

Glossary

Abomination of Desolation: When the Antichrist sits down in the rebuilt Jewish Temple and declares himself to be God, the great tribulation of 42 months will then begin (the second half of Tribulation). At the occurrence of this event, the Jews living in Israel are commanded to flee into the wilderness. All tribulation saints will know, from that day on, they must now wait 1260 days before the Lord returns.

Agnostic: Someone not knowing or believing that it is impossible to know, whether God exists.

Amillennialism: The belief that there will be no literal 1000 year reign of Christ. Thus Revelation 20 is taken symbolically, not literally, by adherents of this view. Amillennialists generally believe that Israel has been permanently set aside for all time and that God's current plan of salvation involves only the Church.

Anti Semitism: Is the strong dislike or cruel and unfair treatment of Jewish people.

Antichrist: Often described as the evilest man that will ever live. He will arrive on the world scene and appear to be the world's savior, but everyone on earth will soon learn his real mission will be one of destruction (1 John 2:18; Rev. 13:1-8).

Apostasy, The: During the end times the Bible predicts a falling away or departure from the faith. Because we have experienced a number of generations where people have rebelled against God, the one that takes place during the tribulation will likely surpass prior apostasies. The Greek word apostasy was originally used to describe a revolt staged by a military commander (2 Thess. 2:3; Matt. 24:11-13).

Armageddon: Armageddon comes from the Hebrew word meaning "the Mount of Megiddo". This ancient fortress is located in northern Israel, across the Plain of Esdraelon from Nazareth. Armageddon will be the gathering place for the final great battle, which bears its name (Rev. 16:16).

Church Age: The church age began on the day of Pentecost and will end at the rapture of the church

before the beginning of the tribulation. Many dispensationalists believe the Church is the reason why there is a gap between Daniel's 69th and 70th week (Dan. 9:24-27).

Damascus: The city of Damascus has been around for thousands of years and it never has been destroyed in battle. The Prophet Isaiah predicted that someday this city would be destroyed.

Isaiah 17:1 "The burden of Damascus. Behold, Damascus is taken away from being a city, and it shall be a ruinous heap".

Dispensationalism: The view that believes God's dealings with men have proceeded through well defined time periods, in each of which God reveals a particular purpose to be accomplished in that period, to which men respond in faith or unbelief.

Dragon: The dragon is the symbolic name given to represent the devil. Satan is also described as "that old serpent."

Eastern Gate: The Eastern Gate has a very important prophetic role to play. It is the only Gate that is currently blocked. The book of Ezekiel foretold that it would be shut and the only one who will open it will be the "Prince" Jesus.

Eschatology: The study of things that relate to the end times. That which relates to the final events in the history of mankind. A big word to impress your friends with.

False Church: During the first part of the tribulation the Antichrist's rise to power will be aided by a religious system which will include most if not all of the world's major religions. During the second half of the tribulation the Antichrist will destroy this false church. The book of Revelation describes the false churches as the great whore Rev. 17:1-5.

False Prophet: He will administrate the working of the one world church. The False Prophet's primary mission will be to cause the world to worship the Antichrist (Rev. 13:11-14).

Gog and Magog: Most prophetic scholars agree that Gog and Magog were the people that lived in the lands which are now modern Russia. Someday Russia and a horde of Middle East countries will launch a surprise attack against Israel. All but one

sixth of the Gog army will be destroyed upon the mountains of Israel (see Ezekiel chapters 38 and 39).

Historicism: Historicism relates the timing of the current church age through the day/year theory. The day/year theory takes numbers such as the 2300 days (Dan 8:14), and 1290 days (Dan. 12:11), and declares them to be years. They also relate the seal, trumpet, and bowl judgments to major historical events that have occurred throughout the past 2000 years. For example, the fifth seal (in Rev. chapter 6), may be identified as the martyrdom under Roman Emperor Diocletian (284-304 A.D.). The Pope is commonly looked at as being the Antichrist. Historicism is the view held by the Mormons, the Seventh day Adventists, and the Jehovah Witnesses.

Jacob's Trouble: Called by Jeremiah as "the time of Jacob's trouble" and by Daniel as "the time of distress such as never before occurred", this event will take place during the 3-1/2 year reign of Antichrist. The time of Jacob's trouble will be a time of great suffering on earth. The suffering will be brought on by the actions of the Antichrist and by the wrath of God being poured out on a sinful world (Jeremiah 30:7).

Judgment, Great White Throne: This judgment is predominately for the unsaved. The dead, small and great, stand before God (Rev. 20:12). It is here where all those who did not accept Jesus Christ and the gift he purchased for them with his death, burial and resurrection will stand before God, who will judge them "according to their works". After the millennium the "dead" will be resurrected to appear at this judgment. It is here where all those that are not found written in the book of life are cast into the lake of fire (Rev 20:11-15).

Judgment Seat of Christ: The Judgment seat of Christ is often called the BEMA seat (the Greek word translated "judgment seat" in 2 Cor. 5:10). In early times referred to a raised platform where speeches were given, and crowns were awarded to the winners of athletic contests. The bema of Christ, is not a judgment that determines salvation, but is for Christians only. At this judgment Christ who died to save us will stand to judge us.

The terms of this judgment can be found (in 1 Cor. 3:9-15), indicating that "every man's work shall be

made manifest: for the day shall declare it, because it shall be revealed by fire.

This is where Christians are rewarded for the works they do for Christ while they are in the body (living), after they were saved by Grace. (You must be saved by Christ before "ANY" of your works can be rewarded). Works done and then are made known to man by boasting will not pass the test of fire and will be burned up. You'll receive no awards for them. These good works are those required from a born again Christian which is different than those explained under Works through good living.

Kings of the East: And the 6th angel poured out his vial upon the great river Euphrates; and the water thereof was dried up, that the way of the kings of the east might be prepared. I believe the kings of the east will likely be or will largely include the nation of China (see Rev. 16:12).

Lake of Fire: The lake of fire is the final abode for all the lost, the Devil and all of his coworkers. Everyone that's condemned to this fiery inferno will suffer unrelenting eternal torment (Rev. 20:15).

Little Horn: Daniel the prophet described seeing a little horn rising out from among ten other horns. The little horn is clearly another representation of the Antichrist because Daniel's accounting aligns with the apostle John's Revelation 13 description of the Antichrist (Dan 7:7-8); Dan 7:19 and verse 25).

Mark of the Beast: "He causeth all, both small and great, rich and poor, free and bond, to receive a mark in their right hand, or in their foreheads: And that no man might buy or sell, save he that had the mark, or the name of the beast, or the number of his name" (Rev. 13:16-18). The Mark of the Beast will likely be a microchip implant that operates like an ATM or credit card. Remember, everyone who receives the Mark of the Beast will be cast into hell, so don't take the mark!

Millennium: After the tribulation, Jesus Christ will set up an earthly Kingdom where he will rule for one thousand years (Rev. 20:3-4).

Pentecost: The Christian Pentecost celebrates the sending of the Holy Spirit to the Apostles. In the Jewish religion it is a holy day that comes 50 days

after Passover, or (in the Christian religion), a holy day that is the 7th Sunday after Easter. The Jewish Pentecost celebrates the harvest of the first fruits and the gift of the Torah (the holy book of the Jews), to Moses at Sinai.

Preterism: The belief that nearly all prophetic events have already occurred. The year 70 A.D. is a popular date where Preterists claims that the book of Revelation was fulfilled. Under Preterism you are basically left to just wait for Jesus to return.

Rapture: At an unknown hour and day the Lord Jesus will descent from heaven, while remaining in the air, he will snatch his Bride, the Church, out from among this sinful world. Christ then takes the Church to heaven for the 7 year wedding feast. The earthly reason for the removal of the Church is to make way for the rise of Antichrist and to fulfill Daniel's final 70th week (Matt. 25:13; 1 Thess. 4:16; 1 Cor. 15:51-54).

Red Heifer: The Bible predicts that the Jewish Temple will be rebuilt in Jerusalem. Ever since the 70 A.D. destruction, one major roadblock barring the reconstruction of the Temple is the fact that the Temple Mount area has been defiled with warfare. In order to cleanse the Tribulation Temple Mount for worship, the Jews will need the ashes of a pure red heifer. Numbers chapter 19 describes how King Solomon cleansed the first Temple with the ashes of a specially prepared red heifer (Num. 19:2-9).

Replacementism: Replacement theology is the view that Israel, having failed God, has been replaced by the Church around (70 A.D.). The Church is now seen as spiritual Israel and spiritual Jerusalem. This teaching claims that all the promises and blessings, in fact Israel's entire inheritance, now belongs to the Church. However, all is not lost for Israel; it gets to keep all the curses.

Restrainer, The: The presence of the Holy Spirit on earth currently is what restrains the forces of evil. The Holy Spirit resides in the lives of all believers, which is why Christians are called the "salt of the earth" (Matt. 5:13).

Rosh Hashanah: The Jewish festival of the civil New Year celebrated on the first and second days of the month Tishri. During this holiday trumpets

are blown as a call for repentance. Many Christians look towards Rosh Hashanah as a possible time for the rapture (Num. 10:1-10).

Second Coming: This is the time when Jesus Christ will return, defeat the Antichrist, and set up his 1000 year Kingdom on earth. The second coming is not the Rapture. The Rapture takes place prior to the second coming. Another important difference between the two is that the Rapture will occur at an unknown time which the second coming will take place 42 months after the Antichrist declares himself to be God (Rev. 13:5; Matt. 25:13).

Shekinah: The visible majesty of the Divine Presence, especially when resting or dwelling between the cherubim on the mercy seat, in the Tabernacle, or in the Temple of Solomon. A term used in the Targums and by the later Jews, and adopted by Christians.

Tribulation: A period of time lasting 7 years, the first 3-1/2 years will be much more peaceful as the Antichrist rises to power. The second 3-1/2 years will bring the greatest suffering in human history as the wrath of God and the Antichrist is poured out on earth (Dan. 9:27; Matt. 24:21).

Two Witnesses: During the tribulation, two men will prophesy in the streets of Jerusalem. These two witnesses of God will have the power to prevent it from raining on the earth, to call fire down from heaven, to turn bodies of water into blood, and to command a number of other plagues. After they preach for 42 months, the Antichrist will be allowed to kill them. Three and a half days later they will be resurrected and Raptured up to heaven. Some scholars say the two men could either be Elijah and Enoch; or Moses and Elijah (Rev. 11:3-13; Malachi 4:5-6).

