog, and here the writer, John refers back to the Old Testament prophet, Ezekiel, knowing that many of his readers would be familiar with the concept of Gog and Magog. In fact, in Ezekiel chapters 38 and 39, much prophetic material is given concerning Gog. Gog and Magog refer to the Satanic forces which shall presently be destroyed. No matter what the interpretation of these symbols, the final ending is the same: Satan is defeated. The theme of the book of Revelation will always be that Jesus triumphs and Satan is defeated. These events can only take place at the great judgment.

#### The Great Judgment-Revelation 20:11-15:

Everyone will be judged by God. The books will be opened and examined and we will be judged by what we have done in this life. The main thing we must remember is that in order to be saved we must be written in the Lamb's Book of Life. For other passages detailing these events see 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18 and 1 Thessalonians 5:1-11.

#### **The Reward of the Faithful-Heaven: Revelation Chapters 21 and 22:**

In these chapters we see a description of events that take place after the judgment. A description of Heaven is given along with exhortations and warnings to the readers of this book.

#### Everything is New-Revelation 21:1-8:

The tabernacle of God is now with men, as it was in the days of Moses (Leviticus 26:11). Jesus is the Alpha and the Omega (Revelation 1:11). He is the beginning and the end, just like Alpha is the first letter of the Greek alphabet and Omega is the last letter of

the Greek alphabet. It is Jesus who gives the water of life. We must overcome the world in order to enjoy His fellowship for eternity. This way of life is contrasted with the ways of sin in these verses.

#### The New Jerusalem-Revelation 21:9-21:

The bride, the Lamb's wife, the New Jerusalem, all of these are titles used to describe the heavenly realm. This realm was seen descending out of heaven from God. John attempts in these last two chapters to describe the wonders of heaven with words. It is an impossibility to adequately describe the beauties of heaven with words. John uses words to bring to our mind gold and rare and precious stones. Yet, compared with the actual beauties he saw, these words must only be a pale copy of the original.

Heaven then has a wall with twelve gates representing the children of Israel (the twelve tribes). The wall has twelve foundations representing the twelve apostles of Jesus. The city is a square (or, more accurately, a three-dimensional square, a cube). When Heaven was measured it measured 12,000 furlongs in each dimension (length, breadth, and height). While we must understand the book of Revelation in symbolic terms, it is interesting to note that if these are the actual dimensions of Heaven, then each dimension is 1500 miles in length. There are eight furlongs to a mile. The wall is 144 yards wide, since a cubit roughly corresponds with a yard. This city is immense! The city also has twelve gates. We know that the number twelve symbolizes completeness. It is a complete city.

#### The Glory of Heaven-Revelation 21:22-27:

There is no need of a temple, sun, or moon since this is where God Himself dwells. An interesting fact is that the glories of the kingdoms of the earth are to be brought into the Heavenly realm. There is a stern warning contained in verse 27, we must be written in the Lamb's Book of Life.

#### The River of Life-Revelation 22:1-5:

In Heaven the tree of life is available to man. This is the culmination of man's history. In Genesis chapter 3 we find where Adam and Eve were driven out of the Garden of Eden so that they would not be able to eat of the tree of life. Now, at the close of the age, mankind once again has access to the tree of life in Heaven.

The same can be said about Heaven having no more curse. In Genesis chapter 3 we find that before God drove Adam and Eve out of the Garden of Eden that he pronounced curses upon the serpent, Adam, and Eve. Now in Heaven there is no more curse. In Heaven, there is no death, we shall reign forever.

Exhortations and Warnings-Revelation 22:6-21:

In these last verses of the book of Revelation, Jesus specifically mentions three times that He is coming quickly (22:7, 12, and 20). We should be earnestly looking for the return of the Lord. Once again, in verse 6, John reminds his readers that this book concerns things which must shortly take place. This is one reason why we should look to history to see the fulfillment of many of the symbols of the book of Revelation. This book does not primarily describe events in our future, but things which would be in the future to first century readers.

These verses tell us that “the time is at hand” (verse 10). Judgment will find us as we are then (verse 11). Jesus is coming quickly; He will bring either a reward or a punishment. We must keep His commandments because those outside Heaven are those who do not. Verse 16 shows us that this book is written for the use of the church. Verse 17 gives the invitation of the Spirit and the church for all to come to Jesus and be saved. Verses 18-19 present a warning to anyone who would add to or take away from the book of Revelation. Jesus reminds us finally, “Surely I am coming quickly” (verse 20). I believe after studying this marvelous book that we can say along with John, “Amen. Even so, come, Lord Jesus”!