

Revelation

John who received the revelation of Jesus Christ was most likely the apostle who also wrote the gospel and letters that bear his name. The book was probably written in about 96 AD, in the reign of the emperor Domitian, a time of persecution for the church. Some think it was written about 30 years earlier when Nero was persecuting the church, but the prevailing consensus has been the later date.

The temple is mentioned several times in Revelation, 3:12, 7:15, 11:1, 12, 19, 14:15, 17, 16:1, 17 and 21:22. Most references are clearly to the true temple in heaven (see Hebrews 9), God's dwelling place, not a geographical location on earth. The final "no temple" observation in 21:22 is because the city itself is the holy of holies, and no set apart temple space is called for when the consummation has come.

The number 7 is prominent in Revelation, relating to God's whole plan, from the creation when God rested on the 7th day, to the lampstand in the tabernacle with 7 branches, to the 7 pillars of Wisdom in Proverbs. It is a number associated with the Spirit(s) of God, and with the Lamb, and imperfectly coopted by the dragon and his allies. In Revelation besides the 7 lampstands, and 7 torches, relating to churches and the Spirit, there are 7 horns and 7 crowns and 7 seals and 7 trumpets and 7 bowls, besides the 7 heads and 7 hills, etc.

The prophet of Revelation is Jesus Christ, in 1:1, who received the message from the Father and relayed it via an angel to John. Jesus is the anointed Prophet who was Moses' heir (Deut 18:18, Acts 3:22), and as Moses spoke God's message through Aaron (Ex 4:14-15, 7:1-2), so Jesus Christ spoke through John. Keep the Exodus in mind when reading Revelation, as it is a major link along with Babel and Babylon to connecting the signs seen by John with their Old Testament foreshadowing.

The most important resource for understanding Revelation is the rest of the Bible, including the older books of prophecy which are quoted, paraphrased, and alluded to over and over again.

Many of the interpretations imposed on Revelation over the centuries have been situational. That's actually part of the design of material like

Revelation, or portions of Daniel or Ezekiel. People can see themselves and their circumstances in the imagery of the book, and know that God is in charge, things haven't spun out of control, Jesus has won and will always win. The kingdom will not be thwarted.

Patient endurance on the part of the saints is a persistent theme of Revelation.

Note the blessing associated with public reading of this book (and all of scripture), 1:3, and note 22:17-19.

The 7 churches of Asia can be found in an arc on the map, each was unique, and collectively give an overview of challenges faced by churches in every generation and every place. Note that each prophetic utterance in chapters 2-3 closes with "what the Spirit says to the churches" (not church singular), and notice 2:23, "all the churches will know..." The 7 were real congregations, but also are representative of all the Lord's churches.

Revelation (1:1-2) is a translation of the Greek word "apocalypse" which means an unveiling, making known, a revelation. The 1st verses of the book reveal prophetic roots with language reminiscent of Daniel 2:28-30, 45-47. God is the revealer of mysteries, generally through chosen human agents and by signs.

The salutation in benediction in 1:3 and salutation in 1:4-8 presents the entirety of Revelation as a letter, and all who read/hear it as recipients. Note the description of God, the Spirit, and Jesus, in 1:4-5. "Him who is and ... was and ... is to come" is an expansion of God's name in Ex 3:14 and echoes language in Isaiah 41:4 etc. The 7 spirits before the throne will recur with some explanation, and reference Zechariah 4:2-7 and Isaiah 11:2-10.

The "kingdom of priests" in 1:6 is analogous to 1 Peter 2:5, 9 which references Exodus 19:5-6. Rev 1:7 references Daniel 7:13-14 and Zechariah 12:10.

In short, Revelation is interwoven with hundreds of prophetic references and imagery found in the Old Testament.

John heard a voice, and John saw a vision, 1:10ff. The "heard" and

“saw” idea will recur several times.

Patmos was an island off the coast of Asia, not far from Ephesus. There was a Roman garrison there, and a rock quarry, and a small population. Ships did stop there. John’s presence on Patmos (1:9) appears to have been in forced exile for the sake of Jesus.

The Lord’s Day, according to all ancient sources from the decades immediately after John is the first day of the week, Resurrection Day, which was assembly day for the churches.

In John’s first vision of Christ through the angel, he saw features and clothing highlighting his humanity and his divinity, connecting him to other heavenly visions including Daniel 7 and Ezekiel 1. Features are described in 1:12-20 that indicate the Lord Christ is Son of God, and son of man, prophet and priest and king, servant and savior. The lampstand(s) would be in the temple, the great high priest is among his churches, tending to them to keep the light(s) aflame.

The alpha and omega in 1:8 and 1st and last in 1:17 (see also 22:13) might be applied to the Father or the Son, either or both. An important theme in Revelation is that everything starts and ends with the Son of God, he is Creator, Redeemer, and Judge. Everything between creation and judgement is like the alphabet (alpha and omega, first and last letters), falling into its place in the divine order. Even when everything looks chaotic and frightening to us on earth, the divinely ordained purposes of God in Christ will persist and always prevail.