Wrath of God, The: The Wrath of God is poured out on man during the tribulation. The people of earth will come under God's wrath because they refuse to turn from their wicked ways. Those that receive the Antichrist's Mark will not only come under God's Wrath, but will be lost forever (1 Thess. 1:10; 1 Thess. 5:9; Rev. 14:9-11).

10 Nation Confederation - Toes; Horns; Kings: Out of the area that once was the Roman Empire, ten leaders will arise. The only purpose these 10 leaders will have, is to give their power to the

Antichrist (Dan. 2:41-44; Dan. 7:20; Rev. 17:12; Rev. 17:17).

144,000 Jewish Saints: Before the Antichrist administers his mark, God will send an angel to mark the foreheads of 144,000 Jews, 12,000 from each of the 12 tribes (Jacob's 12 sons). The 144,000 sealed Jews will be commissioned to be witnesses during the tribulation (Rev. 7:2-8).

200 Million Man Army, The: During the latter part of the tribulation an army of 200 million strong, will move into the Middle East, crossing over the dried up Euphrates river. This army, guided by four demonic angels, will kill one third of mankind (Rev. 9:14-16; Rev. 16:12).

70th Week: The final seven years of Gentile domination of the nation of Israel and the city of Jerusalem; the last week of the 70 weeks of years (490 years), of Daniel's prophecy which will begin after the long interval (Dan 9:27).

Words and Phrases Used in Revelation

144,000 »» Chapters 7 and 14 of Revelation refer to a group of 144,000 “servants of God” (7:3) who represent “every tribe of the sons of Israel” (7:4-8). They are sealed with the name of God/the Lamb on their foreheads—a sign of divine acceptance and deliverance (7:3-4; 14:1). They have been redeemed: “from the earth” (14:3) and “from mankind as firstfruits for God and the Lamb” (14:4). They are people of high integrity, spoken of as being blameless, honest, and pure (14:4-5). They follow the Lamb (14:1, 4) and are uniquely able to learn “a new song” that is sung before the throne (14:3).

»» “Though the Bible distinguishes true Israelites from those who have forsaken their heritage, the term ‘Israel’ is never used outside the descendants of Jacob himself. The remnant of Israel as portrayed here in the book of Revelation should not therefore be taken as meaning the church. It would be rather ridiculous to carry the typology of Israel representing the church to the extent of dividing them up into twelve tribes as was done

here, if it was the intent of the writer to describe the church” (Walvoord 143).

the altar »» Two altars are mentioned in Revelation. The altar located in the Jerusalem temple is referred to only once (11:1). All other references describe an altar located near God’s throne (8:1, 3) in a heavenly temple. Like the altar of incense described in Exodus 30:1-10, it is made of gold (8:3; 9:13) and has horns (9:13).

The altar is a place where incense is burned (8:3). The incense is, or at least bears relation to, “the prayers of [all] the saints” (8:3; cf. 5:8). Oversight of the altar’s fire appears to be the province of angels, or possibly of a single angel (14:18; comp. 8:5). An angel throws fire from the altar to the earth, leading to the display of nature’s fury (8:5).

The altar seems to have a special connection with those martyred for their belief in God and Christ. It affirms the fact that they are vindicated through divine judgment (16:5-7). Furthermore, the souls of the (Tribulation?) martyrs are pictured as being under the altar (6:9); indeed, the altar may be a place of rest (6:11).

A voice is said to emanate from the altar area on three occasions: The first case plainly describes the voice as that of the martyrs crying out for justice (6:9-10). This description probably provides the key to interpreting the other two instances of speech proceeding from the altar, which are more cryptic. In the second case, a voice from the altar’s horns calls on an angel to launch the sixth trumpet judgment (9:13). Finally, the altar is said to speak, affirming God’s judgment on those who have slain the saints and prophets (16:5-7).

»» “There seems . . . to be no altar in the New Jerusalem, just as there is no temple, for the Lamb is enthroned, and there is no need for a place of sacrifice” (Ryken, Wilhoit, and Longman 21).

angel[s] of the . . . church[es] »» The angels of the churches are first mentioned in 1:20. Thereafter each church’s “angel” is named as the addressee of the letters that John is instructed to write (2:1; 2:8; 2:12; 2:18; 3:1; 3:7; 3:14).

»» “Whether the ‘angel’ of each church refers to a heavenly being, like a guardian angel, or to an earthly messenger (Gr. angelos simply means

messenger), like a pastor or bishop, has been disputed. In each of the letters that follow, the angel of each church is addressed as the recipient. Since these angels no doubt are expected to pass along to the churches the information communicated to them by Christ, many commentators feel they must be visible, human messengers in contact with the congregations” (Gregg 61-62).

Babylon / Babylon the great / Babylon the great city »» Revelation applies the name “Babylon” to an entity that it describes both as a city (e.g., 18:10; 18:21) and a prostitute (e.g., 17:5). As a city Babylon is noted for her greatness (16:19; 17:18; 18:2; 18:10; 18:16; 18:18-19; 18:21) and her “dominion over the kings of the earth” (17:18). As a prostitute she is connected with people groups worldwide (17:15; cf. 17:1). Indeed, she is said to have liaised with all nations in her immorality (14:8; 17:2; 18:3; cf. 18:23). Furthermore, Babylon has a special relationship with the beast (17:3), such that the prostitute-city’s mystery is one with that of the beast (17:7).

Babylon’s imminent destruction is announced when she is first named (14:8). The city is not only a hub of economic activity (18:3; 18:11-19; 18:23), but an icon of luxurious living (18:3; 18:7; 18:9; 18:11-19; cf. 17:4). She is guilty of a great number of sins (18:4-5) and, not surprisingly, receives swift retributive justice for them (18:6ff, esp. vv. 10, 19). Indeed, the city is named as the object of God’s wrath (16:17-21, esp. v. 19). The prostitute is referred to as the source of the earth’s abominations (17:5). In addition, she is responsible for martyring the saints (17:6; 18:24).

Ironically, Babylon’s destruction comes at the hand of the beast with which she was once in alliance. This relationship apparently deteriorates, and the beast, with help from ten kings, turns on and destroys her (17:16-17). This destruction is carried out at God’s decree (17:17) and is final (18:20-24). Her demise is mourned by the earth’s kings, merchants, and seamen (18:9-19). Nevertheless, the martyred are vindicated by her judgment and the saints lift up a hymn of praise when she succumbs to God’s judgment (18:20).

»» “Babylon was the great enemy of Israel in Old Testament times (Isa. 21:9; Jer. 50:2; 51:8) and

here stands for the capital city of the final apostate civilization, the symbol of human society organized politically, economically, and religiously in opposition to and defiance of God” (Ladd, Commentary 194).

the beast »» The Greek word rendered “beast” in Revelation is **therion**. This word denotes an animal—especially a wild animal—and, by extension, a savage being. Revelation uses therion in its natural sense once (6:8). All 30 or so other uses of the word are figurative, referring to one or another agent empowered by Satan to oppose God, the Lamb, and the saints.

Most occurrences of therion are found in chapters 13 and 17, which refer to “a beast rising out of the sea” (13:1), “another beast rising out of the earth” (13:11), and “a scarlet beast that [. . .] had seven heads and ten horns” (17:3). The second of these beasts, which is described in detail in 13:11-18, is apparently the same as the false prophet (comp. 13:11-14; 19:20).

The key facts about the beast are as follows:

- He derives power from the dragon, Satan (13:2).
- He exerts worldwide authority for forty-two months (13:3-5, 7; 17:8-13).
- He receives near universal admiration and worship through the deceptive influence of the false prophet (13:3-4, 8, 11-14).
- Worship of the beast is symbolized by possession of a mark on the forehead or right hand (13:16-18).
- He and his followers are subject to the wrath of God (16:1-2, 10).
- He blasphemes God and makes war on the saints, who overcome and refuse to worship him (13:6-7; 15:2ff; 20:4).
- He is ultimately consigned to the lake of fire along with the dragon, the false prophet, and their followers (14:9-11; 19:19-20; 20:10).

Commentators almost universally recognize a connection between the beast and the Roman Empire

blessed is / blessed are »» The pronouncement of blessedness (*makários*) occurs nine times in Revelation (1:3 [2x]; 14:13 [2x]; 16:15; 19:9; 20:6; 22:7; 22:14). It is conferred on six groups of people

that surely overlap to a significant (if not total) extent. Blessed are those who read, hear, and obey John's prophecy (1:3; 22:7); who maintain fidelity to Christ to the point of death (14:13); who are ready for the coming of Christ (16:15); who are invited to the marriage supper of the Lamb (19:9); who take part in the first resurrection, escape the second death, and are ushered into the kingdom (20:6); and who are purified and given the right to enter the New Jerusalem (22:14).

book of life / Lamb's book of life / book of life of the Lamb »» The book of life is referred to six times in Revelation. Given its occurrence throughout the book (3:5; 13:8; 17:8; 20:12; 20:15; 21:27), it is one of the elements that ties the whole together. The phrase has Old Testament precedents (e.g., Ps. 69:28 [“the book of the living’]) and is further developed in the New Testament.

According to Davis, the book of life is essentially a register of the names of the righteous. “In the Old Testament . . . the blessed on the list receive their blessings here and now.” By contrast, “[t]he New Testament transforms this balance book into an eternal ledger of heavenly citizenship. Within the classical world, citizenship was not an automatic right, but a strictly protected honor. Citizens were specifically enrolled, and the franchise was strictly limited

In Revelation the book of life is identified with Jesus Christ, the Lamb (13:8; 21:27) and is said to reflect divine predestination (13:8; 17:8). The presence of one's name in the book guarantees entrance into heaven (3:5; 21:27). By contrast, those whose names are not written in the book of life worship the beast (13:8) and ultimately are condemned to the lake of fire (20:12ff).

the bottomless pit »» Four chapters in Revelation make reference to “the bottomless pit” (he ábyssos [9:11; 11:7; 17:8; 20:1, 3]). In addition, one of these chapters refers to “the shaft of the bottomless pit” [9:1; 9:2]).

