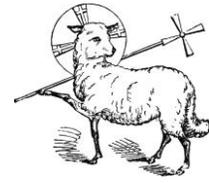


The Worthy Lamb

Bible Study on the Book of the Revelation

Christ Lutheran Church + East Moriches, NY



CLASS 1: INTRODUCTION TO CLASS

We are about to embark on a study of the most difficult book in the Bible, the Book of the Revelation. In order to understand this book you must have a thorough knowledge of the rest of the Bible, an understanding of Jesus' two natures (divine and human), His two states (Exaltation and Humiliation), and His Three Offices (Prophet, Priest, and King).

We must also understand the genre of *apocalyptic literature* in the Bible which occurs primarily in three books: Ezekiel and Daniel in the Old Testament, and the Revelation in the New Testament. Apocalyptic literature cannot be interpreted as we would normally interpret Scripture. It is not written in plain, literal language, but in "signs" (Greek: *seimeion*). In his Gospel, the Apostle John uses this word instead of "miracles." When Jesus performs a sign it always points to *Him*. So it is in the Revelation. Jesus is the fulfillment of everything in the Book of the Revelation, not the headlines in newspapers. In his clear, literal writing, John writes, "these things are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in His name." This is the same reason that Jesus gives this entire book in signs.

There are some who believe that the Revelation provides key clues as to when Jesus is coming to Judge the world. Others use it as a "clue book" that can give those who are "enlightened" a deeper understanding of what Jesus plainly says in the Gospels—that His coming will be unexpected and soon, seen by all, and will be on the Last Day and not prior to it. Christians are warned to not go down this path; this is the heresy of *Gnosticism* (i.e. an elite group "in the know."). Whole false theological systems have been based upon this misunderstanding. It is our hope to show how the Book of the Revelation simply amplifies the clear words that Jesus speaks. We interpret the unclear (the Revelation) in light of the clear (The Gospels, the witness of the New Testament writings).

The Christian Church holds that the Revelation contains no "new" doctrines that are not already covered by the rest of Scripture. No doctrinal formulations can be developed from this Book. The Revelation is a part of the Bible known as *anti-legomenon* which means it was not universally accepted as a book that should have been included in the Bible, yet was allowed to stand.

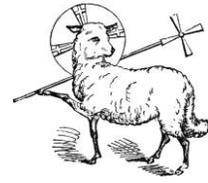
Another error into which one can fall is the "chronological" error, that is, seeing the Revelation as a linear time-line that starts at chapter 1 and ends at chapter 22. As we will see, the Revelation is *cyclical*. It describes the time from Jesus' incarnation to His second coming three different times and in three different ways. Each time it describes this time period (which is the *true* 'millennium' – where Jesus is reigning on earth *now* in His Church through the forgiveness of sins, and present in Word and Sacrament on earth) it does so in a progressively more intense way.

The most common error among Christians is that they see this book as being about "the end times." (The end times started when Jesus was born and go through His second coming, so in one sense they are

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correct). But the Revelation is not about the end times in some kind of coded way. It is about the hope that Jesus gives to the Seven Churches who are undergoing deadly and profound persecution. Evil seems to be triumphing. Jesus gives the Revelation to lift the sights of His people to the unending hope of heaven where we will worship the Lord forever and ever, singing His praises non-stop. If one loses sight of this central truth, he/she will understand this book incorrectly. So we ask you to put aside anything that you have learned about this book, and we will re-explore it together in the light of the Scriptures and church History. It will be a true blessing to you.

The Gospel of Luke and the Book of Acts both end and begin with the Ascension of Jesus into heaven from the Mount of Olives forty days after He is raised from the dead. He goes back to His Father, where He now lives and reigns at God's right hand for the sake of the Church. Luke and Acts show us what happens when Jesus leaves the earth, the Revelation shows us what happens when Jesus arrives in Heaven! It is a *glorious* book.

Bring your favorite Bible. Also, please bring any other materials that you find that you would like to share with the class on this, no matter what theological position is presented. It always will make for good, thoughtful discussion. Handouts will be provided at each class. It would be helpful if you get a three ring binder where you can keep the sheets and your notes. Make sure you bring a pen as well.

When we speak of differences between belief between other Christians (and there are *many*) we do so with great respect for them and their faith in Jesus. End times/ Prophecy issues are ultimately a "secondary doctrine" meaning having differences is not something that causes one to lose faith/salvation. In the end, Jesus Himself will reveal the truth. (The primary doctrine is "Jesus is Lord". One cannot be saved without faith in Jesus). However, this does not mean that we will not look critically at the public teaching of other Christians. This will be done to make clear what we believe and what we reject as Orthodox Christians.

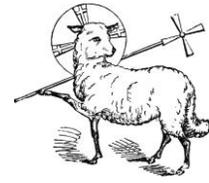
It is our goal not to only help you understand this complex book (as much as we can... some remains a mystery), but also to use this as a wonderful faith-expanding experience. You will be blessed!

John G. Fleischmann, M.Div., STS, The Feast of the Holy Trinity, June 16, 2019

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INTRODUCTION TO THE BOOK OF THE REVELATION

My esteemed professor (and now colleague) Dr. Donald R. Miesner wrote:

“ Many devout Christians over the centuries agreed with Martin Luther when he stated, ‘They are supposed to be blessed who keep what is written in this book [the Revelation] and yet no one knows what that is, to say nothing of keeping it. This is just the same as if we did not have the book at all’.

Fortunately, Luther’s later studies led him to reflect in 1546, ‘We can profit from this book and make good use of it. First for our comfort...second for our warning.’ Within the last generation in particular many excellent works have appeared that lift the veil of mystery from Revelation. The path to being able to read, hear, and heed its liberating and sustaining gospel message is now open.”¹

Revelation is indeed a challenging book. This is because:

- It requires complete knowledge of the rest of the Scriptures to understand the messages, symbols, and patterns.
- It is written symbolically. Unless one understand the *Biblical* definition of these symbols he/she will misinterpret them.
- Though it is written in Messages, Symbols, and patterns there is a temptation to translate this book woodenly, literally, and chronologically.
- One must understand this book in light of the *clear* words of Scripture pertaining to the *Parousia*. However, much of Christianity disregards this important hermeneutical rule and does the opposite leading to much false teaching.
- The Revelation is not a book about the “end times” but about eternal hope, glory, and worship that extends from the time of Jesus’ birth/Incarnation, through His second coming, and then through eternity. It is not about a specific period at the end of time as often taught in popular theology. The Revelation *uses* the End-Times to point all Christians to that eternal hope.

Dr. Miesner continues:

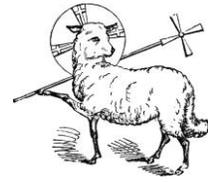
WHY was the book written? John, finding himself in exile because of “the word of God and the testimony of Jesus” (1:9), felt the need to strengthen the faithful people of the churches of Asia. The letters to the Churches was his best chance of rendering his pastoral and spiritual support. The faith of the churches was endangered by false teachers and by the loss of spiritual fervor from within. From the outside, they were slandered and opposed by Jews and persecuted by the enforcers of emperor worship. Some had lost their lives, and John, their spiritual leader, had been banished. John’s

¹ Donald R. Miesner, *Keys to Revelation: Messages in Letters, Symbols, and Patterns*. (St. Louis, MO: Concordia Publishing House, 2010). Page 10.

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purpose, then, is one giving comfort and encouragement to the faithful and of warning to the straying and lost. Specifically he wrote:

- ✘ To encourage fidelity to Jesus by pointing to the triumph and the promises of the risen Christ;
- ✘ To reveal Christ as the only worthy and able to insure a glorious future
- ✘ To show that emperor worship and polytheism are counterfeit and forms of satanic opposition to God;
- ✘ To call to spiritual renewal and/or repentance all who would read, hear, and heed the gospel call; and
- ✘ To warn persecutors and backsliders by portraying the dreadful consequence of denying, defying, or opposing God and His people.²

And

WHEN? Even though occasional persecutions occurred before the time of Emperor Domitian, such as Nero's massacre of Christians at Rome in the sixties, which claimed the lives of Peter, Paul, and others, emperor worship was not widely enforced until the nineties of the first century. Then Christians became especially vulnerable. In some cases, they were exposed to authorities by Jews who felt threatened by the new faith in the resurrected Lord...To worship an idea or a spirit was perceived to be ineffective in promoting the desired loyalty... in time, all people, regardless of their other religious ties, were asked to offer once a year the ritual incense to proclaim the emperor as "Lord and God" (*Dominus et Deus*). This seems to have brought on the crisis of faith that John addressed from exile in Patmos during Domitian's reign. The time is likely around 95 AD. ³

Some questions to ponder?

1. Persecution in the first century was progressive. It started out in an unorganized, scattered way. But as time went on, it became unified and powerful, to the point where anyone found to be of "the Way" would be imprisoned, tortured, or put to death. Can you identify things in our lifetime where this progression of hatred toward Christians seems to be occurring?

CHAPTER 1

v.1 Definition of the word Αποκαλυψς

v. 1 Definition of the word εσημανεν

v. 1 Definition of the word αγγελου αυτου

² Ibid. Page 11.

³ Ibid. Pages 11 and 12.

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v.1 Definition of the word δουλω

v. 3 Definition of the word αναγιωσκω

v.4 Definition of what “Seven Spirits” means

REVELATION 1:1-7 (Greek translation by Louis Brighton)

The revelatory unveiling of Jesus Christ which God gave to Him to show to his slaves what things are necessary to come about quickly and He communicated in visible signs these things as he sent them through His angel to His slave John, who witnessed to the Word of God and to the testimony of Jesus Christ what things he saw. Blessed is the one who reads out loud and those who hear the words of this prophecy and who keep the things written in it, for the time is near. John, to the seven churches which are in Asia: Grace to you and peace from the One Who is and Who was and Who is coming, and from the Seven Spirits that are before His throne and from Jesus Christ, the witness, the faithful one, the firstborn of the dead and the ruler of the kings of the earth. To Him who loves us and set us free from our sins by His blood, and He made us to be a kingdom, priests to God and Father to Him be [all] the glory and the dominion forever and ever, Amen. Behold He is coming with the clouds and every eye will see Him, even those who pierced Him, and all the tribes of the earth will mourn over Him. Yes, Amen! I am the Alpha and the Omega says YAHWEH, the [only] God, the One Who was and Who is Coming, the Almighty.

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

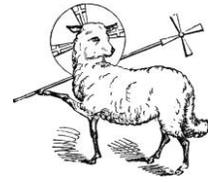
1. What is the importance of the words “Apocalypse” and “Visible Signs” in understanding this book?
2. How is the Trinity mentioned in this prologue?
3. What part of the purpose of the Revelation begins to be revealed? (Hint, who is this about?)

NOTES:

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Vocabulary

- v. 8 Definition of the term παντοκρατωρ Pantokrator
- v. 9. Definition of the description of Jesus διάτην μαρτυριαν Ιησου dia martarian (Jesus)
- v. 10 Definition of the phrase εν πνευματι En Pneumati
- v. 10 Definition of the term κυριακη ημερα Kuriake Hamera
- v. 18. Definition of the word Αδου aidou, "Hades"

Dr. Miesner: Primary doctrines within the Revelation:

1. Christ is present with His Church and cares for her.
2. The wicked will be judged severely
3. Christians will be accountable for fidelity to Christ.
4. God is transcendent. Pantokrator
5. God is in complete control of nature and human destiny.
6. Satan's power is limited.
7. Hell is a place for eternal punishment.
8. The reward for the just is a glorious one.
9. The Christian's hope for eternity is well grounded.
10. Until the Lord returns His people will suffer. "In the world you will have tribulation, but I have overcome the world (John 16:33)

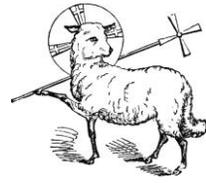
Some notes on the introductory chapter:

1. John begins by stating his primary intent is revealing Jesus Christ.
2. The first of John's seven beatitudes (1:3) shows the benefit and urgency of this message.
3. The Churches get a Trinitarian greeting (v. 4-5) culminating in Jesus as the faithful witness, firstborn, and ruler. Thus, there is stressed, in succession, His fidelity, His conquest of death, and His dominion over all rulers.

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The Exalted Christ

Importance of the term “Son of Man”.

1. Already had significance among the Jews (Daniel 7:13-14)
2. Appears 88 times in NT, 84 of which are in the four Gospels and 2 in Revelation (1:13, 14:14).
3. Jesus uses this title to identify Himself.
4. The other two titles given in the NT are “Christ”, and “Lord.”

5. The title “Son of Man” not only identifies Jesus, the Son of God, as the true man who came to take the place of the human race in his life and death and resurrection. It also emphasizes the fact that Jesus Christ, as *the* human being, was elevated to the high and unique status of being *the* Man to rule everything on behalf of God the Father.

Notes

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Seven Golden Lampstands

1. Seven Golden Lampstands chosen,
Churches of the Son of Man;
First and Last He now has Risen,
Through His Stars reveals His Plan.
He who hears the Words I give,
Let him overcome and Live!

Ephesus

2. Through your work and perseverance,
You have tarried patiently;
Rise again to heights of heaven
Jesus Christ your first love be.
He who hears the Words I give,
Let him overcome and Live!

Smyrna

3. Poor on earth but rich in Spirit,
Satan vows to lead astray;
Faithful unto death believing
Pledges Coronation Day!
He who hears the Words I give,
Let him overcome and Live!

Pergamum

4. Even in the Serpent's shadow,
To My Name you have been true;
Now receive the hidden manna,
As my blessed, chosen few.
He who hears the Words I give,
Let him overcome and Live!

Thyatira

5. Blazing eyes see faith and service
As your light reflects My Love,
In your teaching and temptation,
Set your minds on Things Above.
He who hears the Words I give,
Let him overcome and Live!

Sardis

6. Golden Lampstand, wake from slumber!
Keep in mind what I have said;
As a thief I come unto you,
Will you be alive or dead?
He who hears the Words I give,
Let him overcome and Live!

Philadelphia

7. All will see My Love upon you,
Pillars in My Temple's Frame;
When the trials crush upon you,
I will give you My New Name.
He who hears the Words I give,
Let him overcome and Live!

Laodicea

8. Sing your Amen! Rise before Me!
Neither cold nor lukewarm be!
I will put My Robe upon you,
Heal your eyes that you may see.
He who hears the Words I give,
Let him overcome and Live!

9. O you Lampstands, now shine brightly
In this dark and evil day;
By your potent light now burning
Flood Satanic night away!
He who hears the Words I give,
Let him overcome and Live.

Text: John G. Fleischmann, b. 1960
Tune: Neander, 1680

*To my dear Brother in Christ, Francis D.
Bonadonna,
Celebrating his fifteenth year as a Star in the Church of
Christ, June 1995*

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EPHESUS

“Write what you see in a book and send it to the seven churches, to Ephesus and to Smyrna and to Pergamos and to Thyatira and to Sardis and to Philadelphia and to Laodicea.”

Grace to you and peace from Him who is and who was and who is to come, Every three years during the season of Eastertide- from Easter Sunday through the Feast of Pentecost the Church lectionary affords us the opportunity to plunge into the depths of the Revelation of Jesus to St. John. When this occurs, we always take advantage of it. Our focus will be on the Seven Churches of the Revelation mentioned in today’s Epistle, beginning with the Church at Ephesus. Before we begin it is prudent to take a few minutes to explain some important things.

By far, the most misunderstood book in the New Testament- and perhaps the entire Bible- is the Revelation. Given by Jesus, through His angel to the Apostle John, who was under a banishment of persecution on the remote isle of Patmos, cut off from His Church in Ephesus over which he was Bishop, and his friends and family, this is a magnificent letter.

The book of the Revelation is an “advanced study book.” It is not the place where one should begin reading the Bible. It is not a good read for new Christians, ever. It is an Apocalypse, which means that it is extremely symbolic.

This means, rather than understanding things at face value, we must understand what the symbols mean. To do this, you *must* be fluent in what the Bible says about these symbols in other places. It is an advanced study book because it assumes

that you know what the Old Testament prophets and writers understood the symbols to be. It is an advanced study book because we must synthesize what it says with what *Jesus* says plainly and clearly, and not the other way around as modern Evangelicalism has done.

Revelation has to fit Jesus’ explanation of the End Times, not fitting Jesus’ teaching into what the Revelation says about the end times. This is a grave error. Remember, Scripture cannot be broken, and Jesus, Himself, is the ultimate Last Word of God. So we interpret the unclear meaning of the Revelation in light of the clear meaning of what Jesus says.

Ask anyone what the book of the Revelation is about and they’ll probably answer, “the end times.” By that they mean that the book of Revelation is interpreted by the headlines of today. Some preachers have based their entire ministry upon the Revelation in this fashion. But sadly, they are mistaken.

You can correctly say that the book of the Revelation is about the end times if you understand the end times to be from the time that Jesus ascended into heaven to the time He returns in glory, as the book of the Revelation is written to the Church—where Jesus reigns on earth now in Word and Sacrament—encouraging, uplifting and granting hope in the midst of our struggles. It is not a doctrinal book; it is a book that assumes you know all of your doctrine and the clear teachings of the Bible. It is a book of the worship of the Children of God, both in heaven and on earth, and a book that grants hope to the Church with the vision that death has been trampled down by

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Death and the Bride of Christ will enter into the eternal marriage feast of heaven. It is not a book that gives clues about when the end will take place: Everything written in it can be applied to the Church of every age. It is not a book that charts out a time line, where events can be sequentially strung together to make a neat chart. It is cyclical. And each cycle speaks of the same things that occur from the Ascension to the Coming of Jesus from three different perspectives. So we are not embarking on a study of the end times as we go through each of the Churches listed in our Epistle today.

The Book of the Revelation is written to seven specific, real churches that existed in Asia Minor in the First Century. However, from the internal witness of the text, we can say that what has been given to the Seven Churches is still given to the Church of today.

Finally, the Revelation is all about Jesus Christ. It gives us a picture of His exaltation in heaven at God's right hand. It is written in picture language, where time after time the Lord plunders evil and delivers His church. These things are important if you want to understand the Revelation properly and not in the frenzied, incorrect way of modern Evangelical thought. What you will hear is what the Church has always confessed about this wonderful book, not new-fangled doctrines developed from a book that has no doctrines. So much more can be said, and will be said, as we make our way through Chapters 2 and 3 in the next 7 weeks.

The Seven Churches of Asia Minor all have their own personalities and issues, just like congregations have today. As we go

through each of them we will be looking at six different categories: Some background on the Church, the Image of Jesus that He Himself presents, the commendation of the good that Christ sees in the specific Church; the sin that Jesus condemns in each church, the call to repentance that Jesus gives each Church, and the Promise that Jesus gives to each Church. Through these, we will make application to our individual lives and to the life of our congregation. This is intended to lead us to repentance and to receive the promise of God in and through Christ Jesus. There is a study guide in your Bulletin that I invite you to use. Bring your Bibles to Church, take notes, learn and live.



THE CHURCH AT EPHESUS

1. As we begin our study of the Church at Ephesus we must first answer the question, "what is the Church?" The Church, Biblically and Confessionally understood is God's own gathering of His Saints around His means of grace- Word and Sacrament, in regular and unceasing worship. The Saints are those of whom Jesus speaks in today's Gospel, "Blessed are those who have not seen and yet believe. That tells us that what we are doing here today is something extremely holy. We are here because in Baptism God placed us here. We are here to receive His forgiveness, His love, His mercy, the very life and heart of our crucified, risen and ascended Lord. It is not about "attendance" as if we will get into some kind of trouble for not coming. It is about understanding our deep need, our desperate need to be saved. That cannot happen anywhere but when we are gathered with God's Saints here and now around the Font, His Word, His Body and His blood. We respond in

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worship not as we ought, but only as we are able in singing, praying, forgiving each other, giving our tithes and offerings, and in the fellowship that the Holy Spirit Himself has created.

When anything gets in the way of God coming to us or us coming to God, there is a spiritual problem. Each of these churches have a problem. And we must pay attention to these problems because they exist in abundance today in every church. In this first letter to the Church at Ephesus—the Church that John would become the Bishop over after His exile was completed—the problem was idolatry. It's First Commandment stuff.

You shall have no other gods before me.

What does this mean? We should fear, love, and trust in God above all things.

Ancient Israel often committed this sin, and almost all of the punishment that they received was directly related to them violating this sin. Such was the case in Ephesus.

2. In John's time, Ephesus was the chief city of the province of Asia. John was the Bishop of the Church there. Ephesus was the hub for the three major roads through Asia minor. It also was the main Asian Harbor for Roman ships, and the roads of Ephesus connected sea with land.

The Roman fertility goddess, Diana, had a temple in the midst of the city. Known as one of the "seven wonders of the world", it was a place where criminals sought asylum, where idol worship took place, and followers worshiped her by having sex with temple prostitutes.

There was a group of Christian heretic compromisers led by a man named Nicolas,

called the "Nicolaitans" who encouraged Christians to eat the foods sacrificed to the gods and to participate in the sexual immorality of the city in the name of Christianity. They'd like the bumper sticker that says, "Coexist!"

Biblically speaking, we read about Ephesus in Acts 19, where Paul barely escaped with his life from the riot of silversmiths taking place in the large amphitheater that was in the City.

One could imagine that being a follower of Jesus would be difficult in a setting like this. There was huge pressure from the pantheists and atheists against those who confessed Jesus as Lord. And there was huge pressure to cave into it from within the Church with the subterfuge movement of the Nicolaitans.

This is not unlike the Church of today. Our own government and society is becoming less and less tolerant of Christianity. There is a new movement to remove all exemptions from Churches that the government has always afforded for the betterment of society to religious organizations of all stripes. There are Christians from within who move among us with the same subterfuge as the Nicolaitans. We are getting a taste of what the Christians of Ephesus had as a full meal. Persecution was brewing in Ephesus, and it was easy to be distracted from the faith. So it is with us today.

3. Jesus sends His first letter to this church.

"To the angel of the church in Ephesus write: The words of him who holds the seven stars in his right hand, who walks among the seven golden lampstands."

Some symbolism to be unpacked here. The seven stars, the Book identifies as being the

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same as the seven angels. Most scholars agree that these are the pastors of the Churches. Angels, not in the sense of winged, spiritual beings, but in the down and dirty translation of the word, “messengers”, that is the ones who proclaim the Gospel to the people in that place. Not all scholars agree with this- Dr. Louis Brighton sees the angels as “guardian angels” of the Churches. But either way, the message is the same.

The seven golden lampstands are the seven churches. Jesus holds them in his Right hand, that is, in power, for they are His body. He walks among the seven lampstands- reminiscent of God walking in the Garden of Eden before Adam and Eve fell into sin. This shows He is in their midst. He is dwelling with them and in them. This is the true Millennium: Jesus is reigning on earth now in His Church. The thousand years is now—meaning the “fullness of time”, not a literal reign of one thousand calendar years as some erroneously teach.

4. Jesus commends the Church:

I know your works, your toil and your patient endurance, and how you cannot bear with those who are evil, but have tested those who call themselves apostles and are not, and found them to be false. I know you are enduring patiently and bearing up for my name's sake and you have not grown weary.

Here we get some clues.