Note the keys in 1:18, apparently obtained in his victory over death and the devil (Matt 16:18, Heb 2:9, 14; 1 John 3:8).

Each of the 7 churches in chapters 2-3 is told that the Lord knows their works, and other particular details. Each is assured that the conqueror who is faithful to him will be rewarded. Challenges the churches face(d) include losing the fervor of Christian love, persecution, false prophets in the heritage of Balaam and Jezebel, who though quite different both led Israel toward idolatry and sexual immorality. The names Balaam and Nicolaitans in Hebrew and Greek mean substantially the same thing, those who lord it over others.

2:1, Jesus serves/ministers to his churches. See also 1 Samuel 3:1-4.

2:5, without love, the lamp will go out, the lampstand removed.

2:6, the only clue to “Nicolaitans” is the meaning of the name, those who lord over the people.

2:7, repeated to each of the 7 churches, the Spirit speaks to the churches.

2:7, the tree of life is in the heavenly Jerusalem (22:1-2), alongside the river of life. The heavenly Jerusalem is the destination of the faithful, the conquerors.

2:8, son the man who overcame death promises those who are faithful unto death (2:10) the victory crown of life, and no fear of banishment from God in the 2nd death (see Revelation 20:14).

2:12, the prophet who wields God’s word as a sword (Hosea 6:5) knows the challenge of virulent opposition from false religion, as in pagan idolatry and emperor worship (2:13-14), and from those who entice believers with compromise, like Balaam (2:14-15) who was threatened by the Lord’s angel with a sword (Numbers 22:22ff). The hidden manna (2:17) was in the presence of the LORD, before the throne (Ex 16:33). A white stone speaks of righteousness, and perhaps a “yes” answer from the Urim and Thummim, but also note the stones of the foundation in Revelation 21:14, and that Christians are living stones being built into a sacred structure, 1 Peter 2:1ff.

2:18, the Son of God with attributes found in descriptions of the divine presence in the Old Testament. Note the feet of burnished bronze in 2:18 and rod of iron in 2:26-27 and consider both Psalm 2:7-9, a messianic Psalm, and Micah 4:13, where the Lord’s people are pictured as an ox that threshes with hooves of bronze and horns of iron. Reigning with Christ is an oft repeated promise to the saints.

The morning star in 2:28 reminds us of 1 John 1:7, Matt. 2:2, 2 Pet. 1:19, Phil. 2:15-16.

Note again that the message and lesson is for “all the churches” in 2:23.

3:1 has an echo of 2:1, his who has the 7 stars (and 7 spirits). He was serving in the temple in 2:1, he has charge of heavenly places in 3:1, the great high priest. He has concern for sacred garments in holy places (3:4-5) and has charge of the book of life. Even when the Lord is critical of a church, he generally says there are some who are doing right holding on

while some do not (2:15, 2:24, 3:4). Jesus 2nd coming as in other passages should be expected momentarily, with no special signs or forewarning, like a thief in the night.

3:7 presents the words of the heir of David who has taken up his authority, the anointed king who cannot be contradicted or defied. He can give his people opportunities for service, no matter what the world around them looks like. He promises the humiliation of those who oppose the faithful. A time of great trial was at hand, but in the trial the Lord provides his people who hold fast with security only he can provide. The reward is a permanent place in the heavenly Jerusalem (3:12, 21:1ff), marked as a citizen.

The one who speaks in 3:14 is the “amen”. A Hebrew word that means “yes” or “true.” Isaiah 65:16 refers to God as “Elohim Amen”, the God of truth, which is immediately followed by promise the new heavens and new earth in v17. How was God the God of truth? Particularly in laying down his life for us, the sacrificial lamb who is the Good Shepherd that stands at the door. The one who has conquered through death was zealous for God, and demands something more than lukewarm adherence to his word. As the Lord clothed the sinners in the garden, so he can clothe us, if we’re willing. Note that it is to Christians the Lord says, “I stand at the door and knock.” The promise is the fulfillment of what humans made in the image of God are supposed to be and do, to reign together with God over all creation.

Revelation 4 shifts scenes to a 2nd vision. Not particularly in any historical chronological order, just the order of John’s experience. As he was “in the Spirit” in 1:10, so in perhaps a different sense the same phrase in 4:2. The throne scene John saw was reminiscent of Ex 24:9-11 and Isaiah 6:1ff, and had elements in common with Ezekiel 1:1ff. The splendor of God’s throne and the divine council/court (Ps 82:1, 89:5-7) that surrounds him, with all his radiant glory like light refracted from jewels, and precious metals. The elders can be taken as supernatural beings, but the #24 reminds us of the 12 patriarchs (ie, 12 tribes of Israel) and the 12 apostles (21:12,14) as well as the #books in the Hebrew Bible (remember that Samuel, Kings and Chronicles are one book, as are the 12 minor prophets and Ezra-Nehemiah). At various times and in various ways God has chosen the #12, or here 2X12, in his working with mankind, and note the connection of the 24 elders with prayers and songs in 5:8.

