

The Book of Revelation

Commentaries to Recommend

Triumph of the Lamb by Dennis Johnson, published in 2001 by Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing, 384 pages, clothbound.

More than Conquerors by William Hendriksen, published in 1962 by Baker Book House, 216 pages, clothbound.

The Returning of the King by Vern Poythress, published in 2000 by Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing, 213 pages, paperback.

The Book of Revelation: The New International Greek Testament Commentary by G.K. Beale, published in 1999 by William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1245 pages, clothbound.

Type of Literature

- The book of Revelation is a vision that God gave to the apostle John.
- A vision reveals God's message in symbolic terms.
- The visions in Ezekiel, Zechariah and Daniel serve as a model for this type of revelation.
- When we seek to interpret a vision we would not think to interpret it literally but rather symbolically since it is that kind of literature.

Understanding the Book of Revelation

The book of Revelation is first and foremost a devotional book. It is a book of comfort for believers who live in an ungodly world. This is a book that corrects our perspective on life so that we will live a life of thanks and joy. *1 Thessalonians 5:16-18*

The Prologue

Revelation 1:1-3

Purpose

- God, through an angel, gave a revelation to the apostle John that reveals how the new covenant era will unfold and the fullness of the kingdom will be ushered in.
- John is given a revelation of what "soon" will take place. This means that the book of Revelation is not just about the 2nd Coming of Jesus Christ. It had relevance for those who first received it.

Blessing

- The book of Revelation is especially said to be blessing to all those who read it.
- This book gives us the true perspective of what is happening in this world.
- This book describes in great detail to what length the Lord goes to care for his children.

Greetings

Revelation 1:4-8

Destination of Revelation

- The book of Revelation is given to seven historical churches in the Roman province of Asia (modern day Turkey).
- Beginning with Ephesus the seven churches are geographically located one after the other in the form of a "mail route."

Grace and Peace

- The grace of God that we believers experience gets us a salvation that is full and free. *Ephesians 2:8-10*
- The peace of God that we experience as believers is the result of Jesus paying for our sins on the cross. If our sins are paid for then the God of heaven and earth is no longer angry with us. *Romans 5:1*

Seven Spirits

- This most likely refers to the working of the Holy Spirit.
- The role of the Spirit is to carry out the plans of the Son who reigns from the throne. *1 Peter 1:10-11*
- The number seven may well refer to the completeness of the work of the Spirit.

The Identification of the Son

- Jesus, the Redeemer, is God, the 2nd person of the Trinity, who came to this earth to purchase a people for himself. *Matthew 1:21*
- Whatever Jesus says is true for his words are the word of God.
- When Jesus died on the cross and rose from the dead he purchased a people to be with him forever. *1 Corinthians 15:20-22*
- By virtue of his securing salvation by his death on the cross he is the God-man who reigns over all creation. *Matthew 28:18-20*

What Jesus Accomplished

- He died for his people and purchased for them eternal unconditional acceptance and a transformed life. *Hebrews 10:14-18, Romans 5:6-8*
- To be a believer is to be a priest in the order of Melchizedek, which means that we are saved by the work of Jesus Christ. *1 Peter 1:9-11, Hebrews 10:1-18*
- Because Jesus is our Redeemer all of life and all of eternity is to glorify him. *1 Corinthians 10:31*

The Coming of Jesus

- In the book of Daniel Daniel is given a vision that reveals the son of man as coming on the clouds of heaven and he is given by the Ancient of Days a kingdom that will last forever.

The Book of Revelation

Daniel 7:13-14

- In the book of Revelation Jesus is described as coming to set up his eternal kingdom. This is the 2nd coming of Jesus Christ.
- In the book of Zechariah salvation comes to Israel and this is a picture of salvation coming to the real people of God in the new covenant era. *Zechariah 12:10*
- The regathering of Israel back into the land is fulfilled not literally but spiritually in the church in the new covenant era. *Romans 9:22-26, Hosea 1:10, 2:23*

Final Thought

- The resurrected Christ has always existed and he will always exist as the Lord of heaven and earth.
- Jesus Christ is the center of all history and all things. *Romans 11:33-36*

The First Vision

Revelation 1:9-20

The Setting

Revelation 1:9-10

- The apostle John seems to have been exiled by the Romans to the island of Patmos, which is located southern portion of the Aegean Sea and just southwest of modern day Turkey or the Roman province of Asia.
- The mention of the Lord's Day can be interpreted in one of two ways. It can refer to the 1st day of the week, Sunday, and the commemoration of the resurrection of Jesus Christ, or it can refer to the Day of the Lord as the time in which God is revealing his plan to bring judgment and his plan to completion.
- The problem with view the Lord's Day as referring to Sunday is that it is never used that way outside of this one reference in the book of Revelation.
- There is also the problem that in the New Covenant era under the law of Christ there are no longer any special days to God. *Romans 14:1-8, Colossians 2:16-23, Galatians 4:8-11*
- The view that the Lord's Day refers to the final revealing of God's plan of judgment is criticized because not all of the visions in the book of Revelation refer to the 2nd coming of Jesus Christ.
- The Day of the Lord in the Old Testament prophets always refers to a time of divine judgment. *Isaiah 13:6, Joel 1:15*
- It is my opinion the view that the Lord's Day refers to the revealing of the final judgment and the events that lead up to it best fits into the context of Scripture. *1 Corinthians 10:11*

"In the Spirit"

Revelation 1:10a

- This would refer to the experience of the apostle John in receiving these visions from the Lord. *Ezekiel 2:2, 3:12*
- This would not refer to giving the Spirit control since the believer is always under the control of the Spirit in the sense that the believer cannot miss the changed life that Jesus purchased for him on the cross. *Romans 8:5-14*

"voice like a trumpet"

Revelation 1:10b

- At the beginning of the old covenant era at Mount Sinai the Lord summons Moses and Israel to the mountain by the sound of the trumpet. *Exodus 19:16-19*
- This sounding of the trumpet is used in the *book of Revelation* to introduce John as he is brought by means of a vision into the presence of God to the throne room in heaven.

"write on a scroll what you see"

Revelation 1:11

- John is commanded to record what he hears and sees and to send it to the seven churches in the Roman province of Asia.
- The order of the seven churches cannot be determined by Scripture to have any significance.
- Each of the letters was to be read in all the seven churches. *Revelation 2:7*
- There is no biblical evidence to suggest that each church refers to a church age.

Seven Golden Lampstands

Revelation 1:12

- The seven golden lampstands represent the seven churches mentioned in *Revelation 1:11* and therefore the church. *Revelation 1:20*
- The imagery of the seven lampstands is first seen in the instructions regarding the building of the tabernacle and would seem to represent Israel. *Exodus 25:31-40*
- The number seven most likely refers to completeness.
- The other significant use of the lampstand would come from *Zechariah 4:1-14*. Here the lampstand would see to also refer to Israel.
- The church as the lampstands is the vehicle that God uses to implement his plan of redemption.

"like a son of man"

Revelation 1:12-16

- The imagery of the son of man comes from the *book of Daniel*. *Daniel 7:8-14*
- In *Daniel* the son of man is given the kingdom which is also given to the believers in the kingdom. *Daniel 7:18, 27*

The Book of Revelation

- The imagery of the ancient of days becomes the imagery of the son in the *book of Revelation*. The ancient of days comes in judgment so also Jesus, the son of man, comes in judgment.
- The robe most likely refers to the priestly robes that the Aaronic priests wore during under the old covenant. *Exodus 28:1-5*
- Jesus' role in redemption is a priestly role. *Hebrews 10:11-18*
- "His eyes were like blazing fire" does have some connection with *Daniel 7* where the throne of the ancient of days is "flaming with fire and the wheels were all ablaze." This most likely refers to the judgment that is being exercised by the son. This is also seen in the letter to the church at Thyatira where Jesus sits in evaluation of his church there. *Revelation 2:18-23*
- "His feet were like bronze glowing in a furnace" would seem to refer to a purity that will apply to those who seek to be his children. *Revelation 3:18*
- "Voice was like the sound of rushing waters" finds its Old Covenant connection in the book of Ezekiel where the use of rushing waters would seem to refer to the authority and power of the one who spoke. *Ezekiel 43:1-2*
- "Out of his mouth came a double-edged sword" has a connection with role of the Messiah in bringing judgment. This metaphor is repeated at the end of the *book of Revelation* where Jesus returns in judgment. The sword most likely refers to the Roman short sword that was used in battle. *Isaiah 11:1-4, Revelation 19:5*
- "His face was like the sun shining in all its brilliance" most likely refers to his holiness. *Daniel 10:5-6, Matthew 17:2*

Words of Encouragement

Revelation 1:16-18

- The response to the vision of the son of man is overwhelming. During his first coming Jesus hid his glory most of the time.
- Jesus comforts John by reminding him of who he is.
- "I am the First and the Last" states that the Messiah is clearly in charge of history since he is God who became man and therefore we as his children have no need to fear the future. *Isaiah 44:6, Revelation 21:6*
- "I am the living one" refers to Jesus as the resurrected redeemer who through his resurrection proved that he was God who became man. *Daniel 4:34-35*
- "I hold the keys of death and Hades" refers to the authority that Jesus holds over the realm of death. *1 Corinthians 15:50-57*

Time Frame

Revelation 1:19

- John is told to write what he has seen in his vision.
- John's vision addresses both the present and the future. This would mean that the content of the visions have relevance to both the original hearers as well as all the readers that come after them.

Seven Stars

Revelation 1:20

- Some think that the stars, which are said to be angels, are the pastors of the seven churches. The problem with this is that there is no example or mention of a single pastor in the New Testament. *Hebrews 13:7,13, Titus 1:5, Acts 14:23*
- Some think that the stars are the messengers of each church that will carry the letter to their respective church. This idea has a problem in that the Greek word is always used for angels in the *book of Revelation*. The idea of a messenger has merit yet the rebukes by the Lord are addressed to the "angels" as well as the churches, though if you understand the messenger as representing the church then it does seem to work out.
- Some think that the stars refer to literal angels who watch over each of the seven churches (guardian angels). It is true that we do have a reference to the angel Michael who watches over the people of God (*Daniel 12:1*). We also have demons that are described as being attached to specific nations (*Daniel 10:12-21*). But, the problem with this view is that we do not know how an angel could represent a church.
- The other view is that *the angel of each church is not literally an angel—that is, a distinct spiritual being charged with the welfare of the church. Rather, the angel is the church, viewed from the perspective of Christ's control over his churches: the stars are in his hand. (Triumph of the Lamb, page 63.)*

Seven Lampstands

Revelation 1:20

- The lampstands are the seven churches of the *book of Revelation*.
- The lampstand in the Old Covenant speaks of the lampstand that was put into the tabernacle which referred to the nation of Israel, the temporary, unbelieving picture of the people of God, while the lampstands in the *book of Revelation* refer to the church of Jesus Christ. Both Israel and the church are what the Spirit used and uses to bring about the plan of redemption. *Zechariah 4:1-14, Exodus 25*

Letters to the Seven Churches

Revelation 2,3

The Structure of the Letters

The letters follow a standard template of seven parts though not all the letters contain all seven parts:

1. Address
2. Identification of Jesus
3. Commending the good stuff
4. Pointing out the bad stuff
5. Call to repentance
6. Call to listen to what was said
7. Call to overcome

The Book of Revelation

Ephesus

Revelation 2:1-7

Ephesus was wealthy, prosperous, magnificent, and famous for its shrine of Diana. The city was located near the western coast of Asia Minor, on the Aegean Sea and near the mouth of the Cayster River. Its harbour—in the days of its glory—accommodated the largest ships. Moreover, it was easily accessible by land, for Ephesus was connected by highways with the most important cities of Asia Minor. Ephesus was for a long time the commercial centre of Asia. The temple of Diana was at the same time a treasure house, a museum, and a place of refuge for criminals. It furnished employment for many, including the silversmiths who made miniature shrines of Diana. (Hendriksen, page 60.)

A View of the King

Here the risen Christ is viewed as the Sovereign Lord of his church. He watches over and controls the seven churches. It does not yet appear that the Lord is in sovereign control of all things but he is. *Matthew 28:18-20*

The Issue

The church at Ephesus is a church of **doers**. They are also a church that does not tolerate false teaching. They would seem to be a church that was doctrinally sound. They were not a faint-hearted church in their pursuit of ministry. *Titus 1:9, 2 Timothy 4:2*

The Nicolaitans may be defined as follows: *These constituted a heretical sect in the early church about which we know nothing apart from the references in the Revelation. Ancient church fathers, beginning with Irenaeus, speculated that they formed a heretical sect which was founded by Nicolaus, a proselyte of Antioch (Acts 6:5) who was one of the seven. But we have no sure information to this effect. John refers again to these false teachers in the letter to Pergamum where he gives us more information about them. (Ladd, page 40.)*

The Sin

- The believers at Ephesus had **forsaken their first love**. Our faith is first and foremost a relationship. When one becomes a believer one becomes a God-lover. Works of ministry are to be motivated by our love for our Savior. Anything short of that is unacceptable. *Matthew 22:34-40, Hebrews 8:6-13*
- It is also true that love for God will always bring about a love for one another. One cannot be a God-lover and not have a desire to love one another. *1 John 4:19-21*

The Solution

The Christian life begins with repentance and continues with repentance. Repentance is the evidence of the work of the Spirit in the life of the believer. *Acts 26:20, 2 Corinthians 7:8-11*

The Reward

- Only those who **overcome** get to eat of the tree of life in the paradise of God.
- All true believers will persevere in their faith until they die. Perseverance is the evidence of saving faith. *Hebrews 3:14, Philippians 1:6, Romans 8:30, Philippians 2:12-13*

The tree of life in the paradise of God is a figure for eternal life. The imagery that is used is that of the garden of Eden. Heaven is described in the same imagery as the garden of Eden yet with much more for the believer than Eden. *Genesis 2:8-9, 3:23-24, Revelation 22:1-2*

Smyrna

Revelation 2:8-11

This city, located on an arm of the Aegean Sea, was a rival of Ephesus. It claimed to be the 'First City of Asia in beauty and size'. A gloriously picturesque city, it sloped up from the sea, and its splendid public buildings on the rounded top of the hill Pagos formed what was known as 'the crown of Smyrna'. The westerly breeze, the zephyr, comes from the sea and blows through every part of the city rendering it fresh and cool even during the summer. From the very beginning of Rome's rise to power, even before its days of greatness, Smyrna was its loyal ally and was recognized as such by Rome. The faithfulness and loyalty of the Smyrnians became proverbial. (Hendriksen, page 63.)

A View of the King

Jesus is described as the one "who died and came to life again." These are words of assurance to a church that is about to go through suffering. We must always remember that God uses difficult times for the good of the believer. There are no exceptions to this truth. *1 Peter 1:6-7*

The Issue

#1 their poverty

The origin of the poverty in Smyrna bears some relationship to the church's affliction, according to the statement of v. 9. It is unlikely that it can be traced to the converts' belonging to the poorer class of society. Smyrna was too rich a city this (Swete). Nor is it probable that the Christians' deprived condition came from losing their property when put out of the synagogues at conversion to Christ. In such a Gentile city the church population would have been mostly non-Jewish. Possibly their goods had been pillaged by Jewish or Gentile mobs (Swete), as seems to have been the fate of some (cf. Heb. 10:34). The context suggests that something of this nature was at least a contributing cause of their poverty (cf. 2:9-10). Without excluding this as a factor,

the best explanation is that their poverty resulted from demands made of them because of their faith in Christ. (Thomas, page 163.)

The Book of Revelation

#2 their afflictions

The believers at Smyrna were about to undergo a time of persecution. Believers are called to suffer since our Savior suffered on our behalf. To be identified with Jesus Christ in suffering ought to be an honor for the believer. *1 Peter 2:18-23*

The Sin

There is no sin mentioned in this letter only the warning to the believers to persevere. Our Father in Heaven never puts the believer in a situation that is too difficult for him or which makes sin inevitable.