Ábyssos is used in the LXX to translate the Hebrew *tehom*, which properly denotes the primeval deep (Gen. 1:2), and subsequently is applied to life-threatening troubles (Ps. 71:20; Jon. 2:5). In the New Testament, it occurs only two times outside of Revelation: Luke 8:31 and Romans 10:7. In the first of these references it denotes the abode of evil

spirits; in the second, the abode of the dead—that is, Hades.

The term takes on a more explicit meaning in Revelation. The abyss has a key and is presumably kept locked (9:1). The key is apparently in the possession of an angel (20:1); however, a star fallen from heaven is given the key and opens it (9:2). Fire seems to burn within it, for abundant, dark smoke rises from the shaft when it is opened (9:2). Locusts apparently emanate from it along with the smoke (9:3ff).

The bottomless pit has a king who rules over the locusts; his name is “Destroyer” (9:11). The beast rises from it to attack the two witnesses (11:7) and to wage war against the Lamb (17:8ff). The abyss serves as a prison for the dragon (i.e., Satan) for 1,000 years (20:3, 7) before he is released and then consigned to the lake of fire (Jeremias, “ábyssos [abyss]”; Lewis).

the dragon / the great dragon / a great red dragon »» In chapter 12 John first mentions “a great red dragon” (v. 3). This character is explicitly identified as “that ancient serpent, who is called the devil and Satan” (v. 9; cf. 20:2). The dragon plays a prominent role in chapters 12, 13, and 20, and is mentioned briefly in chapter 16.

The dragon seeks to destroy a newborn child (12:4)—likely a reference to Christ. His purpose is thwarted and, following a defeat by Michael and his angels (12:7), the dragon and his angels are cast down from heaven to earth (12:9). Thereafter he takes up warfare with the woman who bore the child and with the rest of her offspring (12:13-17).

In a successive vision the dragon confers his power on a beast that rises out of the sea (13:2). A second beast, who is possibly to be equated with the false prophet, is said to speak “like a dragon” (13:11). The dragon, the beast, and the false prophet take their place as an evil triumvirate in the chapters that follow (16:13). Both the dragon and the beast are the recipients of human worship (13:4).

As the end times progress, the dragon is shut up in the abyss for a thousand years (20:2) before being released for a brief time. Ultimately, he is consigned to the lake of fire (20:10), joining the beast and the false prophet there (19:19-20).

- eyes . . . like a flame of fire »» 1:14; 2:18; 19:12
- face . . . like the sun »» 1:16; 10:1
- feet . . . like burnished bronze »» 1:15; 2:18

fire and [. . .] sulfur / fire that burns with sulfur

»» Fire and sulfur are combined in the prophecy of the sixth trumpet (9:17, 18) and in references to eternal judgment in the lake of fire (14:10; 19:20; 20:10; 21:8). Smoke is sometimes mentioned along with these two elements (9:17, 18; 14:11).

“In the OT the metaphor of ‘fire and sulphur,’ sometimes together with ‘smoke,’ indicates a fatal judgment (Gen. 19:24, 28; Deut. 29:23; 2 Sam. 22:9; Isa. 34:9-10; Ezek. 38:22)” (Beale and McDonough 1115).

»» Sulfur—traditionally referred to as brimstone—is a “combustible . . . known to most ancient Near Eastern peoples from mineral deposits Once one of these deposits took fire it would melt and run in burning streams down the ravines spreading everywhere suffocating fumes such as come from the ordinary brimstone match. No more realistic figure could be chosen to depict terrible suffering and destruction” (Patch 457).

the first and the last »» This phrase occurs three times in Revelation (1:17; 2:8; 22:13), each referring to Jesus Christ. The title is one that Jehovah attributed to Himself several times in the book of Isaiah (41:4; 44:6; and 48:12). Notably, the LORD used this self-description in passages where He called attention to his uniqueness as Lord of creation (40:12; 48:14), sovereign (40:13), omniscient (40:14), Lord of the nations (40:15ff), majestic (40:21), etc. By attributing the same self-description to Jesus, John is making a strong case for his equality with Jehovah.

flashes of lightning . . . rumblings . . . peals of thunder . . . [earthquake] »» Three physical phenomena—lightning, rumbling, and thunder—appear together four times in Revelation (4:5; 8:5; 11:19; 16:18). A fourth phenomenon—an earthquake—is combined with the other three in 8:5; 11:19; and 16:18. Two of the scenes also contain a reference to hail (11:19; 16:18, 21).

The phenomena are clearly associated with the throne/temple area (8:2-5; 11:16, 19; 16:17-18); indeed, they emanate from it (4:4-6). Nevertheless, their influence extends beyond heaven to earth.

This fact is most clearly seen in the seventh bowl, where an unprecedented earthquake and a terrible hailstorm bring great destruction upon humankind (16:17-21).

the four living creatures »» Twenty references to four living creatures occur in chapters 4, 5, 6, 7, 14, 15, and 19—each time in a throne room scene. They dwell in the presence of God and the Lamb (4:6; 5:6; 14:3; etc.). Physically, they are described as being full of eyes (4:6; 4:8) and having six wings (4:8). Each one has a distinctive appearance, whether of a lion, an ox, a man’s face, and an eagle in flight (4:7). They are said to be constantly engaged in proclaiming the holiness of God (4:8). Their description is similar to that of the beings described in Isaiah 6:2-3 and Ezekiel 1:5-11.

The four living creatures are distinct from the mass of angels who also praise the Lamb (5:11ff; 7:11-12). Along with the twenty-four elders, they bow before the Lamb, singing of the worthiness of his sacrifice (5:8ff). They lead in worship of God and the Lamb, evoking a response from the twenty-four elders and the angels (4:9-10). They affirm humans for their worship of God (19:1-4) and the Lamb (5:13-14). They are present when the 144,000 sing a new song (14:2-3), and they join the throng of the redeemed and the angels in worship of God and the Lamb (7:9-12). While their primary function seems to be worship, they are present for the Lamb’s opening of the seals on the scroll (6:1; 6:3; 6:5-6; 6:7) and aid the angels in carrying out God’s wrath (15:7).

»» “The various portraits of the living creatures in Revelation and within the OT (cf. 1 Kings 6:24-28; 2 Chron. 3:13; Ezek. 1:6) argue against a strictly literal understanding of these beings. They likely are heavenly angelic representatives of the created order that continually give praise to God . . .” (Beale and McDonough 1100).

I know your works »» Jesus issues this statement toward the beginning of five of the letters to the churches in chapters 2-3 (2:2; 2:19; 3:1; 3:8; 3:15). Statements of similar import appear in the other two letters: “I know your tribulation and your poverty” (2:9) and “I know where you dwell” (2:13). The thrust of these pronouncements is that Jesus sees each church’s works (good and bad), and that he is aware of the trying circumstances under

which they are called to labor and persevere. His knowledge will ultimately be the basis on which he will reward believers for their deeds.

“Jesus’ first message to each church is: ‘I know your works.’ The churches’ works are sometimes commendable, sometimes requiring censure” (Gregg 63).

“His is a divine knowledge. He knows intimately the works of the churches and the reality of their loyalty to him despite outward appearances” (Johnson, notes on 2:1-7).

in the Spirit »» The phrase *en pneumati* (“in the Spirit,” or more literally, “in Spirit”) occurs four times in Revelation (1:10; 4:2; 17:3; 21:10). Each time it refers to a revelatory vision that John experienced.

»» “The words imply being transported into the world of prophetic visions by the Spirit of God” (Johnson, notes on 1:10).

the kings of the earth/kings on earth »» The kings of the earth are the leaders of the earth-dwellers—that is, those who enter compromising liaisons with the great prostitute (17:2; 18:3; 18:9). In fact, they are subjects in her “dominion” (*basileia* [17:18]) and they weep when she is destroyed (18:9).

The kings of the earth exhibit their rebellion against God by arraying themselves against the Lamb in a great end-time battle (19:19). Though they hold superior status in the world’s eyes, it is clear that Christ rules over them (1:5; cf. 17:14; 19:16). They are subject to the wrath of God and the Lamb no less than the humblest members of humankind (6:12-17, esp. v. 15). They will experience total defeat at the hands of Christ (19:15-21). Given their recalcitrance, the fact that they will “bring their glory” into the New Jerusalem (21:24) can hardly signify their eternal blessedness.

A similar phrase, “the kings of the whole world [*oikoumene*],” occurs in 16:14. Since this phrase also refers to leaders who join in battle against God under demonic influence, it is likely equivalent to “the kings of the earth.”

[the] **Lord God** »» This term occurs eight times in Revelation (1:8; 4:8; 11:17; 15:3; 16:7; 18:8; 21:22;

22:5). It is typically associated with the fact of God’s supreme power.

loud voice / loud voices / mighty voice / voice like thunder »» In the accounts of his visions John repeatedly refers to loud voices, and on a few occasions he likens them to thunder (6:1; 14:2; 19:6). Individual angels are most often the speakers (5:2; 7:2; 10:3; 14:7; 14:9; 14:15; 14:18; 18:2; 19:17). Multitudes in heaven cry out loud several times (5:12; 6:10; 7:10; 11:15; 14:2; 19:1; 19:6). Some of the voices are difficult to identify (8:13; 11:12; 12:10), while in other cases it is one of the four living creatures (6:1), Jesus Christ (1:10) or, implicitly, God (16:1; 16:17; 21:3).

Individual angels and living creatures emit loud voices to announce a variety of eschatological developments, whether as catalyst (e.g., 14:15; 19:17) or narrator (e.g., 14:7; 18:2). The same is true of those few instances where God himself speaks with a loud voice. The multitudes in heaven address God and Christ with loud voices, whether through expressions of praise (5:12; 7:10; 11:15; 19:1) or petitions for justice (6:10).

make war on . . . two witnesses / the woman’s offspring / the saints »» The beast and the dragon are said to make war (*polemos*) on God’s followers in the end times. The objects of these assaults will include the two witnesses (11:7), the rest of the woman’s offspring (12:17), and the saints (13:7). John probably borrowed this military language from Daniel 7:21.

mighty angel / powerful angel »» References to a mighty angel (*angelon ischuron*) occur in 5:2; 10:1; and 18:21.

name / mark / seal . . . on . . . forehead[s] »» The book of Revelation constructs an intriguing contrast between the righteous and the unrighteous by employing imagery related to seals and foreheads. From ancient times, and thus in both the Old and New Testaments, seals have conveyed notions of authority, authenticity, identity, ownership, mystery, worthiness, and preservation (Ryken, Wilhoit, and Longman 766). Furthermore, the Scriptures refer to the forehead most often “as a place where one wears an identifying mark, either literal or figurative. . . . In apocalyptic visions, people’s foreheads receive

marks of identity, either good (sometimes for purposes of protection) or bad . . ." (299).