The 4 living creatures in 4:6-8 are doing as the “seraphim” (fiery ones) in Isaiah 6:1-7, and they have the appearance of the cherubim in Ezekiel 1, 10. They were depicted on the ark of the covenant one each side of the sacred throne (mercy seat) as on the hangings of the temple and tabernacle. They are God’s honor guard and throne bearers.

Note the 3 fold glory in 4:8 and 4:11.

The continued throne scene in 5:1ff reminds us again of Daniel 7:9-14 when the Son of Man came to the throne of the Ancient of Days to receive dominion. This is the same scene, but the Son of Man is identified as the Lion of the tribe of Judah (Genesis 49:9) and seen as a slain lamb (John 1:29ff). Daniel’s vision set the time frame in the historical circumstances of Roman rule, which is when Jesus did in fact ascend to the throne of glory.

The sealed scroll is a covenant document, perhaps to be thought of as a deed (Jeremiah 32:10) or a will (Hebrews 9:16-17). Only the Lamb is worthy to open the scroll, enact the covenant, and there are great consequences from his actions.

Note the distinction between “heard” (lion) and “saw” (lamb that had been slain) in 5:5-6.

The Root of David references Isaiah 11:1, and other prophecies.

The prayers of the saints are likened to sacred incense in 5:8. The golden harps reference songs of the saints (see Rev 14:2-3), hearts making melody to the Lord (Eph 5:19).

Note that the praise of the elders in 5:9-10 indicates the healing of Babel’s divisions (Genesis 11:1ff, Deuteronomy 32), and the fourfold depiction of humanity in 9b. Note too the ransomed here are the same kingdom of priests mentioned in 1:6.

The voices of angels celebrating the Lamb’s victory in 5:11 are described as numbering many millions. This time the benediction of the heavenly host is 7 fold. Then we transition to include the physical realm in 5:13 and the benediction of honor is 4 fold, the number associated with the earth and its “four corners.” Isaiah prophesied that every knee will bow (45:22-23) and every tongue acknowledges the LORD God, and Paul applied that prophecy to Jesus in glory (Philippians 2:9-11). John’s vision of

the glory of the Lion/Lamb transcends time, encompassing the consummation of Jesus' reign as well as its beginning, which is also the case in Daniel 7.

Revelation 6:1-8 describes four horsemen called forth by the four living creatures. Remember the horsemen God sent throughout the earth in Zechariah's vision, Zech 1:8-17, whose job was to patrol the world and bring things into order for the peace and prosperity of God's community. Then again in Zech 6:1-8 four chariots of similar colors went throughout the earth to accomplish the Spirit's purpose among the exiles. Note: The horses and riders of these first four seals are generally not to be identified with *someone* but rather represent *something* (as war, death, plagues, famine, and so forth). Not exactly an individual, divine or otherwise, but spiritual force unleashed.

6:1-2, When the Lamb opened the **first seal**, the 1st living creature called out, with a voice like thunder, with divine power and authority, he commanded, "**Come**". What comes forth is a **white horse** and rider, and white generally represents **righteousness**.

.This force of righteousness is armed with a bow (see Ps. 7:11-13, 64:6-7, Zech. 9:9-17). Notice in Zech. 9:9ff that the bow of God is his nation, and the arrows are his people (see also Ps. 127:4). Consider 2 Cor 2:7, in context, and Rom. 1:16-17, 3:21ff, 6:13ff. The Lamb has revealed God's righteousness, and it is a conquering force. Our Lord is king of righteousness (Heb 7:1-3).

6:3-4, When the Lamb opened the **second seal**, the second being, called "**Come**". John saw a second horse, this one **fiery red**. War is in the mix for this world. We are reminded of judgment and discipline, **trial by fire** (1 Cor. 3:11-15, Heb. 12:4-7). Trial and testing, conflict and challenge are part of the Godly program enacted on the authority of the Christ. The **servant** of Christ must expect rejection, hostility, and **persecution**, even from those who have been family and friends (Matt. 10:21-34, esp v34, 16:24-26, 2 Tim. 3:12). The servant must be dedicated and steadfast in a world where men strive against one another, demarking the followers of the Prince of Peace.

6:5-6, When the Lamb opened the **third seal** the third living creature called "**Come**". The horse this time is **black**, the color of mourning, despair, and loss (consider Rom. 8:20-23, 7:21-25, Eccl. 2). The rider

holds **scales**. The anointed is mostly concerned with weighing men's hearts, not things (Dan. 5:27, Job 31:6, 1 Pet. 4:16-19, John 6:27), yet the world is driven by pursuit of wages. The Lord's concern with wages is usually with regard to labor in the kingdom (Matt. 20:1-16, Rom. 6:23, 1 Tim. 5:17-18) though economic hardship has often been part of his plan for confronting rebellious mankind (Lev 26:26). Labor here is reduced to subsistence (Ecclesiastes 6:7), which in fact weighs men's hearts, to whom or what will they turn?