Philippians 2:12-13, 1 Corinthians 10:13

The Solution

Perseverance is a mark of true belief. Only those who overcome will enter heaven. Everyone whom Jesus died for on the cross will persevere in his or her faith until the end. Lack of perseverance is a sure sign of a lack of saving faith. *Romans 8:28-30, Hebrews 3:14, John 6:44*

The Reward

Only those who **overcome** will not be hurt by the second death. It is in difficult times that believers shine. Suffering or physical death can be the gateway for the believer to eternity with the one they love the most. *Revelation 20:14, Romans 8:10-11*

Pergamum

Revelation 2:12-17

This city was located upon a huge rocky hill which, as it were, plants its foot upon the great surrounding valley. The Romans made it the capital of the province of Asia. Here Aesculapius, the god of healing, was worshipped under the emblem of a serpent, which to believers in Christ was the very symbol of Satan. Here were to be seen the many pagan altars and the great altar of Zeus. All these things may have been in the mind of Christ when he called Pergamum the place 'where Satan dwells'. Yet, it seems to us that the obvious purpose of the Author is to direct our attention to the fact that Pergamum was the capital of the province and, as such, also the centre of emperor-worship. Here the government was carried on and here were the temples dedicated to the worship of Caesar. Here believers were asked to offer incense to the image of the emperors and to say 'Caesar is Lord'. Here Satan has his throne; here he has free rein. (Hendricksen, page 66.)

A View of the King

The Redeemer is viewed as the one *who has the sharp, double-edged sword*. This is picture of judgement and conquest. The book of Revelation shows Jesus Christ as the conqueror over the realm of Satan. *1 John 3:8*

The Issue

The believers at Pergamum lived in a very difficult situation. Living in the very center of emperor worship meant that the believers would live in constant peril. Yet, they have remained faithful to their Lord and they are commended for this.

The Sin

#1 Toleration of those who follow the teaching of Balaam.

In Numbers 24 Balaam persistently refused the request of Barak, king of Moab, to curse Israel. In the account of Israel's seduction to worship Baal in Num. 25 no mention is made of Balaam's agency in causing this defection. Nevertheless, according to Num. 31:16, he had apparently advised Balak that Israel would forfeit God's protection if he could induce them to worship idols, which he did. This tragic incident at Baal-Peor made a deep impression on subsequent generations of Israelites. The doctrine relevant to the downfall resulting from Balaam's counsel advocates that the people of God commit sexual immorality or intermarry with the heathen and compromise in the matter of idolatrous worship. Balaam bears more guilt than even antagonistic King Barak. As an alleged prophet of God, he betrayed his calling and is viewed as the real instigator of the seduction in which 24,000 of God's people fell into idolatrous worship and practices...

The emphasis here is not on selling his prophetic gift for money as in 2 Peter or on assuming erroneously that God would curse Israel as in Jude. It is simply on teaching them to eat things sacrificed to idols and to commit fornication. (Thomas, pages 190-191.)

#2 Toleration of those who hold to the teachings of the Nicolaitans.

The best conclusion is that there were two different but similar groups in this church, both of which had disobeyed the decision of the Jerusalem council in regard to idolatrous practices and fornication (cf. Acts 15:20,29). (Thomas, page 193.)

The Solution

Toleration with the world demands repentance. A continued refusal to repent is a denial that we have saving faith. *Matthew 18:15-20, 1 John 2:3-6*

The Reward

#1 Hidden Manna – A figure for eternal life. Jesus Christ is our spiritual manna forever. *John 6:25-40*

#2 White Stone – It could be a ticket of entrance into eternal life, an everyday picture from Roman life.

Thyatira

Revelation 2:18-29

This place was situated in a valley connecting two other valleys. Lacking natural fortifications and being wide open to attack and invasion, a garrison was generally stationed here in order not only to defend the town but also to obstruct the path of the enemy to Pergamum, the capital. Being the centre of communication, with many people passing through it, Thyatira became a trading city. Here were to be found the trade-guilds: wool-workers, tanners, potters, etc. These trade-guilds were associated with the worship of tutelary deities: each guild had its guardian god. The situation, therefore, was somewhat as follows: if you wish to get ahead in this world, you must belong to a guild; if you belong to a guild, your very membership implies that you

The Book of Revelation

worship its god. You will be expected to attend the guild-festivals and eat food part of which is offered to the tutelary deity and which you receive on your table as a gift from the god. And then, when the feast ends, and the real—grossly immoral—fun begins, you must not walk out unless you desire to become the object of ridicule and persecution! (Hendriksen, page 71.)

A View of the King

This allusion to 1:14 designates Christ as the one whose eyes flash with anger and who is prepared to tread under his feet the enemies of the Christian faith. This stern portrayal prepares us for the equally stern words in verses 26-27. (Ladd, page 50.) Hebrews 10:31

The Issue

Thyatira is distinguished among all seven churches as being the only one commended for both love and service. This church deserves credit for its standards in maintaining this emblem of discipleship called love (cf. John 13:35). (Thomas, pages 211-212.)

The Sin

The church at Thyatira was committing the sin of tolerating the sin of a certain prophetess.

Jezebel was the name of the Phoenician wife of Ahab (1 Kings 16:31) who sought to carry the Northern Kingdom of Israel into the worship of Baal and Astarte (2 Kgs. 9:22) and to engage in associated immoralities and magical practices (Swete). (Thomas, page 213.)

The problem in Thyatira was an unhealthy tolerance. They recognized the presence of the false prophetess; they recognized also the evil character of her teaching, but they tolerantly refused to deal with her. Here is the opposite situation from that in Ephesus. The Ephesians had tested those who called themselves apostles and had rejected pseudo-apostles, but this conflict had made them harsh and censorious. Here is a church abounding and increasing in love and faith which is tolerant of false prophets to her own detriment. (Ladd, pages 51-52.)

The Solution

#1 repent

Faithfulness is the only thing that matters to the believer. There is never an occasion when failure to obey is ever acceptable. *Matthew 7:21-23, 1 Corinthians 5:9-13*

#2 hold on

Perseverance is the responsibility of the believer. Our Father in heaven has promised to keep us, but we must exercise effort in staying faithful to our Lord. *Hebrews 12:4-11, John 10:27-30*

The Reward

#1 authority over the nations - (amil - judge with Christ at the end, premil – reign during millenium)

#2 give the morning star – reference to Jesus Christ (cf. *Revelation 22:16*)

Sardis

Revelation 3:1-6

Sardis, the impregnable, was situated upon a nearly inaccessible hill, overseer of the Hermus Valley, and in ancient times the proud capital of Lydia. Its people were arrogant, over-confident. There were sure—too sure, alas!—that no-one could scale this hill with its perpendicular sides. There was only one point of access: a very narrow neck of land toward the south and this could easily be fortified. But the enemy came, in 549 BC and again in 218 BC, and...took Sardis. One unobserved, unguarded weak point, and oblique crack in the rockwall, the one chance in a thousand for a night attack by skillful mountain-climbers, was all that was necessary to deal a crushing blow to the arrogance of the over-confident citizens of this proud capital. The hill upon which Sardis stood was too small for a growing city. Therefore the ancient Sardis, the acropolis, began to be deserted and a new city arose in its vicinity. When the Apocalypse was written, Sardis was facing decay, a slow but sure death. In the year AD 17 the city was partly destroyed by an earthquake. Thus, again and again, the self-satisfied and boastful inhabitants of Sardis had seen destruction coming upon them 'as a thief in the night', most suddenly and unexpectedly. (Hendricksen, page 73.)

A View of the King

These are the words of him who holds the seven spirits of God and the seven stars. The Lord Jesus Christ does not function as the God of the Deists who creates and then sits back to let the creation goes its own way. *Matthew 28:18-20*

The Issue

Sardis was sinking into spiritual stupor...Whereas in Pergamum and Thyatira a small element of the congregation had fallen into the temptation of the world, in Sardis the congregation as a whole had 'defiled its garments'. Sardis, too, was in the world. It should have been a light-bearer. It failed in its duty. Neither the Jews nor the Gentiles seem greatly to have troubled the people of Sardis. Sardis was a very 'peaceful' church. It enjoyed peace, but it was the peace of the cemetery. (Hendriksen, page 73.)

The Sin

The church at Sardis was a living corpse. The church had become caught up in the world. The sin of compromise characterized the church as a whole. *1 John 2:15-17, Matthew 23:25-29, Galatians 1:10*

The Solution

1. Remember

Those who profess to believe are called to remember what it means to believe in the Lord Jesus Christ. When you receive Jesus you embrace him for all that he is. It is all or nothing.

Joshua 22, 1 Corinthians 11:23-26

The Book of Revelation

2. Repent

True saving faith will always result in a life that lives for Jesus Christ. Every true believer is a God-lover. *Matthew 3:1-10, James 14-24*

The Reward

#1 *with me dressed in white*

To be truly righteous and to be with our Lord is the best of all worlds, Heaven. *Romans 3:21-26, 5:1*

#2 *kept in the book of life*

True believers always heed the warning and persevere in the faith.

Hebrews 10:26-31, Philippians 2:12-13, Matthew 10:32-33, 1 Timothy 2:11-13

Philadelphia

Revelation 3:7-13

This city was situated in a valley, on an important road. It derived its name from Attalus II, 159-138 BC, whose loyalty to his brother Eumenes won him the epithet 'brother-lover'. It was founded with the intention of being a centre for the spread of the Greek language and manners in Lydia and in Phrygia and so from the very beginning it was a missionary city and very successful in its purpose.

A View of the King

Jesus is described as the one "who holds the key of David."

The key of David can be understood only in its Old Testament setting. In Isaiah 22:22, Eliakim received the key of the chief steward of the king's household, and as the representative of the king, he was authorized to exercise full administrative authority in the king's name. The key of David is the key to David's house—the messianic Kingdom. The immediate background of the phrase was the claim of the Jews in Philadelphia that they were the true people of God who held the key to the Kingdom of God. John contradicts this claim by asserting that the key to the kingdom which had belonged to Israel really belongs to Jesus as the Davidic Messiah (5:5; 22:16) and had been forfeited by Israel because she had rejected her Messiah. It is Christ alone and no longer Israel who can give men entrance into the messianic Kingdom. (Ladd, pages 58-59.)

The Issue

Open Door – 2 Options

#1 *The more common interpretation is that it denotes a great opportunity for missionary activity. Paul uses the metaphor in this way. He writes to the Corinthians of his plans to stay in Ephesus until Pentecost, "for a wide door for effective work has opened to me" (I Cor 16:9; cf. II Cor 2:12; Col 4:3). (Mounce, page 117.)*

#2 *The open door seems to be referring to the issue of salvation and more specifically to the promise of God to save completely those who come to Jesus in repentance and faith. The synagogue of Satan will not keep the believers in Philadelphia from entering into the presence of the Lord.*

Philippians 1:6

Jews at your feet – 2 Options

#1 *The church in Philadelphia would be exalted before the Jews.*

#2 *The ultimate conversion of the Jews at the end of the age would bring Jews to "acknowledge that I have loved you." The sin it is only the churches of Smyrna and*

Philadelphia that receive no rebukes. There is no specific sin for which they are called to repent.

The Solution

The hour of trial seems to be referring to a time of persecution that the Lord will keep the church in Philadelphia from experiencing.

The Reward (figures for eternal life)

pillar in the temple – Believers are described as living stones making up a spiritual temple. *1 Peter 2:4-10* The place of the believer in God's temple is permanent, lasting into eternity. *Romans 8:30*

write on him the name of my God

When Christ comes as the mighty conqueror, he has a name inscribed which no one knows but himself (19:12). This is a symbolic way of suggesting the glory and majesty of Christ at his revelation, which will be shared by his followers. (Ladd, pages 63-64.)

Laodicea

Revelation 3:14-22

Laodicea was situated in the neighborhood of hot springs. Emitting lukewarm water from the mouth was a figure which its citizens could easily understand. A famous school of medicine grew up here, producing, among other things, a remedy for weak eyes. In this city the soft black wool for the sheep of the valley was woven into garments. But Laodicea was especially famous for its wealth. Located at the confluence of three great highways—be sure to consult a map—it grew rapidly into a great commercial and financial centre. It was the home of the millionaires. There were, of course, theatres, a stadium, and a gymnasium equipped with baths. It was a city of bankers and finance. So wealthy was this city that its inhabitants declined to receive aid from the government after the place had been partly wrecked by an earthquake. (Hendriksen, page 76.)

A View of the King

These are the words of the Amen, the faithful and true witness,

In John 18:37 Jesus states for this I came into the world, to testify to the truth. Unlike the Laodiceans, Jesus was faithful to his father and all that he said and did reflected this. Faithfulness is the only thing that counts for the believer.

The Book of Revelation

The Issue

The physical location of Laodicea put it in the vicinity of two other cities, Hieropolis and Colosse. Hieropolis had the hot springs that had medicinal value. Colosse had cold springs that provided refreshing drinking water. By the time the water from both sources reached Laodicea the temperature of both sources of water would have been lukewarm. Thus, the hot springs would have lost its medicinal value and the cold springs would have lost their refreshing value.

The Laodiceans are accused of having lukewarm hearts that are not fit for the kingdom of God. Their deeds were spiritual indifferent and therefore merited the divine judgment for their deeds were not the evidence of those redeemed by the Savior. *Romans 6:17*

The Sin

The church at Laodicea was self-satisfied and did not need the Lord. They saw themselves as having it all, when, if the truth were to be told, they were spiritually poor and in need of everything. *Luke 18:9-14*

The Solution

Revelation 3:20 calls all professed believers to bring the Lordship of Jesus Christ to every part of their lives. Believers are to have Jesus Christ as the focal point of their lives. True faith always brings about a changed life. Saving faith is then described in three different ways.

#1 *buy from me gold refined in the fire so that you can become rich*

A believer values what his Savior and Lord values. *Matthew 6:33*

#2 *white clothes to wear so that you can cover your shameful nakedness*

A believer has a new heart and desires to live for Jesus. *Titus 3:3-7*

#3 *salve to put on your eyes, so that you can see*

A believer has the mind of Christ. *1 Corinthians 2:14-16*

The Reward

I will give the right to sit with me on my throne

If we persevere until the end then we will be with our Lord and will reign with him for all eternity. Although the details of this are not clear it is clear that we will be IN CHRIST for all eternity. *2 Timothy 2:12*

The Throne Room Scene in Heaven

Revelation 4:1-11

Is this the Rapture?

Revelation 4:1

- In historical Dispensationalism *Revelation 4:1* is scene as a proof text for the rapture of the church at the beginning of the 7-year tribulation.
- There is nothing in the context that would lead you to that conclusion.
- The context of this passage is a change in location in the vision from the earth to heaven.
- Scripture does speak of the rapture, but only as taking place when Jesus returns to this earth. *1 Thessalonians 4:13-18, Matthew 24:26-41*

Timing?