A. Church at Ephesus is patiently enduring. Oh, the suffering and evil is there! The pressure is on. But they have remained faithful. They have not caved in, nor resorted to violence or an uprising against those who oppose them.

They have tested those who call themselves apostles and are not, and found them to be false.

How'd they do that? By knowing the doctrine of Jesus Christ and by comparing what they knew to be true with what the Nicolaitans were attempting to teach. The Holy Spirit can guide us through His Word to know the truth and to know the lie. In his first Epistle, John himself tells you and me to “test the spirits to see if they are of God.” At the time he was speaking of the Gnostics who were infiltrating the Church, not unlike the Nicolaitans, but how do we do that today?

I think we fail at it. We become duped with false teachers like Joyce Meyer, Joel Osteen, Rick Warren, and a host of others that preach a theology of glory but never bring us to the Cross of Christ. It is interesting to note that a huge portion of their funding come from people who are in denominational churches like our own. Follow them and you fail the discernment process and sin. Follow them and the enemy has you. The Nicolaitans have pulled you away from the true faith. Follow them and you're not enduring, and perhaps don't even realize it.

4. Then, Jesus gets to the heart of the matter. He confronts the Church with their sin, both corporately and individually:

But I have this against you, that you have abandoned your first love.

Think, for a moment, in human terms. Do you remember when you fell in love with your spouse? Do you remember the feelings that you had, the desire to be with him or her as much as possible, the pain you felt when you were apart, the desire to do

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anything for them? Back when the flames of the relationship were high and hot and wonderful?

Then, fast forward into life a couple of decades. You still love each other. But once the passion seems to wear off, we begin living for ourselves again. We take our spouse for granted. The daily drudgery of life sets in, the bills have to be paid, the house has to be fixed, things get tense at work, and we become distracted. We still love our spouse dearly, but we are distracted by life.

This is what was happening in Ephesus. They no longer had the “glow” that Thomas had in our Gospel today when He realized that the other Apostles were telling the truth, that Jesus really was there in front of him, and that He truly was his “Lord and God.”

For the Ephesians, life intervened. The struggle of the faith became the end instead of the means, and they became more interested in enduring than in Who they were enduring for, Jesus the Lord. While pure doctrine is vital—without it no one can be saved—I dare say that the constant focus on the purity of doctrine can and does become a god in the lives of many theologians today. The faith is not about a fight. The faith trusts that which is handed down to us from the Church of all time. Idolatry occurs when we become compulsive and paranoid about doctrine rather than simply trusting the Lord’s Word. To be sure, if false doctrine occurs, it must be called out. But doctrine, beloved, is the road upon which we walk. It is not the walk itself. I worry about some of my Lutheran brothers who don’t seem to understand this. Their “faith” is all about filling pot

holes and not walking the narrow road that Jesus has placed us upon by faith in Him.

This is the sin of idolatry.

Idolatry. We are guilty of this also. Sunday morning instead of worship- a biggy here- just compare the attendance today to last week. Revenge instead of forgiveness. Me before you. The list goes on and on. Bottom line: When you sin, you put yourself before the Lord and you have lost your first love. The Lord tells us today, “I have this against you, you have lost your first love.”

Guilty as charged.

O Lord, forgive me. O Lord, send me your Holy Spirit that I might change my evil ways and love you first and foremost in my life again, even over myself.

5. The reason Jesus points this out to Ephesus and to us is so that we repent.

Remember therefore from where you have fallen; repent, and do the works you did at first. If not, I will come to you and remove your lampstand from its place unless you repent.

We repent first by remembering our relationship with Jesus. Then by reflecting on when, where and how we have fallen. How did we get this far away from Jesus in our lives? We go before the Lord, confessing our sin, nailing it to the Cross through Baptism into Jesus’s death, and we rejoice in the words of Holy Absolution spoken upon us.

Jesus threatens to remove the Lampstand if this is not done. Sometimes, with all of the death and loss that we have gone through, and the little growth that we have seen, one must ask, is the Lampstand being taken away from us here? Have we sinned? Are we not repentant? Do we have a first love that is other than Christ Jesus? Is it

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ourselves? Is it our desire to do things our own way like a bulldozer? Do we not have a problem with a lack of commitment to weekly worship? Is the Lord Jesus pleased with us and our worship? Hard questions. Questions that Jesus, through our text, demands to be answered, so that repentance and change of life follow. That change of life is to “do the works you did at first.” Oh Lord, please grant that to us. Spare us. Rekindle the light in our Lampstand through your Blessed Holy Spirit.

Help us to stand up to the world, the Nicolaitans, ourselves. Rekindle in us the fire of your love.

6. Jesus then gives His promise:

To the one who conquers I will grant to eat of the tree of life, which is in the paradise of God.

Our blessed Lord is all about second chances, because He is all about forgiveness. That is what Jesus upon Good Friday’s Cross did for you and for our Church. It forgave us. It is the truest display of God’s love that God could ever give us.

Adam and Eve disobeyed God and ate from the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil, and were cast out of the Garden that they might not subsequently eat from the Tree of Life in the paradise of God. They had the promise of Messiah, but they couldn’t touch the fruit from that second tree in the garden that granted eternal life.

In the fullness of time, God replanted the tree of life square on the top of Golgotha. From it flows the words of His lips in the blessed Scriptures, proclaimed to you each week. From it flows the water into which you are baptized. From it flows the stream

of blood and upon it hangs the broken body, all for you. Take and hear. Take and bathe. Take and eat. Take and Drink. The fruits of the Tree of are restored to you.

He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.

SMYRNA

Be faithful unto death, and I will give you the crown of life.

Grace to you and peace from him who is and who was and who is to come, and from the seven spirits who are before his throne, and from Jesus Christ the faithful witness, the firstborn of the dead and the ruler of kings on earth. Amen.

We continue our study of the Letters to the Seven Churches in the Revelation.

Again, the reason that we are studying these 7 actual congregations of Asia Minor is that not only was the Lord Jesus speaking to them, but also to us. There is contemporary application to what John wrote down at the command of the Angel of the Lord.

We will be looking at the six different categories that are on your insert sheet once again. We will look at the background information on the Church, the Christology—that is, the image given by Jesus of Himself, at the commendation that Jesus gives to the Church pointing out the good that they are doing, the condemnation pointing out their sin, the call to repentance and finally the promise that Jesus gives to those who repent of their sin.

Today we visit the Church at Smyrna.

When Jesus was raised from the dead, His first appearance to His disciples was in the upper room where they were locked inside out of fear. Since Jesus was crucified, they

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thought they were the next ones to go to the Cross. They already struck the head, now they were coming after the Body. Their Lord had died. The women had shared the utter nonsense with them, that they had seen Jesus alive. But all of a sudden, there in their midst was Jesus. They were afraid. They were afraid because dead people don't come back, and there He was. They were afraid because they certainly were a part of the reason that He died. They were afraid because they abandoned Him at the end. They were afraid because Peter denied Him. They were afraid because Judas went to hell. Jesus stands before them. The first words out of His mouth were, "Peace be with you." Not a rebuke. Not a ghastly scream. But peace.

Coupled closely with this is another statement that both the angels and Jesus Himself made at other times: μη φοβη: fear not. In Mark 5 Jesus says to terrified Jairus, whose daughter was dying, "Fear not, only believe." And in Luke 12 Jesus says to all of His sheep including you and me, "Fear not little flock, for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom."

In the Bible, ultimately there is only one thing for humans to fear: The judgment and wrath of God. It is worse than death, because it is eternal death—the "Second death" as our text calls it, which means hell. Those under God's wrath and judgment are headed there.

But for those under the blood of the Lamb, those who are His own, God's wrath has been appeased. There is no wrath. You, who were children of wrath, are now His daughters and sons through Jesus Christ. So if that is the only thing to ultimately be

feared, and since Jesus became our propitiation and payment for sin, since Jesus came under God's judgment for us, there is absolutely nothing to fear in this life or the next. So fear not.

The issue for the Church in Smyrna was fear. For the persecution against Christians was beyond description. Christians were meeting horrific ends to their lives.

Like Ephesus, Smyrna was a large, port city in Asia minor, north of Ephesus. Like Ephesus, it also had roads, unlike many of the other regions in Asia minor.

Smyrna was reputed as among the most beautiful cities of antiquity. Historically, it rose from obscurity when Lysimachus rebuilt it in 190 B.C. It was a rare, planned city of its time, built according to plans attributed to Alexander the Great. There was a temple in Smyrna dedicated to the goddess Roma that was built in 195 B.C. And, because of its faithfulness to Rome, the city also received permission from the Roman government to construct a temple there to Emperor Tiberius in 26 AD. The citadel or *crown* of the city rising majestically to the east, was regarded as the "crown of Asia."

Along with a strong loyalty to Rome came persecution of the Christians. Christianity was outlawed in any and all Roman provinces, and at the time of our text, was outlawed in Smyrna as well. Loyalists to the Emperor made certain of this.

Emperor worship was the order of the day. It was in the Temple built for Tiberius where it took place. You've no doubt heard the accounts of the people having to throw a pinch of incense to Caesar to worship him in the ancient Roman world; this is where it took place.

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The Church at Smyrna was in the midst of this. Asia Minor was the beginning place of all persecution against the Church of Christ. There was a second form of persecution in Smyrna that the text indicates: The persecution that came from the large Jewish Community that dwelt there. Jesus calls them the “Jews that are not”. In other words, the Jews who rejected Jesus as Messiah ceased to be Jewish, for Messiah was the fulfillment of their faith and they rejected Him, most notably when they conspired with Rome to put Him on your cross.

Persecution is the “great separator”. It is what the Lord allows so that judgment already is beginning. It is easy to lose faith and hope in the face of persecution for believing in Jesus.

Therein lies our temptation.

We live in an age that is becoming more and more hostile toward Christians. The outward persecution exists in the world for sure. The 21 martyrs in Libya in 2014. In Columbo, Sri Lanka, terrorists invaded three Christian Churches two weeks ago on Easter killing 253 people in Church- a hundred more than the huge catch of fish Luke records in today’s Gospel. Recently in China, Christians were executed in the public square for carrying Bibles.

That persecution is beginning to encroach within the American fabric as well. Put a strong statement about Jesus on FaceBook today and you will be banned for 30 days from posting anything. Wear a cross around your neck if you are a flight attendant for Delta Airlines and you will be suspended from work without pay. Go to a public event as a pastor to offer a benediction and you use Jesus’ name, they

will never ask you back. As the American society continues its moral tumble, persecution exists in the form of discrimination against Christians. Don’t bake a cake for a same-sex union because of your faith; speak out against abortion, particularly the state-endorsed infanticide passed by our governor recently, and you will be marked as a bigot, homophobe, or Nazi. If you’re a student in high school or university and you dare to bring up anything about your belief in Creation, you will be immediately censured by your teacher or professor, or made to look like you are a fool.

It would be very easy just to keep your mouth closed.

It would have been easy for first Century Bishop of Smyrna, Polycarp to keep his mouth closed, too. But he didn’t.

The ancient Church Father, Polycarp was martyred in Smyrna because he refused to worship Caesar.

We read of his execution in ancient writings:

The Proconsul asked him whether he was Polycarp. On hearing that he was, he tried to persuade him to apostatize, saying, “Have respect for your old age, swear by the fortune of Caesar. Repent... “Swear,” urged the Proconsul, “reproach Christ, and I will set you free.” “86 years have I have served him,” Polycarp declared, “and he has done me no wrong. How can I blaspheme my King and my Savior?”

...“You threaten me with fire which burns for an hour, and is then extinguished, but you know nothing

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of the fire of the coming judgment and eternal punishment, reserved for the ungodly. Why are you waiting? Bring on whatever you want.”

So they simply bound him with his hands behind him like a distinguished ram chosen from a great flock for sacrifice. Ready to be an acceptable burnt-offering to God, he looked up to heaven, and said, “O Lord God Almighty, the Father of your beloved and blessed Son Jesus Christ, by whom we have received the knowledge of you, the God of angels, powers and every creature, and of all the righteous who live before you, I give you thanks that you count me worthy to be numbered among your martyrs, sharing the cup of Christ and the resurrection to eternal life, both of soul and body, through the immortality of the Holy Spirit. May I be received this day as an acceptable sacrifice, as you, the true God, have predestined, revealed to me, and now fulfilled. I praise you for all these things, I bless you and glorify you, along with the everlasting Jesus Christ, your beloved Son. To you, with him, through the Holy Ghost, be glory both now and forever. Amen.”..

Eventually, when those wicked men saw that his body could not be consumed by the fire, they commanded an executioner to pierce him with a dagger. When he

did ... such a great quantity of blood flowed that the fire was extinguished. The crowd were amazed at the difference between the unbelievers and the elect – of whom the great Polycarp was surely one, having in our own times been an apostolic and prophetic teacher, and bishop of the Catholic Church in Smyrna. For every word he spoke either has been or shall be accomplished.

And they did what they willed. Polycarp, the Bishop of Smyrna, was Martyred at the stake in 167 AD, about 70 years after this letter was written to this Church.

Jesus appears to the Saints of the Lampstand of Smyrna as the “**the first and the last, who died and came to life.**” Jesus was the first: He was present at the Creation of the World. Jesus is Last: The one who will bring that same creation to a close, ushering in a New Creation on the Last Day. He died and came to life: Died for our sins on the Cross, and came to life from the Easter Tomb. This all powerful Jesus who could even crush death, did so for you and me. Rome may think it has the last word, and some Christians may be tempted to think that it does, but Jesus does, not Rome. Jesus does, not the president or president elect of the United States. Trust not in princes they are but mortal, earthborn they are and soon decay. Naught are their counsels at life’s last portal when the dark grave soon claims its prey. Hear that loud and clear, dear Christian! Jesus is the First and the Last in our lives as well. He is our first love. He gave us life.

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And He is the Last in that He has the Last word on us, backed up by His life, death, and resurrection that you have received in faith and by His Means of Grace. And if Jesus isn't first in your life, He cannot be last in your life. The words of Jesus to Thomas ring true: Be not unbelieving, but believe!

2. Jesus commends this Church at Smyrna for both their patient endurance in the face of persecution, and for their poverty. Persecution is hard to endure. Just think of your own social settings where you are with people who believe differently than you do—maybe it's their faith, maybe it's their politics, maybe it's their view on social issues. Two temptations come right to the surface when there is a discussion with them. First, is to simply remain silent and not to express your own faith or thoughts. Second— even worse, is to agree with them so as to avoid confrontation, arguing or even the loss of friendship. The Lord would have us speak our faith and shine His light into these situations, of course in love, but all too often our lips are sealed. Now, imagine if you had to say something about Jesus that didn't tow the party line under fear of torture and death. Enduring persecution is hard. All Polycarp had to do was throw the incense and there would have been no pyre. But there also would have been no heaven for him.

4. What does the Bible say to us about fear? Fear about our lives comes first and foremost from committing the sin of losing our First Love, as they did in Ephesus. When we lose our First love, Jesus, then everything turns inward upon ourselves, and we know that there is no hope to be found in our hearts or lives. We are sinners.

Without Christ, our First Love, we are doomed!

Jesus tells us, "do not fear those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. Rather fear him who can destroy both soul and body in hell." (Matthew 10:28). Of course, the one spoken of here is God Himself.

The problem with fear is that it is all encompassing, all embracing. When you are afraid, you cannot hear or believe the victory that the Lord has already given you. Jesus' words to the Church here are very, very clear. It is not simply a "Fear Not" that the angels said to the Shepherds at Christmas or Mary in her parlor. The Grammatical Structure is much more intense than this. The Greek is in the PRESENT, ACTIVE, IMPERATIVE: "STOP BEING AFRAID of what you will suffer"! It is a command.

Why? Because Jesus is the one who was dead and is alive again. Man can only take your life, not your soul. But Jesus can restore even that life that man takes away, or that death claims suddenly, or that Cancer causes. He's giving you your life, your body back. Even if you die. So Stop being afraid!

5. Yes, indeed, the suffering would come and would last ten days. Ten days is the Biblical number for the "perfect time." Ten days conveys a short time when compared with eternity. This is over against the "1000 years" where Jesus reigns over His Church in Word and Sacrament, a symbolic number that is ten cubed: The perfect time multiplied" meaning the perfect length of a long time." Luther says, "The Greatest suffering in Christ is the suffering where the devil attacks and engulfs us for some time. The devil will put some in prison. That can

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be a literal time in a literal prison, as I suspect may be coming for Christians even here if they don't tow the official "party" position; or it can be a prison in one's own mind and body.

A professor of mine in Seminary told us a story. Prior to teaching at the Seminary, he served for a time as a pastor in Latvia. His organist was a very humble man from Latvia. He would play majestically. One day, the pastor was visited by the Bishop of Latvia who told Dr. Brighton a story about the organist. When the communists came, they arrested this man, his wife and his two children. They brought him to the town square, forced him to his knees and held a pistol to his head. "Deny Christ" they demanded. "I cannot" the organist replied. They demanded two more times: "Deny Christ!" "Deny Christ". He refused. "He is my Lord, I cannot deny him." They took the pistol away from his head and killed his wife and children in front of the man. He was in a mental and emotional prison of despair for the rest of his life. Before they died, his wife said to him, don't deny Jesus. If they kill us we will be in heaven. Do not bow to them. Imagine how those words rang through his mind as long as he lived. Jesus' exhortation to them to repent of their fear is to hold fast. "Be faithful unto death, and I will give you the crown of life. Smyrna knew all about Crowns. It was the "Crown city" of Asia Minor—the Acropolis (which means crown). They knew all about crowns in Smyrna. Jesus tells them that as they remain faithful to Him, a crown even better than Caesar's awaited them: The Crown of Life. Be faithful unto death, and I will give you the Crown of Life.

6. The promise is this: "The one who conquers will not be hurt by the second death."

What does this mean?

If there is a second death, there must be a first. Some say the first death is our physical death. But there is strong evidence to suggest that the First Death is unbelief in our hearts while we are still living. Unbelief cannot endure suffering. Unbelief does not know the freeing joy of the Gospel in Jesus who is the First and the Last. Unbelief has no hope. Unbelief brings only the Second Death.

The Second death is hell. Hell is the eternal abandonment of God caused by us walking away from God, caused by us refusing to receive His Gifts He gives to all, refusing to believe that Jesus is the Christ and by believing have eternal life in His name. The Second death, hell, is reality. The world laughs at its possible existence, the Church has all but watered down her belief in hell as well. A true delusion of the devil. Jesus says it is real. Jesus calls it the second death from which there is no resurrection, no coming back.

But to the one who holds dearly to the Savior, there is no second death. Only restored, new creation life in heaven. That gives us hope. That encourages us in our suffering. That is a promise from God.

He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the Churches. The one who conquers will not be hurt by the second death

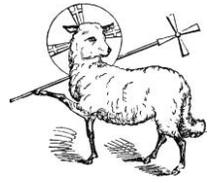
Pergamum

And to the angel of the church in Pergamos write, These things says the one who has the sharp two-edged sword: "I know where

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you dwell—where the throne of Satan is. Yet you hold to my name and you have not denied my faith even in the days of Antipas my witness, my faithful one, who was put to death in your presence, where Satan dwells. Nevertheless I have a few things against you because you have there some who are holding to the teaching of Balaam, who taught Balak to cast an offense before the sons of Israel [so as to cause them] to eat meat offered to idols and to commit sexual immorality. In like manner, you also have some who are holding to the teachings of the Nicolaitans. Repent then! If not, I am coming to you quickly and I will make war with them by the sword of my mouth, The one who has an ear, let him listen to what the Spirit says to the churches. To the one who conquers I will give of the manna which has been hidden, and I will give to him a white stone, and upon that stone a new name written which no one knows except the one who receives it.

Unto him who loves us and has freed us from our sins by his blood and made us a kingdom, priests to His God and Father, to him be glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen.

This week I would like to bring up some very important points when it comes to the Churches in Revelation.

First, these seven letters to the Churches precedes the prophecy of the Revelation. They are preparatory letters so that the Christians of these persecuted churches would clearly hear and understand what it is that Jesus is saying to them through John.

Secondly, Jesus confronts the Churches with **seven sins which only Christians can commit**. We all know that the Ten Commandments apply to everyone. On the last day, those who have broken them but are not covered with the Robe of Christ's Righteousness will have to pay eternally for breaking them. Our daily sin breaks them as well, and save for the blood of Christ, we would be lost forever. Thanks be to God who gives us the Victory that leads to salvation through faith in Jesus Christ alone.

But the sins of the Churches in Revelation are different. They are, in a sense, much worse than simply breaking God's commandments, because they are the sins related to being unfaithful to the Lord who has claimed us as His own. They include: losing our First love, living in fear, comingling money and our faith and compromise their faith and witness to gain earthly honor and security, as well as the freedom to engage in illicit sexual relationships, tolerating false doctrine or accepting those who practice it, being dead spiritually, and being lukewarm, smug in our riches and prosperity. The Lord will not hold you, or the Church guiltless in this. Repent!

We continue with our study of the Seven Churches in the Revelation with the Church at Pergamos. If you prefer the Latin, Pergamum. As Jesus speaks to these specific, literal congregations of Asia Minor, so may He speak His Word to us today, commending us for our faith, condemning our sin and fulfilling for us His promises, signed when He died, sealed when He was glorified.

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We've seen a lot of persecution already in the Churches of Ephesus and Smyrna. Ephesus felt the pressure to cave on the Gospel and deny Christ through both outside forces and internal heresy. Smyrna came under the pressure of the State, and executions of Christians who denied Caesar as God took place. Today, ramp up that persecution a thousand fold. The Church of Pergamos was not the place for the weak in Confession of Christ.

Out of all of the Churches, Pergamos was the farthest north congregation on the Mediterranean Sea. There was a fortress or citadel there that rose 1000 feet above the plain to guard the city and the Roman provinces.

The people of Pergamos prided themselves on being intellectuals. One of the largest libraries of the known world was there, with over 200,000 parchment scrolls.

It was there that the Temple of Zeus stood—a huge tribute to the “god of gods” in the Greek world another one of the Seven Wonders of the ancient world. Not to be outdone by the Greeks, the Romans built their own Temple there to their chief god at the time, Caesar Augustus, around 29 AD. Remember, Caesar Augustus was in power when Jesus was born, and was the one who demanded the Census that took Mary and Joseph to Bethlehem.

There was another temple there as well, the temple to Ashlepios, the Greek god of healing, whose symbol was a serpent. This is where the “snake” comes from in the

caduceus, used even today by the medical profession. It did not come from Moses lifting up the serpent in the wilderness as some may conclude. The serpent in the Scriptures always is satanic.

Additionally, the local authorities in Pergamos had the “*ius gladii*” that is, the “right of the sword” and could inflict the death penalty without appealing to a higher authority.

Couple the uber intellectual, rampant idolatry in the worship of Zeus, Caesar and Ashlepios, and give them *ius gladii*, allow them to make laws that demand total allegiance to their twisted way of thinking, and you begin to sense that none of this was good for Christians. America is beginning to have a lot in common with Pergamos!

To the Text:

And to the angel of the church in Pergamos write, These things says the one who has the sharp two-edged sword: “I know where you dwell—where the throne of Satan is.