Revelation 7:3 introduces a group of righteous people—144,000 “servants of God”—who are described as being “sealed [. . .] on their foreheads.” The mark that they bear is said to be “[the Lamb’s] name and his Father’s name” (14:1); this is probably equivalent to the “new name” referred to in 2:17. They appear to be spared certain judgments that befall others (9:4) and are ultimately admitted to the New Jerusalem (22:4). According to Johnson, “the ‘sealed’ are the people of God and . . . their sealing must be related to their salvation as in the comparable figure used by Paul (2Cor 1:22; Eph 1:13; 4:30; cf. 4 Ezra 6:5)” (notes on 7:1-3).

Revelation 13:16-17 introduces a second group of people—apparently the majority—who are said to bear a different kind of mark—the mark of the beast—either on their right hand or their forehead. Wearing the mark of the beast is synonymous with worshiping him (14:9, 11; 20:4). Those who wear it suffer divine judgment, both in the end times (9:4; 16:2) and throughout eternity (14:10-11).

There is reason to believe that these two groups are mutually exclusive. Those who refuse to worship the beast or wear his mark are identified with those who are martyred on account of their testimony. They are ushered into Christ’s millennial kingdom (20:4).

The concept of being sealed in one’s forehead in a way that signifies divine acceptance and deliverance from judgment does not originate in Revelation. Rather, it borrows from Ezekiel 9 (esp. v. 4), where the inhabitants of Jerusalem who lament its spiritual corruption are said to be marked on their foreheads and are spared divine judgment.

the Nicolaitans »» New Testament references to the Nicolaitans occur only in 2:6 and 2:15.

»» “The Nicolaitans were a sect (sometimes associated with Nicolaus, one of the seven original deacons in the church in Jerusalem according to Acts 6:5) that apparently taught that Christians could engage in immoral behavior with impunity” (NET Bible, fn to 2:6).

one like a son of man »» 1:13; 14:14

According to Johnson, “it is quite appropriate for John to use the term Son of Man [in reference to Christ], since in the Gospels that term is most frequently associated with the Messiah’s suffering and the glory of the Second Advent as well as with his right to judge the world (Matt 26:64; John 5:27). Both themes are present in the context of Revelation” (notes on 14:14-16).

the one who conquers »» This phrase occurs eight times in Revelation (2:7; 2:11; 2:17; 2:26; 3:5; 3:12; 3:21; 21:7). Its underlying Greek verb, *nikao*, is common in John’s writings. In Revelation it is associated with persistent fidelity to Christ in the face of opposition (e.g., 2:26; 12:11; 15:2). Conquerors ultimately become heirs of God’s blessings in the New Jerusalem (21:7).

In other of his writings John employs *nikao* to denote victory over the world (John 16:33; 1 John 4:4; 5:4), the evil one (1 John 2:13, 14), and the spirits that oppose Christ and propagate deceit (1 John 4:4). John’s teachings describe spiritual conquest in the following terms:

- peace in the midst of suffering (John 16:33)
- knowledge of God (1 John 2:13, 14)
- spiritual strength (1 John 2:14)
- ability to discern truth from falsehood (1 John 4:1-4)
- belief in Jesus as the Son of God (1 John 5:4-5)

»» “[E]ach letter [in chaps. 2-3] contains a victor’s promise of reward. These promises are often the most metaphorical and symbolic portions of the letters and thus in some cases present interpretative difficulties. Each is eschatological and is correlated with the last two chapters of the book Probably we are to understand the multiple promises as different facets that combine to make up one great promise to believers, that wherever Christ is, there will the overcomers be. Who are the ‘overcomers’? Certainly it is those who are fully loyal to Christ as his true disciples, those who are identified with him in his suffering and death (1 John 5:4-5)” (Johnson, notes on 2:1-7).

right hand »» The image of the right hand is used eight times in Revelation—in reference to Jesus (1:16; 1:17; 1:20; 2:1), God (5:1; 5:7), angels (10:5), and humans (13:16).

»» “Two domains of imagery emerge. The first is one of prominence or favored position. . . . [T]o have extended the right hand was an indication of specification and favor (Gal 2:9; Rev 1:17). . . . The second domain of ‘right hand’ portrays an image of intense power and strength. Most frequently it is used by the psalmists of the Lord as a God who rescues and sustains by means of his mighty ‘right hand’ The conquering Jesus is portrayed as holding the seven stars in his ‘right hand’ (Rev 1:16; cf. 1:20; 2:1)” (Ryken, Wilhoit, and Longman 361).

the second death »» This phrase occurs in 2:11; 20:6; 20:14; and 21:8. It refers to the condemnation of the unrighteous—those who do not conquer—in the lake of fire (20:14-15; 21:7-8). Those who conquer will not experience the second death (2:11).

seven angels »» Revelation 8 introduces seven angels who stand before God and are called on to blow seven trumpets that signal judgment (vv. 2, 6). Similarly, Revelation 15 refers to seven angels who pour out God’s wrath in the form of seven plagues (vv. 1, 6, 7, 8). The latter seven angels are also mentioned in subsequent chapters (16:1; 17:1; 21:9). John’s prophecy does not state overtly whether the second cadre is the same as the first, but this certainly seems plausible, as both occupy space in the heavenly temple/throne area (8:2, 6; 15:6)

seven churches »» References to seven churches occur in 1:4; 1:11; and 1:20 (2x).

»» “There were at least three other churches in Asia at this time [i.e., in Colosse, Hierapolis, and Troas], but the number may here have been limited to seven because of the symbolic value of that number. Seven, being the number of completeness, could suggest that the message to the seven churches is applicable to the total church throughout the world” (Gregg 59).

[seven golden] lampstands »» References to seven golden lampstands occur in 1:12; 1:13; 1:20 (2x); and 2:1. They are explicitly identified as representing the seven churches of Asia to whom Jesus directed John to address the book of Revelation (1:20). The symbolism of a lampstand as a local church also occurs in 2:5, though in this case only one church is in view.

»» “The lamps in the opening chapter of Revelation symbolize the divine presence with the seven churches. Christ’s warning that the lamp could be withdrawn connotes God’s removing his active presence from them” (Ryken, Wilhoit, and Longman 486).

»» “Zechariah had a vision of a seven-branched golden lampstand fed by seven pipes—explained to him as the ‘eyes of the Lord, which range through the earth’ (4:10). . . . If Zechariah’s imagery was in John’s mind, it might mean that the churches, which correspond to the people of God today, are light bearers only because of their intimate connection with Christ, the source of the light, through the power of the Holy Spirit (1:4b; 3:1; 4:5; 5:6)” (Johnson, notes on 1:12).

seven spirits »» References to seven spirits occur in 1:4; 3:1; 4:5; and 5:6.

»» “The Spirit is symbolized as seven, reminiscent of the sevenfold ministry mentioned in Isaiah 11:2 (wisdom, understanding, counsel, power, knowledge, fear of the Lord, delight)” (Elwell, “Revelation” 1204).

seven stars [in his right hand] »» The imagery of seven stars is referred to five times in the first three chapters (1:16; 1:20 (2x); 2:1; 3:1). The stars are said to represent “the angels of the seven churches” (1:20), but the meaning of this phrase is subject to debate (see Glossary).

a sharp [two-edged] sword »» Four times the book of Revelation refers to Christ as wielding a sword (2:16), a sharp sword (19:15), or a sharp two-edged sword (1:16; 2:12). In three of these cases the sword is said to be in his mouth. The metaphor conveys Christ’s ability to pronounce and/or carry out judgment on those who deserve it (2:16; 19:15).

»» “The sword . . . symbolizes divine judgment. . . . Jesus is depicted as bearing a sharp, two-edged sword in his mouth (Rev 1:16), which he will use ‘to strike down the nations’ (Rev 19:15 NRSV) at the consummation” (Ryken, Wilhoit, and Longman 835).

»» Walvoord argues that the sword in Christ’s mouth is not to be equated with the sword of Hebrews 4:12. Different Greek words underlie the

two, and “[t]he sword mentioned in Revelation has the character of a sword of devastating judgment rather than a sword uncovering unbelief” (46).

synagogue of Satan »» This phrase occurs in the letters to the churches in Smyrna (2:9) and Philadelphia (3:9). It has been interpreted in various ways, as illustrated in the quotes below.

»» “Synagogue of Satan’ refers, then, to certain Jews in ancient Smyrna who, motivated by Satan, slandered the church there. The term should never be indiscriminately applied to all Jewish synagogues” (Johnson, notes on 2:9).

the temple / God’s temple / his temple / the sanctuary . . . [in heaven] »» Revelation makes one reference to what appears to be a literal temple located in Jerusalem (11:1-2). However, John most of John’s temple references occur in chapters 11, 14, 15 and 16, describing his visions of heaven after the blowing of the seventh trumpet. The disclosure of the temple in heaven was accompanied twice by lightning and other phenomena reminiscent of the giving of the Law at Sinai (11:19; 16:18).

The context reveals several features of the heavenly temple. It seems to be the site where the altar (16:1, 4-7) and the throne (16:17) are located (cf. Isa. 6:1, 6). The redeemed who come out of the great tribulation are said to dwell before God’s throne, continually serving “in his temple” (7:15). The emphasis here is on the presence and worship of God. The heavenly temple is said to contain “the ark of his covenant” (11:19); furthermore, it is referred to as “the tent of witness” (15:5), presumably denoting its function as the repository of divine law.

On two occasions a loud voice—presumably that of God—emanates from the temple (16:1, 17). Angels are present within it (14:15, 17; 15:5-6). Some seem to have specific responsibilities there, such as care of “the fire” (14:18) or the execution of divine judgment (14:17-20; 15:1, 5-7). Smoke representing God’s glory made it impossible to enter the temple for a time (15:8).