Perhaps there is a reminder here that God's people as human beings may suffer deprivation, and may be victims of economic discrimination. Poverty and hardship may be theirs along with society, or Christians may be targeted as particular victims of a society in conflict with God's purposes, but even so they will not lack in terms of God's abundance (Matt. 16:24-27, 1 Cor. 1:26-29, Eph. 3:14-21, Phil. 4:11-13).

6:7-8, When the fourth seal was opened a **pale horse** was called forth. This rider is identified as **death**, which is now under the authority of the Son of God (Heb. 2:14-15, 2 Tim. 1:8-10, 1 Cor. 15:20-28, Rom. 6:9). **Death** and **Hades** (Hades→ the abode of the souls of the dead who are not with the Lord) are now used to the Lord's purpose and not at all to Satan's (see previous verses and Rev. 1:18). The pair are often used in parallel in the Greek Old Testament (as in Psalm 6:5). Creation is subject to the kingdom of the beloved Son, completely, even its rebellious elements, including those still subject to death. A fourth part of the earth (man's domain), or a complete fraction of it (recall that the number four is especially associated with the physical world) is subjected to death. This is not used to convince the Christian (1 Thess. 4:13-5:3) but to confront the world with its own mortality and need for salvation (Rev. 9:20). The Son of God uses death and the grave to his own purpose, to provoke repentance. Though they do not originate with God, even trouble and pain fit into his grand scheme, with his utter authority over creation (2 Corinthians 12:7-10), and until the Lord comes again, Christians are to face death without fear. (Note that the slayers here also number four, as is appropriate for the troubling of the earth, ¹sword, ²famine, ³plague, and ⁴wild beasts, echoing prophecies of severe chastening in Ezekiel and other prophets.)

The fifth seal, 6:9-11, reveals the presence of those who have died for the Word. Most likely this includes all those who have died in faith, not only those who died by violence, but the focus is on those who suffered. They're not viewed in Hades (remember the previous seal) but under the altar

which is before the throne of God. Their lives have been poured out (see 2 Timothy 4:6) as an offering to God. They want justice (Ps 79:10), and they are comforted for a time (as in 2 Peter 3:9) while they await the full number of devoted believers to be completed. They are in contrast to “those who dwell on the earth” because their/our citizenship is in heaven. Note the white robes (recall 3:5, 18).

6:12-17, the sixth seal provokes cataclysmic events that are often used to describe the final cataclysms of nations condemned by God, and of the 2nd coming and the judgment. See Isaiah 13:10-13, 24:1-6 and 19-23, 34:3-6; Ezekiel 32:6-8, Matthew 24:29-31. The world and its rulers aren't ready to face the Lamb, they want shelter for the “wrath of the Lamb” which ought to be absurd, but isn't. Sinners don't want to be in the presence of God. The final question here, “who can stand?” leads directly into an answer in chapter 7 (see also Joel 2:10-11, where the “who can endure it?” question is answered in Joel 2:32, as cited by Peter in Acts 2:16-21; also Psalm 76:6-9).

7:1-3, mighty angelic forces are and have been restrained... but can be unleashed. The 4 here, as often, indicates the whole of the earth. The four winds here remind us again of Zechariah's vision of 4 chariots in Zech 6:1-8, which went “out to the four winds of heaven” in v5.

The servants of God are marked with a seal in v3 (recall 2 Cor 1:19-22) to protect them for divine judgment (as in Ezekiel 9:4). Chaos is restrained for the sake of God's servants in this world.

7:4-8, John heard the number, 144,000 from every tribe of the sons of Israel, but this list matches no list of the sons or the tribes, omitting Dan and including Joseph and one of his sons, Manasseh, but omitting Ephraim. Those distinctions should catch out attention. The tribe of Dan is credited in Judges with abandoning their inheritance and introducing centuries of prolonged idolatry into Israel. The tribe of Ephraim led the northern tribes away from the heir of David. There's more to those stories, including a lack of lineage for Dan or Ephraim (the Ephraim genealogy goes only to Joshua) in the lists of 1 Chronicles. These 12 “tribes” are the same as those sealed in v3, the servants of God, and the listed count is for a purpose, highlighting the number 12 (X12X1000). The format is like a military census (see Numbers 1:20ff) with each “tribe” the same. The original military census of Israel included men, 20 years old and older. This

one includes male “virgins” (14;3-4, compare Ex 19:15) who are “the redeemed of the earth” and who “follow the Lamb wherever he goes.” That sounds like an idealized count of Christians, God’s holy people.

7:9-17, John “heard the number” in v4, and saw “a great multitude” beyond numbering. Remember when John heard “Lion” and saw “Lamb.” One perspective on the sealed is the conscripts who follow Jesus in 5-8, another is a great multitude tended by the Lamb as shepherd (7:17, as in Psalm 23), who serve all the time in God’s temple (v15, which is the church on earth, and God’s dwelling in heaven). The great tribulation in v14 is not an event, it is a reality of serving Christ in this world (recall Matthew 24:21, Revelation 2:22, Matthew 13:21, John 16:33). Notice again the white robes, v14 (and what makes them white) as in 3:4-5, 3:18, 6:11.