2. Jesus presents himself as the one with the sharp, two edged sword. A bit later in the text he says to those who do not repent, “I will make war with them with the sword of my mouth”. We read from Scripture:

The word of God is living and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the division of soul and spirit, and of joints and marrow, and is a

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discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart.

And take the Helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God.

Here, we see what must be done in the Revelation. We must go to the clear passages of Scripture to understand the unclear. And by doing this, we see that the SWORD is always the Word and Judgment of God. Anything that Jesus speaks is the Word of God. One side of that sword is law: This is what Jesus speaks of when He will go after the sinners with the Word. The other side is the Gospel. That is what He pursues us with- even when slain by the Law, the Gospel cuts us free from the demands and punishments of the Law.

This imagery has a double entendre: He speaks right to the heart of the matter with the people who live under *ius gladii*.

The Synagogue of Satan refers to all of the Temples in Pergamos. Everywhere they look, they are surrounded by the Serpent. They are in the Serpent's shadow.

3. Commendation: Jesus commends the Christians at Pergamos for holding to the faith in Him in spite of what they had endured at the hands of these "intelligent idolaters" that inhabited the land. He makes reference to Antipas, who he calls "my witness, my faithful one". Extra biblical sources inform us that Antipas (not Herod Antipas), was put to death by being placed inside of a bronze bull and then braziered over a fire. Not unlike some of the torturous deaths perpetrated by Isis today

where caged men are immolated, or caged groups of people are hoisted with a crane into a deep pool of water and drowned, often for the same reason of refusing to deny Christ. Our liberal media shields us from seeing the truth of what is really going on in the world today. Jesus commends us as well. The world has gone PC, the world is attacking the Church and our beliefs, but we still believe them. Hold Fast!!

4. Condemnation. While they have held fast, there are some who have caved in. Jesus refers to an incident in Numbers 31, where Balak, the King, tried to bribe Balaam the prophet to curse Moses for money. Balaam would not do it. This is a picture of serving money over God. One cannot do this, for either God is God or Money is God. There is no middle ground. And just because you're poor, don't think you're immune from this sin. Poverty can lead to covetousness. It can lead to worry. It can lead to fear. And last week, we heard Jesus shout at us, "stop being afraid!" And then there are those blasted Nicolaitans are present in Pergamos, also. Remember them from Ephesus? They are the ones that encourage the Church into a synthesis with the sinful practices of the surrounding unbelievers. Go ahead, eat the food sacrificed to idols, which is idolatry. Go ahead, satisfy your needs with as much sex as you can get, which is adultery. Where do we learn this? From the sharp two edged sword, the Scriptures. There were those doing these things. Jesus command to them? Repent! Or he is going to make war with that sword of His mouth against all who are not holding to the faith and going the ways of Balak or the Nicolaitans.

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That's a strong word to us. As a congregation and as individuals. Get rid of that sin of Balak about making money our God. Stop compromising with the world. Understand where sin is taking place, judge that sin and avoid that sin. Stop being so PC. Let the sword come from your mouth, not sewerage. Evangelize those who are lost, don't agree with them. Remain chaste in the Lord and in your marriage. All allurements of the world that still surround the Church today.

5. The Promise:

To the one who conquers I will give of the manna which has been hidden, and I will give to him a white stone, and upon that stone a new name written which no one knows except the one who receives it.

At the end of the prophet Jeremiah's life, it is recorded in extra Biblical sources that he moved to Alexandria, Egypt. He took the Ark of the Covenant with him so that it would not be desecrated. Before leaving Israel, he hid the ark, and he hid the manna that was in the ark, somewhere in the southern regions of Judea, and did not take it into Egypt with him.

The ancient rabbis wrote that when Messiah came, the hidden Manna would be found, that we might eat it again.

Manna. Psalm 78:25 calls it the "bread of the angels." It was the way that the Lord provided food for the Children of Israel in the Wilderness.

When Messiah came He didn't *find* the bread: He IS the bread- the true bread come down from heaven, our Lord Jesus Christ.

We receive that Bread, that Hidden-but-now-revealed Manna, at the Altar. In it, the Blessed receive Jesus. They receive His

forgiveness. They receive His Life. His Salvation. His Strength. His presence. Take and Eat. This is my body. Given for you. True manna from heaven. Still the food of the angels. For you. For Me. And the white stone with the New Name. The white stone. Judges would cast a white stone into an urn to signify the verdict of innocence. And your name is on that stone. Your new name. The one bestowed upon you by God in Baptism. The one by which the Lord knows you and calls you as His own now. Your white stone has been cast because Jesus had the black stone cast against Him for you. There is no double jeopardy. The verdict has been literally cast by God Himself. You are free. You are sinless.

L The one who has an ear, let him listen to what the Spirit says to the churches

Thyatira

And to the angel of the church in Thyatira write, "These things says the Son of God, the one who has his eyes like a flame of fire and his feet like burnished brass: I know your works and your love and faith and service and your endurance, and your last works are more than the first ones. However, I have something against you, namely that you tolerate that woman Jezebel, who calls herself a prophetess and teaches and deceives my very own slaves to commit immorality and to eat meat offered to idols. And I gave her time so that she might repent, but she does not wish to repent of her immorality. Behold I am going to cast her onto a sickbed, and those who have committed adultery with her into a terrible suffering unless they repent of her works. And her children I will

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kill with death so that all the churches will know that I am the one who searches the innermost thoughts and the hearts and I will give to each according to your works. But I say to you – the rest who are in Thyatira, as many as do not hold to this teaching, who have not known the depths of Satan as they say—I will not put upon you another burden. Nevertheless, what you do have, hold firmly until whenever I come. And the one who conquers and who keeps my works up to the end, I will give to him authority over the nations, and he will shepherd them with an iron rod, as clay vessels are broken in pieces. And as I have received from my Father, so also will I give to him the morning star. The one who has an ear, let him listen to what the Spirit says to the Churches.

Worthy is the Lamb who was slain to receive power and riches and wisdom and strength and honor and glory and blessing. Amen.

Today we turn our attention to the Church in Thyatira- a city that was just south of Pergamos. It served as a “buffer” city to protect Pergamos, as it was the capital city of Asia Minor. If enemies were to approach from the south, the enemy would have been plundered in Thyatira before it reached the Capital.

There is little know about Thyatira- it doesn't exist today, and the archeology doesn't tell us much about the people or the Church that was there at one time. Biblically, we know that Lydia came from Thyatira, who was a seller of purple goods

and a convert to Christianity according to Acts 16:14.

We also know that it was a “guild city”. Guilds have much in common with modern day trade unions. If you wanted to excel in business in a certain craft, you had to join a guild. Non-guild members were shunned and often lost their jobs.

Where guilds differed from modern unions is that each guild had its own patron god. A guild meeting would include sacrificing to the guild-god, eating the sacrifice, and polishing off the night with a required orgy where everyone present was required to participate. If you were a member of a guild, but did not partake of the idolatry and adultery, you would lose your job, and you would not be permitted to purchase or sell items at market. One was forced into this kind of behavior, which was very common in Asia Minor as we have seen from the other churches.

2. It is the Church in Thyatira that Jesus reveals Himself as “the Son of God”. This is the only time in the Revelation that Jesus refers to Himself as the “Son of God.” He has eyes like fire- which suggests the Lord's righteous anger over and against the agents of darkness and the enemies of the Church both inside and outside the Church. Jesus' eyes burn right through the sin as we see in Daniel 10. The brass feet demonstrate his firmness and determination to trample under foot these same enemies, found in Daniel 2. Remember what we learned in the first sermon, that much of the imagery in Revelation is not original, but taken from the Old Testament. To know the New

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Testament meaning we must know the Old Testament meaning. That is true in this case. These things show Jesus to be omnipotent, that is, all powerful over evil.

3. Jesus commends the Christians at Thyatira for their works of love, faith, endurance and service in spite of the pressure that surrounds them. Their works have gotten stronger and better. Sometimes persecution hones the work of the Body of Christ into something very powerful. It seems this was happening in Thyatira.

4. But it wasn't the only thing happening in the Church at Thyatira.

However, I have something against you, namely that you tolerate that woman Jezebel, who calls herself a prophetess and teaches and deceives my very own slaves to commit immorality and to eat meat offered to idols. And I gave her time so that she might repent, but she does not wish to repent of her immorality.

To understand this, we must know who Jezebel is and what she represents. 1 Kings 16 verses 29 and following tell us. Ahaz, the king of the Northern Kingdom in Israel took Jezebel to be his wife—something strictly forbidden by God. Jezebel was a Canaanite Baal worshiper, not a Hebrew. She intermingled the teachings of Baal with those of the Lord, synchronizing them together, creating a religion of “syncretism”. A little Baal worship her, a little worship of the God of Israel there. Both things living together in a happy little relationship.

The sin of the people was Syncretism. That means that they believed “it doesn't matter what you believe, all rivers lead to the same ocean” and denies the exclusive nature of the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob.

The Church fell prey to this. When you lose Jesus as your first love, when you stop believing His own words that “no one comes to the Father but by me” with our own more “kinder, gentler” faith that holds that other views are just as valid, you become a syncretist and have married Jezebel just as Ahaz did.

For many Christians, syncretism meant survival. Play the game. Join a guild. Worship their god- who would even notice? Participate in their debauchery- its only a couple of times a year. But Jesus tells them to do so they would lose their place in heaven.

. Behold I am going to cast her onto a sickbed, and those who have committed adultery with her into a terrible suffering unless they repent of her works. And her children I will kill with death so that all the churches will know that I am the one who searches the innermost thoughts and the hearts and I will give to each according to your works.

5. Repentance means stop living like this. He speaks to us as much as He did to them. Stop living like this. Jesus is your only hope. Not because the Church says so, but because *Jesus* says so. It would be better to be cast out of the guild, lose your job and be barred in the market place, than to

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syncretize Christianity with every other world religion. That was the sin of Thyatira, may it not be yours.

Notice, the Lord gives some time to the people to do this. In order to help them repent he throws affliction upon them. For those whom he loves, he chastens and disciplines, even painfully so they may escape the certain coming judgment of God.

6. Finally, to those who repent, He gives a promise:

I will give to him authority over the nations, and he will shepherd them with an iron rod, as clay vessels are broken in pieces. And as I have received from my Father, so also will I give to him the morning star.

How is this done? By holding on faithfully to the works of Jesus Christ—His perfect life, His death on the Cross for our sins, His rising from the Grave, His Ascending on High, His reigning for the Church, and His coming again as judge.

Such will share in his authority over the nations. At the judgment, His own—you and I – will be separated out from the Nations, and He will give us Himself. We will shine with the brightness and holiness of Jesus because He has declared us righteous eternally before the Father.

The one who has an ear, let him listen to what the Spirit says to the Churches.

Sardis

And to the angel of the church in Sardis write, "These things says the one who has the seven Spirits of God and the seven stars: I know your works, that you have a reputation that you are alive, and you are dead. Be watchful and strengthen the remaining things, which were about to die, for I have not found your works perfected before my God. Remember, then, how you have received and heard, and keep so that you repent. If, then, you do not keep watch, I will come as a thief, and you will certainly not recognize in what moment I will come upon you. However, you have a few names in Sardis that have not polluted their garments, and they shall walk with me in white because they are worthy. The one who thus conquers will be clothed in white garments, and I will certainly not remove his name from the book of life, and I will confess his name before my Father and before his angels. The one who has an ear, let him listen to what the Spirit says to the Churches.

You are worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honor and power. For you created all things, and by Your will they exist and were created. Amen.

We continue today with the Church in Sardis. At one point, the richest man in the world lived in Sardis, the Lydian King Croesus. They built a large city, whose inhabitants were extremely wealthy, and there sat the Temple of Artemis. They literally rested on their laurels, not keeping watch, and the city was invaded and destroyed. It would later be rebuilt during the Seleucid period. A temple to the

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Phrygian goddess Cybele was erected on the site of the old temple to Artemis. Cybele was the goddess who could restore life to the dead. The city of Sardis was also where textiles and garments were manufactured.

I'm sure you've heard people say, "I won't go to church, it is full of hypocrites". Normally good answer to that is, you should come and join us, we're all hypocrites because we are all sinners. But in the case of Sardis, it is Jesus calling the Christians there "hypocrites", and that is an entirely different, horrifying situation. For these are hypocrites without repentance, hypocrites who while claiming to be Christian, by their lives show that they are not. Sometimes, I find this letter to be the most stinging letter to the Church today. And the most stinging letter to each of us.

A Rabbi, who converted to Christianity, wrote a work called "the Apocalypse dedicated to Peter." While, not Biblical, he made mention of the fact that there were seven levels of heaven and seven levels of hell. In this work the ones who were at the bottom most level of hell were those who called themselves Christians- who were exposed to the Gospel and who, perhaps at one time believed, but decided to live their lives as the world lives its life. They would suffer the most eternally. While not in the Bible, it shows how seriously those in the early church viewed hypocrisy and apostasy among God's people.

To this church of dead saints, Jesus presents Himself as These things says *the one who has the seven Spirits of God and the seven*

stars. Only the Holy Spirit can give life, and life is exactly what these Christians needed. Life is exactly what we need, also. But sin gets in the way.

It surely does in Sardis when Jesus says to them, ***I know your works, that you have a reputation that you are alive, and you are dead. Be watchful and strengthen the remaining things, which were about to die, for I have not found your works perfected before my God.*** The works that Jesus knows here are not good ones! They are works of hypocrisy. Works that show that there was a vast disparity between the "talk" and the "walk" of these so-called-Christians. He holds nothing back: you have a reputation of being alive—that is, you are Christian—and yet your works are dead. Laced with sin and loving it. Not only have they lost their first love as the Church at Ephesus; they have lost all love. They have lost their relationship with Jesus altogether. Their faith is dying.

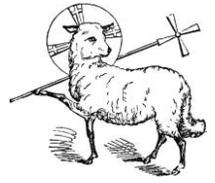
The word that Jesus uses for dead here is scary. It is not the word $\theta\alpha\nu\alpha\tau\omicron\varsigma$ which means "to die." It is the word $\nu\epsilon\kappa\rho\omicron\varsigma$ which means "dead as a corpse." No CPR is going to bring you back kind of dead. Eternally stable. Flatline. Assystolic. Rigor Mortis. Decay kind of dead. Dead and rotting. There is no coming back from this death.

Cybele has no power over this kind of death. Once you're gone you're gone. Jesus is in your face with this today, beloved! Are you alive, or are you $\nu\epsilon\kappa\rho\omicron\varsigma$. ? You don't want to know the answer to this!

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So, what are we to do about this? Nothing. We can do nothing. Once we return to spiritual deadness from which we were raised in Baptism, we are dead again.

Think about your life. Is your prayer life alive? Do you search the Scriptures each day? Do you really trust the Lord Jesus in all things? This is your spiritual EKG. I'd venture to say that many hearts are no longer beating, or the beat is so slow that it cannot sustain life.

This is what I mean when I say that this letter stings worse than the one to Laodicea, the last church, who is dead for different reasons.

Repent.

The key is in the white garment that Jesus gives to you. That symbolizes His righteousness. His holiness. His love. Do you realize that the blood of the Lamb of God is so cleansing and His resurrection is so powerful, that they can restore life back to the deadest of the dead, even if they were once before alive?

That is the powerful message to the Church at Sardis. That is what Jesus means when He says **Remember, then, how you have received and heard, and keep so that you repent.**

The promises of Jesus are glorious, O hypocrites! Your deadness of sin does not cause Jesus to stop loving you. He wraps you in His robe- the same one you wore before- and He brings you alive in Him. He will send His Holy Spirit upon you and me to

drive our hypocrisy away and cause us to come to life and fall deeply in love with Him once more.

The one who thus conquers will be clothed in white garments, and I will certainly not remove his name from the book of life, and I will confess his name before my Father and before his angels

You are once again forgiven by the blood of Jesus. You are made alive by His resurrection. In Your Baptism you were dressed, you were entered into His book of Life, you were carved into the palm of His hand. When you get to heaven, the Father will know your name. So will the angels. Because Jesus confesses your name before them.

So now we are called to be on guard, to keep watch. Watch and guard our lives so that our walk and talk match. Watch for His presence in those around us. Watch for the sign of His coming again as a thief. He will. And the question He begs of the Church at Sardis he now asks us: Will you be alive or dead?

The one who has an ear, let him listen to what the Spirit says to the Churches.

Philadelphia

And to the angel in the Church in Philadelphia write: These things says the holy one, the true one, the one who has the key of David, the one who opens and no one can close and closes and no one opens: I know your works — behold, I have placed before you an opened door which no one is able to close — namely

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that you have a little power and that you have kept y Word and you have not denied my name. Behold, I am going to hand over those of the synagogue of Satan who call themselves to be Jews and are not, but rather they lie. Behold, I am going to force them so that they will come and they will fall down before your feet and shall acknowledge that I have loved you. Because you have kept the Word of my endurance, I will also protect you from the hour of the trial that will most certainly come upon the whole inhabited earth in order to test those dwelling upon the earth. I am coming quickly. Hold what you have so that no one may take your crown. The one who conquers, I will place him as a pillar in the temple of my God, and he will never again go outside, and I will write upon him the name of my God and the name of the city of my God— the New Jerusalem, which is coming down out of heaven from my God— and my own new name. The one who has an ear, let him listen to what the Spirit says to the Churches.

The Spirit and the bride say, "Come!"
And let him who hears say, "Come!"
And let him who thirsts come. Whoever desires, let him take the water of life freely. Amen.

In our study of the Seven Churches in the Revelation, today we turn our attention to the Church at Philadelphia. This, of course, is the Philadelphia of Asia Minor, much older than the Philadelphia in Pennsylvania. It received its name from the love that its

emperor Attalus — who had rebuilt the city — had for his older brother Eumenes, not for other altruistic ideals.

I shall never forget the morning of February 9, 1971. We lived in Los Angeles County and were in the process of moving East. My dad's job was transferring him — and us — to Philadelphia- not the one in Asia Minor! On that morning, my dad was in Philadelphia, while my mom, brother Jim and I were still in California. Shortly after 6am our house began shaking as never before. We had felt many earthquakes when we were in California, but this was much worse. The house shook and shook and shook — for over a minute with gaining intensity. (For those who don't know, generally earthquakes only last a few seconds and they're done). History records this as the Sylmar Earthquake, and over 60 people lost their lives as the San Andreas fault once again "slipped."

Of course, going to Good Shepherd Lutheran School in Inglewood, ours was the only school for miles that still opened that day.

The earthquake was scary enough. But what you also must understand is that after a major earthquake there are aftershocks — mini earthquakes that follow the major one — that can go on for months. You never know when they are going to hit. Usually there are a bunch on the same day. The aftershocks from the Sylmar earthquake were all

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larger than all of the other earthquakes that I felt as a kid. I remember how scary it was. It dominated the conversation of all my classmates and friends until we moved to New Jersey a few months later. One of the things we used to wonder was: "Is it safer to stay in your house and have the house fall on you, or is it better to go outside and risk the earth opening up and swallowing you" as some earthquakes can do.

The Church at Philadelphia was in a volcanic region, just like California or Hawaii. And with volcanoes, there are always going to be earthquakes. When a huge earthquake hit and decimated the city of Philadelphia, the Christians and others fled from the city out into the Countryside so as not to be killed by falling building and trees. So, I guess, they answered that question by getting out of Dodge and not staying in their homes!

Because the Christians would flee from the City because of their fear of earthquakes, those of the Synagogue of Satan – whom we heard about already in the Church of Smyrna – those who have rejected Christ as Messiah – would ridicule the Christians for their fear and say that God did not love them because He was sending all of this suffering on them.

And to the angel in the Church in Philadelphia write: These things says the holy one, the true one, the one who has the key of David, the one who opens and no one can close and closes and no

one opens: I know your works – behold, I have placed before you an opened door which no one is able to close – namely that you have a little power and that you have kept y Word and you have not denied my name.

So Jesus comes to them in this letter. He presents Himself as Holy and True.

What does it mean to be holy? It means to be sinless. Wholly other from humanity. Only God is holy. So you begin to see the value of the gift that you received in Baptism when God made you holy, and you know all too well that you are not.

Jesus is Holy because Jesus is almighty, all-knowing, ever present God in the Flesh.

Jesus is truth. For He is the very Word of God. His Word is always good. His promises are never reneged. They stand eternally.

And, Jesus is also the "Key of David." If you remember, this is how Jesus is seen in the fourth "O Antiphon of Advent" - an antiphon taken directly from this verse.

To gain a better understanding, we go to Isaiah chapter 22, where we see where this is first mentioned.

In that day I will call my servant Eliakim, the son of Hilkiah, and I will clothe him with your robe, and will bind your sash on him, and will commit your authority to his hand.

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And he shall be a father the inhabitants of Jerusalem and to the house of Judah. And I will place on his shoulder the key of the House of David. He shall open, and none shall shut; and he shall shut, and none shall open.

Eliakim was the servant of King Hezekiah who was given the authority to open and close the doors of the kingdom at the King's command to both close the doors to invaders and to open the doors so that the residents of the Kingdom could freely enter and exit. That authority and key were types that would be fulfilled by *the* Key of David, Jesus Christ.

Jesus opens the door. He opens the door for all believers to go to heaven – a door that is normally locked shut to all because of their sin. Through His cross He opens that door for all who would believe. It remains closed to those who reject Him. The other thing that Jesus does is He opens the door for evangelism, the Spread of God's Word containing Law and Gospel.

He opens the gates of hell for all who reject him. The wide-road that leads to destruction.

Philadelphia was a place from which the Greek Culture and language was spread in the region of Asia Minor. It was a place from which, also, the Gospel could flow naturally and the faith be spread throughout the region and the world.

Both of those doors remain open to you, beloved. In Christ, the Door of heaven is wide open for you through faith in Christ, in your Baptism. And the door of evangelism remains wide open. It's too bad that for most of the Church it appears to be closed. Lord, have mercy!

Jesus, the Key of David also locks and no one can unlock. Locked out of heaven are all who disbelieve for their unbelief. And locked behind the gates of the Kingdom of God are His Saints so that the devil, world, self, sin, and death have no power over all who are His own.

Because you have kept the Word of my endurance, I will also protect you from the hour of the trial that will most certainly come upon the whole inhabited earth in order to test those dwelling upon the earth. I am coming quickly. Hold what you have so that no one may take your crown.

The Church in Philadelphia is very unique among the Churches. It is the only Church where there is no sin mentioned, no condemnation, no call to repentance. Jesus commends them purely for being faithful to His Gospel and to Him. If there is any temptation to sin, it is only in the temptation to give up and keep running.

Jesus tells the Church, assures the Church, that He will protect them from the trials that are coming upon them and upon the entire inhabited earth. He then assures them that He is coming

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quickly. At the end of the book of the Revelation, these are the same words that Jesus declares to His Church. And what is John's response? "Even so, come Lord, Jesus." Prayerfully that is your response as well.

Jesus echoes the words He spoke to the Church at Smyrna: Be faithful unto death and I will give you the Crown of Life. "Hold what you have so that no one may take your crown." Jesus wore your crown of thorns so one day you will wear His crown of Gold.

The one who conquers, I will place him as a pillar in the temple of my God, and he will never again go outside, and I will write upon him the name of my God and the name of the city of my God— the New Jerusalem, which is coming down out of heaven from my God— and my own new name.