Given the use of temple references in reference to the dwelling of God, John’s statement that he saw no temple in the New Jerusalem (21:22) may seem unexpected.

those who dwell on earth »» “Those who dwell on the earth” are apparently the mass of the world’s inhabitants who are not followers of the Lamb (3:10; 13:8; 17:8). They will marvel at the beast’s appearance (17:8) and will be deceived into worshiping him (13:8, 12, 14). Furthermore, they will liaise with the great prostitute (17:2). Unlike the spiritually victorious of Philadelphia, and presumably other conquerors, they are destined for “trial” (peirasmós) (3:10). They will be judged for martyring Christ’s followers (6:9-10) and will be subject to the trumpet judgments (8:13). They will endure torments inflicted by the two witnesses, and will celebrate when the latter die (11:9-10).

All of the references just mentioned use a form of the word katoikeo (“to dwell”). The phrase “those who dwell on earth” also occurs in 14:6. The Greek text in this verse is uncertain, with some manuscripts substituting kathemai (“to sit”) for katoikeo (“to dwell, live, settle”). This verse foretells the proclamation of a gospel message to the earth’s residents, and it stresses that the audience will include all demographic groups.

the throne »» The book of Revelation contains some 40 references to the throne of God or of Christ. Nearly half of those references occur in chapters 4 and 5. Several terms are used to denote the divine throne. The most common is simply “the throne” (e.g., 4:3; 5:1; 6:16; 7:9; 14:3). It is also spoken of as “his [i.e., God’s] throne” (1:4; 3:21; 12:5), “my [i.e., Christ’s] throne” (3:21), “a throne . . . in heaven” (4:2), “the throne of God” (7:15), “a great white throne” (20:11), and “the throne of God and of the Lamb” (22:1; 22:3). The throne is an image of God’s sovereign rule and prerogatives as supreme judge. It is collocated with the heavenly temple (16:17).

tree of life »» This phrase occurs four times in Revelation (2:7; 22:2; 22:14; 22:19). The Scriptures first make reference to a tree of life in Genesis 2 and 3. Figurative references appear in the book of Proverbs (3:18; 11:30; 13:12; 15:4).

»» “In Revelation the tree of life is the supreme image of future splendor and paradise regained. Its final appearance in the Bible occurs in the last chapter, as part of the combined city and garden

that climaxes the heavenly vision . . .” (Ryken, Wilhoit, and Longman 890).

[every] tribe and language and people and nation »» The terms “tribe” (phulé), “language” (glóssa), “people” (laós), and “nation” (éthnos) occur together five times in Revelation (5:9; 7:9; 11:9; 13:7; 14:6). In each text they occur in a slightly different order, and in all but one case (11:9) they are modified by “every” (pás). Revelation 17:15 substitutes “multitudes” (ochlos) for phulé. In addition, 10:11 associates three of the terms (all but phulé) with “kings” (basileus).

This combination of terms serves to emphasize that the book’s prophecies—whether pertaining to the outpouring of divine wrath or the conferral of eternal salvation—will come to pass so as to affect every segment of humanity. The Lamb’s sacrifice will lead to redemption—not in some exclusive fashion, but in a way that includes diverse representatives of the human race (5:9-10; 7:9-10). The judgments that God metes out will be experienced widely. Various classes of people will witness the death of the two prophets (11:9-10). The beast will receive authority to conquer without sociopolitical boundaries (13:5-8). And all people who inhabit the earth will be called to fear God in the face of the judgment of Babylon (14:6-7).

the [twenty-four] elders »» Twelve times Revelation makes reference to twenty-four elders (4:4; 4:10; 5:5; 5:6; 5:8; 5:11; 5:14; 7:11; 7:13; 11:16; 14:3; 19:4). Seven of these references are concentrated in the throne room narratives of chapters 4 and 5.

The elders sit on thrones in a circle around God’s throne (4:4). They are dressed in white clothing and wear gold crowns (4:4). They are present in the throne room along with the four living creatures. They are distinct from distinct from at least some angels (5:2, 4; 5:11; 11:15-16).

The elders are aware of Christ’s worthiness (5:4-5) and the identity of those delivered from the great tribulation (7:13ff). They are depicted consistently as worshiping God and the Lamb along with the four living creatures, the angels, and the redeemed of mankind (4:9-11; 5:8ff; 7:9ff; 11:15ff; 19:1ff). They seem to represent the saints by offering their prayers as incense (5:8).

According to Elwell, “[s]ome scholars interpret the elders to be angelic beings, but more likely, they are representatives of all the redeemed of the earth” (“Revelation” 1207). Gregg summarizes the significance that various interpreters have attached to the reference to twenty-four elders (86-89):

- the redeemed of the Old and New Testaments, with the number twenty-four incorporating Old Testament patriarchs and apostles—twelve each; these two groups are associated with each other in Revelation 21:12-14

The view that the elders represent the New Testament saints is supported by contextual cues. The description of the elders’

appearance—“clothed in white garments, with golden crowns on their heads”—seems consistent with the promises extended to the conquerors in Smyrna (2:10), Sardis (3:4-5; cf. 3:18), and Philadelphia (3:11). Johnson argues that since individual elders twice address John (5:5; 7:13), they can hardly be viewed as “a symbolic group representing the church” (notes on 7:13-14). One (admittedly speculative) way to reconcile these facts would be to view the elders as individual believers from the church age selected to sit before the throne of God and the Lamb.

the word of God . . . the testimony of Jesus

[Christ] / the witness they had borne »» These two concepts are frequently associated with each other in Revelation (1:2; 1:9; 6:9; 20:4). A related combination, “the commandments of God and . . . the testimony of Jesus,” occurs in 12:17. Similarly, 14:12 speaks of the saints’ persistent obedience to God’s commands and faith toward Jesus. In 19:10, “the testimony of Jesus” appears without a correlate. Finally, believers achieve victory over Satan “by the blood of the Lamb and the word of their testimony” (12:11).

The revelation of truth—as embodied by terms such as “the word of God” and “the testimony of Jesus”—originates in God and is mediated through Jesus Christ (1:1-2). This includes prophecy such as John’s visions (1:1-2; 19:10), but refers more generally to the whole body of Christian truth (1:9). Believers identify with the truth and become witnesses to it (1:2; 6:9; 12:11). Under the

influence of Satan, the world's powers oppose believers for their testimony and persecute many of them to the point of death (6:9; 12:17). However, this is not a sign of perdition, but of ultimate victory (12:11; 14:12-13; 20:4).

THE ANTICHRIST

21 Facts about the Coming Antichrist

1. He will be an intellectual genius. Dan. 8:23
2. He will be an oratorical genius. Dan. 11:36
3. He will be a political genius. Rev. 17:11-12
4. He will be a commercial genius. Dan. 11:43; Rev. 13:16-17
5. He will be a military genius. Rev. 6:2; 13:2
6. He will be a religious genius. 2 Thess. 2:4; Rev. 13:8
7. He will begin by controlling the Western power block. Rev. 17:12
8. He will make a seven-year covenant with Israel but will break it after three and a half years. Dan. 9:27
9. He will attempt to destroy all of Israel. Rev. 12
10. He will destroy the false religious system so that he may rule unhindered. Rev. 17:16-17
11. He will set himself up as God. Dan. 11:36-37; 2 Thess. 2:4, 11; Rev. 13:5
12. He will briefly rule over all nations. Ps. 2; Dan. 11:36; Rev. 13:16
13. He will be utterly crushed by the Lord Jesus Christ at the Battle of Armageddon. Rev. 19
14. He will be the first creature thrown into the lake of fire. Rev. 19:20
15. He will be a master of deceit. 2 Thess. 2:10
16. He will profane the temple. Matt. 24:15
17. He will be energized by Satan himself. Rev. 13:2
18. He will do everything according to his own selfish will. Dan. 11:36
19. He will not regard the God of his fathers. Dan. 11:37
20. He will not have the desire of women. Dan. 11:37
21. His god will be the god of power. Dan. 11:38

6 Names for the Coming Antichrist

1. The little horn Dan. 7:8
2. The willful king Dan. 11:36
3. The man of sin 2 Thess. 2:3
4. The son of perdition 2 Thess. 2:3

5. The wicked one 2 Thess. 2:8
6. The beast Rev. 11:7

THE TRIBULATION

12 Names for the Coming World Calamity

1. The Day of the Lord Isa. 2:12; 13:6, 9; Ezek. 13:5; 30:3; Joel 1:15; 2:1, 11, 31; 3:14; Amos 5:18, 20; Obad. 15; Zeph. 1:7, 14; Zech. 14:1; Mal. 4:5; Acts 2:20; 1 Thess. 5:2; 2 Thess. 2:2; 2 Pet. 3:10
2. The indignation Isa. 26:20; 34:2
3. The day of God's vengeance Isa. 34:8; 63:1-6
4. The time of Jacob's trouble Jer. 30:7
5. The overspreading of abominations Dan. 9:27
6. The time of trouble such as never was Dan. 12:1
7. The seventieth week Dan. 9:24-27
8. The time of the end Dan. 12:9
9. The great day of his wrath Rev. 6:17
10. The hour of his judgment Rev. 14:7
11. The end of this world Matt. 13:40, 49
12. The great Tribulation Matt. 24:21

7 Reasons for the Great Tribulation

1. To harvest the crop that has been sown throughout the ages by God, Satan, and mankind Matt. 13
2. To prove the falseness of the devil's claim Isa. 14:12-15
3. To prepare a great martyred multitude for heaven Rev. 7:9, 14
4. To prepare a great living multitude for the Millennium Matt. 25:32-34
5. To punish the Gentiles Rom. 1:18; 2 Thess. 2:11-12; Rev. 19:15
6. To purge Israel Ezek. 20:23, 38; Zech. 13:8-9; Mal. 3:3
7. To prepare the earth itself for the Millennium Rev. 16:20

25 Individuals and Groups Appearing in the Great Tribulation

1. God Rev. 7:9-17; 11:17; 17:3
2. The devil Rev. 12:12
3. Two special witnesses Rev. 11:3
4. The Antichrist 2 Thess. 2:3-4, 9
5. The false prophet Rev. 13:11