Chapter 7 answered the question of the world in 6:17 (see also Psalm 24:3-6). The 7th seal in 8:1-5 results first in a brief silence, and then fire from the altar flung upon the earth (and this must be related to the prayers of the saints, 5:8, 6:9ff). The silence is consistent with the theme of divine judgment on the world in 6:12-17, the day of wrath and salvation. See Hab 2:20, Zeph 1:17, Psalm 31:17, and Psalm 62:1-7. Note the language of Isaiah 29:5-7 in Rev 8:5. Of course there is also an allusion to God coming down on Mt Sinai.

The 7 trumpets, 8:6-11:19 conclude, like the 7 seals, with imagery of divine judgment, the consummation of God’s plan. The conquest of Jericho comes to mind, with its cycle of 7 days of trumpets, and then 7 cycles of marching with trumpets on the 7th day, ending with a shout. God’s victory was given to his people who marched in silence (recall 8:1) for 6 days, 6 circuits of the walls, before raising a shout of triumph.

Recall that the 10 plagues on Egypt were ascribed to a band of destroying angels, Psalm 78:49-50. The 1st 4 trumpets remind us in part of the plagues of Egypt, and demonstrate God’s power over his creation and the gods of men. The land and plants, the sea and its creatures, including seafarers, freshwater, the sun, moon and stars, and light, all damaged or subdued in part as the creation groans in travail (Romans 8:19ff). Nations and great powers of the unseen realm are rising and falling in the language of great mountains and fallen stars as God gives the nations over to wrath (Revelation 1:18ff). For “wormwood” see Jeremiah 9:15, 23:15, God’s wrath against an idolatrous unjust nation.

8:13, eagles/vultures are associated in the prophets with the carrion of battle (Luke 14:37, for example). The 3 final trumpets are worse than the previous 4.

9:1, the fallen star suggests a rebellious heavenly being, the devil or one like him. The “abyss” in v1-2 is the Greek word for the “great deep” in Genesis 1:2, 7:11, 8:2, Jonah 2:6, etc. It is also used of a place of imprisonment and torment for demons in Luke 8:31/Matthew 8:29. The latter is probably John’s meaning, analogous to Tartarus in 2 Peter 2:4. A mighty fallen “angel” was enabled to free a horde of “locusts” that aren’t locusts from the abyss, a place of fire and smoke. God has used literal locusts in hordes that darkened the sun, Ex 10:15, to chasten idolatrous and unjust nations, as also in Joel 1:4ff, esp 2:2, 10. These in Rev 9 are not literal locusts, but comparable as a devouring horde. John’s description includes the word “like” over and over again in 9:3-10 to denote comparative description, not the physical nature of the creatures. These locusts make people miserable, rather than devouring the plants as normal locusts would, and not all humans, only those who are sealed with the seal of God (9:4). As with pestilence in general, there is a limited duration for the misery inflicted. Their effect of making people utterly miserable reminds me of many vices people are seduced into when they don’t know the Lord. Mankind apart from God falls into a kind of madness and self-destructive behavior that leads to despair. Not without inspiration or driving forces, the forces of evil are real, plentiful, and powerful among those who aren’t sealed by God. Religions or philosophies of life inspired by anything except God himself lead to hopelessness and miserable despair.

9:11 The king of the abyss, Destroyer is his name, might be Beelzebub, prince of demons (Matthew 12:24) called “Satan” by Jesus (Matthew 12:26), or could be another mighty hostile angel. The period of distress with the supernatural locusts was brief, but was just a prelude to more “woes” to follow.

9:13, with 6th trumpet comes a voice from the 4 horns of the altar of incense, ordering the angel with the trumpet to release yet another 4 angels bound at the River Euphrates. Since the voice comes from the altar, the prayers of saints on earth must be a factor in choosing the time for this woe. Babylon had come from the Euphrates to bring God’s wrath upon Israel in the days of Jeremiah, Daniel, and Ezekiel. Babylon in turn was conquered when Cyrus the Persian diverted the waters of the Euphrates to

gain entrance to the city (Daniel 5). The Babylonian troops had been like a swarm of locusts (Jer 46:23-24, for example) against Judah and Egypt. Similarly the whole world is under God's indictment for idolatry and immorality (Rev 9:20-21).

No human army has ever yet numbered $2 \times 10,000 \times 10,000 = 200,000,000$... but these aren't human soldiers or weapons of human technology. These are forces of darkness set loose in this world when humanity worships demons (9:20) and idols and don't restrain violence, witchcraft (hallucinogenic drugs, etc.) and sexual immorality. Such consequences need not be a one-time event, but from generation to generation and nation to nation disaster follows when mankind pursues their own "gods" and moral values and won't repent.