- The only thing that we can be certain about is that this vision takes place after the giving of the letters to the 7 churches.
- Historical chronology does not seem to be the issue of these visions in the book of Revelation. Truths of the time of fulfillment are being described from both an earthly and heavenly perspective. *1 Corinthians 10:11*

The Throne

Revelation 4:2-6a

- When we are first introduced to the throne room scene in the book of Revelation we are immediately reminded of the throne scene vision that Ezekiel experienced. *Ezekiel 1*
- The one who sat on the throne reminds us of the vision given to Daniel as well as the scene in Ezekiel. *Daniel 7:9, Ezekiel 1:26-28*
- The description of our God is given in the colors of precious stones.
The name Jasper was applied to a variety of precious stones in the ancient world, ranging in color from reddish through amber to green, and from opaque to translucent. From the comparison of the radiance of the new Jerusalem to "crystal-clear jasper" (Rev. 21:11, 18-19), we can infer that John's readers would have pictured a stone through which light shines, perhaps the precious green. Sardius, also known as carnelian, is a reddish stone that also appears among the twelve foundation stones of the new Jerusalem (22:20). (Johnson, p. 98)
- The rainbow ties this vision with the one given to Ezekiel. Though his throne was movable, this one is fixed. *Ezekiel 1:28*
- The flashes of lightening, rumblings and peals of thunder quickly cause us to think back to Mt. Sinai and the giving of the Old Covenant to Israel. *Exodus 19:16-19*
- The seven lamps symbolize the Holy Spirit, which once again finds its symbolic origins in the tabernacle furniture of the Old Covenant. *Exodus 25:31-40*
- The sea of glass that is before the throne finds its origins in both Exodus and Ezekiel and seems to be contrasted with the earthly sea out of which great evil comes. *Exodus 24:10, Ezekiel 1:22, Revelation 13:1*

Those Around the Throne

Revelation 4:4-11

- The meaning of the 24 elders is a much-debated topic.
- *Perhaps it reflects the twenty-four orders of priests and the twenty-four orders of singers in the Old Testament temple, since they worship in God's heavenly sanctuary (1 Chron. 24:7-19; 25:6-31). (Johnson, p. 100)*

The Book of Revelation

- Or they may foreshadow the two sets of twelve in the new Jerusalem: twelve gates of pearl, bearing the names of Israel's tribes (21:12,21), and twelve foundation stones, bearing the names of the Lamb's apostles (21:14, 19-20). Thus the elders are sometimes understood as a portrait of the whole church, under the old covenant and new. (Johnson, p. 100)
- This identification however is problematic. The elders function, as do angels elsewhere, as agents of revelation and explanation to John (5:5; 7:13-14). They speak as third-party observers of the church's redemption, singing together with the four living creatures, ... (5:9-10; 7:14-15). Later, the Lamb's army "sang a new song before the throne and before the four living creatures and the elders" (14:3). (Johnson, p. 100)
- The elders are therefore the council of the Lord's heavenly servants and advisors rather than a symbolic representation of the church, militant or triumphant. (Johnson, p. 100)
- The four living creatures share much resemblance with the cherubim and seraphim of the Old Testament. *Ezekiel 1:4-14, 10:20, Isaiah 6:2-3*
- Like the wheels associated with Ezekiel's living creatures, John's living creatures are "full of eyes around and within," reflecting the omniscience of the One whom they worship (*Ezek 1:18; Rev. 4:6,8*). (Johnson, p. 100.)
- Perhaps the most significant difference between Ezekiel and Revelation is the absence of these wheels in John's vision. Ezekiel's vision assured the exiles in Babylon that, despite the temple's destruction and their deportation, the Lord had not retracted the promise of his presence but would travel with them to the place of their captivity. (Johnson, p. 100)
- The way into the presence of God has always been blocked. Whether it is the garden of Eden (*Genesis 3:24*), the ark of the covenant (*Exodus 25:18*), or the holy of holies in the temple (*1 Kings 6:23-28*), the cherubim stand guard. But, in Jesus Christ we have the freedom to go boldly to the throne of grace and therefore the apostle John is invited to come into the throne room of God. *Hebrews 4:16*
- Both the living creatures and the elders give praise to the one who sits on the throne. *The praises around the throne move from contemplation of who God is in himself, to his work of creation, and then on to the apex of worthiness, the work of redemption accomplished by the Lamb.* (Johnson, p. 103)

The Scroll and the Lamb

Revelation 5

The Scroll

Revelation 5:1-3

- The documents of the early church were not written in the form of a book but a scroll.
- The early documents were written on papyrus while the later documents were written on vellum, which is animal skin. Typically, these documents were only written on one side due to the difficulty of preparing the opposite side.
- The vision of the prophet Ezekiel introduces the idea of a scroll written on both sides that contain a word of prophecy from the Lord. *Ezekiel 2:9-3:3*
- The scroll is *Revelation 5* is the bringing of all things to their final conclusion and ushering in the eternal state.

The Dilemma Regarding the Scroll

Revelation 5:4-5

- The question that is asked in heaven is, "Who is worthy to break the seals and open the scroll?" John weeps when he sees that no one is worthy to open the scroll.
- The only one who has ever existed that is truly worthy is Jesus, the God-man. *Matthew 19:16-17, John 1:1-2*
- The solution to the dilemma is found in the person of Jesus Christ who was prophesied to be the savior of the world. *Genesis 49:8-12, John 1:29*
- Jesus comes from the line of David and though Israel gets destroyed there will remain a remnant so that the Messiah can come to redeem his people. *Isaiah 11:1,10*

Hear and See

Revelation 5:5-6

- John first hears about the one who can open the scroll. What he hears is the prophetic description of the coming Messiah.
- John sees the Jesus as the lamb that was slain.
- John hears the language of the picture and sees the true fulfillment. *Revelation 7:4-10*

The Lamb and the Throne

Revelation 5:6-8

- In the beginning of John's visions God is on the throne. *Revelation 1:4-5, 5:1-5*
- In the scene with the scroll we now see that Jesus "standing in the center of the throne."
- At the close of the throne room scene in chapter 5 we see that the angelic hosts give equal honor and praise to both the Father and the Son. *Revelation 5:13-14*
- Both the Father and the Son are God. *John 10:30, Matthew 28:18-20*

Seven Horns and Seven Eyes of the Lamb

Revelation 5:6

- Consequently in the symbolism of the Bible's apocalyptic literature, horns represent powerful kings or nations (*Dan. 7:24; Zech. 1:18-21*). The Lamb's seven horns show his supreme worthiness to receive the praises that greet his appearance (*Rev. 5:9, 12, 13*), but they primarily portray his supreme power. They are the visual equivalent of the title **Almighty**, ascribed to the Lord God (*1:8, 4:8*). (Johnson, p. 107)

The Book of Revelation

- *The Lamb's seven eyes show his omniscience as well as the mode of his presence with his embattled churches, for the eyes, like the seven lamps before God's throne, symbolize "the seven Spirits of God, sent out into all the earth" (Rev 5:6)... The Lamb has all power and all knowledge, extending to the earth's farthest corner. In omniscience he can say to each church, "I know." (Johnson, p. 107) Zechariah 4:2,10*

Prayers of the Saints

Revelation 5:8

John introduces the prayers of believers as they play an integral part in God's plan for the end.

Revelation 6:9-11, 8:3-5

The Lamb Purchased a People

Revelation 5:9-10

- Jesus purchased a people on the cross from all over the world. His death was for a specific people. *Hebrews 10:14-18, John 10:14-16*
- Those whom Jesus purchased will reign with him in the new heavens and new earth.
2 Timothy 2:12
- Those who Jesus purchased on the cross, when they believe, will enter into the true kingdom of God of which Israel was the temporary picture. *Colossians 1:13, Matthew 8:5-12*
- To be a believer is to join Jesus in his priesthood, the Melchizedek priesthood.
Hebrews 7:11-28, 1 Peter 2:9-10
- To be a priest means that we do not have to go through a mediator to get to God.
Hebrews 4:14-16
- Through the work of Jesus on the cross we have been made part of the family of God and are therefore given the status as sons. *Galatians 4:1-7*

Old Song vs New Song

Revelation 5:8-10

- The Song of Moses was the old song that described the Lord's saving or redeeming Israel from the slavery of the Egyptians and Pharaoh.
Exodus 15
- The new song is the Song of the Lamb which describes the spiritual salvation of all those for whom Jesus died.
- The song of Moses is a physical picture of the salvation that was accomplished by the work of Jesus on the cross and which is being described in the new song of the lamb.
Isaiah 42:8-13

Angelic Response to the Lamb

Revelation 5:11-14

- All of the angelic beings in heaven break out in a symphony of praise to the Lamb.
- Then all of the redeemed break out in praise of the Lamb.
- The phrase "every creature in heaven and on earth and under the earth and on the sea, and all that is in them" is a descriptive phrase for all men. *Philippians 2:10, Psalm 146:6*

The Seals

Revelation 6

Thoughts to Ponder

- It is the Lamb in the middle of the throne that is opening the seals that bring judgment to the earth.
- Notice that it is one of the four living creatures, which are continually before the throne, who issue forth the judgments that the four horsemen bring upon the earth.
- Our God who sits upon his throne is the first cause of all things. *Ephesians 1:11*

Time Frame for the Seals

Matthew 24:1-14, Luke 21:5-28

- Jesus warns his followers that there will be wars and disasters all throughout the New Covenant era before his 2nd Coming.
- The New Covenant era, from Pentecost until the 2nd Coming, is that period of time God is using to collect the elect into his family. *Acts 1:4-8*
- The restoration of Israel is fulfilled in the New Covenant era with the establishing of the church, the real people of God. *Romans 9:23-26*
- The time frame of the 1st four seals is the New Covenant era. These seals describe what will take place throughout that era.

First Four Seals

- The first four seals as well as the first four trumpets are grouped together.
- The four horsemen find their initial meaning in the Old Testament in the book of Zechariah where we find four chariot horses (red, black, white, dappled). *Zechariah 6:1-8*
The chariots that appeared to Zechariah symbolized "the four spirits [or winds] of heaven," sent out from the Lord's presence to the four points of the compass, bringing judgment on the nations that had oppressed Judah. (Johnson, page 117.)
- The four horsemen in the book of Revelation ride horses that are white, red, black, and pale.
John likewise sees four horses and riders gallop through the earth, summoned by God attendants to wreak havoc on his enemies. The first four seals show the instruments that the Lamb uses to judge those who oppose his rule and oppress his church. (Johnson, page 117.)

1st Seal (rider on white horse)

Revelation 6:1-2

The Book of Revelation

- There is a controversy regarding this rider. One view states that the rider is Jesus and what is being described is the conquest of the gospel. The other view states that the rider is the judgment of war upon the world.
- Those who hold that the rider of the white horse is Jesus refer to *Revelation 1, 19:11*.
- Those who hold that the rider of the white horse is Jesus make note of the white horse and its use for a conquering hero.
- The rider of the white horse is God's instrument for judgment and the color white corresponds to its Old Testament reference. *Zechariah 6:1-8*
- The rider of the white horse is God's instrument for judgment because the rider is carrying a bow and wearing a crown. In *Revelation 19:11-6* the rider is carrying a sharp sword and is wearing many crowns.

- *The clearest indication that the first rider of Revelation 6 is Christ's instrument of judgment but not Christ is this rider's association with the three that follow him, since it is beyond dispute that they symbolize disasters that lead to loss of life: violent warfare, siege and famine, and finally epidemic pestilence and the grave. All four ride forth to afflict the earth in obedience to the cherubim's commands. The rider of the white horse could well be called Conquest. It is appropriate that he lead this terrible cavalry of violence, famine, and death, for the expansionist aspirations of rulers precipitate military conflict and scarcity of such resources as food and medicine, leading to malnutrition, starvation, epidemic, and death. He is armed with a bow, the weapon of the feared Parthian mounted archers who threatened the Roman Empire's eastern boundary in the first century—a grim reminder to those who dwelt in the east (Asian, for instance) that the celebrated **Pax Romana** was not as inviolable as the Caesars' devotees believed. Yet this portrait of human avarice for power, galloping greedily through its present domain toward regions yet to conquer, is nothing more than God's instrument of judgment, sent forth by the Lamb through his breaking the first seal.* (Johnson, pages 119-120.)

2nd Seal (rider on red horse)

Revelation 6:3-4

- Conquest results in bloodshed, famine, and death.
- The rider of the red horse would seem to stand for the bloodshed that accompanies military conquest.
- *Conquest leads to bloodshed in battle. Both serve the will of the Lamb.* (Johnson, page 121)

3rd Seal (rider on black horse)

Revelation 6:5-6

- *Famine can be brought on by natural causes such as drought or infestation (Deut. 28:23-24, 38-42). But here, in the company of riders symbolizing conquest and warfare, the scarcity of sustenance-level food should be attributed to the conditions of war, disrupting trade and transportation during the siege (Deut. 28:49-57; 2 Kings 7).* (Johnson, pages 121-122)
- As bad as this judgment could be it is only a partial judgment. The fullness of judgment awaits the 2nd Coming of the King of kings.
- *As Christians see societies crumble and collapse, our response should not be terrified alarm, as though our security were bound up with a fragile human network of law and order, but anticipation and confidence: the Lamb is now on the throne, with God's plan for history firmly in hand.* (Johnson, page 122)

4th Seal (rider on the pale or ashen horse)

Revelation 6:7-8

- *The color of the fourth horse (NASB: "ashen") differs from its "dappled" counterpart in Zechariah's vision (Zech. 6:3). The horse John sees is literally green, the color of grass and other plants (Rev. 8:7, 9:4; Mark 6:39). As in modern English so in ancient Greek, when applied to people's appearance, "green" signified the pallor of illness or even death. Hence this horse, befitting its riders, exhibits the pale green, ashen color of death.* (Johnson, page 123)
- The Old Testament description of God's judgments can be seen in God's judgment on Israel. *Ezekiel 14:12-21*

5th Seal (martyrs under the throne)

Revelation 6:9-11

- *But Jesus said that despite the world-shaking impact of such disasters, "the end does not follow immediately." This delay poses the problem portrayed in the fifth seal.* (Johnson, page 124)
 - With the opening of the 5th seal the perspective shifts from the earth to heaven.
 - The altar that is being discussed is actually the combination of the two altars of the tabernacle. *Exodus 27:1-8, 30:1-10* John sees a single altar, "the altar" as he always calls it, which serves the purposes of both altars in the earthly shadow sanctuary (*Heb 8:5; 9:11*), but this altar has also witnessed the shedding of blood in the slaughter of Jesus' martyrs (*16:6-7*). (Johnson, page 125)
 - Those who are under the altar are those who have been slain for their faith. This group corresponds to the people of God that Jesus redeemed by his death on the cross.
- Revelation 7:9*
- The martyrs are viewed as the whole of the people of God even though they literally only make up a portion of the people of God. This can be seen by the white robes that they wear which are also worn by the great multitude of *Revelation 7*.
 - The white robes represent for the victorious believer who perseveres in the faith who are at rest in heaven. *Revelation 3:5*
 - Those under the altar are the same group as those who are being described in *Revelation 20*.
- Revelation 20:4*
- The lament of the martyrs is answered by the 6th seal and the 2nd Coming of Jesus Christ.
- 2 Peter 3:8-10*

The Book of Revelation

- The time of the seals is the New Covenant era and all this will continue until the last of the elect comes to saving faith and then the end will come. *Matthew 24:14*

6th Seal (2nd Coming)

Revelation 6:12-17

- Seal 5 explained the restraint of the judgments of the seals 1-4, showing that the end will not come until all martyrs have died. Now seal 6 provides the balancing assurance that the end will come certainly and suddenly. (Johnson, pages 126-127)
- The earthquake is introduced in *Exodus 19:18* with the inauguration of the Old Covenant era, the era of the picture, on Mount Sinai. The great earthquake, which brings in the 2nd Coming, is seen also in *Revelation 16:18* with the pouring out of the 7th bowl.
- Regarding the signs in the heavens Johnson speaks of their origins in the Old Testament. *This imagery has Old Testament precedent: sun darkened and moon turned to blood (Joel 2:31), stars falling like figs in the wind and sky rolled like a scroll (Isa. 34:4), mountains and islands displaced (Isa. 54:10; Ezek. 38:20).* (Johnson, page 127)
- *The sixth seal carries us beyond the present period of limited, providential judgments on earth (seals 1-4) and martyrs' rest in heaven (seal 5). This destruction falls not on a portion of rebellious humanity or a fraction of the spheres that touch human life but on the whole of the earth and the sky. It falls specifically on those light signs (sun, moon, stars) placed into the firmament at creation's dawn to separate light from dark, day from night, and to mark time's passage as long as the first heavens and earth endure (Gen. 1:14-18). But before the end is revealed, John sees the surprising positive answer to the rebels' question, "Who is able to stand?" (Johnson, page 128) 2 Peter 3:10-14*

The People of God

Revelation 7

Interludes

- *Revelation 7* is the first of two interludes in the book of Revelation. The other interlude is found in *Revelation 10:1-11:13*.
- The first interlude answers the question that John posed at the end of chapter 6.
- *This interlude, like the visions that separate the sixth trumpets from the seventh (Rev. 10:1-11:13), serves two purposes. First, the interlude visions reassure the church that the woes inflicted by the wrath of the Lamb on rebellious humanity cannot sever us from his protective care. Second, the interludes dramatize the delay of final judgment, which evoked the martyr's lament (6:10). Those who hear Revelation read aloud experience delay and suspense in the unfolding of the drama (cf. 7:3; 10:6).* (Johnson, pages 128-129)

Four Angels

- The four angels symbolize the delay in destruction of the earth until the servants of God are sealed.
- The four corners of the earth symbolize all of the earth. *Isaiah 11:12, Ezekiel 7:2*
- *The scene takes us back to a time prior to the events of the sixth seal, which showed the destruction of the universe through earthquake and falling stars.* (Johnson, page 129)
- Please note that the sequence of visions does not reflect historical chronology.

144,000

Revelation 7:1-8

- The first mention of sealing the servants of God is found in *Ezekiel 9* when Ezekiel has a vision in which he sees judgment delayed on Jerusalem until those *who grieve and lament over all the detestable things that are done in it* are sealed by the heavenly messenger.
- In *Ephesians 1:13-14* Paul describes the believer as one who has been sealed by the Holy Spirit. In this context Paul is referring to the changed life of the believer as the evidence that they belong to the Lord.
- Believers are described as those who have the name of God on them, which symbolizes that they belong to God's family. *Revelation 3:11-12*
- Those who do not believe are also marked out. They are given the mark of the beast since they belong to Satan. *Revelation 13:16, 1 John 3:10*
- The twelve tribes are a unique grouping of the tribes that is found in nowhere else in the Bible. This would cause us to conclude that this numbering of the tribes of Israel was not meant to be taken literally.
- Like all numbers in the book of Revelation they are symbolic and would seem to signify completeness.