The ancient city of Philadelphia— also sometimes called Neocaesarea or Flavian— new names given to the city after being rebuilt at least twice after earthquakes— was loaded with temples. The main temple there was the Temple of Dionysius, the goddess of wine. The fertile volcanic soil was wonderful for growing grapes!

One of the practices there was to dedicate pillars in the temples in honor of special people in Philadelphia. Pillars were frequently added to the Temples to shore them up because of all of the seismic activity. And, when someone

put up a pillar in your honor, your name went on it.

It is like a lot of churches. When someone donates something, many churches put up a plaque, often times right in the sanctuary, honoring or remembering the person, and then also, prominently, the name of the one who gave. I am so glad that our church constitution forbids this. We never put up plaques in our church- for all glory belongs to God, not benefactors!

So the temples were loaded with pillars bearing names.

What is it that our text says? Jesus says that He will write on us the Name of God. He will also write on us the name of the New City, the New Jerusalem. And then- this is the best, WE become the pillars in its only temple— the Temple of our God around the Lamb!

So, when did this happen? When was your name carved into God's Temple? We know from the past several letters to the Churches— in your Baptism! You are God's temple. Your name isn't on it; God's name is. That's because you have received your New Name, and it is the Lord's Name. Do you understand how important your Baptism into Christ is before the Father? It is everything, beloved. Thank you Lord that you plunged us into the water, killing off sin and death, raising us up to new life, and carving our names into your book, your palm, your heart.

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So, to the Pillars of God's Church, He says even today, The one who has an ear, let him listen to what the Spirit says to the Churches.

Laodicea

And to the angel of the church in Laodicea write, "these things says the Amen, the witness, the faithful and true one, the source of the creation of God: I know your works, namely that you are neither cold nor hot. Would that you were cold and hot! Because thus you are lukewarm and neither hot nor cold, I am going to vomit you out of my mouth. For you are saying, 'I am wealthy and I have acquired riches and I have need of nothing more,' but you do not know that you are the wretched one and pitiful and poor and blind and naked. I advise you to purchase from me gold which has been refined by fire so that you may be wealthy, and white garments so that you may clothe yourself and the shame of your nakedness may not be seen, and eye salve to rub on you eyes so that you may see. All whom I love I myself reprove and discipline. Be zealous, then and repent! Behold I stand at the door and knock. If anyone should hear my voice and should open the door, then I will enter to be with him, and I will dine with him and he with me. The one who conquers, I will grant to him to sit with me on my throne, even as I myself have conquered and have sat down with my Father on His throne. The one who has an ear; let him listen to what the Spirit says to the Churches.

The Spirit and the bride say, "come!" And let him who hears say, "Come!" And let him

who thirsts come. Whoever desires, let him take the water of life freely. Amen.

Seven golden lampstands, the Churches of the Son of Man. Churches and congregations just like ours, and through speaking to the Churches in the Revelation, the Lord has used these past six weeks to confront us, to console us and to grant us His hope. He writes these letters to the Church that she might be purified before He reveals to us the prophecy contained in this mysterious book of the Revelation. Only when our sin is confessed and forgiven, only when we are living in unity with absolutely everyone else in our congregation, only when we are utilizing the gifts of the Spirit which the Lord granted to each of us to serve Him by serving others, can we hear the prophecy of this book- that prophecy that assures all believers their share in eternal life with and in the Bride, His Church.

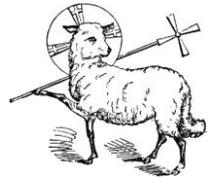
Today we look at the last Church: Laodicea. We see what a spiritual wreck she is. She is the congregation of the living dead, and not in a good way. But the great news proclaimed at Pentecost by the Holy Spirit can bring even the deadest church back alive and save you. This is the hope of our sermon today. For heaven knows, the rebuke to this church is the hardest to hear, for it hits a bullseye in our hearts. We are them.

Laodicea- a very wealthy city named after Laodice, the wife of Antiochus II. Laodicea was the "Wall Street" of Asia Minor. It is where money and gold and silver were exchanged, where riches grew, where folk

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were both remade into wealthy people or busted down into poverty with one single trade. Laodicea also was a pharmaceutical giant. It was there that the physicians and the chemists have developed treatments for diseases of the ear and the eye.

The area was rich with mineral springs. Water came via aqueduct to Laodicea from the cool springs of Denizli for the people to drink. The hot springs at Hierapolis, to the North, still exist to this day, and were said to have healing qualities. But in Laodicea, the springs produced a luke warm, non-drinkable, non usable water source. Three years ago I rode in the Inlet to Inlet ride. Dune Road was flooded. As I rode through the floods near East Quogue, water splashed from the street and covered my water bottle. As I went to take a drink, all I could taste was the salt-water of the sea that had splashed upon it. It made me gag. The same was true if you attempted to drink from the springs at Laodicea. It would make you vomit.

So, the Church at Laodicea knew all about what it means to be lukewarm when it comes to their water supply. What they didn't understand is that their faith had gone the same way.

They were not cold—like someone who hates God, who shakes his fist at God, blaming Him for all of the suffering. They were not hot: Aflame for Jesus Christ, passionate about forgiving each other and living as one, looking forward to the beatific vision and hope of eternal heaven with the Lamb. They were lukewarm. And Jesus, the Amen, the witness, the faithful

and true one tells them that lukewarmness spells eternal death for Christians and the Church. The deepest level of hell awaited them.

What's your temperature? Are you cold? Questioning God? Living your life and your faith on your own terms. Confusing yourself with the Almighty? Are you hot? Are you on fire for the Lord, absorbing His word each day, praying continuously, never missing worship, always contributing from heart in your offerings to the Lord? Or, are you just along for the ride? Lukewarm. Not giving any true consideration to your faith when you consider the social issues that are being thrust upon believers today? Are you here today for the wrong reasons—you want to see someone, you want to judge someone, you want to put your finger on the pulse of the undercurrents? That is lukewarmness.

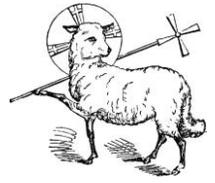
And just as when a water bottle is covered with salt water and it causes you to wretch, Jesus' living water is polluted by the minerals of our sin and the sea of our death. Jesus says, I will vomit (Greek εμεσαι στοματο μου). Beloved, these are words that you must never hear, for if you do, you are lost forever. This is the sternest warning that Jesus gives to all of the Churches, and He has saved the best for last, the best for you.

We are but sin and death. Our worship has grown cold. Our passions for this world have grown hot. But our love for Christ has become tepid. There is no hope for those who are lukewarm.

The Worthy Lamb

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Heed His word. Repent! Repent before it is too late!

Here is the great news. Today is Pentecost. This is when the Holy and Life-Giving Spirit of God came upon the dry bones of the House of Israel and the lukewarmness of our hearts and brings us alive in Jesus Christ. He knocks at the door with His Holy, Inerrant Word and with His blessed sacraments of Baptism that Grants us faith and forgiveness, absolution when God speaks forgiveness over our heads, and Holy Communion where we receive all of the forgiveness, strength and healing that we need. It is through His Word that He brings us alive.

He clears our vision with the salve of His healing, giving us our Fathers' eyes to see Jesus in everyone. He grants sight to our spiritual blindness. He opens our ears and the pathway between them and our hearts so that we might Hear His Word and believe. He brings us back from death to life.

He does this through His death on the Cross for our sins—where He redeemed us, not with gold or silver, but with His holy, precious blood and with his innocent suffering and death, that I may be His own and live under Him in His Kingdom and serve Him in everlasting righteousness, innocence, and blessedness, just as He is risen from the dead, lives and reigns to all eternity. This is most certainly true.

The one who has an ear; let him listen to what the Spirit says to the Churches.

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From Dr. Donald R. Miesner, *Keys to Revelation: Messages in Letters, Symbols, and Patterns*. (St. Louis: CPH, no date) Pages 50 and 51

THE LETTERS TO THE SEVEN CHURCHES

CONTENT	Chapter 2:1-7	Chapter 2:8-11	Chapter 2:12-17
1. Commission (to write to:)	EPHESUS	SMYRNA	PERGAMUM
2. Cultural Background	Paul's mission center for Asia; John, bishop later. Temples of Diana & emperor; theater; harbor, hub for 3 roads	Izmir: beautiful city/acropolis (crown); <i>Dea Roma</i> temple; harbor, trade center; Polycarp, bishop, martyr; games	Seleucid capital; 1000 cone hill; Asklepios, Zeus, Dionysius, & caesar temples; library, parchment; <i>us glaciali</i>
3. Christology	Holds the 7 stars; and, walks among the 7 lampstands	The first & the last; the one Who died & came to life	The one with the sharp, two-edged sword
4. Commendation	Endurance; keeping faith pure; hating Nicolaitans	Enduring tribulation, poverty, & slander of "pseudo-Jews"	Holding to Jesus' name & faith; Anitpas, "my faithful witness"
5. Condemnation (Criticism)	Growing lax regarding their first love	NONE	Harboring false teachings (Balaam and the Nicolaitans)
6. Challenge	Remember from what you've fallen! Repent!	Don't fear the coming suffering! Be faithful unto death!	Repent!
7. Confrontation (Consequences)	If not, I will remove your lampstand!	["Synagogue of Satan" is exposed for its slander & cruelty]	If not, I will war vs. the transgressors with the sword of my mouth!
8. Consolation (Promise)	Eating of the tree of life in the paradise of God	Getting the crown of life; not being hurt by the second death	The hidden manna, the white stone, & a new name
9. Concluding Admonition	Let him who has an ear hear what the Spirit says!	Let him who has an ear hear what the Spirit says!	Let him who has an ear hear what the Spirit says!
10. Contemporary Application	When our priorities are blurred, we need to re-focus on our first love to nurture & extend it.	Despite adversity, we need to be faithful to God, whose promises are for eternal life. (<i>"per aspera ad astra"</i>)	In the face of perverse teachings and external pressures, we need to dig deeper into God's word.
P. S. Completion (of the promise)	The tree of life...for the nations (22:2)	Over such the second death has no power... book of life (20:6,12)	His name shall be on their foreheads (22:4)

THE LETTERS TO THE SEVEN CHURCHES (CONTINUED)

Chapter 2:18-29	Chapter 3:1-6	Chapter 3:7-13	Chapter 3:14-22
THYATIRA	SARDIS	PHILADELPHIA	LAODICEA
Seleucid frontier city; guarding the empire; many trade guilds with religious rites; home of Lydia (Acts 16)	Lydian capital; "safe" on 1500 citadels? it fell twice! wool; temples of Artemis & Cybele (restorer of the dead?)	"Open door" to Greek culture; "gateway to East"; commercial center; many earthquakes; renamed twice	Money, manufacture, & medicine; warm mineral springs; key road juncture; emperor worship; Col. 4:16
Son of God; eyes like a flame of fire; feet like burnished bronze	Having the 7 spirits of God & the 7 stars	The holy & true one who has the key of David	The "Amen," faithful & true witness; beginning of God's creation
Increase of works; love, faith, service, & patient endurance	NONE	Having kept Jesus' word, and not denied His name	NONE
Tolerating Jezebel's false teachings (immorality & idolatry)	Being called alive, while really dead	NONE	Being lukewarm, smug in riches & prosperity
Hold fast what you have; avoid the "deep things" of Satan!	Repent! Revitalize your works! Awake!	Hold fast what you have so no one seizes your crown!	Buy from the "Amen" gold, garments & salve! Repent; and open the door!
"Impenitents" will suffer sickness, tribulation, & their children's death.	If not, I will come like a thief, at an unknown hour.	["Synagogue of Satan" will acknowledge you & see my love for you.]	I'll spit you out. You are wretched, poor, pitiable, blind, & naked.
Getting power over the nations, rule with rod of iron, & the Morning Star	Be clad in white; name in book of life; stand before God & angels	Safe in hour of trial; pillar in God's temple; get thrice-holy name	Eating with Jesus and sitting with Him on His throne
Let him who has an ear hear what the Spirit says!	Let him who has an ear hear what the Spirit says!	Let him who has an ear hear what the Spirit says!	Let him who has an ear hear what the Spirit says!
When the church is corrupted from within, we need to dig deeper into God's word.	When faith becomes smug & inactive, we need an infusion of God's Spirit.	When doors seem to close and hopes wane, we need to trust God's power & promise to keep doors open.	When self-sufficiency dulls our eagerness for grace, we need to see reality & invite Jesus in to give us true riches.
They shall reign forever. I, Jesus, a bright morning star (22:5,16)	Name... written in the Lamb's book of life (20:15; 21:27)	temple is God & Lamb; name on foreheads (21:3,22; 22:4)	I saw thrones; tree of life...yielding its fruit (20:4; 22:2)

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REVELATION CHAPTER 4

Vocabulary

1. Θυρα –Door. Significance:
3. ιρις – Rainbow, Significance:
6. ζων ζων – Living Creature, Significance:
8. κυριος ο θεος – The Lord [only] God, Significance:

Text

John sees , hears and reports the Praise of God the Creator and then, as he continues to relate this inaugural vision of God’s heavenly glory he describes Jesus as the redeemer.

V.1 – The meaning of “after these things”

V.2 – In the Spirit- Difference between here and 1:10 See also 2 Cor. 12:14ff.

V.2. Meaning of “Come up here...”. See also Isaiah 6, Ezekiel 8:1-3.

V. 2 God enthroned.

V.2 God’s facial description not given, rather he is described as precious stones.

V.3- Rainbow (ιρις vs. τοξον)- Rainbow is not only a promise of God never destroying the earth again with water, but also it is a sign of God’s loving grace, mercy, and salvation; His everlasting Sabbath.

V.4: The 24 Elders. Number from 12 Tribes plus 12 Apostles. Represents all Saints in Heaven. Cannot be angels as no angel *ever* sat on a throne, and no angel *ever* wore a crown. Only Jesus and His elect do this.

V.4 “The number twenty four is best explained as *the elders (patriarchs) of the twelve tribes of Israel, who represent before God’s heavenly throne saints from the Israel of old, and the twelve apostles, who represent saints from the Israel of the NT period.*” P. 119, Commentary on Revelation by Louis Brighton.

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V.5 Lightning and Thunder-

V. 5 Seven Spirits = Holy Spirit.

V.6 Crystal Sea- suggests a vast distance which intervened between Throne of God and John.

V.4-8 Four Living Creatures:

Meanings: The Four Gospels (Matthew the winged man, Mark the winged Lion, Luke the winged ox, and John the Eagle). Also see Isaiah 6:2-3; Ezekiel 1:10 and 18). (Victorinus, 3rd Century).

Augustin, Irenaus, Oecumenius and others had differing views on the meaning of these symbols. Once again we see some of the difficulty presented with symbolic language.



The number 4 suggests the “totality of God’s animate creation”, i.e. “The Four Corners of the Earth.”

The winged creatures are, properly, representatives of God’s total creation in worship before his heavenly throne. The four creatures are interpreted, symbolically and/or as representatives, they fulfill the godly role of attending God in His heavenly majesty. (Brighton, 127).

4:8-11 THE GREAT TE DEUM/ HYMN OF PRAISE

V. 8 Trisagion. See Isaiah 6:3

V. 8 o pantokrator

V.8 ... who was and who is and who is to come..

v.9-11 Worthy (Axioj)

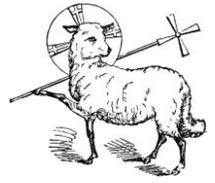
v. 11 – Acknowledgment of Jesus as Creator. (John 1:1-5; 14). Evolution not only attacks creation (making creation its own God, worshiping the creation rather than the creator) but it attacks Jesus directly. Evolution is a horrible lie. It seeks to eliminate God (stated by Huxley).

Martin Luther: “... if you cannot understand how this could have been done in six days, then grant the Holy Spirit the honor of being more learned than you are...”

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Revelation Chapter 5

Important Vocabulary:

βιβλιον- from βυβλος- meaning “strip of papyrus” – commonly called “book”. In Revelation it refers to a scroll. Codex (books as we know them) first appeared ca. 150 AD.

εκλαιον- ingressive/inceptive imperfect which indicates, “I began to weep and continued to do so for a time.”

ενικαησεν- indicative, active, third person singular of νικεω, “be victorious, win, prevail.”

αινοιξα- present, active participle from ανοιγω, “open, opening,” Also used when Jesus opens ears and eyes (Mt. 9:30, Mk 7:35)

αρνιον- Lamb

κιθαρων- noun, accusative, feminine, singular, “stringed instrument” like harp or lyre. Used in singing the Psalms. Transliteration from Hebrew.

αδουσιν- indicative, present, active, third person plural, “Sing (now)”

εσφαγμενον – perfect passive participle, nominative, neuter, singular of αφανω- to kill in a violent way, to slaughter.

V. 1- Significance of “Right hand”

v. 1- Significance of “Scroll”

v. 1- Significance of “Seal”

v.2 “Significance of “Who is worthy to open the book and to break its seals?”

v. 4 Why is John weeping?

v. 5. Lion of Judah

v. 5. Root of David

v. 6 Elders and Four Living Creatures

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v.7- Significance of taking the scroll

v.8 -Harp

v. 8- Censers/Incense

v. 9 Meaning of "New Song"

v.9 Words of New Song

v. 11 "ten thousand times ten thousand and thousands times thousands"

v.12 "Worthy is the Lamb who has been slaughtered"

v. 12- All the Power

v. 12- All the Wealth

v. 12- All the Wisdom

v. 12-All the Strength

v. 12- All the Honor

v. 12- All the Glory

v.12- All the Blessing

v.13- All creation now joins in the new song.

v.13- The four living creatures say "Amen".

v. 13 The Lamb is worshiped by the elders

"The ultimate purpose of Christ receiving the scroll and then revealing its contents to John and to the Church is to strengthen the church's faith and to encourage the church in the midst of all the sufferings, to remain faithful to Christ and so to attain the promise of everlasting life."

"Revelation 4 and 5 are a dramatization of the exaltation of Jesus Christ at the right hand of God, as it appeared from heaven's view...Everything seen and heard in the prophetic message is to be interpreted in view of this inaugural vision of Christ's coronation, for then and only then will the individual components of the message yield their proper interpretation." The Rev. Dr. Louis Brighton

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Revelation Chapter 6

The Prophecy begins.

1. Structure

Revelation is comprised of three different visions, each having seven sections. These visions are *cyclical, not sequential or chronological*. Each of the three visions begins at Christ's Ascension and conclude with the End of the World. In the sections between the three visions there are interludes that show us the mission of the Church of Jesus.

Dr. Donald Miesner writes:

*The visions of Revelation are cyclical in nature. As John progresses with the series of seven seals, trumpets, and bowls, the tie frame is always the same: the age of the church. It stretches from Jesus' first coming to His second (and final!) coming. Each cycle, however, increases in intensity and with fresh insights, as it progresses toward the book's (and the church's) consummation. The succession of cycles does **not** prophecy a succession of periods of world history, as some past interpreters supposed.⁴*

The Three Visions are found in :

- ✘ Revelation 6:1-17; 8:1-5
- ✘ Revelation 8:6-11:19
- ✘ Revelation 15:1-16:21

2. Grammar

δηναρῖου – (“Denarius”) The average daily wage of an average laborer.

χλωρος – Chloros (think: Chlorophyll, Clorox) – a ghastly or ghostly green color associated with some plants, with sickness, and with death.

Θυσιαστηριον – sacrificial altar. Occurs 8x in Revelation

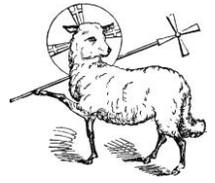
τον εσφαγμενον – slain/slaughtered. This applies not only to the martyrs but to all who have died in the Lord. Barclay: “Their life blood has been poured out (on and under the altar) as an offering to God.”

⁴ Donald R. Miesner, *Keys to Revelation: Messages in Letters, Symbols, and Patterns*. (St. Louis, MO: Concordia Publishing House, n.d.) Page 15.

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την μαρτυριαν – witnesses: Those who see something and then testify in court. Those who testify of Christ are the ones who are slain- martyrs.

πληρωθωσινω- “Should be fulfilled” –the complete number of martyrs.

ελισσομενον- to roll up like a scroll.

3. The First Cycle (Revelation 6:1-17)

a. The Worthy Lamb opens the First Seal, the White Horse v.2. (during the time that this was written, a warrior on a horse was the most fearful sight one could have. This was before military tanks, airplanes, missiles, etc...)

1). Some believe this represents Jesus because of the white horse and garment. However, it cannot. All four of the horsemen of the Apocalypse are evil and do evil things to God’s people and the earth. So it cannot be Jesus.

2). While we associate the color of white with purity and holiness, there is another meaning for it. In Rome, the most coveted color was white. It represented total rule. The Caesars wore white (don’t confuse with kings who wore purple!).

3). The first horse stands for TYRANNY AND CONQUEST UNDER THE SWORD.

4). Note that this does not apply just to a period of time at the very end of the world, but throughout the cycle of human life. All of the horsemen represent the evil that occur throughout time to all of God’s people.

5). Tyranny includes: Governmental tyranny, religious tyranny (like in Islamic countries), bullying, tyranny of one spouse over another (such as in verbal abuse, physical abuse, or sexual abuse), ANY TIME A PERSON, GOVERNMENT, RELIGION, etc.. places self or institution over another in a tyrannical way getting between God and you, the white horse has visited. Think of some examples today:.....

b. The Worthy Lamb opens the Second Seal, the Red Horse v.3

1). The Red horse is the destroyer of peace (creating war) which means MURDER.

2). We see plenty of this today as the world has already seen. Each weekend, for instance, the city of Chicago sees dozens of deaths (in the city with the strictest gun control laws in the nation- an illustration that law does not change a soul, only Christ can do this). Mass shootings as we continue to witness, the plotted and executed attacks on law enforcement officers, firefighters, EMS personnel (an attempt at anarchy), etc... The red horse has also been running through the world.

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c. The Worthy Lamb opens the Third Seal, the Black Horse v.5

- 1). The black horse represents scarcity, poverty, economic imbalance.
- 2). Even today famine takes the lives of thousands of people every year. Political corruption abounds when those in control take for themselves and, in doing so, hurt those whom they are supposed to serve.
- 3). Injustice occurs when evil becomes good and good becomes evil. (Think of everything going on in government today as an illustration. Trans-sexual and homosexual life is exalted over and against what God created and declared to be very good. It doesn't take much to see that the Black Horse is galloping in the world today.

d. The Worthy Lamb opens the Fourth Seal, the Ghastly/Ghostly Green Horse. V.7-8

- 1). This horseman is death.
- 2). This horse has roamed the earth ever since the Fall into Sin.
- 3). This horse comes for us as do all of the others.
- 4). Death destroys in multiple ways: famine, death (murder), wild animals (not only beasts but things like viruses, bacteria, cancers, and the like).

Summary of the Four Horsemen: These are all of the things that attempt to rip us away from the Lord and His wondrous salvation. They have been with us since the fall into sin. They are tools of the devil to make you renounce your faith in Jesus, the Worthy Lamb. But these seals are given to us as "intel" so that we might know Satan's *modus operandi* and not be fooled by them. They may have power on earth, but in the end they are cast into the "lake of fire."