6. 144,000 Israelite preachers Rev. 7:4
7. An army of locusts like demons from the bottomless pit Rev. 9:2-3
8. An army of horse and rider demons from the Euphrates River Rev. 9:14-16
9. Three evil spirits Rev. 16:13-14
10. A cruel, power-mad ruler from the north Ezek. 38:1-3
11. An angel with the seal of the living God Rev. 7:2
12. Seven angels with seven trumpets Rev. 8-9, 11
13. An angel with a golden censer Rev. 8:3
14. An angel with a little book and a measuring reed Rev. 10:1-2; 11:1
15. An angel with the everlasting gospel Rev. 14:6
16. An angel with a harvest sickle Rev. 14:14-19
17. Seven angels with seven vials of wrath Rev. 16
18. An angel with a message of doom Rev. 18:1, 21
19. An angel with a strange invitation Rev. 19:17
20. An angel with a key and a great chain Rev. 20:1
21. A persecuted woman (Israel) Rev. 12:1-2
22. A vile and bloody harlot (the false church) Rev. 17:3-5
23. An arrogant queen (the world's political and economic systems) Rev. 18:2, 7
24. A pure, chaste bride (the true Church) Rev. 19:7-8
25. A mighty warrior from heaven Rev. 19:11, 16

4 Interpretations of Revelation

The Idealist View

The first view of Revelation is the idealist view, or the spiritual view. This view uses the allegorical method to interpret the Book of Revelation. The allegorical approach to Revelation was introduced by ancient church father Origen (AD 185-254) and made prominent by Augustine (AD 354-420). According to this view, the events of Revelation are not tied to specific historical

events. The imagery of the book symbolically presents the ongoing struggle throughout the ages of God against Satan and good against evil. In this struggle, the saints are persecuted and martyred by the forces of evil but will one day receive their vindication. In the end, God is victorious, and His sovereignty is displayed throughout ages. Robert Mounce summarizes the idealist view stating, "Revelation is a theological poem presenting the ageless struggle between the kingdom of light and the kingdom of darkness. It is a philosophy of history wherein Christian forces are continuously meeting and conquering the demonic forces of evil." {2}

The symbols in Revelation are not tied to specific events but point to themes throughout church history. The battles in Revelation are viewed as spiritual warfare manifested in the persecution of Christians or wars in general that have occurred in history. The beast from the sea may be identified as the satanically-inspired political opposition to the church in any age. The beast from the land represents pagan, or corrupt, religion to Christianity. The harlot represents the compromised church, or the seduction of the world in general. Each seal, trumpet, or bowl represents natural disasters, wars, famines, and the like which occur as God works out His plan in history. Catastrophes represent God's displeasure with sinful man; however, sinful mankind goes through these catastrophes while still refusing to turn and repent. God ultimately triumphs in the end.

The strength of this view is that it avoids the problem of harmonizing passages with events in history. It also makes the book of Revelation applicable and relevant for all periods of church history.

However, there are several weaknesses of this view. First, this view denies the book of Revelation any specific historical fulfillment. The symbols portray the ever-present conflict but no necessary consummation of the

historical process. Rev.1:1 states that the events will come to pass shortly, giving the impression that John is prophesying future historical events.

Second, reading spiritual meanings into the text could lead to arbitrary interpretations. Followers of this approach have often allowed the cultural and socio-political factors of their time to influence their interpretation rather than seeking the author's intended meaning.

Unless interpreters are grounded in the grammatical, historical, and contextual method of hermeneutics, they leave themselves open to alternate interpretations that may even contradict the author's intended meaning.

The Preterist View

The second view is called the preterist view. Preter, which means "past," is derived from the Latin. There are two major views among preterists: full preterism and partial preterism. Both views believe that the prophecies of the Olivet discourse of Matthew 24 and Revelation were fulfilled in the first century with the fall of Jerusalem in AD 70. Chapters 1-3 describe the conditions in the seven churches of Asia Minor prior to the Jewish war (AD 66-70). The remaining chapters of Revelation and Jesus' Olivet Discourse describe the fall of Jerusalem to the Romans.

Full preterists believe that all the prophecies found in Revelation were fulfilled in AD 70 and that we are now living in the eternal state, or the new heavens and the new earth. Partial preterists believe that most of the prophecies of Revelation were fulfilled in the destruction of Jerusalem but that chapters 20-22 point to future events such as a future resurrection of believers and return of Christ to the earth. Partial preterists view full preterism as heretical since it denies the second coming of Christ and teaches an unorthodox view of the resurrection.

Church historians trace the roots of preterism to Jesuit priest Luis de Alcazar (1554-1613). Alcazar's interpretation is considered a response to the Protestant historicist interpretation of Revelation that identified the Pope as the Anti-Christ. However, some preterists contend that preterist teachings are found in the writings of the early church as early as the fourth century AD.

Crucial to the preterist view is the date of Revelation. Since it is a prophecy of the destruction of Jerusalem, preterists hold to a pre-AD 70 date of writing. According to this view, John was writing specifically to the church of his day and had only its situation in mind. This letter was written to encourage the saints to persevere under the persecution of the Roman Empire.

Preterists point to several reasons to support their view. First, Jesus stated at the end of the Olivet Discourse, "Truly I say to you, this generation will not pass away until all these things take place" (Mt. 24:34). A generation usually refers to forty years. The fall of Jerusalem would then fit the time Jesus predicted. Second, Josephus' detailed record of the fall of Jerusalem appears in several ways to match the symbolism of Revelation. Finally, this view would be directly relevant to John's readers of his day.

There are several criticisms of this view. First, the events described in Jesus' Olivet Discourse and in Revelation 4-19 differ in several ways from the fall of Jerusalem.

One example is that Christ described his return to Jerusalem this way: "[A]s lightning that comes from the east is visible even in the west, so will be the coming of the Son of Man" (Mt. 24:27). Preterists believe this refers to the Roman army's advance on Jerusalem. However, the Roman army advanced on Jerusalem from west to east, and their assault was not as a quick lightning strike. The Jewish war lasted for several years before Jerusalem

was besieged, and the city fell after a lengthy siege. Second, General Titus did not set up an “abomination of desolation” (Mt. 24:15) in the Jerusalem Temple. Rather, he destroyed the Temple and burned it to the ground. Thus, it appears the preterist is required to allegorize or stretch the metaphors and symbols in order to find fulfillment of the prophecies in the fall of Jerusalem.

Another example of allegorical interpretation by preterists is their interpretation of Revelation 7:4. John identifies a special group of prophets: the 144,000 from the “tribes of Israel.” Preterist Hank Hanegraaff states that this group represents the true bride of Christ and is referred to in Rev. 7:9 as the “great multitude that no one could count from every nation, tribe, people, and language.” In other words, the 144,000 in verse 4, and the great multitude in verse 9 are the same people. This appears to go against the context of the chapter for several reasons. First, throughout the Bible the phrase “tribes of Israel” refers to literal Jews. Second, John says there are 12,000 from each of the twelve tribes of Israel. This is a strange way to describe the multitude of believers from all nations. Finally, the context shows John is speaking of two different groups: one on the earth (the 144,000 referenced in 7:1-3), and the great multitude in heaven before the throne (7:9). Here Hanegraaff appears to be allegorizing the text.

Robert Mounce states, “The major problem with the preterist position is that the decisive victory portrayed in the latter chapters of the Apocalypse was never achieved. It is difficult to believe that John envisioned anything less than the complete overthrow of Satan, the final destruction of evil, and the eternal reign on God. If this is not to be, then either the Seer was essentially wrong in the major thrust of his message or his work was so helplessly ambiguous that its first recipients were all led astray.”

Mounce and other New Testament scholars believe the preterists’ interpretations are not consistent and utilize allegorical interpretations to make passages fit their theological view.

Second, the preterist position rests on a pre-AD 70 date of writing. However, most New Testament scholars date the writing of the book to AD 95. If John had written Revelation after AD 70, the book could not have been a prophecy of the fall of Jerusalem. This presents a significant argument against the preterist position.

Preterists point to several lines of evidence for a pre-AD 70 date of writing. First, John does not mention the fall of the Jerusalem Temple. If he had been writing two decades after the event, it seems strange that he never mentioned this catastrophic event. Second, John does not refer to either Jesus’ prophecy of the destruction of the Temple (Mt. 24, Mk. 13, Lk. 21) or the fulfillment of this prophecy. Third, in Revelation 11:1, John is told to “measure the temple of God and the altar, and count the worshipers there.” Preterist argue that this indicates that the Temple is still standing during the writing of Revelation.

The preterist view, particularly the partial preterist view, is a prominent position held by such notable scholars as R. C. Sproul, Hank Hanegraaff, Kenneth Gentry, and the late David Chilton (who later converted to full preterism after the publishing of his books).

The Historicist View

The third view is called the historicist approach. This view teaches that Revelation is a symbolic representation that presents the course of history from the apostle’s life through the end of the age. The symbols in the apocalypse correspond to events in the history of Western Europe, including various popes, the Protestant Reformation, the French

Revolution, and rulers such as Charlemagne. Most interpreters place the events of their day in the later chapters of Revelation.

Many adherents of this position view chapters 1-3 as seven periods in church history. The breaking of the seals in chapters 4-7 symbolizes the fall of the Roman Empire. The Trumpet judgments in chapters 8-10 represent the invasions of the Roman Empire by the Vandals, Huns, Saracens, and Turks. Among Protestant historicists of the Reformation, the antichrist in Revelation was believed to be the papacy. Chapters 11-13 in Revelation represent the true church in its struggle against Roman Catholicism. The bowl judgments of Revelation 14-16 represent God's judgment on the Catholic Church, culminating in the future overthrow of Catholicism depicted in chapters 17-19.{14}

There are several criticisms of this approach. First, this approach allows for a wide variety of interpretations. Adherents have a tendency to interpret the text through the context of their period. Thus, many saw the climax of the book happening in their generation. John Walvoord points out the lack of agreement among historicists. He states, "As many as fifty different interpretations of the book of Revelation therefore evolve, depending on the time and circumstances of the expositor."{15} Moses Stuart echoed the same concern in his writings over a century ago. He wrote, "Hitherto, scarcely any two original and independent expositors have agreed, in respect to some points very important in their bearing upon the interpretation of the book."{16}

Second, this view focuses mostly on the events of the church in Western Europe and says very little about the church in the East. Thus, its narrow scope fails to account for God's activity throughout Asia and the rest of the world. Finally, this view would have little significance for the church of the first century whom John was addressing. It is unlikely they would have

been able to interpret Revelation as the historical approach suggests.

Prominent scholars who held this view include John Wycliffe, John Knox, William Tyndale, Martin Luther, John Calvin, Ulrich Zwingli, John Wesley, Jonathan Edwards, George Whitefield, Charles Finney, C. H. Spurgeon, and Matthew Henry. This view rose to popularity during the Protestant Reformation because of its identification of the pope and the papacy with the beasts of Revelation 13. However, since the beginning of the twentieth century, it has declined in popularity and influence.