Reordering of the 12 Tribes of Israel

- Reuben loses his place of first-born honor as a result of his sin in having sex with his father's concubines. *Genesis 49:3-4, 1 Chronicles 5:1-2*
- *Judah is promoted from the fourth position to first as the tribe of the Messiah, Jesus.* (Johnson, page 132)
- *The sons of the concubines (technically slaves of the competing wives Leah and Rachel, pressed by their mistresses into service as surrogate mothers) are promoted from the end of the line to positions three through six, above six of the sons of the wives, Leah and Rachel.*
- *The elevation of these descendants of women who were outsiders to the covenant family signifies the inclusion of the Gentiles among "the bond-servants of our God" (Rev 7:3.)* (Johnson, page 132)
- *Dan however is replaced by Joseph's son Manasseh because the tribe of Dan became notorious in Israel's history for leading the northern kingdom into idolatrous apostasy (Judg. 18, 1 Kings 12:29-30)...* (Johnson, page 132)
- *Thus the order of the tribes in Revelation 7 symbolize the reign of Jesus, from the tribe of Judah; the incorporation of outcasts; and the exclusion of idolaters from the covenant community that God shields from his terrible wrath.* (Johnson, page 132)

(Chart by Dennis Johnson, *Triumph of the Lamb*, page 133)

The Book of Revelation

Genesis 35:23-26

Revelation 7:5-8

Sons of Wives

Of Leah

Reuben	Judah (tribe of Messiah, Rev 5:5)
Simeon	Reuben
Levi	Gad
Judah	Asher
Issachar	Naphtali
Zebulun	Manasseh (replacing Dan)

Of Rachel

Joseph	Simeon
Benjamin	Levi

Sons of Concubines

Of Bilhah

Dan	Issachar
Naphtali	Zebulun

Of Zilpah

Gad	Joseph
Asher	Benjamin

Hear and See

- John hears the number of those who are sealed from the tribes of Israel. He sees the great multitude before the throne in front of the lamb.
- What John hears is the description of the people of God in their Old Covenant setting, Israel.
- What John sees is the true people of God in their fulfillment.
- Israel functions as a temporary, unbelieving picture of the people of God. *Hebrews 8:7-13, Matthew 8:5-12, Matthew 21:33-46* With the coming of the New Covenant era the apostle Paul redefines what is a Jew. By that he means what makes one a part of the real people of God. *Romans 2:28-29*
- The promise of regathering Israel is given in a literal Israelite, but the fulfillment is in the church which is the real people of God. The church does indeed replace Israel as the people of God. *Romans 9:22-26, Hosea 1:10, Hosea 2:24*
- In the figurative story of Hagar and Sarah the apostle Paul uses Sarah, the mother of all Israelites, to stand for all true believers, the church. *Galatians 4:21-31*

Great Multitude

Revelation 7:9-17

- The great crowd before the throne is the true people of God, those for whom Jesus died, *from every tribe and language and people and nation. Revelation 5:9-10*
- There is a great moment of praise by the heavenly host around the throne for the great multitude are the visible evidence that the Son, as the redeemer, has fulfilled his task. The plan of God has been accomplished.
- In answer to the question, who are they, and where did they come from? John is told that they are the ones who have come out of the great tribulation. Here as in *Revelation 6:9-11* the believers are described in terms of martyrs, for all believers must go through trials to enter the kingdom of God. *Acts 14:22*
- The description of the multitude describes all believers who upon death go to be with the Lord. *Philippians 1:21-24*
- *In response to the sixth seal's terrifying preview of final judgment and the desperate question, "Who is able to stand?" these visions assure the Lamb's flock that nothing in the present or the future will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ. Those marked as God's treasure by the seal of his name are secured and sheltered from his burning wrath to come. They are the people of the covenant, portrayed as twelve complete tribes. But now the Lamb has conquered through his death, God's covenant embraces all nations, tribes, peoples, and tongues. The Israel secured by God's seal is a multiethnic multitude, dressed in robes washed white in the Lamb's blood and praising him for his salvation.*
(Johnson, pages 135-136)

The 7th Seal

Revelation 8:1-5

Meaning of 7th Seal

- The 7th seal is the introduction into the 7 trumpets.
- The 7th seal gives the explanation for the judgments of the 7 trumpets.
- The 7th seal describes the judgments as the response to the prayers of the saints.
- In *Revelation 8:3* it is the prayer of all the saints that is mentioned in connection with the altar in heaven. This would seem to mean that the martyrs describes in *Revelation 6:10* are really a description of all believers.

Silence in Heaven

- *This silence is the calm before the storm. For God's enemies on earth it is a silence of dread, but for those who dwell in heaven it is the silence of eager expectation.* (Johnson, page 136)

The Book of Revelation

- Silence is set the scene for the judgment of God. In *Revelation 8:1* the silence is a dramatic effect to prepare us what is to come. *Zechariah 2:13, Zephaniah 1:7-9*

The Trumpets

Revelation 8:6-9:21

Meaning of the 7 Trumpets

This is the message of the trumpet visions shown to John: wars must happen, but the end is not yet... The trumpet visions portray limited disasters and distresses in the midst of history, events that are bitter foretastes of the final, unrestrained destruction of all opposition to God's reign at the end of the present world order. The correspondence between the spheres afflicted in the sounding of the first four trumpets and those destroyed in the pouring of the first four bowls (earth, sea, rivers and streams, sky) shows that God's righteous wrath summons every aspect of our environment to indict human rebellion, both through the flow of history (trumpets) and its climax (bowls). (Johnson, pages 139-140)

The trumpets recapitulate the seals. But whereas the first five seals focused on the trials through which believers must pass, now the focus in the first six trumpets is on judgments that unbelievers, both inside and outside the visible church, must endure. The trumpets resemble some of the trials pictured in the seals, but now the primary purpose of the trials is to punish.

(Book of Revelation, G.K. Beale, published by Eerdmans, 1999, pages 472-473)

The fact that the falling fire originates in the heavenly altar before the throne of God alerts us to the symbolic form of the trumpet visions. There are allusions to the physical plagues that fell on Egypt before the exodus, and the form of falling fire devastate different spheres of the physical order. Yet the purpose of portraying these judgments as the descent of burning objects from the sky is not to equate them with missiles or meteors, atomic fallout, acid rain, or volcanic ash. Rather it is to stress that the destruction that decimates the physical world through warfare, other human evils, or natural disaster is ultimately the outworking of God's sovereign purpose, defending his people and warning his enemies. (Johnson, pages 142-143)

Significance of the Use of Trumpets

- *In biblical literature the sound of the trumpet announces the coming of God in splendor and victory. (Johnson, page 140)*
- The first mention of trumpets is found in *Exodus 19:16* when by means of the trumpet blast the nation of Israel was told that now God was going to meet with his people on Mount Sinai.
- In *Joshua 6:2-5* the seven trumpets were used to signify the time when God would bring judgment on the city of Jericho.
- The blowing of the trumpet in *Joel 2:1-2* would seem to be the most relevant of all the trumpet passages and most coincide with what is taking place in *Revelation 8* and the sounding of the trumpets to announce the coming of God's judgments.
- Trumpets sound the alarm, but in this case all for naught. Judgments alone will never bring about true repentance and faith. *Revelation 9:20-21, John 6:44*

First Four Trumpets

Just as the first four seals were grouped together so the first four trumpets are to be viewed as a distinct group. This is part of the literary structure of the visions of the book of Revelation.

1st Trumpet

Revelation 8:7

- The 1st trumpet brings forth a judgment that has its imagery in the plagues of Egypt.
- The 7th plague brought hail and fire. *Exodus 9:13-35*
- The mixture of blood along with hail and fire would seem to indicate that this judgment comes along with war.
- Just as the 7th plague did not destroy everything so the judgment of the 1st trumpet will be a limited judgment. *Exodus 9:31-32*
- It is helpful to note that just as the land of Goshen, the land of the Israelites, was spared the 7th plague so shall the believers be protected since they are sealed by God. *Exodus 9:26, Revelation 7:1-3*

2nd Trumpet

Revelation 8:8-9

- When John says, "something like a huge mountain" he is describing a vision and his perception of what he sees.
- The 1st plague of Egypt only partially describes this trumpet judgment. *Exodus 7:20-21*
- In *Revelation 18* the fall of Babylon is described. Babylon is the system of the world. *John sees in symbolic form the disruption of the trade network that kept the Babylon of his day, Rome's sea-centered empire, afloat. (Johnson, page 144)*
- *The worldly powers that oppress God's true Israel are to be shaken at the source of their confidence. Again, however, the judgment on the sea is limited as God's wrath remains restrained. (Johnson, page 145)*
- Please note that this is a limited judgment.

3rd Trumpet

Revelation 8:10-11

- Judgment on Israel at the time of Jeremiah was described in terms of bitter or poisoned waters. *Jeremiah 9:15-16*

The Book of Revelation

- The 3rd trumpet also uses the imagery of the 1st plague of Egypt where the water of the Nile has been turned into blood and it not only kills fish but is unfit to drink. *Exodus 8:24*
- *Through humanity's avarice and violence another basic resource on which life depends, water, is made repugnant and lethal rather than refreshing and life giving. Again, however, the defilement is limited.* (Johnson, page 146)

4th Trumpet

Revelation 8:12

- *At the opening of the sixth seal John saw the sun blackened, the moon turned blood-red, and the stars fallen to earth like figs (Rev. 6:12-13); yet now he sees sun, moon, and stars still shining in the sky and then struck with only partial dimming. This confirms our conclusion that the sixth seal provided a preview of the final dissolution of the old created order, in preparation for the new heavens and earth. The fourth trumpet judgment, however, symbolizes providential disasters that precede the final cataclysm.* (Johnson, page 146)
- The imagery seems to come from the 9th plague in Egypt where darkness came over the land. *Exodus 10:21-23*
- *If we seek a literal referent for the judgment portrayed in this vision, it may be found in the blackening of the skies by the smoke of burning fields and smoldering cities, sacked and put to the torch by their military conquerors.* (Johnson, page 146)

Message of the Eagle

Revelation 8:13

- *The last three trumpets are woes to come on "those who dwell on the earth." Whereas the first four affected the spheres surrounding and supporting human life, the last three will target rebellious humanity directly.* (Johnson, page 147)
- The three woes of the last three trumpets come to completion in chapters 8, 9, and 11. *Revelation 8:13, 9:12, 11:14*
- The 1st woe takes place after the 5th trumpet is sounded and is completed before the 6th trumpet is sounded.
- The 2nd woe takes place after the sounding of the 6th trumpet and is completed before the 7th trumpet is sounded.
- The 3rd woe takes place after the 7th trumpet is sounded and yet that trumpet brings on a great celebration in heaven. *The final woe is the climax of God's wrath on earth, revealed in the outpouring of the bowls containing the seven last plagues, the destruction of Babylon, and the defeat of the beasts, those who follow them, and the dragon.* (Johnson, page 147)

5th Trumpet

Revelation 9:1-12

- As with the first four seals the first four trumpets make up a unique group. With the 5th trumpet begins something unique for us to consider.
- With the 1st coming of Jesus Christ Satan is described as defeated. *Luke 10:18*
- It is the cross that was the true defeat of Satan. At the cross Jesus purchased a people for himself. *Revelation 5:9-10*
- The imagery of the locust comes from the Old Testament. First you have the locusts 8th plague of Egypt, and then you have army of locusts that bring destruction to the southern kingdom of Judah. *Exodus 10:14-15, Joel 2:1-2*
- *The locust army of the fifth trumpet symbolizes demonic torment inflicted on the minds and souls of "those who dwell on the earth," who lack the seal of God's name on their thoughts and lives. The destructive power of these locusts is great, and yet it is restricted by God.* (Johnson, pages 148-149)
- It is from the throne that these Satanic hordes are sent and they do not inflict the believer for the believer is sealed. Ironically, they bring misery to the unbeliever. Such is the way of Satan. To have Satan as a father is a tough task to endure. *John 8:42-44*
- *Though limited in duration and severity, this outbreak of demonic activity among the unbelieving carries the expression of God's wrath in the course of history to a new level, a first woe. The terrors and anxieties during a civilization's dissolution, such as Rome would undergo in the coming centuries, epitomize but do not exhaust the torments of heart and mind symbolized by the army of the fifth trumpet.* (Johnson, page 149)

6th Trumpet

Revelation 9:13-21

- *The sixth trumpet, which the second woe, is humanity's last warning blast. When it sounds, a voice from the golden altar on which the church's prayers were offered to God commands, "Release the four angels who are bound at the great river Euphrates." This command marks the end of a period of restraint of God's judgment, because it rescinds the earlier command that four angels at the earth's four corners must hold back the four winds until God's servants have been sealed (Rev. 7:1-3). The trumpet judgments have escalated from one-third destruction of land, sea, rivers (with some human death), and sky, to mental and spiritual torture of unbelievers, and now to the slaughter of one-third of human population.* (Johnson, page 150)
- In the Old Testament the enemies of Israel most often seem to come from the area of the Euphrates River. Assyria with its capital in Nineveh, destroyed the northern kingdom in 722 BC while Babylon, under Nebuchadnezzar, destroyed the southern kingdom in 586 BC.
- *In the vision of the sixth trumpet, the imagery of invasion from the East is derived from the Parthian threat, but the horsemen who sweep over the Euphrates in John's vision are more terrifying than the Parthians at their worst.* (Johnson, pages 150-151)
- *John reminds us that we are moving in the symbolic world of prophetic visions with the words, "this I saw in the vision horses and those who sat on them" (Rev.9:17).* (Johnson, page 151)
- *As the sixth seal provided a preview of the traumas that will characterize the dissolution of the first heavens and earth, so the sixth trumpet previews an increase of satanic deception that precipitates growing violence, death, and despair.* (Johnson, page 152)
- Apart from the saving work of the Holy Spirit nothing that can be done to unbelieving mankind can cause them to turn to Jesus Christ.

The Book of Revelation

Romans 3:9-19, John 6:44, 1 Corinthians 2:14

Interlude Vision: The Angel and the Little Scroll

Revelation 10

- Between the sixth and seventh trumpets, as between the sixth and seventh seals, an interlude is inserted to dramatize the delay of final judgment and to focus our attention on God's care for his church in the midst of his providential and escalating judgments on its oppressors. (Johnson, page 152)
- Who is this "mighty angel" who holds the little scroll in his hand? Is it Jesus or is it an angel?
- There is no doubt that there are similarities between the mighty angel and Jesus. In the book of Daniel the Ancient of Days has a similar description. In the beginning of the book of Revelation the description of the son of man as well as the description of one who sat on the throne both have similarities with the mighty angel and this has led some to conclude that the mighty angel is God. *Daniel 7:13, Revelation 1:13-16, 4:1-3*
- When John says that he saw "another mighty angel" this would lead us to conclude that this mighty angel was of the same type as the other mighty angels mentioned in *Revelation 5:2* and *18:21*.
- One should also keep in mind that the angel described in *Daniel 10:5* looks very much like the Ancient of Days, but he is only an angel.
- Throughout Revelation angels are superhuman servants of God, doing his bidding and carrying his revelation to the embattled saints on earth. There is no more reason to view this "strong angel" as a divine being than there was to view the first "strong angel" in *Revelation 5:2* as the Son of God. (Johnson, pages 158-159)
- The scroll is that opened by the Lamb, but its carrier is an angel sent by the Lamb from heaven to earth, to deliver "the Revelation of Jesus Christ" to John for the sake of the churches. (Johnson, page 160)
- The content of what the seven thunders spoke is sealed up until its proper time. *Daniel 12:4*
- In this context God commands John to "seal up" the message of the seven thunders and then tell him not to "write them down." Thus John is being told to affirm God's sovereign control over the judgments proclaimed in the thunders and then is prohibited from revealing the contents to his readers. The major message is one of sovereignty. God is in control, and the saints do not need to know all the details. (*Revelation*, by Grant R. Osborne, Baker Book House, 2006, pages 397-398)
- The announcement is made that will the upcoming 7th trumpet "the mystery of God will be accomplished." The two interludes of chapters 10 and 11 take us to the 2nd Coming of Jesus Christ.
- John is told by the angel to eat the scroll. The scroll as a word from God is as sweet as honey. But the content of the message is prophetic judgment and therefore it will turn sour in the stomach of John. This imagery is first seen in God's dealing with the prophet Ezekiel.