There are still two more seals.

e. The Worthy Lamb opens the Fifth Seal: The Martyrs

- 1). The martyrs are beneath the altar. As noted before, William Barclay in his commentary on Revelation notes: "The souls of the martyrs are beneath the altar. That is to say, their life blood has been poured out as an offering to God." The imagery here is that when a sacrifice is made on the altar, the blood flows down and remains under it.
- 2). The reason for martyrdom was their witness of Christ through the Word of God. While not all Christians will be martyred, we are all under persecution in this world for sharing Christ and His Holy Word.
- 3). This text indicates that there are still those who will be martyred up until the time of the end. The text refers to them as the "fullness".
- 4). The martyrs that are under the altar cry out, "How Long, Master, the holy and true, until you judge and avenge our blood on those who dwell on the earth?"
 - a). Notice the Christians do not take revenge; it is left to God.
 - b). Notice that they are with the Lord and cry out. They are very much alive.
 - c). The saints in heaven pray for us and for the Church. Excursus..

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5). This does not just apply to those who were killed for the faith, but all who die in the faith.

f. The Worthy Lamb opens the Sixth Seal, v. 12

- 1). Visionary scene of the end of all things with accompanying cosmic disturbances.
- 2). Note that all of these cosmic disturbances take place at Christ's Crucifixion, signaling *our* judgment has already occurred in Christ:
 - a). Tribulation- think of the betrayal of Jesus Himself, think of the fear of the apostles during the time of his trials and crucifixion, their fear as they were locked in the upper room.
 - b). Earthquake- there was a great earthquake when Jesus died, ripping the temple curtain in twain.
 - c). Signs in the heavens: The earth was dark from noon to three o'clock in the afternoon as Jesus suffered our hell for us on the cross.
 - d). This will be repeated on the Last Day.
- 3). Jesus is the fulfillment of the Day of the Lord for us. Now we await the *consummation* of His promise, that is the Last Day, Judgment Day. For us that day will be glorious because baptized into Christ, Christ suffered the judgment due us.

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Revelation Chapter 7

Revelation Chapter 7 is an interlude that follows the first vision to give comfort to John and to God's People.

Vocabulary/Grammar

v. 10 ν σωτηρια τω θεω ημων – Actually dative source/possession and not dative w/ indirect object (as many translations have). Should be, “salvation *is of our God*” instead of “salvation be to our God.”

v. 15. σκηνοῦσαι / σκηνοῶ – Only occurs 5 times in NT, four are in Revelation (7:15; 12:12, 13:6, 15:5). The only other time it occurs is in John 1:14, which greatly informs us of what this means. The verb means “to pitch a tent”. In John 1:14 we read, “The Word became flesh and **tabernacled/tented** among us—translated as “dwelt”. The same applies here in 7:15. It is used of God's presence in the midst of His people.

Terms

Church Militant – the Church on earth that is fighting sin, death, the world, and the devil as it continues on its mission of sharing Christ with the hostile world that God so loved. Portrayed by the 144,000 in this text. We are a part of the Church Militant. Kingdom of Grace.

Church Triumphant- the Church that is in heaven around the throne of God to which we will once be taken. Kingdom of Glory.

Text

v.1 Four Angels

v.1 Four Winds

v.1 Four Corners of the Earth

v. 2 Fifth Angel- ascending from the East

v. 3. Sealing of the Saints: No harm can touch them; God will never leave them.

v. 4 144,000. Number is not literal. 12 Tribes of Israel x 12,000 people in Tribes = 144,000.

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- This stands for all of God's chosen people (His slaves/ servants on earth). Church Militant.
- v.4 The 144,000 are all male virgins. No women in the number. A literal translation (as the Jehovah's Witnesses believe) would be problematic. And... the JW's do not realize what Revelation 14:1-5 says). Again, this number is symbolic of all God's chosen on earth, men and women.
- v. 5-8 The Tribes of Israel are mentioned by name. However, there are some differences between the Tribes of Israel in the OT and those in Revelation. In the original Tribes, all tribes had their own land *except the Levites*, who were the priests spread throughout all of the tribes and lands. Ephraim and Dan, who occupied the North sinned gravely by practicing idolatry. The early Church Father Hippolytus states, "For as from the tribe of Judah Christ is born, so also from the tribe of Dan the antichrist will be born."
- v.8 In Revelation the tribe of Ephraim is replaced by "the tribe of Joseph" (Ephraim's father), and the tribe of Dan is replaced by "the tribe of Benjamin. This shows that God has cleansed the tribes from any association of idolatry and apostasy.
- v.9 Church Triumphant: A great multitude/ unnumbered/ massive from all nations, tribes peoples, and languages. The Church in heaven.
- v. 9 White Robes- Purity/holiness/sinlessness. White robes are worn by the 24 Elders, by the saints in heaven and also by the saints on earth. White robes made white in the blood of the lamb.
- v.9 Palm Branches – only here and in the Triumphal entry are palm branches mentioned in the Bible. At the Triumphal Entry palms were used for the wrong reason (at least by some) seeing Jesus as an earthly king; Here they are praising Him for the right reason.
- v.10 The Church Triumphant sing "Salvation belongs to our God and to the Lamb."
- v. 11 The angels, elders, and four living creatures fall prostrate on their faces, worshiping God, continuing the "new song."
- v. 14 The Elder knows who these are, but asks John as he senses John's private wonder. The elder not only asked John who this great crowd was but also "from whence have they come?"
- v. 14 The Great Tribulation. The church has always experienced tribulation and persecution. This Great Tribulation, however, is referring to what Jesus says in Mt. 24:15-21,

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Mark 13:14-27, and Luke 21:20-28, the grossly evil days right before the Lord returns. It is the *worst* of the common tribulations that all Christians in general suffer. It is synonymous with the suffering at the end of the Church Age (the millennium). The evil days immediately before Christ's second coming are referred to here.

- v.14 Washed their robes and made them white in the Lamb's blood: Jesus blood cleanses us from all sin.
- v. 15 Serve Him day and night. There is no end to their worship around the throne. This is a comforting vision for those who experienced the winds of the four horsemen on earth.
- v. 15 He who sits on the throne will spread His tabernacle over them. Again, see John 1:14.
- v.16-17 Eschatological State together as the church.



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Revelation Chapter 8

The Seventh Seal (from previous chapters) introduces the Second Sevenfold Vision.

Grammar:

v. 11 $\alpha\psi\iota\nu\theta\omicron\varsigma$ – (Latin, *Artemisia Absinthium*- “wormwood.” A bitter, poisonous plant. In OT was used also of bitter things and perverted justice.

v. 13 $\alpha\epsilon\tau\omicron\varsigma$ – bird of prey (vulture or eagle).

Text:

v.1 Silence: An interlude. Shows silence is important in our worship of Jesus. Beginning of worship services should be marked with silence to prepare to meet the Lord. 6th Century Church Father Oecumenius suggested that this silence is the *antitype* of the silence/rest of the seventh day of creation.

v. 1 Half Hour – Relatively short time.

v. 2 *The* Seven angels. With definite article. Shows that this is a group of angels with whom the hearers were familiar. Appears 10 times in the Revelation.

v. 2 Sounding of Trumpets: Rather than a musical instrument, a loud sound of announcement. Diaphones in Fire Service blast out a box number. Buglers in the military play *Reveille*, Taps, and sound the Battle cry. A mark of Jesus coming in Matthew 24:29-31

v. 3 “Another Angel” – not one of “the” seven. Pours out the censer on earth and then angels begin to blow their trumpets.

v. 7ff The First Four Trumpet Angels announce upheavals in nature.

v. 7 The First Angel- Hail and fire- (The Seventh Plague of Egypt, Exodus 9: 23-24). Some understand this as warfare, however the context suggests it is a natural event.

v. 7 Third of the earth- a phrase often used by the prophets (Ezekiel and Zechariah) significance is simply that it is not yet the *entire* earth affected.

v. 8- The Second Angel- Burning Mountain that turns sea into blood. (The First Plague of Egypt, Exodus 7:14-28).

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From the “Meyer Minute”, August 26, 2019:

Meyer Minute for August 26

“Vulcanalia” was the festival for Vulcan, the Roman god of fire. It’s hard to put yourself into the Roman world of religion. We Americans have traditionally believed that there is one God, but the ancient Romans had many. Christians historically have understood the faith by the doctrines, the teachings of the Bible, which are systematized and put into books like catechisms for people to learn. That would have been totally foreign to the Romans. And Bible-believing Christians think other world religions may be well-intentioned but are wrong. Romans didn’t think that way; the more the merrier. “You have your opinion; I have mine. Who are you to say that I’m wrong?” So people in Pompeii celebrated Vulcanalia, not taking it too seriously, just having a good time and nodding to the nice gods. The date was August 23 in the year 79 A.D.

The next day started normally, just like your day today. Pompeii was a commercial center on the Bay of Naples, not far from Rome. Bustling life included import and export business, textiles, a large food industry (olive oils, wine, fish, breads, a sauce called “garum”) and millstones, carved from the nearby abundance of volcanic rock. Pompeiians ate dinner at home but breakfast and lunch were often at food stands, sometimes take outs. People pursued their own interests, or in the case of slaves, a third of the population, the business of their masters. At noon the earth shakes. An hour later Vesuvius erupts with a hot cloud of dust and ash reaching 8 miles into the sky. The cloud keeps growing larger, soon 18 miles high. Now we can’t see the sun, dark as night. Some 12 hours later a landslide of volcanic debris heads right at us. Heat over 500 degrees instantly kills us all. Today, August 26, Pompeii is no more.

Apparently their god Vulcan was not pleased by their celebration. The mysteries and terrible powers of the creation, known so much more today because of the discoveries of science, move us Christians to awe, to the fear of the true God. “Where were you when I laid the foundations of the earth?” He asked Job. We know so little, but one thing we do know. “Love never fails” (1 Corinthians 13:8). In today’s normal going-here and going there, who knows what may come? We know one thing. He’s with us in the love of His Son, love we share with one another so long as we have life.

v. 10-11 The Third Trumpet/Angel – Water becomes bitter, poisonous, undrinkable.

v. 10-11 Wormwood- plant with poisonous/bitter nectar.

v. 12 The Fourth Trumpet/Angel – Heavenly bodies are struck (The ninth plague of Egypt, Exodus 10:21-29). The light from the skies are reduced. C.f. Joel 2:28-32; Acts 2:17-21.

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Revelation Chapter 9

Vocabulary

της αβυσσου – the Abyss. This is the word that John uses for “hell” in the Revelation. The word adhv (“hades”) is used by John for the grave, not hell. (Some other writers use this word as “hell” which leads to confusion.

ακριδες – Locusts/ Grasshoppers. Signs of judgment of the earth as Locusts would destroy entire crops leading to severe and deadly famine. Their lifespan is about 5 months. They would attack Israel every seven years. Normally locusts do not harm people, only vegetation. However these locusts are given the power to sting like scorpions. Their only target is unbelieving people.

νηνας πεντε – the five months of a locust’s lifespan.

Αβαδδων, Απολυων – (Transliterated Hebrew, then Greek) meaning “the destroyer.”

Φαρμακων – means witchcraft. Sometimes magic (another Greek word is also used), use of mind-altering drugs and casting spells. We get our word “Pharmacy” etc. from this word.

Text Notes

v.1 – THE FIFTH TRUMPET ANGEL Star that falls from heaven is not the same as “Wormwood” (8:10-11). This star is not just a molten mass, but has personality. In the context we discover who this is: It is Satan.

v.1- Satan’s first introduction (other than in the Letters to the Churches) and will be a presence from this time forward in the Revelation.

v.1- The abyss is hell.

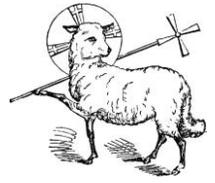
v.2- Satan opens the abyss. Smoke came out. (Think of smoke “boiling” out under great pressure” about to ignite).

v. 2- The darkening of earth is “spiritual” darkening, which is deadly. The spiritually blind (those outside of Christ”) are surrounded by increasing darkness and blindness.

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v. 3-4 Locusts- Demons. Locusts is the sign of God's judgment on the earth. These are different than those. These demons do not attack vegetation but attack people without the seal of God on their foreheads.

v. 5 –6 - They torment the unbelievers. Those alive wish they could die.

v.7 Horrific, terrifying creatures described here.

v. 7 "crowns in appearance like gold"- they appear to have the victory but do not before the Lord.

v. 11- The king over the locust/scorpion/demons is Satan.

v. 11. His name is "Destroyer" in both Hebrew and Greek.

v. 12. The end of the woe of the Fifth Trumpet Angel.

v. 13. The Sixth Trumpet Angel one voice from the horns of the golden incense altar before God.

v. 14- Command the four angels to be released. Church history has had several explanation for these. Some see them as evil angels (They are from Euphrates, which is the North where Israel's enemies were located, however Revelation never uses the term "angel" for demons). Andreas (6th Century) thought they were Michael, Gabriel, Uriel, and Raphael but saw them as demonic. Not likely. These could be the 4 angels that held back the 4 horsemen (chapter 7), releasing them upon God's command. There are angels who carry out God's judgment (in a holy way) 1 Enoch 56:1; Genesis 19:1-29 (angels destroy Sodom and Gomorrah). They will act in a definite time period, not the whole period of the Revelation (from ascension to return of Christ).

The evil forces let loose from under the angel's control by the will of God, will destroy a third of the human race.

v. 16- an incredible battle at the end of time. This is the battle fought at Mount Megiddo (In Hebrew, "Har Megiddo", in Greek: Armageddon). This is the first mention of this battle (It will also come up 16:12-16, and 20:7-10, showing the cyclical structure of the Revelation.

v. 21- Even though there were some people spared, it did not lead them to repentance. This shows the depravity of human beings lost outside of Christ. (Hurricane Dorian and Florida — The state was surely spared from massive disaster this week. However, murders, abortions, hatred, and political corruption will continue. The people will be unchanged and will not realize

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that the angels of God held back the winds and the storm. This is human nature which damns us without Christ.

Towering O'er the Wrecks of Time

Sermon Delivered the Sunday after September 11, 2001
Nehemiah 1:3-11

I am sure that by now most of us here today are simply worn down, traumatized and sickened, angered and frustrated by the events that befell our country over the past week. Our national security has been breached, we have been attacked, we continue to be threatened, and we are left feeling fearful and vulnerable.

Some of us are grieving for those we lost—relatives, friends, and neighbors. We find that even when the television is turned off, the tape is still running in our minds. We keep seeing that plane hit the second tower of the World Trade center and burst into flames. We keep seeing the building pancake down, trapping and killing thousands of people instantly.

Just when you think your balance is restored something else happens: another bomb threat is made, another building is evacuated, another structure tumbles to the ground, and more suspicious people are apprehended.

Of course, there has been a lot of good happening as a result of this attack—flags are up all over the place, people are wearing ribbons, memorial services at churches are packed to capacity. People don't seem to be afraid to talk about God or to pray in public, and patriotism in the country is evident. The chant, "U.S.A, U.S.A" by the construction workers and rescuers during the president's visit to Ground Zero yesterday are all evidence of this.

The magnanimity of this act has caused us to be glued to the TV. Just about everything in life was canceled this week. There is this collective desire to "do something" for the victims, their families, for the rescuers, but there is nothing that can be done to eradicate the event. It will remain with us as long as the world exists. We are exhausted from it. We now know that we are vulnerable to attack, evil and death.

Jesus Christ is still Lord. Jesus Christ is still in control. The events of this week are not an indication that the Lord has left us, but rather a sign that He is coming soon. He renews his promise to us in Word and Sacrament this day that He will never leave us or forsake us. Here He is in His Word. There He is as He comes to us in the Bread and Wine of Holy Communion. He is here in our midst and He comes to bring us peace.

Terrorism is nothing new at all. The children of Israel experienced it frequently in the Old Testament. At the time of our text Israel had been banished to Babylon. Nehemiah, along with Zerubbabel and Ezra, is chosen by God to lead the remnant back to Israel from exile. There was one problem. The entire city of Jerusalem had been destroyed. Recounting the attack and the events of the past leading up to the exile, Nehemiah writes the beginning words of our text: "The said to me, 'Those who survived the exile and are back in the province are in great trouble and disgrace. The wall of Jerusalem is broken down, and its gates have been burned with fire (v 3).

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When Nehemiah's brother Hanani told him of the utter destruction of Jerusalem, it caused him to go into deep depression and grief. "When I heard these things, I sat down and wept. For some days I mourned and fasted and prayed before the God of heaven" (v 4). Nehemiah had this compelling urge to do something. He couldn't just sit around. He had to go to Jerusalem right then and there.

Aren't these the same reactions we are having right now? We have heard of the terrible events in New York, Arlington, and Pennsylvania. A portion of our city has been destroyed. We are traumatized. We are grieving. We know that we are going to be weeping and mourning for many days. We feel that we have to do something. We just can't sit around! Yet there is nothing we can do that changes what happened this past Tuesday. Or is there?

Listen to Nehemiah's prayer: "Let your ear be attentive and your eyes open to hear the prayer your servant is praying before you day and night for your servants, the people of Israel. I confess the sins we Israelites, including myself and my father's house, have committed against you (v 6).

On many occasions during this past week I have heard people referring to this as a "religious war." Indeed, radical extremist Muslims might well call this act jihad, or "holy war." But that is because they are radicals, not because they are Muslims. I would agree that this is a "religious war". But the war I speak began long before the prophet of Muhammad of Islam was even born. It was a war not provoked by airplanes slamming into towers, but by people choosing follow their "consciences" rather than God's command. It is a war that has already left its mark on our souls. It is a deadly war that will, in the end, claim us as its prey.

Nehemiah identifies the source of the battle of which I speak: It is sin. And the battle line is drawn between God and me. He is holy; I am not. What we saw on Tuesday wasn't the problem. It was a symptom. Just like those things in our lives that we do, or leave undone. Israel went into exile because it chose to live in sin rather than in covenantal relationship with the Lord of hosts. That's why Jerusalem kept falling.

As a nation America also has wandered farther and farther away from the Lord. What does it say about us that we are a nation that looks the other way when millions of babies are murdered each year for the sake of convenience? What does it say about us that we have grown accepting of all sorts of sexual deviancy, calling it alternative lifestyles? What does it say about us that Mammon has become the God of most, including those who don't have it but want it? "One Nation under God? Indivisible"? I don't think so! So what does it say about us? It says that we are sinners!

Firefighters are trained to go in and put the fire out at its seat. You can't merely pour water on the outside of a burning building; you have to go inside, find the fire, and put it out hard and fast. That's why firefighters died. They went in. They had to. The same is true when we fight the war of sin. We can get caught up in the din of the world, calling for retaliation and reacting to the symptoms—like pouring water on the outside of a burning building—or we can go to the seat of the fire, which is the human heart. Only there can we really deal with the problem effectively.

Nehemiah shows us the way. It's not with clenched fists but with folded hands. Beloved, we need to be on our knees. We need to empty our hearts to the Lord and repent

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of our sin. Also, our nation needs to confess its idolatry and godlessness. In spite of all of the good that continues to come out of this event, I haven't heard anyone talk about repenting. This is the Lord waking us up! The time is shorter than we expect. Jesus is coming soon.

The text continues: "They are your servants and your people, whom you redeemed by your great strength and your mighty hand" (v 10). It was an explosive moment in history. The innocent died, towering above the earth. The fire was hotter than any fire ever experienced before. The pain was excruciating. We've been told that jumping down wasn't an alternative. The attack was the result of plotting and secret meetings that went virtually undetected. It was carried out by evil people. It certainly has made its mark in history, never to be forgotten; it remains misunderstood by most.

I speak not of the World Trade Center but of the cross of Jesus. It is there that the battle of our sin and God's holiness met. Towering above the earth on the cross, the fire of God's wrath for our sin damned Jesus in our place as He was consumed by our death. It is this death that takes away our sins; this death that gives us life; this death that gives us peace. It is only when we stand forgiven in Christ that we will have peace. That is a peace that will never end.

The terroristic activity of the past week has given us a rare golden opportunity: a world that is asking questions about God! A world open to praying! Like Paul on Mars Hill, we need to jump at this opportunity. Tell your neighbors that this God that they question has a Son, Jesus Christ. Tell them about His love for them. Tell them about the peace He brings, the healing, and the hope. Bring them to the towering inferno of the cross that there they may see their sins consumed by Him in faith.

Whether or not they rebuild the Trade Towers up to minds bigger than mine. But, like Nehemiah, we can rebuild the city into a strong fortress as we share the light of the Gospel into this present darkness. Imagine what New York would be like if everyone called upon the name of the Lord and was saved! That would be one rebuilt city!

Beloved, pray for those who have suffered great loss in this attack, that they might know the peace of Jesus. Pray for those who are helping in the recovery of victims, that they might be protected by God's holy angels. Pray for those who did this horrible act that they might be brought not just to justice, but to Jesus. Pray for each other here in church. Never forget: At God's strong right arm sits Jesus, the One who redeemed us. He is still in control. His peace can never be shaken—not by terrorists, or airplanes or even by you.⁵

⁵ John G. Fleischmann, "Towering O'er the Wrecks of Time: Sermon delivered the Sunday after September 11, 2001" at Christ Lutheran Church, East Moriches, NY. *Concordia Pulpit Resources: A Quarterly Journal for Law/Gospel Preaching*. Series A, Pentecost 16-Last Sunday of the Church Year, September 8- November 24, 2002. Volume 12 Part 4. (St. Louis, MO: Concordia Publishing House, 2002). Pages 43-45.

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Revelation Chapter 10

Vocabulary

ιρις – The rainbow-like halo. See also Revelation 4:3. Same term.

Βιβλαριδιον – Small scroll.

Ηνεωγμενον- Unrolling (a scroll)

Text

v. 1. “Coming down”

v. 1 Description: Clothed with a cloud; Rainbow on head; Face like Sun; feet like pillars of fire.

v. 2 Significance of “little scroll”

v. 3 Significance of loud roar of lion

v. 4 The seven thunders

v. 4 “don’t write them”.

v.5-6 The oath of the angel

v.7 – Mystery of God finished.

v.9 “Take the little scroll and eat it...” Embitterment and sweetness = Law and Gospel

v.10 John complies

v. 11 Command to evangelize.

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REVELATION CHAPTER 11

Vocabulary

Δυσιν μαρτυσιν (v.3) Two witnesses

Την μαρτυριαν (v.7) the act of witnessing

Ο νοματα ανθρωπων (v.7) The named name; name of renown

σεισμος (v. 19) Earthquake

Text

v. 1. The temple, the altar, and all who worship are to be measured. This is God's people.

v. 2. Outer court is not measured. Outer court is the court of the Gentiles; not God's chosen. Also, the outer court is part of the visible temple. All "denominations" fall into this and will all eventually go apostate as the end draws near. Difference between the "Church Visible" and the "Church Invisible." Our allegiance is to the Lord and the Body of Christ, not to a church body.

v.2 Those who are measured are protected by God. Even death cannot harm them.

v.2 "Forty-Two months"- 1. Typology of the 42 years Israel spent in the wilderness. 2. Forty-Two months is 3 ½ years. This will become significant.

v. 3 Two witnesses. Not given their names. Certainly could be Moses and Elijah, John and James, Peter and Paul, or two people who independently shared Jesus with you. Represent Royal and Priestly function of the Church.

v. 3 Requirement of 2 witnesses. They must be independent and non-collaborating.

v. 4 Two olive trees, and two lampstands. Represents the Church. For olive tree see Romans 11:11-36; Lampstands see the Churches in Revelation.

v.5 Fire comes out of the witnesses mouths. The Word of God that destroys sin and wickedness. Cf. 1 Kings 18:20-40 where fire comes down from heaven and burns Elijah's altar.