Note that repentance is the goal of these plagues in 9:21. Sodom had a "fire and Sulphur" retribution (Genesis 19:24) and so will any nation or group of nations persistent in rebellion (Isa 34:9-10, Ezek 38:22). Deception has been a key theme in the 5th and 6th trumpets, things that appear to be something they are not. Acknowledging the truth is key to escaping these plagues.

The 6th seal led into sealing the people of God, 6:12, 7:3. The 6th trumpet leads into John commissioning as a prophet, rather like Ezekiel (Ez 3:1-3, Rev 10:9-11) with a similar injunction to speak God's word to people who might not want to hear it or obey it.

10:1 The angel clothed with a cloud reminds us of the Lord's descent on Sinai, which included being in a thick cloud, thunder, smoke, and fire, and the sound of trumpets. The "pillars of fire" legs extend the imagery to the cloud/fire that guided and guarded Israel in the wilderness. The same God who sent his angels to Moses and Israel is dealing with John in similar power and authority. Note the proclamation of what is to happen with the 7th trumpet in 10:7 alludes to both ends of the reign of Jesus, the mystery revealed through the church (Eph 3:10) and encompassing all nations as in 10:11, consummated in the 2nd coming of Jesus. The angel's divine authority is further indicated by the rainbow over his head. The upraised hand and oath in 10:5-6 echoes the angel speaking to Daniel in Dan 12:7.

When God calls the game, the game will be over, 10:5-6.

John's prophetic message, this book of Revelation, wasn't for a particular group of people in any sense, but for all of mankind in all generations (10:11).

Revelation 11:1-14 still precedes the 7th trumpet, the 3rd woe. As the 6th seal was followed by sealing the people of God before the finality of the 7th seal, so the 6th trumpet has been followed by John's commissioning, and a responsibility to measure the altar and worshipers in God's temple.

We need have no doubt that the temple John was to measure was not a physical structure on earth. We've already been told that God's temple is in heaven (Rev 3:12, 7:15) and that God's faithful people are part of it and will never leave it (as also in Eph 2:20, etc). This temple is not of this world, but it is functioning in this world by virtue of God's people, the living body of Christ, doing his will. This is a reminder too of Ezek 40-48, the Messiah's temple, which the church is being built into.

If John wrote Revelation in 96 AD as commonly believed, then there was no temple of God on earth, and no outer court, as all that had been destroyed in 70 AD. The outer court trampled by the Gentiles (11:2) most likely also refers to hostility against the church and in this world, and the corruption of those who purport to follow Jesus but don't truly honor him.

The "holy city" in 11:2 must not be physical Jerusalem, which is part of Rome/Babylon (or Sodom/Egypt) in 11:8, where the Lord was crucified. Ancient Jerusalem was sometimes called the holy city, by Nehemiah for example (Neh 11:1) but that expression often meant something more than the physical city in the Old Testament too (Ps 46:4, 48:1, 87:1, Isa 52:1-2), and in Revelation that appellation is applied to the New Jerusalem of God (21:2, 21:10, 22:19), the destination of the righteous and dwelling of those clothed in white. The world opposes the City of God on earth (Rev 19:9) and seeks to overwhelm it, which God tolerates for a time.

The 42 months and 1260 days are the same length of time (42x30=1260), as is 3 ½ years, or time, times, and half a time. These numbers have roots in Daniel (Daniel 12:7, the time until God's prophetic plan would be finished, and also Daniel 7:25, 9:27, 12:11-12). 42 months is half of 7 years, which seems pertinent given the usage of 7 elsewhere, including the Sabbath calendar of Israel. The same number/value will recur in chapter 12 for the woman's sanctuary in the wilderness. Forty two also happens to be the number of generations Matthew chose to highlight in the

genealogy of Jesus, Matthew 1:1-17).

The 2 witnesses in 11:3ff surely remind us of Zechariah's prophecy of the two olive trees in Zech 4:1-7, 11-14. Two witnesses because veracity requires 2 or more witnesses (Num 35:30, Deut 17:6, etc). Olive trees because of the Holy Spirit fueling the lamps, lampstands because Jesus, and his disciples, are the light of the world. In Zechariah's vision, the 2 can be equated with Joshua the priest, and Zerubbabel, the prince of Judah, both foreshadowing the Christ who is King and High Priest. In Revelation we're also being reminded of Elijah, 2 Kings 1:10, 1 Kings 17:1, and of Moses, Exodus 7:1ff, who were the two witnesses that spoke with Jesus on the Mt of Transfiguration. These two foreshadowed Jesus as well, both as the Prophet who was to come, and as the one who fulfills the Law and the Prophets. The 2 witnesses point us toward Jesus in his many roles as the anointed one, but the prolonged witness points too to the church which is his body upholding the word of his testimony in this world, and faces hostility as he did. The witnesses are only struck down when they've finished their work (11:7). God's people can be killed, if God allows it, but they can't be silenced or kept down.

Sodom and Egypt in v8 remind us of moral wickedness, oppression, and idolatry, which go hand in hand. This is the character of the world apart from God.