The Futurist View

The fourth view is the futurist view. This view teaches that the events of the Olivet Discourse and Revelation chapters 4-22 will occur in the future. Futurist divide the book of Revelation into three sections as indicated in 1:19: "what you have seen, what is now and what will take place later." Chapter 1 describes the past ("what you have seen"), chapters 2-3 describe the present ("what is now"), and the rest of the book describes future events ("what will take place later").

Futurists apply a literal approach to interpreting Revelation. Chapters 4-19 refer to a period known as the seven-year tribulation (Dan. 9:27). During this time, God's judgments are actually poured out upon mankind as they are revealed in the seals, trumpets, and bowls. Chapter 13 describes a literal future world empire headed by a political and religious leader represented by the two beasts. Chapter 17 pictures a harlot who represents the church in apostasy. Chapter 19 refers to Christ's second coming and the battle of Armageddon followed by a literal thousand-year rule of Christ upon the earth in chapter 20. Chapters 21-22 are events that follow the millennium: the creation of a new heaven and a new earth and the arrival of the heavenly city upon the earth.

Futurists argue that a consistently literal or plain interpretation is to be applied in understanding the book of Revelation. Literal interpretation of the Bible means to explain the original sense, or meaning, of the Bible according to the normal customary usage of its language. This means applying the rules of grammar, staying consistent with the historical framework, and the context of the writing. Literal interpretation does not discount figurative or symbolic language. Futurists teach that prophecies using symbolic language are also to be normally interpreted according to the laws of language. J. P. Lange stated:

The literalist (so called) is not one who denies that figurative language, that symbols, are used in prophecy, nor does he deny that great spiritual truths are set forth therein; his position is, simply, that the prophecies are to be normally interpreted (i.e., according to the received laws of language) as any other utterances are interpreted – that which is manifestly figurative being so regarded. {17}

Charles Ryrie also states,

Symbols, figures of speech and types are all interpreted plainly in this method, and they are in no way contrary to literal interpretation. After all, the very existence of any meaning for a figure of speech depends on the reality of the literal meaning of the terms involved. Figures often make the meaning plainer, but it is the literal, normal, or plain meaning that they convey to the reader.

Futurists acknowledge the use of figures and symbols. When figurative language is used, one must look at the context to find the meaning. However, figurative language does not justify allegorical interpretation.

Futurists contend that the literal interpretation of Revelation finds its roots in the ancient church fathers. Elements of this teaching, such as a future millennial kingdom, are found in the writings of Clement of Rome (AD 96), Justin Martyr (AD 100-165), Irenaeus

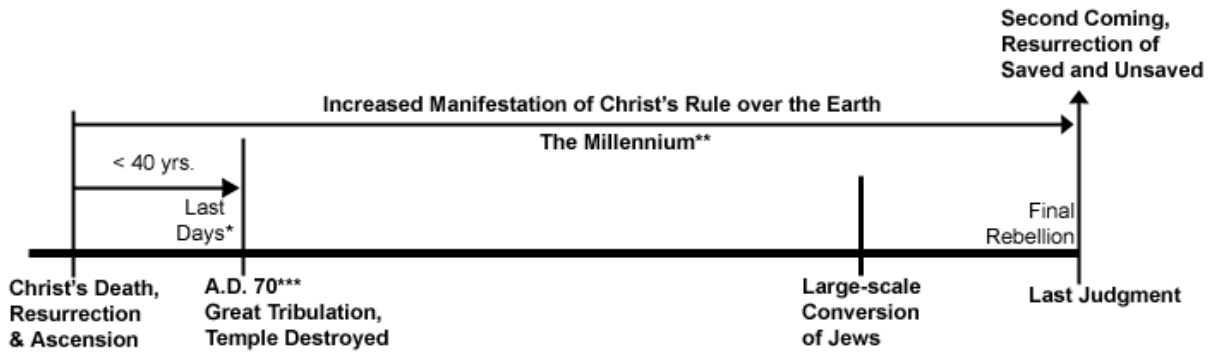
(AD 115-202), Tertullian (AD 150-225) and others. Futurists hold that the church fathers taught a literal interpretation of Revelation until Origen (AD 185-254) introduced allegorical interpretation. This then became the popular form of interpretation when taught by Augustine (AD 354-430). {19} Literal interpretation of Revelation remained throughout the history of the church and rose again to prominence in the modern era.

The futurist view is widely popular among evangelical Christians today. One of the most popular versions on futurist teaching is dispensational theology, promoted by schools such as Dallas Theological Seminary and Moody Bible Institute. Theologians such as Charles Ryrie, John Walvoord, and Dwight Pentecost are noted scholars of this position. Tim LaHaye made this theology popular in the culture with his end times series of novels.

Critics of this view argue that the futurist view renders the book irrelevant to the original readers of the first century. Another criticism is that Revelation is apocalyptic literature and thus meant to be interpreted allegorically or symbolically rather than literally. Hank Hanegraaff states, "Thus, when a Biblical writer uses a symbol or an allegory, we do violence to his intentions if we interpret it in a strictly literal manner."

4 Views of the End Times

Postmillennial

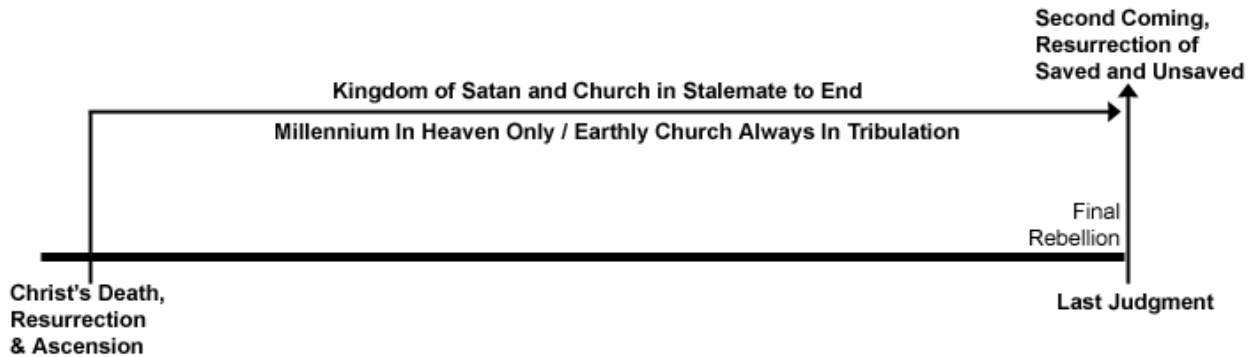


* Some Postmillennialists teach that the Last Days are the entire period from the first to the second coming, since that is the last age of the earth prior to eternity.

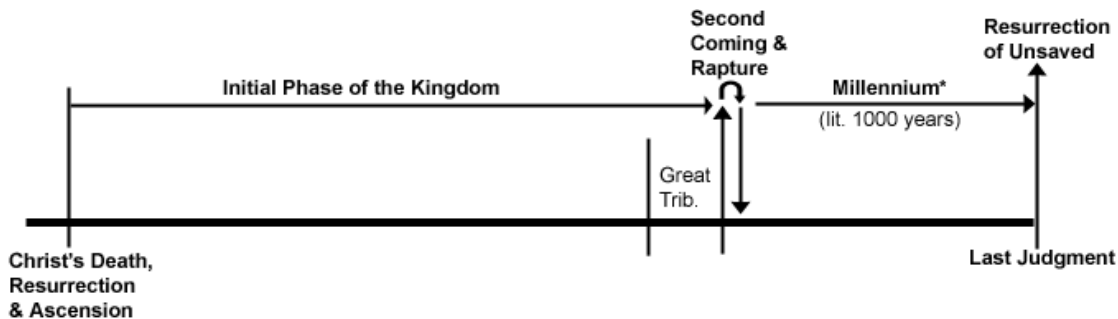
** Some Postmillennialists have taught that church history will end in a literal 1000 year period of great blessing before the Final Judgment.

*** The view that the Great Tribulation has already occurred is called the "preterist" view. Some Postmillennialists believe that the Tribulation covers the entire church history, called the "church historicist" view.

Amillennial

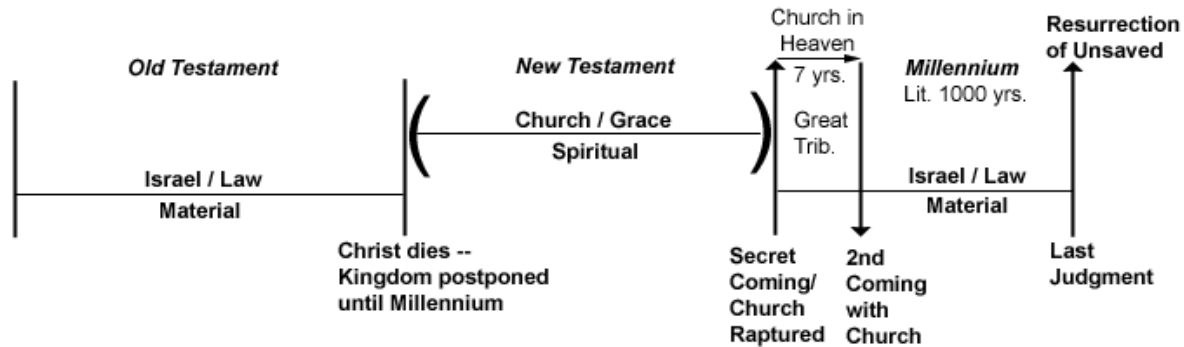


Historic Premillennial



* Unlike Dispensationalism, Historic Premillennialism does not teach a Jewish/Israel-centered millennium.

Dispensational Premillennial



Eschatology: The study (Greek *logos*) of last things (Greek *eschaton*), i.e., the end of the world, the Last Judgment, the Second Coming of Christ, the resurrection of the body and, in general, anything relating to the future.

The Second Coming of Christ (also known as **the Second Advent** and **the Return of Christ**): Christ's physical return to earth, mentioned in such passages as [Acts 1:11](#), 1 Thessalonians 4, and [Hebrews 9:28](#).