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v.6 Power to stop the rain The famine during Elijah's time lasted 3 ½ years.

v.7 The two witnesses are killed by the Beast from the abyss, that is, Satan.

v.8. The bodies exposed and not buried.

v. 8 Sodom and Egypt- Both places of evil. Sodom was known for its sexual sins including promiscuity, homosexuality, etc. Egypt is known for its oppression of the Children of Israel.

v.9-10 The evil rejoice over the dead bodies of the Two Witnesses. It becomes a holiday, gifts are exchanged because the Two Witnesses who tormented them have been defeated and killed.

v. 11 After 3 ½ days the Two Witnesses are raised back to life. The evil now begin to fear (fear that Herod experienced thinking that Jesus was John the Baptist come back to life Mark 6:14)

v. 12 The two witnesses are called up to heaven where they are glorified. This is in full view of the evil.

v. 13 Earthquake. Sometimes used to show God's majesty and power (as in this case). At other times it indicates the Last Day and God's Judgment (cf. 6:12, 16:18).

v.14 Second Woe is passed. Review of timeline: The first woe: Demonic attack on humans (9:13-21); The second woe: The Last Battle/ Armageddon (9:13-21); followed by the End of the World (11:15-19). The section between 9:21 and 11:15 is an interlude.

v. 15. Great voices- not identified. Kingdom of the Cosmos. Hapax- This is the only time in the entire Bible that "Kingdom" and "cosmos" are linked together. Cosmos- refers to God's ordered and created world. Could mean earth, or the entire universe.

v. 15 Reign for ever and ever. Literally unto the ions and ions (in prayers often translated to "unto the ages of ages" or "forever and ever."

v. 16 24 Elders = all of God's people in heaven. 12 Prophets plus 12 Apostles.

v.16 "The One who Is and was." Note here there is no mention of "who is to come" because He has come.

v. 18. Nations are angry that they are called to account for their wickedness. Their anger quickly turns to fear as they await their eternal existence in hell.

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v. 19- God's Temple = God's eternal people. The Church. All believers in Christ.

v. 19. The Ark of the Covenant. God's visible presence among His people. While 2 Kings 25:9 seems to indicate that Nebuchadnezzar destroyed the Ark in his siege on Jerusalem (ca 586 BC) when the city and Temple were destroyed and those not killed were taken to Babylon, there is a rabbinic tradition that can be found in 2 Maccabees 2:1-8:

2 Maccabees 2:1-8

2 We know from the records that Jeremiah the prophet instructed the people who were being taken into exile to hide some of the fire from the altar, as we have just mentioned. ²We also know that he taught them God's Law and warned them not to be deceived by the ornamented gold and silver idols which they would see in the land of their exile. ³And then he urged them never to abandon the Law.

⁴These same records also tell us that Jeremiah, acting under divine guidance, commanded the Tent of the Lord's Presence and the Covenant Box to follow him to the mountain where Moses had looked down on the land which God had promised our people. ⁵When Jeremiah got to the mountain, he found a huge cave and there he hid the Tent of the Lord's Presence, the Covenant Box, and the altar of incense. Then he sealed up the entrance.

⁶Some of Jeremiah's friends tried to follow him and mark the way, but they could not find the cave. ⁷When Jeremiah learned what they had done, he reprimanded them, saying,

No one must know about this place until God gathers his people together again and shows them mercy. ⁸At that time he will reveal where these things are hidden, and the dazzling light of his presence will be seen in the cloud, as it was in the time of Moses and on the occasion when Solomon prayed that the Temple might be dedicated in holy splendor.

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Revelation Chapter 12

Vocabulary

v.1 σημειον – Sign. Appears 7x in the Revelation. This is the word used by John in his Gospel for the miracles of Jesus.

v.1 γυνη- “woman”. At times refers to Eve, Mary, Israel, and the Church.

v.2 Βασανιζομεν – To torture, torment, inflict pain. Normally used for God’s judgment and wrath. This is the only place where it refers to the pain of childbirth (cf Gen. 3:16)

v.3 δυδηματα- Diadem

v.4 ο δρακων καταφαγη – dragon...serpent The oldest reference to the devil.

v. 6 υμερας ξιλιας διακοσια εξυκοντα – 1260 days/3 ½ years/ 42 months/ time, times, and a half time- all refer to the same period.

v. 7 ο Μιχαηλ- the archangel Michael. His name means “who is like God?”

v. 8 ισξυσεν- prevail—Satan *did not* prevail.

v. 14 καιρον και καιρους και ημισυ καιρου – Time, times, a half time – refers to the 3 ½ year period that extends from Jesus’ ascension to the time of His Return.

Text

Introduction- Chapters 12-14 serve as an interlude between the second and third sevenfold visions of events taking place on earth (Second: 8:6-11:19, Third: 15:1-16:21)

v.1 Great sign – Woman clothed with the sun, moon under her feet. The glory is not her own but Christ’s given to her.

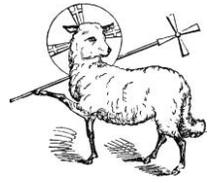
v. 1 Crown- God’s rule. 12 stars = the 12 tribes of Israel now, but when she appears in heaven the 12 apostles.

v. 1. With the exception of Christ, no human in the Bible is clothed and glorified as this woman. The woman is Mary. Mary represents both Israel and the Church; all who are redeemed by Christ.

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- v. 2. She gives birth to the Christ Child.
- v. 3 The sign of the dragon. Note it is not a *great* sign. Note the dragon appears *above* the earth.
- v. 3 –Seven heads = authority; horns=power, diadems = throne. Seven is God’ number, being usurped by Satan.
- v. 3- Red is the color for blood, for murder.
- v. 4- Third of the stars swept out of the skies by the dragons tail= fallen angels, the demons.
- v. 5. The masculinity of this child is stressed twice here. There is no mistake, it is Jesus.
- v. 5. Rod of iron- cannot be beaten.
- v. 6 Woman flees into wilderness- Israel’s exodus from Egypt; our time in this life—the wilderness before our promised land arrives.
- v. 7- War in heaven. Unthinkable, as heaven is a place of peace. Spiritual struggle in which the dragon attempts to replace the Christ child.
- v. 8. Satan does not prevail in this war..
- v. 9 Cast out of heaven by Michael the archangel.

Excursus:

Satan was on the heavenly council where he accuses the saints of God before His throne of their sins. (see Job1-2; Zechariah 3:1-5). Satan claimed that he, not the Christ truthfully represented the saints before God. His accusations, along with himself is thrown out of heaven to the earth. Satan did not want to leave his high place, so he continues to war against the Woman (church) and her seed (individual followers of Jesus).

When did this take place (important): AT THE ASCENSION OF CHRIST. This war is not the original rebellion which took place prior to the Fall into Sin. (Satan was still on the heavenly council at that point). The war and expulsion in Rev. 12 happens as a result of Christ’s Victory and Elevation post-ascension.

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Revelation Chapter 13

Vocabulary

v.1 Θηριον –evil animal; sometimes used to describe an evil person.

v. 1 ονομα – plural, “names”- the beast employs a variety of disguises and methods of deceit.

v.5 υηνας τεσσαρακοντα δυο These 42 months are the same as in 11:2, the same as the 1260 days (11:3, 12:6) , the three and a half years, and the “times, time, time and a half.” Both the time of tribulation and the time that the Two Witnesses share the Gospel.

v.6 σκηνην – tent, dwelling, sanctuary. God’s heavenly abode with His saints.

v.8 τω βιβλιω της ζωης – The Book of Life. In this verse it refers to those whose names *are not* in it. Ours are in it by virtue of Faith in Jesus as the only true Lord and Savior.

v. 10 αποκτανθηναι – “will kill” The Saints cannot escape persecution and death. This becomes an exhortation and encouragement for the saints to have patience and faith in Christ in the face of martyrdom.

v.16 χαραγμα- Mark, brand, tattoo, stamp, image, representation. Masters branded their slaves as they did their animals.

v. 18 αριθμος ... ανθρωπον εστιν.. The number of a man. Suggests particular man (Nero Caesar) but that man is a type of what is to come.

v.18 Εξακοσιοι εξηκοντα εξ – Six hundred and sixty six. Note that the Greek pronunciation of the number six is “hex”.

Text

13:1- The sea is similar to the abyss, but on earth. A place of chaos. Remember that the dragon (Satan) stands on the shore of the sea awaiting the arrival of the beast. Therefore, the beast is not the same entity as the dragon.

13:1- The beast has the same characteristics of the dragon (ten horns, seven heads, seven crowns). It has blasphemous names on its heads). However, the crowns (diadems) were on its horns, not directly on its heads as are the dragon’s.

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13:2- The beast derives its power from the dragon. The beast is under the control of the dragon.

13:2 The beast is the same description of the fourth beast in Daniel 7:2-7. The other three beasts of Daniel had already historically been fulfilled (First beast- the humbling and restoration of Nebuchadnezzar, Second Beast- the unequal power of the 2 countries that made up the Medo-Persian empire; Third Beast- Alexander the Great's conquest). The fourth beast is unfulfilled.

13:2 Many commentators equate the fourth beast with the Roman Empire. This must be broadened as the beast represents and symbolizes every human authority and everything of the human nature that the dragon can corrupt and control and use in his warfare against the Woman (the Church).

13:3 Wounded fatally but the wound healed. Some equate this with Caligula, who had been seriously ill but then recovered, or evil Nero who supposedly committed suicide, but the rumor stated he had actually escaped.

13:4 Authority- The beast operates under the dragon's authority.

13:5- 42 months- The same time period as has already been presented.

13:6- Blasphemy- both against God and His Saints.

13:7- War with the saints- the beast has no problem attacking the unsaved (those whose names are *not* written in the Book of Life). It is particularly focused on the Saints.

13:9/10- The killing here is directed at Christians, not the unbelievers. This is given as an encouragement to the Saints who may face martyrdom because of their faith.

13:11- The Second Beast. Comes up from the earth. It does not force itself upon people but wins their trust so that it can lead them astray.

13:12- The second beast works at the behest of the first beast, and thus, at the behest of the dragon. The first beast is a political beast; the second is a religious beast. He infiltrates the Church and causes much of it to go apostate. Think of some of the theology that passes as "God's Word" today that is actually sinful and against God in many churches.

13:13- He performs great signs (to deceive). Here remember that Pharaoh's magicians were able to perform great signs as well, but under the power of the devil. This says something to Christians who are "miracle minded."

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13:14- Idolatry

13:15 Those who refuse to worship the image made by this beast

13:16- The Mark. Allegiance to the Beast. Shows who belongs to the beast and who is (temporarily) protected by the beast. It affects all areas of life (buying/selling).

13:18 – 666- human number, meaning it represents a human. **Gematria**: the act of converting numbers into letters. The transliteration of “Nero Caesar” into Hebrew is fulfilled by the number 666. Again, Nero Caesar is a “type” of what is to come.

Also, the number 6 is an incomplete number. One short of perfection (“7”), It is the number of man (created on the 6th day). The three sixes together form an unholy trinity. Some speculate that this unholy trinity is the dragon, the beast from the sea, and the beast from the earth.

The wisdom referred to at the beginning of 13:18 is the wisdom that comes from God and enables the Christian to discern how the evil forces of the dragon, both secular and religious, are always and everywhere active, at war to destroy the church and her witness to Christ.



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Come, ye thankful people, come;
Raise the song of harvest home.
All be safely gathered in
Ere the winter storms begin;
God our maker, doth provide
For our wants to be supplied.
Come to God's own temple, come;
Raise the song of harvest home.

All the world is God's own field,
Fruit unto His praise to yield;
Wheat and tares together sown,
Unto joy or sorrow grown.
First the blade and then the ear,
Then the full corn shall appear.
Lord of harvest, grant that we
Wholesome grain and pure may be.

For the Lord, our God, shall come
And shall take His harvest home,
From His field shall in that day
All offenses purge away,
Give His angels charge at last
In the fire the tares to cast,
But the fruitful ears to store
In His garner evermore.

Even so, Lord, quickly come
To Thy final harvest home;
Gather Thou Thy people in,
Free from sorrow, free from sin,
There, forever purified,
In Thy garner to abide:
Come with all Thine angels, come,
Raise the glorious harvest home.

Henry Alford 1810-1871

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Revelation Chapter 14

Vocabulary

v.1 ορος Σιών – Mount Zion. The mount upon which the Temple stood. Also is a direct reference to God’s presence among His people.

v. 6 μεσουρανηματι – “mid-heaven”. The part of heaven directly overhead, the sky, particularly when the sun appears at its zenith, its brightest point, representing the glory of God.

v. 8. Βαβυλων η μεγαλη- Babylon the Great. Babylon was the arch-enemy of Israel that plundered Jerusalem and took those remaining into captivity in Babylon. In Revelation this represents oppressive governments (part of the first beast) which, at the time of writing, was identified as Rome.

v. 9 το θηριον- Altar

v. 12- πιστιν Ιησου – literally “The faith of Jesus”. Note here it is not faith *in* Jesus. This is in the genitive construct. However it is unclear if it is a objective genitive i.e. *believing in Jesus* or a subjective genitive, *Jesus’ faithfulness in carrying out our salvation*. The context actually implies both.

v. 14 υιον ανθρωπον – “Son of Man”. A term first used by Daniel identifying Messiah (Daniel 7:13) as well as a term that Jesus uses of Himself. It means Jesus.

v. 15 εξηρανθη- “to dry out, become dry”. The drying up of the juices of the wheat plant, another way of saying “the ripening of the grain” or “ready for harvest.”

v. 20 σταδιων “stadia” or “furlong”. Approximately 607 feet long. 1600 stadia is about 184 miles.

Text

General: This is John’s second vision of the Lamb in Revelation. The first was in Revelation 5:6. The Lamb is Jesus. After the warfare of the dragon and his beasts (Revelation 12 and 13) John sees the Church Militant (the 144,000) accompanied by a song of victory even though they were conquered by the beasts in earthly warfare. This is a turning point by which we begin to see the triumph of the Lord and of his Church. But there is more suffering to come. This is the only place where “Mt. Zion” appears in Revelation.

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v.1 Lamb on Mount Zion- God's presence among His people

v.1 144,000- As we have learned, this represents all of God's people who are still on earth at any given time awaiting their entrance into heaven. It is the Church Militant. The Church in heaven is called the Church Triumphant.

v.1 "having his name and the name of His Father written on their foreheads". This is juxtaposed against those who have the mark of the beast on their foreheads and hands. It shows that God has claimed His own for Himself. The mark includes all of God's claim on us- beginning with Baptism, all of His means of grace, forgiveness, life and salvation that we receive in His Body.

v.2 Sound- In this verse John hears the "harpers harping on their harps." They are accompanying the "New Song". The words for the New Song are given in 5:9-14, but are not given here.

v.3 Only those in heaven and the 144,000 know or can learn this song. Those with the mark of the beast are not able to sing it.

v.4, 5 The 144,000 are "male virgins". This refers to "spiritual virginity"- meaning that Jesus has made them into the "spotless" bride. Their chastity consists of resisting the allurements of women (read: the Harlot of Babylon, they follow the Lamb and offer themselves to Him as first fruits). (Excursus on Jehovah's Witness to be offered in class).

v.6 -Angel flying in mid-heaven. Mid-heaven is visible to earth (the sky) where birds fly and the sun is seen.

v. 6,7 The first of three angels flies with "the eternal Gospel." The Good News of Jesus. For those who receive it "he gave them the right to be children of God, to those who believe in his name, who were born, not of natural descent, or of the will of the flesh, or of the will of man, but born of God." (John 1:12,13). But this Gospel functions as law to those who will not receive it and will ultimately condemn them. This angel's actions are intended to move people to fear God and give Him glory.

v.8 The second Angel announces the fall of "Babylon the Great".

v. 8 "sexual immorality". While speaking spiritually here, this also is literal. Rome was plagued with sexual promiscuity, sexual deviance, bestiality, homosexuality, cultic sex, and all other forms of the abuse of the gift of sex.

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v.8 This immorality extends to all nations. None are immune. One can see how this is taking place today with all sorts of sexual deviance being forced on those who stand against it.

v.9 The third angel- calls out to those who bear the mark of the beast and announces their judgment.

v.9 The wine of the wrath of God. Terrible judgment. Jesus *drinks* this cup of God's wrath for us at the Cross.

v. 10 This cup of wrath is God's unchecked, merciless anger.

v. 11 Smoke going up forever—the eternal suffering of those in hell. (While Jehovah's Witnesses and a lot of Christians today believe in "annihilationism" – the view that the lost simply "cease to exist"- this verse and the entirety of Scripture says otherwise.

v. 12 Perseverance of the Saints- Saints are encouraged as they hear this judgment upon their enemies. While the end has not yet come in this cycle, the suffering Saints of the 144,000 on earth are encouraged to "remain faithful unto death" and they will obtain the "crown of Life." (Rev. 2:10)

v.13 The Second Beatitude of Revelation: "Blessed are the dead who are dying in the Lord from now on...."

v.13 Notice the tense of the word for death. It is not simply "die" but in the process of dying. It applies to both, however.

v. 14 Son of Man descends to the earth on a white cloud. "Every eye will see Him." This refers to Jesus' Second Coming.

v.14 The crown of thorns is replaced with the victor's crown of gold. Jesus has triumphed! Alleluia!

v. 15 A fourth angel comes and pleads with the Son of Man to send forth his sickle and reap. Not sure which angel this is.

v. 16 The Lamb sends his angels to harvest the earth. Matthew 13:39: "...and the enemy who sowed them is the devil. The harvest is the end of the age, and the harvesters are the angels..."

v.16- The earth reaped: Judgment. The wheat is separated from the chaff.

v. 17 Another angel, from the incense altar, harvests.

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v. 19: Vintage- refers to the unbelievers. Bad. "Trampling out the vintage where the grapes of wrath are stored..."

v. 20 Winepress- The trampling of the wicked who were gathered outside the city recalls the bloodshed (the Crucifixion of Jesus where all evil was trampled out).

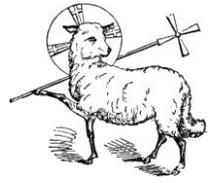
v. 20. The absurdly large amount of blood (184 miles long) suggests the severity and completeness of God's judgment.



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Revelation Chapter 15

Vocabulary

2. The interpretation of this verse is difficult as some words are used grammatically in non-traditional ways. The thrust of the verse is clear.

3. κυριε ο θεος – Lord God- should be understood as YAHWEH.

4. δικαιωματα – God’s righteous acts by which He will judge the human race—those actions against which God shows His anger against all who refuse His gracious invitation.

7 του ζοντος εις τους αιωνας των αιωνων = Who lives forever and ever. The East uses the phrase, “unto the ages of ages.”

Text

v.1 This is the beginning of the third and last vision of the events on earth. The purpose of the third earthly vision is similar to that of the second but much more intense.

v. 1 The 7 Censer Angels are the same angels as before—from the 7 Churches and from the last two visions, namely to show God’s wrath and judgment against the enemies of His Church.

v. 2 Vision of Battlefield: A glassy sea mixed with fire. Note that this is *not* the same “glassy sea” as was presented in 4:6. It is a reminder of the horrifying warfare with its suffering people of God). This is the sea from which the beasts emanate and upon its shore where the dragon waits for the beasts to do their bidding.

v.2 The subject of v. 2 are the saints who have come forth victorious despite being killed by the beasts and dragon. The victory of Christians is hidden from unbelievers (and always has been).

v. 3-4 The victory song. Song is first called the “Song of Moses” recounting the Victory of YAHWEH as he parted the Red Sea and saved Israel (Exodus 14:19-15:21). But it is also/ joined with the Song of the Lamb. Expresses God’s deliverance against all enemies, past, present, and future. It is one great unified hymn.

v. 3-4 This hymn shows that God is the ONLY God and the only HOLY God. The Lord is always delivering His Church to carry on His mission. In the conclusion of this hymn we see that His judgments have been made visible (cf. Ps. 98:2 as well).

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v. 5-8 Refers to the Tabernacle, not the Temple. This is an important distinction. The earthly tabernacle was the visible sign of God's presence in the Wilderness. Refers here to God's presence in glory in heaven amongst His own. It also is a reminder of God's presence and protection among His saints here on earth as the battle ensues.

15:8 Smoke- another representation of the Divine Presence in the Old Testament. (e.g. Mt. Sinai; the Smoke around His altar in Isaiah 6, etc...)

The Venerable Bede wrote, "Smoke would conceal the just actions of God so that they would remain impenetrable and closed to mortals until, when completed, the Lord would come."



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.

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Revelation Chapter 16

Vocabulary

2. κακον και πονηρον – These adjectives normally refer to “evil” and “wicked”. Here they are used for “grievous” and “painful.” Normally, different words are used for these in the NT. The choice of “evil” and “wicked” suggest a moral causation for the physical pain.

3. αιμα ως πεκρου – Blood from a corpse. Indicated finality of death from which there is no return.

12. ανατολης ηλιον – The rising of the sun. OT way of indicating the direction of “East”.

13. ψευδοπροφητου- False prophet. The second (religious) beast. Will be also be called “the Harlot” in subsequent chapters. One who leads people away from Christ within the Church.

16 Αρμαγεδων – Mountain of Megiddo. Ancient Canaanite city. Another name for Mount(ain) Carmel where Elijah faced down the prophets of Baal. Site of several OT battles including those in the times of Deborah, Barak, and King Josiah). Here it is used metaphorically to depict the final universal judgment of God’s opponents and the vindication of the righteous.

17. γεγονεν – perfect indicative of γινομαι, which means “come to be.” Here “happen, take place.” Perfect indicates the six plagues have been completed and the seventh is about to begin.

21 παλαντιαια – The weighing of a talent- equivalent to about 94 pounds. Sometimes translated as “hundredweight” .

Text

General- The seven plagues have similarities with the Egyptian plagues once again. While some of the events presented in this third vision repeat those in the second, in the third vision they are all intensified in order to portray God’s final warning of the seriousness of His judgment at the end.

v. 2 The first plague strikes all who oppose God with painful sores and boils. (Ex. 9:8-12)

v. 3 The second censer is against the seas so that they become as blood and all of the animals and fish of the sea die. (Ex. 7:19-21). Suggests waters will be unfit for people or beasts.