3 ½ days in v9 reminds us of Jesus' time in the grave, but doesn't match it, and these are not buried but intentionally despised by "some" of the world that won't bury them. The 3 ½ is half a week, and at least reminds us of Daniel's prophecy, Daniel 9:27.

The beast in v7 also reminds us of Daniel 7:3ff, and Daniel 7 concludes with the judgment of God's council, including the saints, against the beast(s) who persecute His people.

The raising up by the breath of God in 11:11 harks back to Ezekiel 37, the valley of dry bones, v5, 10. God's people brought to life. God's gift of life is frightening to the worldly. Going to heaven on a cloud is indeed like Jesus.

The great earthquake in 11:13 links about to the judgment of Gog and Magog in Ezekiel 38:19, which corresponds also to the final "battle" in

Revelation 20.

When the testimony of the witnesses has concluded, what remains with the 7th trumpet is the fulfillment of the kingdom, which includes the judgment of the nations, 11:15-19. Psalm 2 began to be fulfilled when Jesus rose triumphant from the dead, it is fully realized when the world city collapses under the weight of sin and the Lord destroys the last enemy (1 Cor 15:24-27, 54-58).

11:18 speaks of the time of judging the dead, referred to repeatedly as the time of Christ's return and the resurrection of the dead, with the loud cry and the final trumpet (1 Cor 15:52). We've just read about the last trumpet. The "destroyers of the earth" have utterly failed in man's original mandate to (responsibly) bring the earth into subjection (Genesis 1:28), spreading order in creation, not chaos and destruction. This puts the consequences of Rev 9 on the shoulders of those who rebel against God too.

The opening of God's temple in heaven suggests no more veil of flesh, no more seeing through as in a mirror (Heb 6:19, 10:20, 1 Cor 13:12, 1 John 3:1-2). Later, in Rev 21:22 John sees no temple in the city of God, because the whole city is the holy of holies. Two different visionary perspectives for the same outcome, God openly present among his people.

The original ark of the covenant disappeared in Jeremiah's day, Jer 3:16. But Jesus is referred to as the "propitiation" for our sins, a term referring to the mercy seat where the blood was sprinkled for atonement (1 John 2:2) and Hebrews 9 refers to the Tabernacle and all its furnishings as shadows of the true sanctuary where God dwells in heaven. That sanctuary with the true throne (ark) of God is revealed after the 7th trumpet.

Revelation 12 shifts the scene to two new "great signs." The radiant woman, and the red dragon. The conflict seen in Rev 12 will be replayed in various ways and angles in chapters 12-20.

The appearance of the woman in 12:1 takes us back to Joseph's 2nd dream in Genesis 37:9-11, a dream understood to mean that all the family of Israel would bow to him. That dream was a prelude to his removal to Egypt, and subsequent role as savior of his family and many others. Jesus is the new Joseph. It's no coincidence that Jesus was born and raised in the household of a man named Joseph, son of Jacob (Matt. 1:16), and that

he went into Egypt in the care of Joseph (Matt. 2:13-15). It's not a coincidence that Jesus was buried in the tomb of a man named Joseph (Matt. 27:57-60) and that the Bible speaks of 2 empty tombs, that of Joseph in Egypt and Joseph of Arimathea. God honored the dreams and blessings given to Joseph (Genesis 49:22-26) with fulfillment in Jesus for all of Israel, including Gentiles grafted in.

The woman then is the true Israel of God, who travailed in labor, all through the Babylonian captivity (Micah 4:9-10) which only ends in the Christ (Matthew 1:17). Paul describes this woman as "the Jerusalem above" (Galatians 4:25) which is the holy city of Revelation, and the City of God in Hebrews 12:22-25. She is personified in some women who were faithful in extraordinary circumstances like Sarah (see Isaiah 51:1-9, which speaks of Sarah, and Zion, and slaying the dragon), and of course Mary (see Luke 1:26ff). Eve should not be overlooked either (Genesis 3:15), but the picture is not a particular human woman, but all of the faithful who collectively participate in the redemption story (Micah 5:3).

The dragon in v3 is "another sign". Distinct from the radiant woman, and in opposition to her. He is clearly identified with the "ancient serpent" in v9 which refers back to Genesis 3, when the conflict was set in motion. As dragon he is like the pharaoh(s) of Egypt, or really they were like him (Isaiah 52:9, Rahab is a term for Egypt, the pierced dragon; Ezekiel 29:3). He is, in v9, the devil, and Satan, the deceiver of the whole world. He tried, not once but many times, to prevent the royal heir from being born, by attacking Israel, attacking the house of David, and then when Jesus was born aiming Herod at the male infants and toddlers of Bethlehem.

While the Lamb has 7 horns and 7 eyes (5:6) on his one head, the dragon has 7 heads and 10 horns with royal crowns on his heads. He has divine power and wisdom (7), bestowed on him by God when he was created, before he became a liar and murderer, and his power is centered in the kingdoms of this world (10 horns). He's had a big impact in heaven and on earth, v4, a damaging impact.