The Millennium: The thousand-year reign of Christ mentioned in Revelation, chapter 20. Premillennialists ("Chiliasm") believe in a literal thousand-year reign in the future. Amillennialists and postmillennialists believe that the thousand years is a figurative number for the entire period from Christ's first coming until His second.

Premillennialism (Also known as **Chiliasm** from the Greek word for "thousand"): The belief that the Second Coming of Christ occurs before the millennium, which is a literal 1000 years. The resurrection of Christians occurs at the beginning of the millennium, the resurrection of the unsaved at the end of the millennium.

Postmillennialism: The belief that the Second Coming of Christ occurs after the millennium. There is an increase in the spread of God's rule in every area of life during the millennium (a figurative concept referring to the entire New Testament age).

Amillennialism: The belief that the Second Coming occurs at the end of history, like postmillennialism, but there is no earthly millennium. The millennium is purely spiritual, applying only to heaven and the Church.

Dispensationalism: The belief that history is divided into several distinct dispensations, or ages in which God relates to mankind in a different way. The most important distinction is between Israel's Age of Law on the one hand, and the Church's Age of Grace on the other. Dispensationalism is pretribulationist and premillennial. The Church Age ends and God's plan for Israel resumes when the Church is raptured at the beginning of the Tribulation. The millennium is Israel-centered: It rules over all other nations and animal sacrifices are performed in the Temple as in the Old Testament.

The Great Tribulation: The great judgment of God that is foretold in such passages as [Matthew 24](#), [Mark 13](#), [Luke 21](#), and the Book of Revelation. The main events occur in the land of Israel.

The Last Days: Most believe that these are the days of great evil before the Great Tribulation. Some believe that the Last Days refers to the entire New Testament/Church period.

The Rapture: The physical resurrection of believers, both living and dead, who will meet Christ in the air at His Second Coming. The word "rapture" is a transliteration of the Latin translation of the word found in [1 Thessalonians 4:17](#) and translated in English as "caught up."

Futurist interpretation of the Tribulation: The Great Tribulation is yet to come.

Preterist interpretation of the Tribulation: The Tribulation has already occurred.

Church Historicist interpretation: The Tribulation is experienced by the Church throughout its history.

Pretribulation (Pretrib) Rapture: The rapture occurs before the Tribulation. (The standard Dispensational view).

Midtribulation (Midtrib) Rapture: The rapture occurs in the middle of the Tribulation.

Posttribulation (Posttrib) Rapture: The rapture occurs after the seven years of the Tribulation. (Historic premillennialist view)

The Prophecies of Revelation

The Seven-Sealed Scroll

The scroll is a record of the major events in this future time of trouble. Some writers say these events depicted in the scroll will occur in the first half of Daniel's seventieth "seven" of years, and others say they pertain to all seven years. It seems preferable, however, to see them as focusing on the last three and a half years. When the first seal is broken in Revelation 6, it is interpreted as a step toward world government. As seen in Daniel, the Antichrist will establish himself as world ruler at the middle of the seven-year period before the Second Coming.

A conqueror is seen riding on a white horse, a symbol of victory. "Its rider held a bow, and he was given a crown, and he rode out as a conqueror bent on conquest" (Rev. 6:2). It is significant that he has a bow but no arrow, which indicates that his conquest will be accomplished at the beginning without war. As noted in Daniel 11:36-39 he will declare himself world ruler, and no one will be strong enough to stand against him (see Rev. 13:4).

The other seals describe the terrible catastrophes and judgments God will bring on the earth. The second seal deals with war, which eventually breaks out (6:3-4); the third seal depicts a devastatingly widespread famine (6:5-6). The fourth seal describes the death of a fourth of the world. "When the Lamb opened the fourth seal, I heard the voice of the fourth living creature say, 'Come!' I looked, and there before me was a pale horse! Its rider was named Death, and Hades was following close behind him. They were given power over a fourth of the earth to kill by sword, famine and plague, and by the wild beasts of the earth" (6:7-8). It should be obvious that these catastrophes will be part of the Great Tribulation.

Though contained in only two verses, this prophecy of the fourth seal judgment is overwhelming. One fourth of the world's

population will be destroyed by sword, hunger, disease, and wild animals. We should remember that these same four elements were involved when Judah was taken captive by Babylon (Jer. 16:4; Ezek. 14:21). If the global population at that time is six billion, it means that 1.5 billion people will perish. Some writers recoil against the idea that this is literally true, but there is no scriptural basis for taking it in other than its plain ordinary meaning. Clearly this period of destruction and devastation on earth, as noted in these four seals, will be terrible. This makes understandable what Christ said in Matthew 24:21-22: "For then there will be great distress, unequaled from the beginning of the world until now—and never to be equaled again. If those days had not been cut short, no one would survive, but for the sake of the elect those days will be shortened."

The destruction of human life, Jesus said, will exceed anything the world has ever seen. This leads to Jesus' statement that if He did not intervene by His second coming and end the terrible time of destruction, no one would be left alive on the earth. Obviously Jesus' words harmonize with the statements in Revelation 6:7-8, when understood in their literal meaning. Jeremiah also wrote of this terrible time: "How awful that day will be! None will be like it. It will be a time of trouble for Jacob, but he will be saved out of it" (Jer. 30:7).

The fifth seal has to do with martyrs who will die for their faith (Rev. 6:9-11). They will be innumerable, for they are described in 7:9-17 as "a great multitude that no one could count" coming out of the Great Tribulation and standing before God's throne in heaven. This clearly contradicts the false notion that believers will be protected from death in the Great Tribulation.

The sixth seal refers to the cosmic disturbances and earthquakes that will characterize this period when "the wrath of the Lamb" (6:16), that is, of Christ, will be poured out on the

unbelieving world. “For the great day of their wrath has come, and who can stand?” (6:17).

The Trumpet Judgments

When the seventh seal is broken, a new series of seven judgments will be introduced by trumpets blown by angels (Rev. 8). As these trumpets sound, each will signal a catastrophe over a portion of the earth, usually involving a third of the world or its people. When the first trumpet sounds, a third of the trees of the earth and all the green grass will be burned up (8:7). With the second trumpet a third of the sea will become blood, a third of the living creatures in the sea will die, and a third of the ships will be destroyed (8:8–9). This will disrupt the shipping of food and other necessities and may explain why there will be widespread famine. With the third trumpet a third of the rivers and springs of water will become terribly bitter, and many people will die from drinking the water (8:10–11). In the fourth trumpet a third of the sun, a third of the moon, and a third of the stars will be darkened (8:12), resulting in disturbances of the earth’s climate. The fifth trumpet, though given symbolically, apparently will reveal the work of demons (pictured as locusts from hell, “the Abyss”), who will torment unbelievers for five months (9:1–11).

The sixth trumpet has to do with the great battle at the end of the Great Tribulation, when a third of the earth’s population will be killed (Rev. 9:13–16). Since a fourth of the world’s population will have been destroyed in the opening of the fourth seal (6:7–8), deaths resulting from the sixth trumpet will reduce the population by 50 percent total (or possibly more, as the other judgments no doubt will also result in loss of life).

After the sounding of the seventh trumpet is recorded in Revelation 11:15, a parenthetical section follows in 11:16–14:13, which does not advance the elapsed time. The seventh trumpet introduces what is portrayed in Revelation 15–16 as the bowl judgments.

The Bowl Judgments

The seven bowl judgments introduced in Revelation 15 and described in chapter 16 are devastating judgments similar to the trumpet judgments, but they are unlike them in that they will affect the whole earth rather than being restricted to one third of the earth. They will be the final judgments of “God’s wrath” (16:1), apparently given in rapid succession just before the second coming of Christ. These catastrophic judgments are seen as bowls that angels will overturn and pour out on the earth.

In the first bowl judgment the unsaved will be afflicted with loathsome sores (16:2). In the second the sea (that is, the oceans) will be turned into blood, and every living thing in it will die (16:3). The third bowl judgment will turn the rivers and springs into blood (16:4). The fourth has to do with changes in the climate, resulting in people being scorched with great heat from the sun (16:8–9). The fifth bowl judgment will bring darkness on the earth and intense pain (16:10). The sixth refers to the drying of the Euphrates River. The fact that dams have been built on the Euphrates River even now causes it to dry up at certain times of the year. This is a further development of what will happen to the Euphrates in the sixth trumpet judgment (9:13–16). The drying up of this great river will enable kings and their armies to march from the East against the world ruler in Israel (see Dan. 11:44). They will be gathered by demonic persuasion to this battle “on the great day of God Almighty” (Rev. 16:14), that is, the Battle of Armageddon.

The seventh bowl will introduce a cataclysmic judgment of a great thunderstorm and a severe earthquake which will destroy civilization as we know it: “Then there came flashes of lightning, rumblings, peals of thunder and a severe earthquake. No earthquake like it has ever occurred since man has been on earth, so tremendous was the quake” (16:18). The dramatic statement is made that in the

earthquake “the cities of the nations” will collapse (16:19), including Babylon (18:1–3). Though the structures of the entire world will be shaken to pieces, apparently the nation Israel will escape, for the Greek word rendered “the nations” often refers to Gentiles. In this terrible catastrophe “every island fled away and the mountains could not be found” (16:20). Apparently the configuration of the entire globe will be changed, with terrible loss of life and property. Also great hailstones weighing about one hundred pounds each will fall on people (16:21). So terrible will be this hailstorm that unbelievers will curse God, but they will not repent. The same will be true earlier in the sixth trumpet judgment (9:20–21). The wickedness of the unsaved, in spite of God’s display of judgment against them, is almost unbelievable.

The Judgment on Babylon

The destruction of Babylon, predicted in the Old Testament in Isaiah 14:22–27 and in Jeremiah 50–51, is depicted in Revelation 18. Attempts have been made to write off this future destruction of Babylon as something already fulfilled or as something relating to the United States. A careful reading of these prophecies, however, indicates plainly that these passages refer to an actual city, Babylon, that will be destroyed suddenly and completely and never again inhabited (see Jer. 50:39–40; 51:8, 29, 37). However, this has never happened. Babylon has continued to be partially inhabited ever since the days of Nebuchadnezzar, as it is even today. Babylon’s future destruction will immediately precede the second coming of Christ, described in Revelation 19.

Taking prophecies in their natural or literal sense means that the world is destined for an awful time of divine judgment because of its rejection of Christ and the Scriptures. Sadly, unbelief leads to judgment whether in time or eternity.