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v.4 All of the other waters become blood. In 8:10-11 only a third turn to blood and bitterness. Here it speaks of all waters throughout the earth.

v.5-7 The angel of the waters proclaims a response to God. The angel confesses, that God, “the One Who is and Who was, the Holy One” is righteous in so judging the human race. Then a voice from heaven speaks the “Amen” to the antiphon of the angel.

v. 8 The fourth angel pours out his censer on the sun and people were scorched with great fire/heat. Notice that in 8:12 the opposite takes place with a third of the sun, moon, and stars being darkened.

v. 10 The fifth angel pours out his censer and the kingdom of the beast becomes darkened. God now strikes the object of their allegiance – the beast—but this just makes the worshipers of the beast all the more vehement in their hatred toward God and His chosen ones.

v. 12 The sixth angel pours out his censer- and the final war begins. The devil’s attack upon the church lasts throughout the NT era, however culminates in one last and greatest battle before the end at Christ’s return.

v. 16 Har Megiddo- “Armageddon” The area around present day Haiffa, Biblical Mt. Carmel. Metaphorical in the sense that it will not just be fought there, but upon all of the world. It is the last worldwide battle against the Church. But it will not prevail.

v. 17 The end. Marked by theophanies (lightnings, thunders, noises- like Mt. Sinai), and judgments (greatest earthquake ever experienced on earth, 100 lb hail stones). Especially called out is “Babylon the Great” that will be destroyed.

The sad thing in all of this is that God’s enemies will never repent. As the plagues progress they become more hateful of God and His people, even with the prospect of eternal hell.

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Revelation Chapter 17

Vocabulary

v. 8 απο καταβολης κοσμου – Foundation of the world (world cast into being)

Text

Introduction: This begins the final vision of the end (17:1-22:5). This section summarizes and concludes all that John has seen earlier in the previous scenes concerning the end.

V 1. The angels remain the 7 angels we have seen throughout beginning with the 7 churches.

v. 1 The great/notorious harlot/prostitute is the second (religious) beast. She is such because she lures people in with apostate Christianity. In the end the torture of God's people will not come just from haters (Unbelievers, Islam, haters of Christianity) but *primarily* from **false Christians** who follow the harlot.

v. 1 Adultery/Fornication/Sexual immorality (πορνης) – is equated to idolatry, emperor worship, being an unfaithful Bride to the Lamb. See Isaiah 1:21.

v.1 The harlot presents herself to the pseudo-Church as an attractive woman. She *offsets* and *counters* the holy woman of Revelation 12 who represents the true children of God. Both women are set forth as representatives of the Church: The woman of Rev. 12 (Mary, representing the TRUE Church) and the harlot (representing apostate Christianity). The pseudo-Church appears to be beautiful and attractive. It is *honored* by the world. She accepts and encourages the lifestyles of the ungodly.

v. 1 Seated on many waters- Waters here represents all of humanity.

v. 1, 2 Harlot has dominion over the nations. Literal component here when kings, presidents, etc.. practice sexual immorality in their lives. A picture of the worst kind of immorality- adultery/idolatry against the only True God and the Lamb.

v. 3 Wilderness/ Desert. This is where our lives are lived, typified by Israel's wanderings. We are in the wilderness awaiting entrance to the Promised Land of heaven. It is where the first (holy) woman dwelt, and now is also where the harlot goes because that is where the church is. The harlot sets up the false church alongside of the true Church. She comes to seduce and tear down the true church.

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v. 4 purple and scarlet- indicates wealth, ostentatious magnificence of Rome. Purple was the color of the emperor. It's why the New York State Police wear a purple tie- they work for the governor, not the state.

v. 4 Abominable things- those things that are immoral, evil, corruptive attitudes and practices used to entice rulers away from the Lamb and to "drink from her cup."

v. 5 "Babylon the Great"- on her forehead, like the Mark of the Beast.

v. 5 Babylon was Israel's enemy as Rome is the enemy of the Church.

v.5 mystery- better, "secret rite".

7-8 "who was, and is not, and is about to come up out of the abyss" –compare this to what John says of the Lamb "who was, and is, (and sometimes 'and who is to come.')

v.7-8 The beast and what it represents come and go in one form or another throughout the entire period from Jesus' ascension to the Last Day.

v. 7-8 Unbelievers will stand in awe of the Harlot but their awe will be short-lived.

v. 9 There were seven hills in Babylon. There are seven hills in Rome. Making the connection.

v. 9 It takes "wisdom" to make this connection.

v. 9-11 Seven Kings plus one- Unsure of exact meaning. However symbolically represents all earthly powers, plus the beast, who claim spiritual authority by which they justify and sanction their despotic dominion over their subjects, in particular as it is used against the Church of Christ. (Right now China is persecuting the church in a huge way. Pastors are being interred in camps and brutally beaten and/or killed in horrific ways. Islam continues to immolate, drown, behead, shoot, and torture Christians. Last month they fileted a woman's face allowing her to live. The persecution is all around us and in a short time will be here).

v. 12 "one hour"- depicts a very short period of time when compared with eternity.

v. 12-14 Ten horns are all of the other powers that *do not* have authority from God that join with those who do (Romans 13/ government) to go after the Church. Together the 7 heads and 10 horns represent all earthly powers, legitimate and illegitimate which are under the dragon and make war with and go against the followers of Christ.

V 15-18 Describes the end of the harlot which will be made clear in Chapter 18.

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Revelation Chapter 18

Vocabulary

v.2, 21 ισχυρος (ισχυρα)- “Mighty”

v. 13 σοματα – bodies, that is the bodies of unbelievers who fall with the Harlot

Text

Introduction: This chapter deals with the Fall of the Harlot, “Babylon the Great.” Particular attention is given to the fall occurring involving unbelieving political rulers, merchants, and seafarers. They all begin to mourn because with the everlasting destruction of the Second Beast/Harlot/Babylon, they all lose income.

v. 1. Another angel- not the same

v. 2 He cried with a “mighty voice”. This word normally is associated with God, not an angel.

v. 2. “Babylon the Great has fallen”- This primarily refers to the Second Beast. But Babylon is a type of Rome. The Roman Empire fell because of debauchery in the year 476AD.

v. 3- Sexual Immorality—both literal and symbolic (as in Israel committing *adultery* through *idolatry*).

v. 3 The merchants grew wealthy from her unfaithfulness.

v. 4,5 Here, God’s people are called to come out from under her influence and not participate in her sins. Her sins are many (piled high to the sky) and God does not overlook her unconfessed and unforgiven iniquity. Eternal payment will now be exacted.

v. 6-10 Because of her arrogance and gross sin, she, and all who follow her will be eternally damned in unending suffering.

v. 9- Oy, that is, “woe” means eternal damnation.

v. 10. One Hour. The judgment is complete, quick, and eternal of the Harlot Babylon.

v. 11-15- a litany of all of the losses of the merchants and seafarers. Kings lose power, merchants lose sales, seafarers cannot return to the city because it is destroyed and ablaze, so stuck out at sea with no more business coming their way.

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v. 17- Hour- same as above.

19- Dust on their heads- a sign of weeping/mourning, like tearing garments (as did the Chief Priest and others during Jesus' sham trial).

v. 20- God's people are called to rejoice. Our hope is not simply in the hope of eternal glory, but also in that all of the Enemies of the Church are forever banished in the eternal fires of hell. No longer does evil exist, let alone have a say on God's saints.

v. 21 "No more at all." Ominous words for Babylon; even more ominous for unbelievers today and of all time. They will join her.

v.22- The minstrels/harpists/craftsman, light, marriage, will all be gone for the wicked. They fell for the deception of the Second Beast. Now they are sent to hell because of it.

v. 24 – "In her was found the blood of prophets and of saints, and of all who have been slain on earth." NOTICE – this is the Second Beast/Harlot. She is the apostate CHRISTIAN church. And notice the blood is on and in her—not on the unbelievers. Apostate Christianity, however, is the WORST type of unbelief because it deceives people with its lies to believe in THEMSELVES, not Christ.

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Revelation Chapter 19 Part 1 (v. 1-10)

Vocabulary

- v. 1 ἀλληλουια – “Hallelujah”. This word is used nowhere else in the NT. The word “alleluia” is a transliteration of this. In Hebrew HALLE-LU-YAH “Praise to Yah(weh)”
- v. 2 ἐφθειρεν – judged/passed judgment. In this case referring to the cause of the demise of the Harlot of Babylon- *she* passed judgment pretentiously upon God’s people claiming that she is the true church of Christ. God destroys her for this lie that caused the suffering, torture, and death of those who are Christ’s.

Text

Introduction. In Chapter 18 the Harlot of Babylon (the false prophet/the second beast) is eternally destroyed by God. The chart below is a helpful comparison between the “two women” (the Woman of Chapter 12- Mary/the Church; and the Harlot of Babylon)

The harlot

A bowl angel says, “Come, I will show you” (17:1)
The judgment of the great harlot (17:1)
Fornicated with kings and earthlings (17:2)
Seated among many waters (17:3)
Full of blasphemous names (17:3)
Wears purple, scarlet; gold, jewels, and pearls (17:4; 18:16-17)
A name on her forehead (17:5)
Mother of abominations (17:5)
Names not in the book of life (17:8)
Seated on 7 hills (17:9)

Kings will destroy her (17:15-18)
She will be naked (17:16)
The great earthly city (17:18)

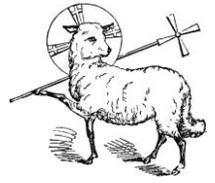
The Bride

A bowl angel says, “Come, I will show you” (21:9)
The marriage of the wife of the Lamb (19:7; 21:2, 9)
Is clothed, bright and pure (19:8)
Coming down out of heaven (21:10)
Is “The holy city Jerusalem” (21:2, 9-10)
Is radiant, like a rare jewel, jasper, crystal (21:11)
God’s name on foreheads (22:4)
No abomination (21:27; 22:3)
Names in the book of life (21:27)
Seen from a high hill, coming down from heaven (21:10)
Kings will bring their glory to her (21:24)
She is clothed in fine linen (19:8)
The holy city, coming down from heaven (21:2, 9-10)

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v.1 Loud voice of an immense crowd- John no hears the “Hallelujah Chorus” most likely made up of all of God’s Angels and Saints.

v.1 The Chorus celebrates the readiness of the bride for marriage to the Lamb in response to God passing judgment on the great harlot.

v. 3 The Hallelujah is raised because God has eternally condemned the harlot of Babylon and her smoke rises forever.

v. 4 The Twenty Four Elders and the Four Living Creatures are the choirmasters.

v. 5- Small and great—this indicates all Christians join in this in heaven and on earth including us now on earth and in the future in heaven.

v. 6 Theophany language- waters/thunders indicate divinity (Mt. Sinai, the Flood, etc).

v. 6 Almighty = pontocrator. All power, all authority, all might. Only God can be pontocrator

v.7-8 Marriage Feast. Understanding marriage in the OT:

1. There was a betrothal. This was initiated by the Father of the Groom approaching the Father of the bride and making the arrangement.
2. Dowry- The Groom’s father would pay the bride’s father money to assist in raising her to the point where she would be given in marriage to his son.
3. A betrothal is legally binding. It would be announced in the Synagogue. The only way out of a betrothal was to divorce.
4. At the point of betrothal (sometimes from infancy, sometimes later in life), the mother and sisters of the bride would begin to make a beautiful wedding garment. The betrothed woman would wear her wedding garments, or at least a part, in public all of the time to mark her has one who was betrothed. It sent the message to other men, “don’t touch me, I belong to him.” The wedding garment was worn long before the marriage took place. Today’s custom is often an engagement ring.
5. The wedding was the time that the groom took the bride into his house and consummated the marriage. The marriage feast surrounding this moment could last over a week, sometimes two weeks.
6. The wedding always took place at the home of the groom.
7. The groom’s father would provide the wedding garments for the guests.
8. We see an example of this from the Holy Family.

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God's Marriage Feast for you.

1. There is a betrothal. God has chosen His Church to be the Bride of Christ.
2. A Dowry has been paid by the Father of the Groom. He gave His Son into death to make the Bride ready for marriage.
3. The Betrothal cannot be broken.
4. God has placed a wedding garment on us already- the robe of righteousness. The robe of righteousness is visible to the world now in the righteous deeds that the Bride is empowered to do. These righteous deeds say to the devil, the world and our own sinful flesh, "Don't touch me, I belong to Him."
5. We wear this wedding garment until the Father of the Groom brings us into the wedding feast.
6. The Lamb will come to carry His bride across the threshold with His nail-pierced hands.
7. We will join the never-ending marriage feast in heaven as the Lamb and His Bride live forever in and through each other, even as husband and wife live in a one-flesh relationship. But this will be perfect. Our marriages can only reflect the glory that is coming to us.

John may have been thinking of what Isaiah wrote:

On this mountain, the Lord of Armies will prepare for all the peoples a feast of choice meat, a feast with aged wine, prime cuts of choice meat, fine vintage wine. On this mountain he will destroy the burial shroud, the shroud over all the peoples, the sheet covering all the nations; he will destroy death forever. The Lord God will wipe away the tears from every face and remove his people's disgrace from the whole earth, for the Lord has spoken.
(Isaiah 25: 6-8, CSB)

v.9- This is the fourth beatitude ("Blessing") out of seven in the Revelation. So far we have seen this in 1:3, 14:13, and 16:15).

v. 10- John falls down before the angel and worships him. He is most likely overcome by awe and wonder. But the angel rebukes John for doing this.

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Revelation Chapter 19, Part 2

Vocabulary

- v. 12 διαδημα- Diadems/ jewels as befitting a King (“bring forth the royal diadem and crown Him Lord of All”).
- v. 13 βεβαμμενον- perfect passive participle of βαπτω (from whence we get the word “baptize”) – in this case meaning “to dip” (in blood)
- v. 15. ρομφαία – Sword. In Revelation this refers to the Word of God.

Text

In this section Jesus conquers the First Beast and all of the unbelievers who are thrown into a lake of fire. He returns in glory. This is the THIRD time that we have heard of the Last Day.

- v. 11 – White Horse- ridden by Jesus as He returns
- v. 11- Faithful and True- Jesus is the only One who lived who is truly “Faithful and true” as He is without sin.
- v. 11- ...he judges and makes war (against all evil). This is the first part of our hope in redemption. Unbelievers who heckled, persecuted, and murdered Christians all meet a horrific future.
- v. 12 – Eyes of flame/fire (c.f. 1:13)
- v. 12 – Name known only to himself: Jesus, our brother, flesh-and-blood God will soon reveal Himself to the world that He comes to judge.
- v. 13- Sprinkled in blood- The entirety of Jesus’ earthly ministry, especially the Cross.
- v. 13- The “Word of God”- c.f. John 1:1; John 1:14
- v. 14 – The armies (hosts, Hebrew “Sabaoth”) Accompany Jesus as He comes, just as He prophesied in the Gospels.
- v. 15- Sharp, two-edged sword always refers to the Word of God. C.. Hebrews 4:12

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v. 15 “Strike the nations.” God’s Word speaks law and condemnation to all who reject Him or live their lives against Him.

v. 15- Winepress—“Squishing” the blood out of all unbelievers. A reference to judgment.

v.16- King of Kings/ Lord of Lords – This is Jesus!

v. 16 Written on his thigh. C.f. Genesis 32:25 when Jacob’s thigh is dislocated after he wrestles with the angel. His name is changed to “Ish Ra El” meaning “Man conquers God.” The only man who truly conquers God (’s wrath) is Ish Ra El reduced to one, Jesus Christ.

Excursus on thigh, Circumcision

vv. 17-18 – Birds eating flesh—think of vultures circling and eating the corpses of dead flesh. This happens while the Saints feast at the True Banquet of the wedding feast. It conveys judgment.

v. 19-20 – The fate of both of the beasts is made clear. They are thrown into the lake of fire.

v. 21- All evil is decimated; the vultures eat. Reinforcement for v. 17-18.

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EXCURSUS: The Millennium

In eschatology (the study of the end times), there is disagreement among Christians as to what the Millennium (Latin Mille = Thousand Annum: Years, “The Thousand Years”) is and when it takes place. The Thousand years are discussed in Revelation Chapter 20 vs. 2, 5, 6, and 7. Some take it literally, some apply it to the time of the Church. It is important to understand this prior to studying chapter 20, as one’s approach necessarily depends on one’s position on this.

Early Traditions and Understandings.

From :

Louis A. Brighton, *Concordia Commentary: Revelation*. Jonathan F. Grothe, General Editor. (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1999).

In the early Church a premillennial interpretation was seemingly prevalent, partly due to the influence of the church father Papias who may have known John. According to Eusebius (ca.260-340) Papias (ca. 60-130) thought that after the resurrection of the dead there would be a millennium at which time “the kingdom of Christ will be set up in material form on this very earth. Eusebius says that this belief came “through unwritten tradition” about “mystical things” and “through a misunderstanding of the apostolic accounts, not perceiving that the things said by them were spoken mystically in figures. For he appears to have been of very limited understanding...But it was due to him that so many of the Church Fathers after him adopted a like opinion.” P. 536.

Justin Martyr (100-165) expressed the belief that after the resurrection of the dead Christians, the millennium would then commence. After the thousand years there would be the general resurrection of all the dead and the judgment. He based his views on Isaiah 65 and Revelation 20. (536-537)

Tyconius (d. 400), wrote a commentary on Revelation that is lost to us today. However from excerpts of other writings his thoughts can be reconstructed. He rejected premillennialism and held that the millennium was the time between Jesus’ ascension and His return in Glory on the Last Day. He also held that the first resurrection was spiritual, not physical like the second one. (537)

Augustine (354-430) duplicates Tyconius’ position in his tome *The City of God*. Jerome (342-420) was at first a premillennialist however he abandoned this position for Augustine’s position after studying his work. (537).

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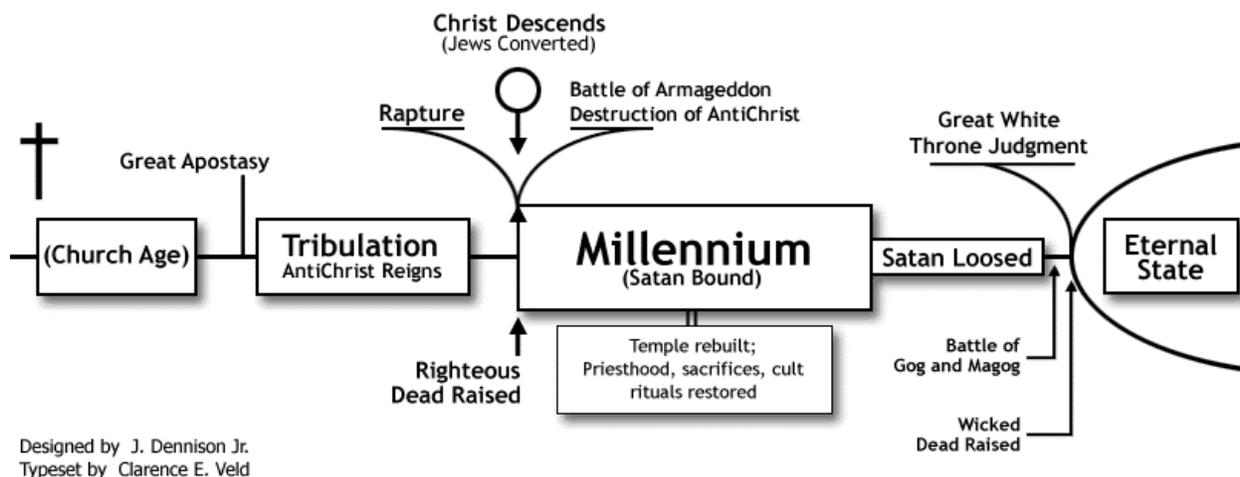


It was not until the Reformation in the sixteenth century that premillennialism began to become popular and take its place alongside of the amillennialism of Augustine. Luther, who was an Augustinian monk, opposed the reintroduction of premillennialism. (538).

In the 18th Century both in England and America, a “post-millennial” view became popular among preachers such as Jonathan Edwards, Johannes Albrecht Bengel, etc... Where there would be a time of prosperity on earth for Christians. This also influenced the theology of John Wesley, though he did not accept it but thought it worthy of consideration. (539).

Views Summarized

Premillennialism: The “Pre” infers that Christians will be removed from earth before the Millennial Kingdom is established by Jesus.



Modern-day Premillennialism holds (among other things):

- The Church will be removed from earth (“First Resurrection”/ Rapture- NOT THE LAST DAY)
 - ✓ Before the Tribulation (“Pre-Tribulation-Premillennialists”)
 - ✓ During the Tribulation (“Mid-Tribulation-Premillennialists”)
 - ✓ After the Tribulation (“Post-Tribulation-Premillennialists”)
- The Millennium will be a literal 1,000 year reign of Jesus on earth.
- The Temple will be rebuilt
- Animal Sacrifices will be restored in the rebuilt Temple
- Satan is loosed at the end of the Millennium.
- Gog and Magog is a battle separate and distinct from Armageddon
- The second resurrection is the resurrection of the wicked.

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- The Great White Throne Judgment takes place on the Last Day.
- There are many “themes and variations on this.”
- Current Day proponents: Schofield Reference Bible, Ryrie Study Bible, Hal Lindsay (*Late, Great Planet Earth*- popular in the 1970s); Tim La Hay (*Left Behind Series*); Much of modern day Evangelicalism; some Pentecostals (however some within Pentecostalism reject this because they don’t hold to “Dispensations” due to their use of Spiritual gifts that Dispensationalism claims have passed.

Amillennialism



Amillennialism

- Has a very simple timeline.
- Holds that the Millennium in Revelation 20 speaks about the time from when Jesus ascended to the time He returns.
- Jesus reigns on earth in the Church through the Forgiveness of sins.
- Does hold to a tribulation period and Armageddon at the end (not pictured on this graphic).
- Holds that the Church is on earth for the Tribulation and Armageddon, that the Tribulation is directed at Christians (Revelation and the Gospels both teach this, as we have seen)
- Holds that “Armageddon” and “God and Magog” are one and the same war.
- Believes in the Loosing of Satan before the Return of Jesus where his power of deception and hatred toward Christians is restored for a little while.
- Believes that the First Resurrection is conversion based on Ephesians 2:1-9. See also Romans 6:1-11

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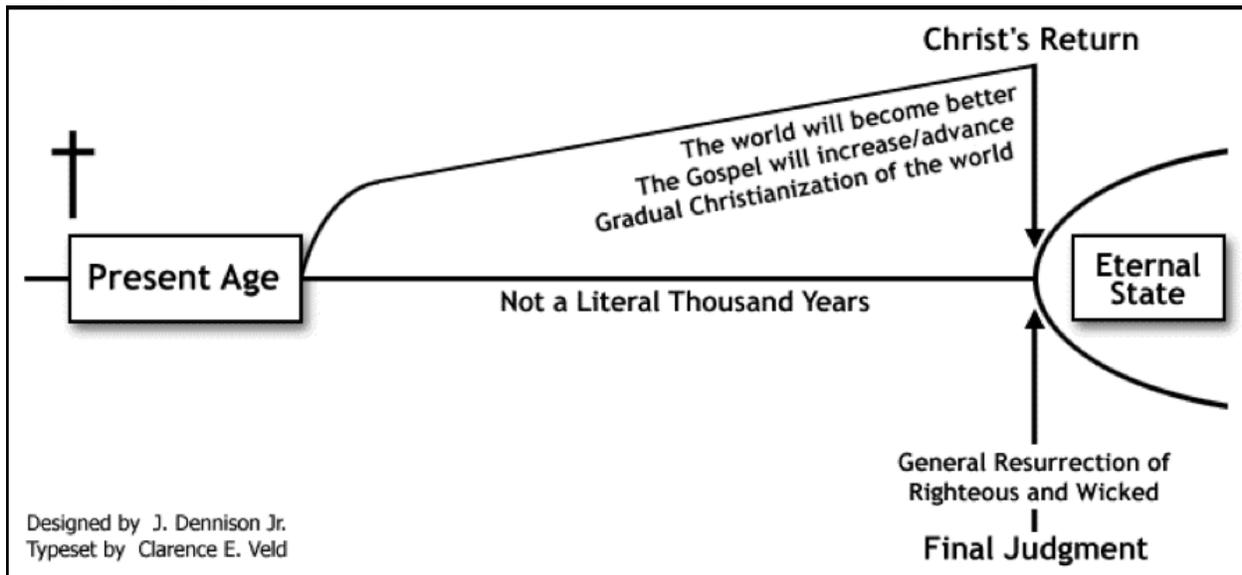
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- Rejects the idea that God would return to animal sacrifices over the sacrifice of His Son Jesus (Hebrews 10: 9-10)
- Is the view supported by the Gospels where no mention of a thousand year Kingdom on Earth is given except in Jesus Himself.
- Holds that 1000 years is 10^3 That is, $10 = 7$ (Completion/ 7 days of Creation) + 3 (the Number for the Triune God) = “perfection”. And then the “perfection” is cubed ($10 \times 10 \times 10$)
- This is the view of Eastern Orthodoxy, Roman Catholicism, Lutherans, Mainline Protestants (except some Baptist and Evangelical churches).
- Amillennialism is not a rejection of End Times prophecies as often depicted by those in other camps.