Ezekiel 2:1-3:11

The Two Witnesses

Revelation 11:1-14

Thoughts to Consider

- This section corresponds to the visions of the 144,000 and the international multitude of Revelation 7 in its placement (between the sixth and seventh of a series), theme (protection of the church amid suffering), and twofold structure. (Johnson, page 165)
- The visions of Revelation 11, however, nuance their portrait of God's protective care with greater complexity. The measuring of the sanctuary (11:1) and the invincibility of the two witnesses until their testifying task is done (11:5) reaffirm the promise of Revelation 7: God will let nothing separate his people from his love. (Johnson, page 165)
- However, the prohibition against measuring the outer court, leaving it vulnerable to trampling by the Gentiles (11:2), and the beast's slaughter of the witnesses (11:7) show that God promises not to spare us from all suffering but to secure our faith fast amid suffering. (Johnson, page 165)

Measuring the Temple

Revelation 11:1-2

- The Old Testament mention of the measuring of the temple is found in *Ezekiel 40:1-5*, when a man is told to measure the dimensions of Ezekiel's temple.
- Both *Ezekiel 40:3* and *Revelation 21:10* both Ezekiel and John are carried to a high mountain in order to view the final temple.
- In the teaching passages of the New Covenant era the concept of temple takes on a personal look as it now refers to the people of God. *1 Corinthians 3:16-17, 1 Corinthians 6:19, Ephesians 2:20-22, 1 Peter 2:4-10*
- Thus here John is to measure God's temple, its altar (associated with the suffering church, 6:9; 8:3-4), and the worshipers as a sign of the ultimate invincibility of Christ's church. (Johnson, page 166)
- The idea of Gentiles trampling the city is first found in *Luke 21:24* where the destruction of Jerusalem in AD 70 is described.
- If the book of Revelation was written sometime near the end of the first century then the AD 70 destruction of Jerusalem is not what is being referred to.
- The reason that John is forbidden from measuring the court outside the sanctuary building itself is that "it has been given to the nations; and they will tread under foot the holy city for forty-two months" (*Rev. 11:2*). This prohibition shows that what is measured is placed under divine protection, and what is not measured is exposed to assault by the nations. It also implies that the court outside the sanctuary symbolizes the "holy city." The court symbolizes a city, and in Revelation cities symbolize communities of people, not merely collections of buildings and streets. But what is the "holy city" that is left vulnerable to be trod under foot by the Gentiles? (Johnson, pages 166-167)
- Although elsewhere in the Bible the title "holy city" refers to the physical metropolis that was the capital of Israel and center of Jewish worship, in the book of Revelation "the holy city" is the new Jerusalem, the bride of the Lamb (*Rev. 21:2; 22:19*).

The Book of Revelation

- *Thus the unmeasured courtyard, given to the Gentiles, and the holy city, trampled by the Gentiles, balance the portrait of the church as the measured sanctuary: though protected from apostasy and God's wrath, the church is exposed to physical coercion, social contempt, and violence. (Johnson, page 169)*

42 months, 1,260 days

Revelation 11:3-12

- *The time period in which the two witnesses carry on their prophetic proclamation is symbolized in a way that equates it with the whole span of the dragon's aggressive but frustrated attempts to eradicate the church from the earth. (Johnson, page 171)*
- *This time span is described in three ways: 42 months (11:2, 13:5); 1,260 days (11:3, 12:6); and "a time and times and half a time" (12:14). (Johnson, page 171)*
- *The mysterious "a time and times and half a time" is derived from Daniel 7:25, in which it symbolizes one-half of a sabbatical-year cycle: "one year, two years, and half a year" add up to 3 ½ years. These three designations all measure the same length of time, for in the ancient world a month was calculated as containing 30 days (42 x 30 = 1,260). (Johnson, page 171)*
- All of these statements refer to the same period of time.
- *The common threads that run through these descriptions are opposition and preservation: opposition from the "Gentiles," from the beast, from the "great city" and its international alliance of conspirators, and from the dragon; but also preservation by God, who will not allow his holy place to be defiled, his witnesses to be silenced, his new Israel to be swept away by the dragon's flood of lies (12:15-16). This mixed situation—this unstable amalgam of deadly danger and divine defense—sounds strangely familiar. It sounds like John's day, and like ours. (Johnson, page 172)*

Two Witnesses

Revelation 11:3-13

- The imagery of the two witnesses is first found in the Mosaic Law. *Deuteronomy 19:15*
- *These two witnesses are prophets who bear a message of impending judgment and a call to repentance, as their sackcloth apparel shows (Isa. 37:1-2; Jonah 3:5; Matt. 11:21). They are portrayed as wielding the power to inflict miraculous signs of judgment after pattern of Moses (Exod. 7-9)... and Elijah (1 Kings 17:1, 2 Kings 1:10-12). (Johnson, page 170)*
- In both 11:7 and 13:7 the beast overcomes and kills first the witnesses and then the saints.
- *In both texts the beasts "makes war with" God's faithful followers and "overcomes" them. In both contexts notes is taken of the fact that people from the world's "peoples and tribes and tongues and nations" support the beast in his aggression against God's representatives (11:9; 13:7). The beast's victory cannot be a spiritual and eternal one, for God soon vindicates the two witnesses. So the only way in which the beast can conquer the witnesses is by killing them, ending their physical life and silencing their indicting testimony; but his triumph is short-lived. Thus the victims of the beast's violence are identified with each other: the "two witnesses" in Revelation 11:7 are "the saints" in 13:7. (Johnson, page 171)B*
- *But the duration of the beast's apparent triumph will be brief (3½ days) in contrast to the prolonged period (3½ years) of the suffering church's faithful testimony. (Johnson, page 173)*

The 3 Woes

1st Woe Intensification of difficulties for the believers (*Revelation 9:12*)

2nd Woe Further intensification of difficulties right before the end (*Revelation 11:14*)

3rd Woe 2nd Coming of Jesus Christ (*Revelation 11:15-19*)

The Seventh Trumpet

Revelation 11:15-19

- The 7th trumpet brings in 2nd Coming of Jesus Christ.
- The scene shifts from the earth to the throne room of heaven.
- With the 2nd Coming comes the fullness of the kingdom and with it we will experience God's Sovereign Will without any sin or evil. *Matthew 6:10*
- In one sense Jesus reigns now, though it does not appear to be so. *Matthew 28:18*
- In another sense Jesus begins his outward reign at the 2nd Coming.
- *At the consummation God dwells with his people in a more complete and intense manner than previously, as indicated by the observation that the curtain that has separated the ark from the rest of the temple and from the people is now gone. All believers, "small and great," enjoy God's presence in a greater manner than was possible in the OT. Therefore, the ark in 11:19 is a suitable symbol for both the judgment and the reward of the last day. Therefore, the full answer to the saints' petition for vindication in 6:9-11 is revealed in 11:15-19. (Beale, page 619)*

The Woman and the Dragon

Revelation 12

- *This chapter consists of two complementary visions, which provide symbolic commentary on the same battle and its sequel. In the first vision the protagonists and preparation for the battle are described in some detail (12:1-4). Then the battle, viewed from an earthly perspective, flashes past in the blink of an eye (12:5), and finally its sequel—the woman's flight to the wilderness for protection for 1,260 days—is stated (12:6). The second vision opens with a heavenly perspective on the battle (12:7-9), followed by a heavenly commentary on its significance (12:10-12); then the same sequel—the woman's flight to the wilderness for protection for three and one-half years (= 1,260 days)—is portrayed in great detail (12:13-17). Twice we see the dragon's defeat in battle, and twice we see his subsequent frustration in trying to destroy the mother of the Messiah. (Johnson, page 179)*
- The woman is the people of God. In the Old Covenant era this was the nation of Israel (the picture). In the New Covenant era it refers to the church (the fulfillment).

The Book of Revelation

- The imagery of the woman is first described in *Genesis 37:9* with the dream of Joseph.
- Through the nation of Israel and the Messiah will come the true people of God.
Isaiah 54:1-8, Galatians 4:27
- In the new heavens and new earth the people of God, the New Jerusalem, are described both in terms of the picture (Israel, 12 tribes) and the fulfillment (Church, 12 Apostles). *Revelation 21:12,14*
- The male child is the Messiah, Jesus Christ our Lord, who will rule the nations with an iron scepter. This language comes from *Psalms 2*.
- The conflict between the woman and the dragon is first described in *Genesis 3:15*.
- *The mortal combat declared by God against “the serpent of old, the devil and Satan” is seen in the opposition of the two seeds throughout history: Cain against Abel, Ishmael against Isaac, Esau against Jacob, Edom against Israel, Saul against David. From the expulsion from Eden, God’s people have been and expectant mother, awaiting the birth of the Seed who would champion their cause against Satan the liar, accuser, and murderer.*
(Johnson, page 181)
- *The dragon, for his part, is shown in symbols signaling his cunning wisdom (seven heads), great power (ten horns), and authority to influence others (seven diadems: Rev 12:3). Through his wisdom and power seem to be infinite, rivaling the omniscience and omnipotence of God, they are counterfeit. “His tail swept away a third of the stars of heaven and threw them to the earth” (12:4)—an impressive demonstration of power, to be sure, but hardly comprehensible.* (Johnson, page 181)
- Satan’s plot failed as Jesus by his death and resurrection and ascension joined the Father on his throne. *Revelation 3:21*
- *In other words, the time period symbolized in 1,260 days encompasses the church’s ongoing experience of suffering and safety, bold testimony and bitter trial, alienation in the desert but nourishment from God, from the time of Jesus’ ascension to heaven until the trauma that precedes his glorious return.* (Johnson, page 183)
- In *Revelation 12:7-12* we see the same conflict from a different perspective or point of view.
- This time the conflict is seen as a battle with Michael and his angels and the dragon.
- *Thus the battle that issues in the dragon’s expulsion from heaven is not the primeval conflict before Adam’s fall, when Satan and other angels who had been created good inexplicably turned against their creator. Rather, the war in heaven that John sees in symbol was fought on earth, when Jesus suffered and died on a cross outside Jerusalem and then rose from the dead. The dragon’s banishment from heaven to earth marks the coming of God’s kingdom and of his Christ’s authority (Rev. 12:10).* (Johnson, page 184)
- *The coming of God’s kingdom was exhibited in the authority that Jesus gave his disciples to expel demons, an authority rooted in the decisive battle that he would win over the prince of demons in his death and resurrection. Therefore when the seventy disciples returned from the kingdom-advancing mission on which Jesus had sent them and marveled at the demons’ subjection to them in Jesus’ name, he responded, “I was watching Satan fall from heaven like lightning” (Luke 10:18)* (Johnson, page 184 footnote)
- The imagery of the eagle is first found in *Exodus 19:4* where the Exodus is described as God saving Israel on eagles wings.
- *Here the floodwaters from the dragon’s mouth symbolize deceptive teaching that would, if believed, drown the church’s faith, destroying its life. Such threats are present in the churches in Asia in the form of the Nicolaitans’ lies and Jezebel’s promise of deep knowledge into secret things (Rev. 2:2, 6, 14-15, 20-24).* (Johnson, pages 185-186)
- *Because the woman seems to be distinguished from “the rest of her children,” some commentators have identified the woman with a Jewish remnant who believe in Jesus and “the rest of her children” with the Gentile Christians. In John’s visions, however, distinct symbols often point not to different referents but to differing perspectives on the same referent. So here the protection of the mother promises that “the church shall never perish,” and the dragon’s war against her offspring reminds us that God shields the church’s members not from physical violence but from spiritual destruction.* (Johnson, pages 186-187)

The Beast out of the Sea

Revelation 13:1-10

- The imagery of the two beasts described in *Revelation 13* can be first be seen in the book of Job. It is in *Job 40,41* that we find the two beasts Leviathan and Behemoth. One beast is of the land and the other is of the sea.
- The first mention of the beast that comes out of the sea is found in *Revelation 11:7* where we find the two witnesses being killed by the “beast that comes up from the Abyss will attack them and overpower and kill them.”
- The reference to the “sea” would seem to refer to the peoples of this world. This imagery is found in the description of the woman who sits on the beast who sits on “many waters.” These waters are described as the peoples of the world. *Revelation 17:15*
- *Daniel’s vision of the Ancient of Days who invests the Son of Man with eternal dominion (Dan.7) began with “four great beasts...coming up from the sea,” symbolizing four successive Gentile kingdoms that would yield power over the people of God (7:3, 17, 23).*
(Johnson, page 188)
- *In one sense, this monster is Daniel’s fourth beast, as is evident from the fact that both speak arrogant boasts and blasphemies (Dan. 7:8, 11, 20; Rev. 13:5-6) and wage war against the saints (Dan. 7:21; Rev. 13:7). Rome was the expression of the beast that would threaten the churches of Asia Minor and throughout the Mediterranean world in the decades and generations after John received his visions. In another sense, though, the monster that John now sees is bigger than Rome, as the merging of imagery from all four of Daniel’s beasts shows. The beast is given “authority to act for forty-two months” (13:5). We have seen that this period (42 months = 1,260 days = 3 ½ years) symbolizes the whole span of time from Christ’s resurrection until the outbreak of intense evil just before his second coming. During this period the church will be persecuted and protected, witnessing invincibly and yet trampled underfoot, conquered but not destroyed. Therefore this beast and its persecuting power would outlast the fall of Rome in the fifth century. It continues to find various expressions, some more overt and potent than others, down to our day.* (Johnson, 188-189)
- The antichrist of *1 John 2:18-22* and the man of lawlessness of *2 Thessalonians 2* would seem to describe a person who will show up right before the 2nd coming.
Yet the beast symbolism derived from Daniel 7 suggests that John’s vision in Rev. 13 focuses on institutional expressions of politico-military power such as Babylon or Rome.
(Johnson, page 190, footnote)

The Book of Revelation

- *Returning to John's vision in Revelation 13, we see that the beast is not only an image bearer of the dragon but also an imitation of the Lamb.... The parallel between John's vision of the Lamb standing "as if slain" ...and the beast's head, which appeared "as if slain" is unmistakable. Jesus was slain yet "came to life"... now the best is proclaimed as having a received a fatal blow, yet it "came to life"...* (Johnson, page 190)
- *The Christ of God has risen, but the world declared it a lie...or madness. The "Christ" of the Devil comes from death—and the world worships him!* (Johnson, page 210, footnote)
- *This wound, paradoxically lethal and yet healed, is associated by many commentators with rumors that circulated through the Roman Empire in the social and political turmoil that followed the mysterious disappearance (suicide) of the emperor Nero in 68: Nero was not really dead; he had gone into hiding in Parthia, and would return at the head of a vast Parthian army to take revenge on Rome.* (Johnson, page 191)

The Beast out of the Earth

Revelation 13:11-18

- *The second beast, which arises out of the land rather than the sea, has no precedent in Daniel's vision of the four beasts and the Son of Man. It is "like a lamb" in appearance, with two horns, but its speech is like "a dragon." Later this beast will be called the false prophet (Rev. 16:13; 19:20).* (Johnson, pages 194-195)
- *Whereas the power of the first beast in its boastful pride is overt and coercive, the influence of the second is covert and deceiving. It is a counterfeit John the Baptist, simulating but not sharing the spirit and power of Elijah (cf. Luke 1:17; Matt. 11:14; Mal. 4:5-6).* (Johnson, page 195)
- *This false prophet, like the Egyptian magicians who managed to simulate a few of the mighty attesting signs God gave to Moses, presents imitation wonders to lead earth's peoples astray after the beast.* (Johnson, page 195)
- *The beast from the earth is the sea beast's religiously oriented accomplice. This false prophet's lying wonders support the sea beast's arrogant boasts and slanders against God, luring those who dwell on the earth into worshipping the beast. What does this earth beast/false prophet symbolize? Just as the best from the sea is Rome and yet is much bigger than Rome, so the beast from the earth is the imperial cult indigenous to Asia Minor but also a larger phenomenon that continues to this day.* (Johnson, page 196)
- *The beast's mark, like the seal of God applied to the church (Rev. 7:1-3), is no outward tattoo or insignia on the body but rather a symbol of the beast's ownership and control of his followers' thoughts (forehead) and deeds (right hands). Immediately after this discussion of the beast's mark, the sealed army of God reappears in the company of the Lamb, their champion; and the seal they received is interpreted as "having His name and the name of His Father written on their foreheads" (14:1).* (Johnson, page 196)
- *Ancient Israelites were to tie the law of God on their foreheads and hands in order to signify that their thoughts and actions were in submission to the Word of the Lord (Deut. 6:8). Now the beast, assisted by its false prophet blasphemously demands the world's universal allegiance.* (Johnson, page 196)
- *The association of the beast with Nero finds support in Revelation 13:17-18, where John speaks of the number of the beast's name and then invites the intelligent person to "calculate the number of the beast," which is the number of man, namely 666.* (Johnson, page 192)
- *John signaled to first-century readers the presence of a kind of ancient code called gematria. Since the letters of ancient alphabets also carried different numerical values, names of words could be encoded by being represented as the mathematical sum of the values of the letters they contained. To make the code harder to crack, especially in mystical or apocalyptic writings, the key name was first transliterated into a foreign alphabet, then its total computed in terms of the values of those foreign characters.* (Johnson, page 192)
- *That man is the emperor Nero, whom some Greek-speakers called **Neron Kaisar**, a name that, spelled in equivalent Hebrews letters, "is calculated" to equal 666. (The second-century Sibylline Oracles use an abbreviated form of gematria in referring to Nero as "a sovereign who has a letter of fifty, a direful serpent causing grievous war," murdering his family members, disappearing and then returning. The "letter of fifty" is N, the initial of Nero.* (Johnson, pages 192-193)
- There are only two types of individuals in this world. There are those who are called the children of God, and those who are called the children of the devil. *1 John 3:10*

The Lamb and the 144,000

Revelation 14:1-5

- *The site of the Lamb's victory celebration is heaven.* (Johnson, page 201)
- *The 144,000 are the same loyal disciples who earlier were marked with God's seal on their foreheads, securing their protection from the coming wrath of God and the Lamb (Rev. 7:3; cf. 6:16-17). Now we see that the seal is the name of the Lamb and his Father. They are branded as God's property, under his protection; and they are imprinted with his identity, to share his holiness. Every overcomer has been promised a permanent place in God's presence as a temple pillar, inscribed with the name of God, of his city, and of Jesus (3:12). In the new Jerusalem all God's servants will bear his name on their foreheads (22:4).* (Johnson, page 201)
- *Seals signify not only ownership but also security, protection under the authority of the One whose name we bear. But the beast's mere "mark" brings those who bear it no shelter from the coming wrath of God.* (Johnson, page 201)
- *The ceremonial symbolized the spiritual, and here the appearance of the whole church—men and women, single and married—under the image of an army of celibate soldiers portrays the single-minded loyalty that we all owe to our captain. The same spiritual monogamy will be symbolized later when the whole church—women and men, married and single—appears as a virgin bride adorned for her Husband (19:7; 21:2), the antithesis of Babylon the shameless prostitute. So here the church appears with the Lamb as a pure army victorious in holy war; the antithesis of the beast's defiled and deluded troops (13:7-8, 14-17).* (Johnson, pages 202-203)
- Old Testament examples of sexual purity being used of Israel can be found at Mount Sinai (*Exodus 19:15*), in David's fighting men (*1 Samuel 21:5*), and in the practice of David's fighting men as seen in Uriah the Hittite (*2 Samuel 11:8-13*).

The Book of Revelation

- So here John sees the believers who have held their faith fast to the death (Rev. 12:11) as the first installment that guarantees the ingathering of all God's people from all the peoples. John will soon see that final sweep of the sickle, which will bring every Jesus-trusting see of the woman safely into God's granary (14:14-16). (Johnson, page 203)
- The concept of firstfruits can be seen in 1 Corinthians 15:20-22 where Jesus is described as the firstfruits of those who are going to be raised from the dead.
- The idea that the people of God are blameless and free from lies would seem to remind us of the description of sacrificial animals of the Mosaic Law that were required to be without blemish. *Leviticus 1:3, 10; 3:1*

The Three Angels Revelation 14:6-13

1st Angel

- This is the angel with the gospel for salvation that is called the "eternal gospel."
- His summons to fear and worship means that it is almost but not quite too late to heed the warnings of the restrained trumpet judgments that have fallen as fire on earth, sea, springs, and sky (8:7-12). (Johnson, page 205)

2nd Angel

- So here when we hear of Babylon's fall—so certain to occur that it is announced as already accomplished—we expect eventually to see a vision of the height from which she has fallen (17-18). Although her identity will be disclosed in that later vision, the well-known role of Nebuchadnezzar's Babylon in the exile of ancient Judah would signal to first-century Christians that "Babylon" is code for the pagan power now oppressing them, Rome and the world system it embodies (cf. 1 Peter 5:13). (Johnson, pages 205-206)

3rd Angel

- Here we have a final warning to the unbeliever.
- Here we also have an encouraging word to the believer that suffering and struggle are almost over for the end is about to take place.
- To persevere means that we will join our God in his rest for all eternity. *Hebrews 4*

The Harvest of the Earth Revelation 14:14-20

The harvest visions show history's end, when the final sweeps of God's scythe will gather Jesus' followers as grain unto the storehouse (14:14-16) and Babylon's drunken followers as grapes to be crushed in God's winepress of holy wrath (14:17-20; cf. 19:15). (Johnson, page 201)

Harvest of the Believers

- The common expectation was that the Messiah would immediately execute this harvest judgment when he appeared, but Jesus' parables (the sower, the tares among the wheat) taught that he came to inaugurate the long-awaited kingdom of God not as a grim reaper but as a patient planter (Matt. 13:1-30, 36-43). (Johnson, page 209)
- Who is the one "like a son of man"? His title would seem to indicate that this is Jesus the redeemer. This title alludes to the title given to Jesus in the book of Daniel as well as in the opening chapter of the book of Revelation. *Daniel 7:13-14, Revelation 1:7*
- Centered between these two triads of angels and set apart from them by his crown, his cloudy throne, and his title "one like a son of man," is Jesus the Messiah and final judge, the Son of Man whom John saw at the beginning of his visions. (Johnson, pages 210-211)

Harvest of the Unbelievers

- The harvest of grapes from earth's vines is accomplished by the second of the three angels mentioned in the harvest visions. As the vision of the Lamb's army as first fruits in heaven anticipated the grain harvest, so the angelic pronouncement that rebels will drink the wine of God's wrath (14:10) foreshadowed the grape harvest and the crushing of the wicked in "the great wine press of the wrath of God" (14:19). (Johnson, page 213)
- In Old Testament prophetic language The 2nd Coming of Jesus Christ is described in terms of the crushing of grapes in the winepress of the wrath of God. *Isaiah 63:1-6*

Seven Angels with the Seven Last Plagues Revelation 15:1-8

The Song of Moses and the Song of the Lamb

- The scene shifts again, from earth to heaven, from which a final judgment cycle is about to be revealed. (Johnson, page 214)
- From an earthly perspective, the beast overcame God's witnesses, the saints (11:7; 13:7). But the reality is that they overcame their enemies by the blood of the Lamb, holding fast to their testimony (12:11). (Johnson, page 215)
- The mention of the "sea of glass" most likely would refer to the area before God's throne as describe in *Revelation 4:6*.
- The song of Moses and the song of the Lamb are both songs of deliverance but they differ in that one is physical while the other is spiritual. *Exodus 15:1-18, Revelation 14:3*
- The relationship of the song of Moses and the song of the Lamb is one of picture and fulfillment.
- The martyrs' earlier aggrieved lament, appealing for just vindication (6:10), is now transposed into a song of celebration because the completion of God's wrath is imminent. Justice has come! (Johnson, page 217)

The Seven Angels Receive the Seven Bowls

- The outpouring of the bowls will reveal the end of history, the termination of the "first heaven and earth" (21:1), from seven perspectives. (Johnson, page 215)

The Book of Revelation

- *Visions that follow the bowl cycle—the disclosure and dismantling of the harlot Babylon (17-18) and the defeat of beasts and dragon (19-20)—provide varying camera angles on the same history-consummating battle, in which our God and his Christ will triumph.* (Johnson, page 215)
- *Commissioned in the intimate presence of God in the holiest chamber of the heavenly tabernacle, the angels emerge to receive their golden bowls, each brimming with the righteous rage of God against those who dwell on the earth, who torment his people and destroy his good creation.* (Johnson, page 218)
- *Throughout the OT, smoke symbolizes the awesome presence of God, as in the cloud of smoke at Sinai (Exod. 24:15-16, where the cloud is also linked with the “glory of Yahweh”) and the cloud became the Shekinah presence of God at the exodus (Exod. 13:21; 14:19, 24).* (Osborne, page 571)
- OT passages that speak of the smoke and the presence of God.
Exodus 40:34-35, 1 Kings 8:10-12, Ezekiel 10:2-4

Seven Bowls of the Wrath of God

Revelation 16

As the bowls belong to the symbolic dialect in which John’s visions bring their message, so also the effects of the outpoured bowls are conveyed in symbolic impressions, not photographic reproductions. (Johnson, page 224)

1st Bowl

- *The first bowl is poured on the earth, where people live and work. Unlike the fire that fell with the first trumpet (Rev. 8:7), however this judgment targets not trees and grass but those people who are in league with the beast, “who had the mark of the beast and who worship his image.”* (Johnson, page 224)
- *In John’s earlier vision this mark, which branded them as the beast’s willing property, was applied to idolaters’ bodies, on the right hand or forehead (13:6). It symbolizes the world’s control of their minds and therefore of their actions. So now God inflicts on those who bear the beast’s mark “a loathsome and malignant sore,” a visual reflection of the despairing, death-seeking anguish symbolized in the demon locust’s stings under the fifth trumpet (= the first woe; 9:5-6).* (Johnson, pages 224-225)
- See also *Exodus 9:8-12* where the 6th plague of Egypt afflicts the Egyptians with boils.
- If Israel does not completely obey the Old Covenant law then God promises to afflict them with boils. *Deuteronomy 28:27,35*

2nd Bowl

- The second bowl reflects the first plague that God sent on Egypt that turned the waters of the Nile into blood so that the fish died. *Exodus 7:20-24*
- Remember the destruction of the 2rd trumpet where a third of the sea was turned to blood and a third of the creatures died and a third of the ships were destroyed. *Revelation 8:8-9*

3rd Bowl

- *In the 3rd trumpet the fouling of these fresh water sources had been portrayed with an emphasis on the resulting bitter taste (wormwood) and toxic outcome (Rev. 8:11). Now the turning of all the rivers and springs into blood, though not literally rendering the water lethal, signals again an escalation in the intensity of the judgment.* (Johnson, pages 226-227)
- The imagery of the enemies of God made to drink their own blood is found in *Isaiah 49:26* where the enemies of Israel are judged in this manner.

4th Bowl

- The 4th trumpet a third of all the light is taken away. *Revelation 8:12*
- *When the fourth bowl is poured on the sun, the result is not a dimming or darkening, as in the fourth trumpet. Rather, the sun’s intensity increases, with the result that earth’s rebellious inhabitants are “scorched with fierce heat” (Rev. 16:9). This plague has no counterpart in the ancient plagues on Egypt. The fiery hostility of the created order against people who are hostile to the Creator makes the sun’s light and warmth, in themselves necessary and delightful, instruments of torture when taken to extreme.* (Johnson, page 228)
- In a description of the life of the believer in the new heavens and new earth it is said “*The sun will not beat upon them, nor any scorching heat.*” *Revelation 7:16*
- *The end of the age of God’s longsuffering and common grace is also signaled by the reaction of the people on whom the plague of scorching sunlight falls: “they blasphemed the name of God who has the power over these plagues, and they did not repent so as to give Him glory” (Rev. 16:9). Their refusal to repent is the same stubborn and foolhardy response as that of the survivors of the plagues revealed in the sixth trumpet (the second woe, 9:20-21).* (Johnson, page 229)

5th Bowl

- *The darkening of the beast’s kingdom when the fifth bowl is poured on its throne reproduces the ninth plague on ancient Egypt (Exod.10:21-23).*
- *The sores were inflicted in the first bowl judgment (16:2), so this is a summary of the preceding judgments, meaning they curse him for all the bowl judgments they had endured...* (Osborne, pages 588-589)

6th Bowl

- *The Euphrates first appeared in John’s visions in connection with the sixth trumpet. There it was the restraining boundary holding back impending judgment. At the command of a voice from the golden altar “the four angels who are bound at the great river Euphrates” were released from their bondage, and a cavalry two hundred million strong swept across the river to kill a third of mankind (Rev. 9:13-15). In biblical history the Euphrates is identified with regions to the north and east, from which Israel’s and Judah’s captors, Assyria and Babylon, had come:* (Johnson, page 231)
- John sees three different descriptions of the same final battle. Each version of the battle highlights the destruction of Babylon, Beast and False Prophet, and Satan the Dragon.
Revelation 16:12-20, 19:1-21, 20:7-10

The Book of Revelation

- Like the place names “Babylon” and “Euphrates,” so “Armageddon” does not refer to a specific geographical locale, but the whole world. The battles in Israel associated with Meggido and the nearby mountain became a typological symbol of the last battle against the saints and Christ, which occurs throughout the earth. (Beale, page 838)
- That “Armageddon” is not literal is evident from the observation that OT prophecies of the final battle of history place it, without exception, in the immediate vicinity of the city of Jerusalem and Mount Zion or its surrounding mountains (see on v 14 for OT references). But the plain of Megiddo is about two days’ walk north of Jerusalem. Furthermore, John himself places the battle directly outside Jerusalem in 14:20 and 20:8-9, though he typologically universalizes the OT references and speaks in spiritual instead of literal geographical terms. Also, if 20:8 refers to the same event as 16:14, ... then 20:9 defines “Armageddon” as “beloved city” of Jerusalem and probably Mount Zion. The parallels of 20:8 and 19:17-19 allude to Ezekiel 38-39, the context of which also foretells that Israel’s final opponent will fight against Israel at “the mountains of Israel” (Ezek. 39:2, 17). (Beale, pages 838-839)
- Verse 15 brings with it a warning to all professed believers that they must be prepared for the coming of their Lord. Revelation 3:2, 3:18, Matthew 25:1-13 (parable of the ten virgins)

7th Bowl

- The seventh bowl gives a final camera angle on the completion of God’s wrath in judgment on rebellious humans and the created order that they have defiled. (Johnson, page 236)
- “It is done!” reminds us of the words of Jesus on the cross “it is finished.” The cross purchased our salvation, while the 2nd coming brings to pass the judgment of God on the unbeliever and the fullness of our salvation in the new heavens and new earth. John 19:30
- On earth “a great earthquake” splits the great city Babylon into three parts, causing the cities of nations to fall in ruins as well, and making islands flee and mountains disappear (Rev. 16:18-20). Just as the ancient hailstorm was unparalleled in previous Egyptian history (“such as has not been seen in Egypt from the day it was founded until now,” Exod. 9:18), so

this quake that shatters the earth will be unparalleled in all human history (“such as there had not been since man came to be upon the earth,” Rev. 16:18). (Johnson, page 237)

- Seal 6 gave us a preview of this great quake, which not only set earth shuddering, so that “every mountain and island were moved out of their places,” but also shook the stars from the sky like figs “shaken by a great wind” and split the sky itself like a scroll (6:12-14). The repetition of terms—“great earthquake,” “every mountain and island” (order reversed in 16:20)—shows that the seventh bowl gives us a second glimpse of the climatic event portrayed in the sixth seal. (Johnson, page 237)
- Zechariah had prophesied that the day of the Lord’s battle against the nations, when he comes to defend his people, will be marked by a terrifying earthquake that splits the Mount of Olives (Zech. 14:3-5). The fulfillment that appears before John’s eyes shows this earthquake to be worldwide, even universe-wide in scope. (Johnson, page 237)
- In one sense, like ancient Babylon, she is a physical city, one situated on seven hills—unmistakably Rome, for John’s first readers (17:9). In another sense, however, like the beast from the sea, this Babylon is more than a single city or even civilization. The power grid of fallen human culture (political, economic, military, religious, social) is so tightly interlocking that when its heart is shattered, the whole edifice crumbles. With Babylon’s fall, all the world’s cities fall. (Johnson, page 238)
- Still human hearts are hard. Even as the fragile falsehoods in which they have trusted shatter around them, still “men blasphemed God because of the plague of hail,” there petrified hearts incapable of repentance (Rev. 16:21). Neither the backwash of sin’s bitter aftertaste nor the first fruits of its lethal harvest can soften hearts of stone. Only God’s Spirit, applying the gospel of grace, can turn stony hearts into hearts of tender flesh, but the bowls show us a moment in time when the Spirit’s gentle and irresistible wooing is complete, the Son’s sheep have been gathered, and the Father’s patience has waited long enough. (Johnson, page 239)

The Woman on the Beast

Revelation 17

Introducing Babylon the Prostitute

Revelation 17:1-6

- The beast’s woman and the Lamb’s woman are opposites, each with her own sort of splendor (gold, precious stones, pearls, and fine linen). But the attractiveness of the harlot is both hollow and short-lived, to be turned to ashes “in one hour” (18:10, 17, 19), whereas the beauty of the bride is genuine and eternal. (Johnson, page 243)
- “Mystery” signifies that the woman is a visionary symbol that requires explicit interpretation, like the seven stars in the hand of the Son of Man (1:20). The angel will provide this interpretation, explaining the mystery to John (17:7). (Johnson, page 246)
- This woman represents fallen human culture in all the apparent glory of its achievement and the true repugnance of its arrogance. In John’s day, seven-hilled Rome was her contemporary expression, but long before Rome arose after Rome fell, the harlot Babylon was giving illegitimate birth to daughters like herself, seductive in appearance and repulsive in reality. (Johnson, page 246)
- The magic is broken; the fairy godmother, who has put her spell on the whole world through the brilliance of her appearance and the munificence of her presents, is revealed as the old witch, old in sorcery before ever Rome grew to be her latest and most powerful incarnation, **mother of whores and of all the obscenity on earth.** (Caird, *The Revelation of St. John*, page 214)
- In verse 17 Babylon is mentioned as the great prostitute “who sits on many waters.” John later, in verse 15, describes these many waters as referring to all the peoples of the world.
- We have seen that the beast portrays Rome from the perspective of its physical threat to the church through violence but that is also transcends Rome, being a composite of all four beasts/kingdoms in Daniel 7. So also the harlot Babylon shows us Rome from the perspective of the spiritual threat of compromise through economic seduction, yet she also transcends Rome and encompasses every expression of the idolatry that worships economic prosperity and cultural achievement, whether in Nineveh, Chaldean Babylon, Tyre, Rome, or later entrepreneurial empires. (Johnson pages 243-244)

The Book of Revelation

- In *1 John 2:15-17* the apostle John addresses how the believer is to view the world. It is a warning against falling in love with the world. The world must be lived in but it cannot keep us from living in obedience to our Lord.