Postmillennialism



- Uncommon view within Christianity today. Some Reformed and Covenant Churches do teach this position yet.
- Teaches the world will get better and better until Christ returns.
- Unlike Premillennialism and Amillennialism which hold to a Tribulation, Armageddon, etc. Postmillennialism rejects this premise.

Conclusion

We must interpret the “unclear” in the light of the “clear”. In the Olivet Discourse (Mt. 24, Mk. 13, and Luke 21) Jesus never discusses the millennium. The trajectory in all three Gospels is clear: The Church will come under heavy persecution at the end, and then the end will come with Jesus returning in the sky. Revelation 1:7 reminds us, “Every eye will see Him.”

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Revelation Chapter 20

Vocabulary

v.1 αλυσιν μεγαλη – Chain, great. Note that the word for chain is the word for “loose” but with the alpha privative negating it. “not loose”= chain. megalh means “huge” or in this case, “unbreakable.”

v. 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7 χιλια ετη. “Thousand years.”

v.4 των πεπελεκισμενων – beheaded. Does not exclusively mean those who were beheaded, but all who were martyred and, by extension, all who suffer for the sake of Christ.

v.5 Οι λοιποι των νεκρων ουκ εζησαν απξι τελεσθη τα ξιλια ετη. The rest of the dead are those not in Christ, the damned.

v. 7 τον Γογ και Μαγογ – Gog and Magog- names of rulers or regimes from which they come. Refers to the great battle at the end. This is the same battle as Armageddon, but presented in a much more cruel and vigorous way.

v. 12 τουσ μεγαλους και τουσ μικρους – the Great and the small, emphasizing the totality of the resurrection and forthcoming judgment. All will rise, big or small, believer or unbeliever, holy or unrighteous.

Text

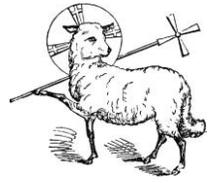
v.1- Angel coming down out of heaven, having the key of the abyss and a great chain in his hand. This is a holy angel as it comes from heaven. The abyss is hell, the great chain is for the binding of Satan.

v. 2 This angels seizes the dragon who is called: 1. The old serpent (from the Garden of Eden), 2. The devil (meaning “slanderer”) and 3. Satan- (meaning the adversary). This refers to the binding of Satan. Satan is sealed in the abyss for nearly a thousand years, chained and bound. However, as this text implies, he will be released from the abyss and from the great chain that binds him for a short time where he will *directly* attack the world, and in particular, the Church. This is synonymous with the Great Tribulation. Remember, the Scriptures *never* promise that the Church will escape the Great Tribulation; The entire focus of the Great Tribulation is on the Bride of Christ, the Church.

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Excursus: The binding of Satan refers to his power to deceive and hurt the church. He was bound so that the Church of Christ could flourish. Because he has been imprisoned he cannot directly hurt the church. So he has those who serve him do his evil bidding: First, the two beasts- Government and False Religion; and Second, his demons. Satan was bound at the Cross. The loosing of Satan is sometimes called “the Little season.” We believe that this is a literal period of time at the end immediately before Jesus returns to judge the world.

v.2 – The thousand years. This has been the source of much controversy within Christianity, “the Millennium” as discussed in the previous two classes. Some take it literally, others symbolically, others with both. What this text indicates cyclically is that the Millennium refers to the time of the Church, that is, the same time referred to in other places as the 3 and ½ years, the 1290 days, and other references that span from Jesus’ incarnation in Bethlehem to the time that he returns.

This was the view of the Jewish rabbis. In both the *Book of Jubilees* speak of the time when Messiah comes to Bethlehem until he returns 1000 years later.

In 2 Enoch, written in 32 BC in Alexandria, the author speaks of all time occupying 7,000 years, with the first six being the time leading up to Messiah and then the last 1000 years being the period of time after Messiah came.

In 1 Enoch 10:4ff God commands the archangel Raphael to bind Azariel (Satan) and cast him into the prison of darkness so the message of Messiah could be proclaimed.

The number 1000 appears several times in the NT: 2 Peter 3:8 “Dear friends, do not overlook this one fact: With the Lord one day is like a thousand years, and a thousand years is like a day...” Psalm 90:4 “For in your sight a thousand years are like yesterday that passes by, like a few hours of the night.” Psalm 50:10 “For every animal of the forest is mine, the cattle on a thousand hills.” None of these texts hold 1000 years in a strictly literal sense. The ancients did not hold to a 1,000 year reign *after Messiah came a first time*. While not Biblically authoritative, such understanding cannot be simply dismissed as modern dispensationalism does.

v.3 Refers to the binding of Satan, specifically to his ability to deceive the nations.

v.4 Thrones and judgment are given to Christians. We reign with Christ in the forgiveness of sins. This also requires judgment. The thousand years are for the entire time that the Church exists on earth as well as in heaven.

v. 4 Those beheaded. This refers to martyrdom. After about 65AD Rome abandoned crucifixion and utilized beheading as the chief form of execution. However, Christians died for the Lord in many ways—crucifixion (Peter), sawing in half (James), thrown to the lions (early Church),

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burned alive (Polycarp), and modern day martyrdom: Guns, bombs, beheadings (Muslim Countries), burning alive (Muslim countries), Drowning (Muslim Countries), beatings, etc... Beheading is one means of execution and martyrdom, but here includes all ways. Also, one does not have to physically die to be tortured for his/her faith. This also includes Christians who were not killed on the basis of the Gospels and other sections of the Revelation.

v.5 The rest of the dead: This refers to the heathens. They are not in heaven. They remain in the state of death until the last day. Those who are still alive are dead to God by their own rejection of Him. They are spiritual zombies, even today. And the physically dead are in the ground being kept for judgment and being cast into the eternal lake of fire.

v.5 The first resurrection. This is not a physical resurrection as some teach, but a Spiritual resurrection in Christ. The Bible bears this out:

“And you were dead in your trespasses and sins in which you previously lived according to the ways of this world, according to the ruler of the power of the air, the spirit now working in the disobedient. We too all previously lived among them in our fleshly desires, carrying out the inclinations of our flesh and thoughts, and we were by nature children under wrath as the others were also. But God, who is rich in mercy, because of his great love that he had for us, made us alive with Christ even though we were dead in our trespasses. You are saved by grace! He also raised us up with him and seated us with him in the heavens in Christ Jesus, so that in the coming ages he might display the immeasurable riches of his grace through his kindness to us in Christ Jesus...” (Ephesians 2:1-7)

The word used for “dead” here is νεκρός – “dead as a rotting corpse”. It is the same word used in the Revelation. Stinky dead.

v. 6 – Those who have already been raised with Christ now are blessed. They reign with Christ now for “1000 years” – the time between the First and Second coming of Jesus.

v.6 – Priests of God. Speaks of the priesthood of all believers (we all have the ability to pray, proclaim Christ to the nations, and forgive sins committed against us).

v.6- The Second Death- This refers to the Lake of Fire and Hell.

v. 7- The loosing of Satan. He now assaults the world, especially the Church, directly.

v.8- Immediately upon his release from the great chain and abyss, he goes out to deceive the nations. This leads the world into “Gog and Magog” the dreaded last battle against the Church.

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<u>Common Points</u>	<u>Rev.16:12-21</u>	<u>Rev.19:11-21</u>	<u>Rev.20:7-10</u>
1. The unholy three are active	v. 13	vv. 19-20	vv. 7-10
2. They deceive	v. 14	v. 20	v. 8
3. They use the kings	vv. 12, 14	vv. 18-19	v. 8
4. The whole world is involved	v. 14	vv. 18-19, 21	vv. 8-9
5. The foes are gathered	vv. 14, 16	vv. 17-19	v. 8
6. There is a great battle	v. 14	vv. 19-21	vv. 8-9
7. The great day	v. 14	v. 17	v. 7
8. God's fury is revealed	v. 19	vv. 15, 20-21	vv. 9-10
9. Retribution from heaven	vv. 18-21	vv. 14-15	vv. 9-10
10. The victory is instant	v. 17	vv. 20-21	v. 9
11. There is finality	vv. 19-21	vv. 20-21	vv. 9-10
12. The lake of fire	-----	v. 20	v. 10

v. 8 Gog and Magog – referred to in Ezekiel 37-39. This is the third and last view in which John sees this great battle. See above.

v.8 These two names represent the gathering of all of the nations of the earth for this assault on the People of God.

v. 8 Gog appears in Gen. 10:2 and 1 Chronicles 1:5 as one of the sons of Japeht, the Son of Noah. The historian Josephus identified Magog with the Scythians. In Ezekiel 38-39 Magog symbolizes all of the enemies of God's people in a war where they attempt to destroy the Children of Israel. However, the Lord delivers them as He will us. Eusebius believes that Gog and Magog represent the Roman Empire. Ambrose believes they are the Goths (Germans who invaded Rome). Andreas agrees with Josephus that these people are the Scythians. Augustine states that Gog and Magog symbolized all the nations of the earth which will rise up against the Church in a final campaign, the "last persecution which the holy Church will endure from the whole world".

v.8 The world becomes increasingly hostile and violent toward the Church so as to extinguish any outward evidence of its existence. The governments turn against the Church and outlaw the faith. No more Church buildings, seminaries, Bibles, or tax exemptions. Capital punishment is applied to those who share the Gospel. Many will lose their lives for the sake of the Gospel as never before. This will be a horrible time.

v.8 Their number will be like the sand of the sea. Unnumbered, multitudinous enemies that will go after the Church.

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v.9 This vast army comes up against the encampment of the Lord, that is, His own still on earth, however it is at this point that the Lord intervenes with “Fire” that comes down from heaven and consumes all of the evil.

v. 10 The devil is thrown into the Lake of Fire. While the abyss is hell initially, it is a temporary abode. However the Lake of Fire is hell in its most fierce, eternal way.

v. 10 Jesus says in Matthew 25: “Then he will also say to those on the left, ‘Depart from me, you who are cursed into *the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels*. The Lake of Fire was never intended to be the eternal destiny of humans. However, because of sin, it is precisely the everlasting destiny of the damned.

v.10 Does not allow for the view of some cults and Christians of *annihilationism* (that is, that all evil will simply be snuffed out as if it were no more, with all suffering ended). The text, along with the Gospels are clear that 1. There is a literal hell; 2. Hell is a place of unspeakable torment; 3. Hell is eternal separation from God; and 4. It is eternal—never ending. It is a horrible place and it is very real.

v. 11 The Great White Throne Judgment begins.

v.11 The One seated on it is God, the Father. The Son is with Him who will be the Judge.

v. 11 The Holiness of God is revealed as all earth tries to flee from the terrible gaze of his countenance. They could not escape Him.

v. 12. Dead... great and small. This indicates *absolutely everyone who has ever lived* will stand before the Judgment throne of God. No one escapes it.

v. 12- Books.... Book of Life. The Books are the Books of Works. They convict all. The Book of Life are those who have been Redeemed by Christ and have already been judged worthy by Jesus’ holy life and sacrificial, substitutionary death that they have received by faith.

v.13- The General physical resurrection at the end. Everyone, no matter what has happened to their remains, will be raised and brought back to life.

v. 14- Death and Hades (the Grave) are no more, ever. They are cast into the Lake of Fire along with the Devil, the Beasts, the Demons, and the Damned. Death and the Grave are no more. Some wish they were, as they would prefer death over their eternal punishment.

v.15- Those not in the Book of Life are cast into the Lake of Fire.

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Revelation Chapter 21

Vocabulary

v. 1 Και η θαλασσα ουκ εστιν ετι – and I saw the sea no more. Perhaps referring to the sea in 4:6, 12:18, and 13:1 all of which portray it is a place of chaos, evil, and separation from God due to sin.

v. 3 σκηνωσει – to dwell, to tent, to tabernacle- a pointed reminder of John 1:14 where Jesus “became flesh and σκηνηωσει among us.

Text

Excursus: All of the visions are now complete. The beast, the false prophet, and Satan are all cast into the lake of fire at this point. Now God reveals the New Heavens and the New Earth to His beloved.

v. 1 The first heaven and earth (our present heaven/earth) have passed away. See Isaiah 65:17 and 2 Peter 3:10-13.

v. 1 The sea is no more. See note above in vocabulary.

v. 2. The Holy City- the New Jerusalem- the Bride of the Lamb. This is the Church.

v.3. “God’s dwelling is with people”- See Vocabulary v. 3. No longer separated from God (the sea is gone), God once again dwells and walks in the midst of His people as He did with Adam and Eve. The curse is totally reversed; Eden is restored.

v. 4. All causes of crying are gone. They are a part of the “first things” which have “passed away.”

v. 5 He who sits on the throne. This is the second time that God the Father speaks, in this case, directly to John. His word is creative. As He once declared “(Let there be) Light!” He now declares “(Let there be) NEW!” and so creates the new heavens and earth with a word.

v. 6 He is the Alpha (creator) and the Omega (completer) of creation. The beginning and the end.

v. 6 The water of Life- always the Holy Spirit in the Scriptures.

v.7 Assurance of God’s promise that the faithful will be blessed.

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v. 8. Those who have rejected God and live in unbelief are doomed to the lake of fire, the Second Death. These include (but not exclusively) the cowardly, the unbelieving, the sinners, the abominable, the murders, the sexually immoral, the sorcerers, the idolaters, and the liars.

v. 9 The angel who bore the plagues now comes with good news: “I will show you the Bride of the Lamb.”

v. 10 John is carried away in the Spirit to a great and high mountain and shown the holy city, Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God. This is the fourth and last time that John is said to be carried away in the Spirit (see also 1:10, 4:2, and 17:3). God is showing John a vision.

11-12. The New Jerusalem has the glory of God (δοξάν). Glory means God’s light, His presence, His salvation. He describes the city and its light (glory).

v. 13 Twelve gates (twelve angels/twelve tribes of Israel), three gates on each side.

v. 14- the foundation were the 12 Apostles.

v. 15 Measuring- all measurements equal. It is four-square.

V. 17-20 Describes the precious stones of which the city is made.

v. 21. The gates were each a single pearl. There were twelve. Calls to mind Nicolai’s verse from *Wake, Awake! For Night is Flying*:

*...Of one pearl each shining portal, where, joining with the choir immortal,
We gather round Thy radiant throne. No eye has seen the light, No ear has heard the might
Of Thy glory; Therefore will we eternally sing hymns of praise and joy to Thee.*

v. 22 No need for Sun, for the Lord and the Lamb illuminate the city.

v. 24 Kings will come to its light (Isaiah 60- Epiphany text)

v. 25 There is a wall, but not to defend against any enemies. A sign of God’s gathering and protection. The gates are never shut because there is no more night. (Night is always a symbol of darkness, sin, and death).

v. 27 The wall does keep out all who are not in the Lamb’s book of life who will be cast into the Lake of fire, the Second death.

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Revelation Chapter 22

Vocabulary

v.3 λατρευσουσιν – This verb designates formal and official service within a religious setting, such as an officiant serving before the Altar of the Lord.

v. 7 εν ταχει...ταχυ quick/swift/in haste.

v. 9 ορα μη- literally, See! No!

v.14 στολας theological vestments. Stoles

v.15 κυνες - dogs

v.15 φαρμακοι – Sorcerers, often involving the use of drugs

v. 18 τας πληγας– plagues

v. 20 ερχου- Come!

v. 21 παντων – all who believe the words of this prophecy and pray “Come now, Lord Jesus.”

Text

Introduction: John sees another depiction of the new heaven and earth, this time reminiscent of the Garden of Eden. (The word “Eden” in Hebrew means “pleasure, delight”).

v.1 The one who shows John the river of the water of life and the tree of life is the same angel who has been attending him throughout the vision, one of the seven angels with the seven censers.

v. 1 The river water of life is so pure that it is clear as crystal. The idea of a river is that it is ever flowing, ever available, and living. In the Garden of Eden there are four rivers that stem from the one that waters the Garden.

v. 1 In John 4:10-44 Jesus speaks of the living water which he gives and which, when received, becomes a spring of water which wells up into eternal life.

v. 1 The river of the water of life makes an appearance in Ezekiel 47:1-12.

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v. 1 Refers to the spiritual power of God and of the Lamb that will sustain forever the communal life of God's people with Him in the new heaven and earth.

v.2 The Tree of life first appears in Genesis 2:9. The Scriptures do not reveal exactly what role "the tree of life" would have played if Adam and Eve had not sinned. Most likely it represented the source and sustainer of true life, God the Creator.

v.2 The tree of life is collective; that is, it is a species of tree that serves the purpose of pointing to God as the Creator and sustainer of life.

v. 2 The tree produces "twelve fruits, yielding its fruit according to each month, and the leaves of the tree are for the healing of the nations." God will abundantly furnish all that is necessary for the sustaining of life in the new heaven and earth. "The healing leaves indicate the complete absence of physical and spiritual want" (R. Mounce, *Revelation* p. 387)

v. 3 There will no longer be any curse. The original curse of God upon the earth because of Adam's sin will be supplanted by God's eternal blessing.

v. 3 Now, the throne of God and of the Lamb will be in her, that is, in the city now pictured as Eden, the paradise of God.

v.3 For the first time John sees the Lamb with the father sitting on the throne.

v. 3 The unity of the Father and the Son is stressed further by the singular pronouns whose antecedent is "God and The Lamb" "His [not *their*] slaves will serve *him* [not *them*].

v.4 "And they will see his face, and his name will be on their foreheads" Since the fall no human being had ever seen God face to face. To do so meant death. Of old the promise had been given that God's people "in righteousness" would one day see his "face" and his "likeness" (See Psalm 17:15).

v. 5 "And they will reign forever and ever." A promise that God's people will and in fact do reign with Christ already now during their lives on earth. But only 22:5 says the saints "will reign forever." The reign of the saints on the present earth is temporary, and it continues during the time that God allots for the Church to complete her mission in Christ. But the reign in the new heaven and the new earth will never end.

Note: This is the end of the actual unfolding of the Visions. Verses 6-21 form the EPILOGUE that Jesus gives to John.

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EPILOGUE (22:6-21)

v.6 Speaker is an angel, most likely the same one.

v. 6 “These words” (the words of the Prophecy of the Revelation) “are faithful and true.”

v.6 These statements that God is righteous and true declare that there *is* an absolute truth, a truth that is righteous and so never changes, a truth that is faithful in its intent. God is the source of this truth and the Lord Christ is the faithful witness to it.

v.6 Here these words are an explicit affirmation of the entire prophetic message of Revelation. And like other affirmations these words also apply to all of Scripture, with Revelation, the final book of the canon, serving as the amen to the entire word of God.

v.7 An urgent interruption from Jesus. Behold I AM coming quickly. The Lord Jesus Himself is speaking and not an angel. It is something applicable only to Himself—the second coming.

v.8-9 Once again, as in the prologue, John identifies himself as the human writer of the Revelation, but now with the added words that he was the one who heard and saw these things.

v.9 When John hears these things he falls down and worships the angel. This is the second time that he does this (see 19:10). This is likely due to him being overwhelmed with the vision given to him. The angel commands him not to do so in very stern words! Also, here we see that angels are created beings, “...I am a fellow slave of yours and of your brothers...”

v.10-11 Instruction for the present moment.

In Daniel 8:26 the prophet is commanded, for the vision is about the distant future. But here, just the opposite is the case: “Do NOT seal the vision BECAUSE THE TIME IS NEAR. The end time is to arrive immediately for John.

So near is the fulfillment that the angel tells John people will have little time to change their manner of life.

The possibility is still present right now for change of status before God- from unrighteous and filthy to righteous and holy- but *now* is the time, not tomorrow!

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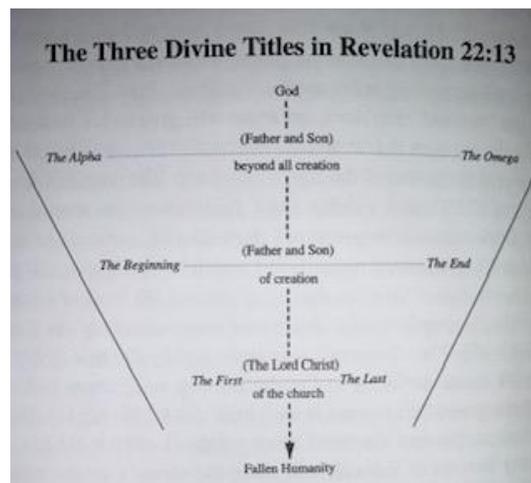
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v. 12-13 A Promise from Christ- Again Jesus says He is coming quickly. He will reward each according to his work. While the Lord Christ in judgment will render to each unbeliever that person's reward according to his works of evil, here in Revelation Jesus will give to his faithful followers salvation. Their works demonstrate that by his grace and power of the Spirit they keep "the words of the prophecy".

Note Christ calls it "my reward" not *their* reward. It is the reward which Christ himself earned, and which he freely gives to all believers by grace. The reward itself is the gift of eternal life in God's holy presence, earned for God's people by the death and resurrection of the Lamb of God. This reward is represented by the "Tree of Life."

v. 13 Three Divine Titles



V,14-15 Beatitude: The seventh and last beatitude (blessing) is announced: "Blessed are those who wash their robes, so that their authority shall be over the tree of life."

v.16 – This is the only time in the entire NT that the Lord uses his personal name to identify Himself!

v.17 "Come"-

v. 18-19 Warning about adding to or taking away from this prophecy. This applies to the entire Bible and not just to the Revelation. Revelation is the last book of the Bible, it is God's Word.

v.20-21 The last word of the Lord Jesus, "Yes I am coming quickly." It is a promise.

v. 21 John's response: "Amen, Come now, Lord Jesus!" Concludes with a benediction: "The grace of the Lord Jesus be with you all."