Babylon and the Beast

Revelation 17:7-18

- *The symbiosis between woman and beast is so close that the revelation of the mysterious identity of the woman tells more about the beast and its impending defeat at the hands of the Lamb (Rev. 17:8-14) than it does about the woman and her impending destruction at the hands of the beast (17:15-18).*
- *The solution to the puzzle may be simpler, if understanding the message of the seven or eight kings is not dependent on historiographic expertise: Seven symbolizes completeness, so it shows that the beast's reign apparently holds sway over the whole history of fallen humanity. Yet from the perspective of the God's plan to establish his kingdom under the scepter of the Lamb, the beast's time is drawing short—five out of seven already "have fallen." To be sure,*

John's readers are not yet at the very end of the conflict of the ages. The one king who "has not yet come" and must "remain a little while" shows that, though the dragon had been decisively defeated by the blood of the Lamb and therefore "has only a short time" (Rev. 12:11-12), nevertheless the church must be prepared to endure further suffering.

(Johnson, pages 250-251)

- *In the present text, this last battle is pictured in the future coming of the beast out of the abyss as an eighth king, who belongs to the seven, at least as the climatic expression of their arrogance toward God and hostility toward his people. (Johnson, page 251)*
- *The camera angle on this last battle vary as we move from Revelation 12 to Revelation 20, but the story line they tell is consistent. Jesus' followers must be prepared for a period of unparalleled, intense persecution at the end, when evil forces now restrained will be released to work their worst against the church. Yet that time of trauma will be brief, and our enemies' final conspiracy will end not in the downfall of the church, as they expect, but in their destruction. (Johnson, page 252)*
- *This destruction of Babylon mirrors the description of the fall of Israel under the hand of God. Ezekiel 16:37-41*
- *If there is one thing in all the world that the rebels do not want to do, it is the purpose of God. But they are helpless to keep that sovereign purpose out of their hearts, to protect their minds from invasion by the Lord God Almighty. In doing what they want to do, hating the harlot and ripping her to pieces, they are doing precisely what God wants. And in gathering to wage their war against the Messiah, they are merely assembling for their own execution. (Johnson, page 253)*

Celebration of the Fall of Babylon

Revelation 18

- *In Isaiah 21 the prophecy is given regarding the fall of Babylon. In Revelation 17-18 we have the description of the fall of what literal Babylon symbolized. Isaiah 13*
- *This principle of **lex talionis**, eye-for-eye equity is reinforced in Revelation 18:6b, which should be translated, "Give back to her a duplicate of her deeds; in the cup which she has mixed, mix an **equivilent** for her to drink: (dej). The Greek words... usually translated "a double portion" or "twice as much" (NIV, NASB) do not mean that Babylon will receive twice the judgment that she deserves in the light of her deeds but that her judgment will be the duplicate that exactly corresponds to the severity of her offenses. (Johnson, pages 255-256)*
- *Just as "in one day" he brought ancient Babylon to the desolation of childless widowhood (Isa. 47:9), so "in one day" he will bring plagues of lethal epidemic, mourning, famine, and fire on the world systems that expressed itself in the ancient Chaldean empire, and in Rome in John's day, and in various other forms since then (Rev. 18:8). (Johnson, page 256)*
- *The strong angel's act of throwing a great millstone into the sea shows that Babylon's fall is permanent and irremediable (Rev. 18:21). Jeremiah had been instructed to write on a scroll the calamities that were to come to Babylon and then to tie the scroll to a stone and throw it into the Euphrates, the river in which Babylon prided herself, declaring, "Just so shall Babylon sink down and not rise again because of the calamity that I am going to bring upon her" (Jer. 51:60-64). In John's vision the weight of the millstone, a massive boulder turned slowly by oxen to grind grain, underscores the impossibility of Babylon's rising from the depths of the sea of judgment in which she is submerged, never to be found again (cf. Ezek. 26:21). (Johnson, pages 258-259)*

Celebration in Heaven over the Fall of Babylon

Revelation 19:1-10

- *A great multitude in heaven shouts, "Hallelujah!" extolling God for demonstrating that "his judgments are true and righteous" by avenging, at last, the blood of his servants (19:1-2). Both their description as "a great multitude" and the salvation theme that opens their praise imply that this choir is the international assemblage of victors who had emerged from the great affliction into their heavenly refuge in Revelation 7:11-17. (Johnson, pages 260-261)*
- *The multitude's second "Hallelujah" celebrates the perpetual rising of Babylon's smoke (Rev. 19:3). This occasion for rejoicing may strike our postmodern ears as especially vindictive, as if the saints' eternal joy is enhanced by eternally witnessing Babylon's punishment. We should note, however, this reference to Babylon's smoke rising "forever and ever" is yet another Old Testament allusion (Isa. 34:10). In the context of the preceding verse (Rev. 19:2), Babylon's smoke serves as an ongoing testimony to God's zeal for justice on behalf of his persecuted church. (Johnson, page 261)*
- *With the kingdom comes the wedding. With the destruction of the harlot comes the presentation of the bride (19:7-9). John's vision of the bride will not occur until Revelation 21:9; but, as the harlot was first mentioned in 14:8 and then revealed in 17:1, so the bride is announced before her entrance. The heavenly celebration is not primarily backward looking, exulting over fallen enemies; it is forward looking, anticipating the consummation of love between God's people and the Lamb, their bridegroom. (Johnson, page 263)*
- *Please take notice that it is "the righteous acts of the saints" that are being highlighted. As in the rest of the teaching passages it is the changed life of the believers that is the observable evidence that they belong to the Lamb. 1 John 3:9-10*

The Rider on the White Horse

The Book of Revelation

Revelation 19:11-16

- Here especially it is crucial to keep in mind the distinction between the literary order of the visions and the historical-chronological order of the events to which the visions refer. The series of visions in Rev. 17:1-20:15 all provide different camera angles or perspectives on the completion of the wrath of God against his enemies, symbolized in the seven bowls of Rev. 16. The meltdown of civilization, commerce, and arts symbolized in Babylon's fall will essentially coincide (historically-chronologically) with the last battle in which the beasts and the dragon meet their doom. (Johnson, pages 268-269, footnote 2)
- As we saw in the victory parade granted to Julius Caesar upon his return from a successful campaign and the first rider, Conquest, in Revelation 6, white horses symbolize triumphant military achievement. (Johnson, page 270)
- As Jesus returns he is described as having eyes that "are like blazing fire." We first see this description of the Son in Revelation 1:14 as he is walking among the lampstands. We then see that same description of him in Revelation 2:18 when he is examining the church in Thyatira. Nothing unholy is hidden from his gaze.
- The dragon appeared with seven diadems, pretending to universal rule (12:3), and the beast to which the dragon gave his power, throne, and authority had ten diadems (13:1). Both numbers symbolize comprehensive authority, but this rider far excels them with his many diadems. (Johnson, page 270)
- The secrecy of Christ's name here somehow corresponds to the name he promises to bestow on the overcomer, a name known only to the donor and the recipient (2:17). (Johnson, page 273)
- "He is clothed with a robe dipped in blood" (Rev. 19:13). This is the blood of God's enemies, a preview of the defeat of the beast and the false prophet, with the slaughter of earth's kings and armies (19:21). His robes are soaked blood red because he treads the wine press of the fierce wrath of God, the Almighty" (19:15), from which his enemies' blood flows deep and wide (14:20). The imagery of this vision is drawn from Isaiah 63:1-6, (Johnson, pages 270-271)
- Elsewhere in the New Testament we learn that at his second coming Christ will be accompanied by an army of his angels to gather his people and bring deserved retribution to the disobedient (Matt. 16:27; 24:30-31; 25:31; 2 Thess. 1:7). Here, however, the clothing of "fine linen, white and clean" identify this cavalry, mounted, like their captain, on the white steeds of victory, as the saints—particularly those who have won the victory by persevering faith, whether through martyrdom or other confessing death. As we have seen, white robes of purity and triumph clothe the souls of the martyrs under the altar and the international throng before God's throne in heaven (6:11; 7:9), and a few sentences before this text John was told that the bride's wedding dress is made of "fine linen, bright and clean" (19:8). (Johnson, page 274)

The Last Battle: Take 1

Revelation 19:17-21

- The first angel announced Babylon's fall, making the once-glorious city into a wilderness inhabited by demons and unclean birds; the second invites those birds to dine on the corpses of the Lamb's enemies, exposed and unburied on the field of battle. The invitation and the list of categories represented among the slain show that this war will mark the fulfillment of the eschatological battle prophesied in Ezekiel 38-39. In that prophecy Gog of the land of Magog is an archetypal pagan power, plotting to invade, overrun, and devastate helpless Israel. But the Lord promises to come to his people's defense, taunting Gog: "You will fall on the mountains of Israel, you and all your troops and the peoples who are with you; I will give you as food to every kind of predatory bird and beast of the field" (Ezek. 39:4). (Johnson, pages 275-276)
- We are about to witness the Lord's last-days battle against the pagan aggressors called Gog and Magog in Ezekiel's prophecy and the battle's grisly aftermath, as "the birds were filled with their flesh" (Rev. 19:21). In the recapitulation or replay, the pagan peoples deceived and gathered by the dragon to assault God's holy community are named "Gog and Magog" (20:8), confirming that Revelation 19:17-21 and 20:7-10 contain complementary visions of the same last battle. (Johnson, page 276)
- We also need to notice the universal extent of the fallen army whose corpses the birds consume. Earlier summaries that anticipated the gathering of the beast's evil army explicitly mentioned "kings," who would be deceived by demons and cede their power to the beast (Rev. 16:14; 17:12-14). Now, however, we hear that it is not only the world's rulers but also all sorts of people—all who, deceived, have received the beast's mark (19:20). The beast's fallen followers will include not only those normally associated with armed conflict—kings, commanders, warriors, horses and riders—but also "the flesh of all men, both free men and slaves, and small and great" (19:18). When the beast and false prophet are cast into the lake of fire, and "the rest" are killed by the judging sword of the Word and their flesh consumed by the birds (19:21), there will be no human survivors except for the faithful army of saints who follow the lamb. (Johnson, page 276)
- One moment John sees the beast, the kings allied with it, and their armies gathered to make "the war" (dej) against Christ and his armies (19:19). The next, the beast and false prophet are seized and cast, still living, into the lake of fire which burns with brimstone (19:20)—another fulfillment of the prophecy of judgment on Gog and Magog (Ezek. 38:22) and another connection between this vision and the reprise of the last battle in Revelation 20:7-10. (Johnson, page 277)
- The fact that the beast and false prophet are thrown alive into the fiery lake, whereas their followers are slain by the sword, confirms that the beast and false prophet, like the harlot Babylon, symbolize not particular human individuals (for example, "the antichrist" understood as a single, eschatological world ruler) but rather institutional structures by which human civilizations and cultures oppose God, his truth, and his church. If the beast and false prophet portrayed mere human beings, there would be no reason for Christ to spare them the first death (physical death) before casting them into the second death, the lake of fire (20:14). Their followers will experience both. (Johnson, page 278)
- The last battle is over, and the Lamb has triumphed. The seventh bowl is empty, poured out on God's enemies, so "the wrath of God is finished" (Rev. 15:1). (Johnson, page 278)

The 1,000 Year Millennium

Revelation 20:1-6

Putting the Millennium in its Place

The Book of Revelation

- *The angel that John now sees, however, is one of God's obedient servants and has come to seize, bind, and imprison Satan. The multiplication of visual features—key, chain, hand, dragon, throwing, locking, and sealing—underscores the symbolic genre of the entire vision, since John's audience knows well that Satan is not a literal dragon who can be bound with a physical chain or locked away in a physical pit. (Johnson, page 283)*
- *As R. Fowler White points out, the precaution of binding Satan to keep him from "deceiving the nations" would be superfluous if it followed the battle of Revelation 19:11-21 in historical-chronological sequence. The beast's troops, who were slaughtered in that battle, include not only kings and military personnel (commanders, mighty men, cavalry riders) but also "all men, both free men and slaves, an small and great" (19:18). These same terms express the universal scope of those deceived into receiving the mark of the beast. The earth beast, later identified as the false prophet, "causes all, the small and the great, and the rich and the poor, and the free men and the slaves, to be given a mark" (13:16). The echo of this verse in the description of those on whose corpses the birds will feast (19:18) and its background in 13:16. (Johnson, page 285)*
- *So we have three visions—the two witness (11), the heavenly woman and the dragon (12), and the binding of the dragon (20)—which together affirm the divinely imposed restraint that hinders the dragon from fulfilling his desire to destroy the church. The visionary language is different, admittedly. In Revelation 11 fire proceeds from the witnesses' mouths to consume anyone who presumes to assault them before the completion of their mission. In Revelation 12 the ground swallows up the torrent from the dragon's mouth, so Messiah's mother cannot be destroyed during her 3½-year sojourn in the wilderness. And in Revelation 20 the dragon is bound and imprisoned so that, until the thousand years are completed, his mouth cannot utter the lies that will gather the nations to besiege the camp of the saints. Yet these are three windows on the same stage in the conflict—the age in which the faithful church is both suffering and spiritually safe, which began with the sacrifice and exaltation of Christ the seed of the woman and which will conclude just before his return. (Johnson, pages 286-287)*

The Binding of Satan

- In what sense is Satan bound during that period of time from Pentecost until just before the 2nd Coming? He is bound because it is during this particular period of time the Father is gathering his people from every tribe, nation and tongue. Satan will not keep those for whom Jesus died from coming to a saving faith. *John 6:44*
- In the parable of the sower Satan has a role to play in keeping folks from believing the message of the gospel. *Matthew 13:1-4, 18-19*
- For the gospel to reap its fruit Satan must be bound. *Matthew 12:22-29*
- Israel, in the Old Covenant era (from Mt. Sinai to the Cross), is described as a temporary, unbelieving, picture of the people of God. *Hebrews 8:7-13, Galatians 4:21-31*
- The time of salvation, or the time for entering into the kingdom of God, was inaugurated by Jesus the Messiah. *Matthew 4:17*
- The church is the fulfillment of the true people of God, a spiritual Israel. *Ephesians 2:11-18, Galatians 3:29, 6:20*
- As believers we do not need to be frightened by what we see in the world. Satan cannot thwart the plan of our God. *Mark 13:7-8*
- *At the end, when the dragon is released to pull together his evil conspiracy, it will seem as if all is lost—the witnesses slain and the godless world celebrating (11:7-9), the camp of the saints surrounded by a countless army that fills the breadth of the earth (20:8-9). But even in that dire moment, the church's divine Protector will defend and vindicate his own. (Johnson, page 289)*
- *In the language of John's visions, the age bracketed by Jesus' two comings is brief—only three and a half years, half of a sabbatical sequence. Yet the same age is very long—one thousand years. Paradoxically, the time until the second coming will prove to be shorter than it now seems and longer than we may have expected—prolonging the martyrs' vindication (Rev 6:10) but also long enough for the gathering of God's children from all the world's nations, cultures, and tongues (7:9). (Johnson, page 289)*

1st Resurrection

- *Yet these victors are not limited to those slain for their faith in a particular way (beheading), or necessarily to martyrs only. All faithful followers of the Lamb who have died are included, for these rulers are also described as those who did not worship the beast or its image and who refused its mark on forehead and hand. This fidelity, not the circumstances or method of their death, distinguishes them as qualified to share the Lamb's rule (cf. 3:21). (Johnson, page 290)*
- *As we have seen, the introduction of the scene with the thrones that John saw places what follows in a heavenly, not an earthly, locale in the minds of the readers familiar with the visions of Daniel 7, a key piece of Old Testament background throughout Revelation. (Johnson, page 291)*
- *At the visionary level, John sees a resurrection, a coming to life. At the referential level, his vision must refer to something other than the resurrection of saints' bodies at Christ's return, destroying the last enemy, death. At the symbolical level, the event to which John's vision refers ushers those who experience it into the privileges of priests who worship in God's presence and kings who share in Christ's rule (Rev. 20:6). (Johnson, page 293)*
- *According to 1 Corinthians 15:25-26 the last enemy that will be destroyed will be death. This would mean that the 1,000 years must be before the 2nd coming. This would put the 1st resurrection as the death of the saints who would then reign with Christ.*
- *If death is, as Paul says it is, the last enemy, the return of Christ and the resurrection of the dead in him must occur at the end of the one thousand years, when the rebel nations are destroyed (20:8-9) and the devil, along with the beast and false prophet and with death and Hades, is thrown into the lake of fire (20:10, 14). (Johnson, page 292)*
- *From one perspective the martyrs in heaven can be viewed as sacrificial victims, awaiting just vindication; but from another—even now, while the "first things" (death, mourning, pain) still exist—they have experienced a "first resurrection," the deliverance of their souls from all that threatened them on earth (cf. 7:15-17). They enjoy the rest from enemies promised to those blessed by God, with the assurance that their deeds of faith and faithfulness accompany them (14:13). But their first resurrection also includes the priestly privilege of worship in God's presence (7:9-17) and the assurance that even now, as they await final vindication through the resurrection of their bodies and*

The Book of Revelation

judgment of their enemies, they participate in the Lamb's reign through the on-going fruit of their testimony in their words, their life, and their death. (Johnson, page 294)

The Last Battle: Take 2

Revelation 20:7-10

- Both descriptions of the last battle (Rev. 19:11-21; 20:7-10) connect it with the Lord's war against aggressor God, of Magog, prophesied in Ezekiel 38-39. In Revelation 19 echoes of Ezekiel are heard in the slaying of God's enemies by the sword and the consumption of their corpses by birds of prey, summoned by God to this gruesome feast. Now the enemies are explicitly called "God and Magog," and their destruction by fire (Rev. 20:9) likewise fulfills Ezekiel's prophecy: "And I will send fire on Magog and those who inhabit the coastlands in safety; and they will know that I am the LORD" (Ezek. 39:6). "I will rain on him and on his troops, and on the many peoples who are with him, a torrential rain, with hailstones, fire and brimstone" (Ezek. 38:22). (Johnson, pages 294-295)
- In Revelation 19 the universal extent of God's judgment was expressed in the invitation to the birds to eat "the flesh of all men, both free men and slaves, and small and great" (19:18). Now this universal extent of the final rebellion is expressed both geographically—"the nations which are in the four corners of the earth" (20:8), "upon the broad plain of the earth" (20:9)—and numerically—"the number of them is like the sand of the seashore"—(20:8). (Johnson, page 295)
- John has seen the church as God's "holy city," trodden underfoot by the nations throughout the span between Christ's exaltation and his return (forty-two months, Rev. 11:2). (Johnson, page 296)
- The torment signified by the "lake" and its "fire and brimstone" is not merely physical, since the devil is a spirit and the beast and false prophet represent not individual human beings but institutional forces (politico-military and religious). But for the wicked who are returned to bodily existence (Revelation refuses to label this "resurrection") for the purpose of standing before God's white throne of judgment (20:12-13), the lake of fire will mean unremitting anguish of body as well as soul. (Johnson, page 296)

The Last Judgment

Revelation 20:11-15

- The last judgment is previously mentioned in Revelation 11:15-18.
- That believers and unbelievers are included is also shown by the fact that this last judgment takes account of two sets of books: the books that record each person's deeds, and the "other book," the book of life. (Johnson, page 298)
- In Daniel 7 we find the courtroom scene and the books being opened. Here is what John is referring to in Revelation 20.
- Yet the distinguishing factor in this judgment is "another book," the book of life. Written on this book are not deeds but names (20:15; cf. 3:5). When this book is appeared earlier in Revelation we were told that these names were inscribed "from the foundation of the world" (17:8), and that the book belongs to the Lamb that was slain (13:8). It is the registry of those from every nation whom he "purchased for God" with his blood (5:9), and it is the one book in all the universe that spells the difference between eternal life and unending death. (Johnson, page 299)
- The death of Jesus on the cross satisfied all the demands of a holy God for all those for whom he died. Romans 5:1, Romans 8:3-4, Hebrews 10:14
- There is a judgment that believers must face that requires them to give an account of their lives as believers. The rewards are described as praise. 2 Corinthians 5:10, 1 Corinthians 4:5
- This death is called the "second" because it is not the cessation of physical life that permeates the first earth and its "first things" as a result of human sin. Rather, it is the central and irreversible destiny of those who worship the creature instead of the Creator, who bear the beast's brand rather than the Lamb's seal. (Johnson, page 299)
- The statement that Death and Hades are thrown into the lake of fire most likely refers to 1 Corinthians 15:26 where Paul states that "The last enemy to be destroyed is death."

The New Jerusalem

Revelation 21-22

- The description of a new heaven and a new earth has its origins in Old Testament prophecy. Isaiah is giving New Covenant fulfillment in the language of the picture. Isaiah 65:17; 66:22
- In 2 Peter 3:3-13 Peter writes about the new heaven and new earth as coming after the destruction of the present heaven and earth by fire. The "sea" that no longer exists symbolizes that realm from which chaos and rebellion have emerged to ravage the first earth. Daniel saw four hostile beasts, representing pagan powers that would arise in history to oppress God's people, come up out of the sea (Dan. 7:3); and it was from the sea that John saw the beast emerge to receive the dragon's devilish power and wage his devilish war against the saints (Rev.13:1). The sea in heaven is calm and clear as glass (15:2), but the earthly sea that gave rise to the beast stormed with restless, threatening rebellion. Its absence in the new earth further dramatizes the eradication of enemy forces that would have threatened the new home's peace and purity. (Johnson, pages 303-304)
- To be a believer is to have a personal relationship with the living God. But, in the new heaven and new earth God will be personally among us for all eternity.
- The wicked tried to hide from the presence of God (Rev. 6:16-17), and the first heaven and earth had fled from him (20:11). But for those who are his people, redeemed by the blood of the Lamb, the nearness of God will be infinite comfort: "He will wipe away every tear from their eyes" (21:4), removing the mourning veil that covered the peoples and swallowing up death for ever, as he had promised through Isaiah (Isa. 25:8, also echoed in Rev. 7:17). This vivid image of our Lord's personal comfort to each grieving heart shows that it is his presence among us (21:3) that will do away with the "first things" that now threaten our joy and peace. Because God himself dwells with his peoples, "there will no longer be any death...mourning, or crying, or pain" (21:4; cf. Isa. 65:19-20). (Johnson, page 305)

The Book of Revelation

- God's pronouncement, "It is done" (Rev. 21:6), echoes the word uttered by a great voice from the throne, when the last bowl was poured out (16:17). There the word looked back to the completion of judgment on God's enemies, for the bowls signify the full and final expression of God's wrath (15:1, 8). Here the word looks forward to the fulfillment of God's favor to his servants, as the following promises of refreshment to the thirsty and inheritance to the overcomer show (21:6-7). (Johnson, page 306)
- The offer of the Alpha and Omega of salvation is given in the same language as is found in *Isaiah 51* when God through the prophet Isaiah called Israel to repentance.
- Whereas John was carried to a wilderness to see the harlot, he is taken to "a great and high mountain" to view the bride (Rev. 21:10). The Old Testament background is Ezekiel 40, in which, immediately after the visions concerning the defeat of God and Magog (Ezek. 38-39), the prophet is brought to "a very high mountain" to view the measurement of a new temple (Ezek. 40:2-3). The bride appears as "the holy city, Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God." Yet the details of its description—its massive dimensions, its building materials, and the names on its gates and foundations—show that the city symbolizes something else, as its title "the bride, the wife of the Lamb" has led us to expect. The bride-city symbolizes the saints, the church in its eschatological beauty. The luminous wedding gown given to the bride by her Groom has already been interpreted as "the righteous acts of the saints" (or "God's just acts vindicating saints"), and all the details of the city's appearance illustrate aspects of the church's loveliness in the eyes of God. (Johnson, page 309)
- The names of the twelve tribes, though not given here, must be those listed in the registry of the 144,000 (7:4-8). Therefore their significance is the same as in Revelation 7. Like that army, sealed with the name of God and the Lamb (14:1), so also this city embraces the covenant people of God, led by the Messiah (Judah promoted to first place) and encompassing believers from all the Gentile nations (sons of the concubines promoted from the end to positions 3-6). This city symbolizes the whole Israel of God, redeemed by the Lion/Lamb of Judah from every tribe and tongue and people and nation to become God's kingdom of priests (5:9-10; cf. Exod. 19:6). (Johnson, page 310)
- Using the temple metaphor, Paul identifies the apostles and prophets in the early church as the foundation, of which Jesus is the chief cornerstone (Eph. 2:20). They serve as the temple's foundation specifically by receiving and relaying to the church "the mystery" that God kept hidden in past ages but has now revealed in the gospel (Eph. 3:3-6). So also John sees these twelve servants of the Word as foundational for the city—which, as it turns out, is a temple that is filled with God's glory, wall to wall, top to bottom. (Johnson, page 311)
- The dimensions that John is about to report dwarf those of Ezekiel's temple, showing not only the symbolic nature of the vision but also, more importantly, the breathtaking majesty and magnitude of Christ's church. (Johnson, page 311)
- Perhaps more significantly, the city's cubic shape, with dimensions of equal length, width, and height, reproduces the proportions of the Holiest Place that housed the ark of the covenant in the tabernacle and the temple (Exod. 26:15-25; 1 Kings 6:20; cf. Ezek. 41:4). The city needs no separate sanctuary, for God's presence fills the whole city, making it all sanctuary (Rev. 21:22). (Johnson, pages 312-313)
- Since each of the stones on the high priest's breastplate bore the name of one of Israel's twelve tribes, the gems role was to symbolize the amazing truth that the high priest represented all Israel when he entered the Holiest Place on the Day of Atonement. In John's vision, however, the Old Testament shadow has been transformed by its New Testament fulfillment, for, as we have seen, the names written on the foundation stones of this new Jerusalem are not those of Israel's sons but those of the Lamb's apostles. (Johnson, page 314)
- The stones' value and loveliness are reminiscent of goodness of Eden before the fall (cf. gold, bedellium, and onyx of Eden, Gen. 2:12). As these stones now beautify the foundations of the new Jerusalem, they mark it as Paradise Restored, in which John will soon see the tree of life, no longer barred from our access but now bearing fruit that feeds and leaves that heal the nations (Rev. 22:2).
- From God and the Lamb radiates bright and constant light, making the luminaries of the first heaven, sun and moon, obsolete and unnecessary (Rev. 21:23). (Johnson, page 317)
- The prophecy regarding the coming of this time of "light" is found in *Isaiah 60:19-20*.

The New Jerusalem (part 2)

Revelation 22

- The hallmark of the true bride, in contrast to the harlot, is that she worships no one but God and waits for no bridegroom but the Lamb. This church, composed of John and his fellow servants who hold up to the testimony of Jesus in clinging to the faithful words of God, now appears to be a small minority, senseless in the face of the aggression of hostile government, the deception of pseudo-religion, and the seduction of euthanizing affluence. In fact, however, he is the King's beloved; and he is driving history to the consummation of their marriage, when her every enemy is vanquished and the lambs glory floods her life with light. (Johnson, page 324)
- Here in the new heavens and new earth the water of life flows out from the throne and there are trees of life on both sides of the river bearing 12 crops of fruit, "yielding its fruit every month." In the imagery of the eternal state is the same as that of the Garden of Eden only to a much greater degree.
- There is no need for light because God is the light, for this would seem to explain what we find in the early days of creation in the book of Genesis where there is light but there are no stars or sun or moon.
- The Angels instruction to John, "Do not seal up the words of the prophecy of this book, for the time is near" (Rev. 22:10), is the opposite of the instruction given to Daniel (Dan. 12:4, 9). The ceiling of Daniel's prophecy signaled that the time of its fulfillment was remote, standing in a different epoch of God's redemptive plan from the prophet (cf. Dan. 8:26). What John has seen, however, concerns the redemptive historical epoch in which he is living—the span between the resurrection of Christ and his return, the 1,260 days between the enthronement of the woman's child and his return as the captain of heavens cavalry. (Johnson, page 325)
- We are now living in the last days (Hebrews 1:2). Following the resurrection and ascension of Jesus Christ the next great event in God's unfolding prophetic plan is the second coming of the son. Because John stands with his hearers in the time in which the conflict of the ages has reached its critical pitch in the sacrifice of the lamb and the expulsion of the Dragon accuser from heaven, every individual needs to face immediately the sort of person he or she is today, without assuming a perpetual string of tomorrow's in which change might occur. (Johnson, page 325)
- The voice suddenly changes without notice, as the speaker self description makes clear that he is not a mere angel, unworthy of worship, but the eternal God (Rev. 22:12-13). The titles used earlier by the enthroned One, "I am the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end" (21:6), are further explained by a third pair of opposites, "the first and the last." This set is drawn from the Lord's proclamations of his

The Book of Revelation

uniqueness as the only true and living God (Isa. 41:4; 44:6; 48:12). In Revelation we heard it previously only on the lips of the triumphant Son of Man (1:17; 2:8), and it is he who is now speaking. The one and only, incomparable and eternal God, who stands sovereign at history's Dawn and its sunset, is the one seated on the throne—and this one God is also the lamb who became dead for his own, yet lives for ever more (1:18). His coming at history's midpoint was to accomplish redemption, and the coming he promises at history's midpoint was to execute judgment: "Behold, I am coming quickly, and my reward is with me, to render to every man according to what he has done" (22:12). (Johnson, page 326)

- Once again the defining description of what is a true believer is always the transformed life. In the eternal kingdom no one can enter unless they are an incurable God lover.
1 John 3:9-10
- The invitation for all who are thirsty to come and drink of the water of life is the gospel invitation. This invitation expresses itself in old covenant language where we see Israel being invited to believe. *Isaiah 55:1-3*
- *As we saw in Revelation 5:5, the imagery of the root of David is adapted from Isaiah 11:1, 10, in which God promised to raise up a wise, just, and mighty king from the Davidic dynasty even after it had been cut down to "the root of Jesse" (David's father) in the exile to Babylon. The adaptation of this image in Revelation signals the uniqueness of Jesus. (Johnson, page 328)*
- *Jesus is the bright morning star foreseen by Baalam, the royal champion who would arise from Israel to conquer God's enemies, including Baalam's employer, Moab (Num. 24:17; see Rev. 2:28). (Johnson, page 328)*
- *Jesus testifies to all who hear not only about the freeness of his grace but also about the inviolability of his words (Rev. 22:18-19). He pronounces severe sanctions against anyone who presumes to add or subtract from this book, echoing the prohibition of Moses against adding or taking away from the law of God: "You shall not add to the word which I am commanding you, nor take away from it, that you may keep the commandments of the LORD your God which I command you" (Deut. 4:2; cf. 12:32; Josh. 1:7). The false prophet who presumes to add to the words of this prophecy, speaking where God has not spoken (Deut. 18:20-22), will have added to him the horrific plagues that have been visualized throughout the book, including the Lake burning with fire and brimstone. (Johnson, page 330)*
- *A brief, closing blessing reminds us, John's hearers, that even before Jesus's triumphant bodily return from heaven, he has not left us orphans, defenseless before our mighty foes: "The grace of the Lord Jesus be with all" (Rev. 22:21). Such strong grace accompanying us each step of the way, Jesus' embattled people have every reason to anticipate with confidence our indescribable joy when "we will be like Him, because we will see Him just as He is" (1 John 3:2). (Johnson, page 330)*