The child (see Isa 9:6-7) who rules with a rod of iron is the anointed one, Christ, as in Psalm 2 (esp v2, 9). He was caught up to heaven when the dragon thought he had the upper hand (recall John 13:2, 27) when he rose from the dead and ascended in victory (Eph 4:8).

The woman fleeing into the wilderness (12:6, 14) isn't defeated. This is a recapitulation of Exodus 13-19, Israel coming out of Egypt to meet God at his mountain. The wilderness experience at Sinai, where they received the Law, and built the sanctuary for God to dwell among them, and saw his glory, was a brief "golden age" for Israel, a courtship where God wooed Israel to be his own (see Hosea 2:14-15, Ezekiel 20:33-38). Similarly, the church is brought out of "Egypt" into the place God prepared for her to be sustained. The time, times and half a time (v14) might also remind us of Elijah having sanctuary during the 3 ½ years of drought (1 Kings 17-18, James 5:17), an appropriate connection in light of the witnesses in chapter 11, but the primary connection is Israel rescued to serve the Lord at Sinai. The eagle's wings in 12:14 strengthen that reference point (Ex 19:4).

The defeat of the dragon in v7-12 echoes conflicts mentioned in Daniel between great angelic princes who influence the nations, Michael being the prince of Daniel's people (Daniel 12:1, 10:18-21). The dragon has a kingdom in this world and is, on account of the blood of the Lamb and faithful testimony of the holy people, reduced to his shrunken domain (12:11) in fulfillment of Genesis 3:14.

12:11 is an important comment for Christians facing the hostility of 12:17. Remember to 1 Peter 5:8-9.

As references for the torrent in v15-16, consider Psalm 124:2-5 and Numbers 16:30. God knows how to rescue his people (as also in 2 Peter 2:1ff).

The radiant woman and noted above can be identified with God's faithful people across generations, God's true Israel, the heavenly Jerusalem, the church of God. She is (as in Gal 4 mentioned above) our mother. Christians are the objects of devilish wrath in this world, 12:17.

Note that the time frame for the woman in the wilderness is the same as that for the 2 witnesses in 11:3.

Rev 12 ends with John observing the dragon standing on the beach, and from that perspective the next adversary arises in 13:1.

In Job God describes 2 great beasts. A land beast, Behemoth, in Job 40:15-24, and a sea beast, Leviathan, in Job 41:1-34. Here in Revelation

13 we have two beast, a sea beast and a land beast. Particularly in the Septuagint (Greek) translation of Job, there are numerous descriptive similarities between Leviathan and the beast from the sea, and Behemoth and the beast from the earth. These are creatures only God can master, and he certainly can.

The 1st beast, from the sea, has attributes that surely identify it as the 4th beast in Daniel 7:7-8, namely the Roman empire (as also in Daniel 7:23ff, and Daniel 2, Nebuchadnezzar's dream of the great 4 part image). It was to be in the days of that 4th kingdom, Rome, that the Son of Man came before the Ancient of Days to receive his kingdom (Daniel 7:13-14), which was depicted in Revelation 12:5. The previous prophecies and features of the beast from the sea point toward imperial Rome, but Rome was the latest edition of Babel/Babylon, the world city that opposes God, and the features of Roman opposition to the rule of God's anointed have been recapitulated many times in other kingdoms of this world aligned with the dragon. Note again 13:4b, and recall Job 41. God will prevail, but no one else can.

The duration of the beast in 13:5 is the same as that of the 2 witnesses and the woman in the wilderness. There will always be opposition to the gospel and the saints in this world. There will always be those who worship idols, power, wealth, safety, etc (13:8). The blasphemies of 13:6 includes God's "tabernacle" which is the church. See also Daniel 7:25.

The mortal wound in 13:3 echoes Genesis 3:15, a crushed head, but the wound was by the sword, 13:14, which alludes to God's word, and Isaiah 27:1, where God's sword is unleashed against Leviathan. The powers of the world have been dealt a death blow by Christ, but seem to survive and continue in battle, though that's really delusional given the continuing work of Christ among his people. The time is short (12:12).

Note the eternal scope of God's plan in 13:8, and the contrast of the redeemed and the earthly. The Book of Life is the roll call of those who belong to God, he knows those who are his.

Note the echo in 13:9 of 2:7, etc.

Note what saints need in troubled times, 13:10.

The 2nd beast from the earth in 13:11ff is like the minions of Satan in 2 Cor 11:13-14, looking like a lamb but speaking like a dragon. Deception, temptation, misdirection, the religious movements of the world, including distortions of the Christian faith, put on a false front of godliness while leaving people in slavery to sin. This beast is later called “the false prophet” in 16:13.

For Christians reading and hearing Revelation at the end of the 1st century, the emperor cult would have certainly come to mind with the enforced worship in 13:12. Pergamum (2:12-17) was a center of emperor worship for Asia, and the comments in 2:13-15 reflect the challenges of the place and the time. Totalitarians always end up opposing Christians because though they are model citizens, they profess loyalty to someone greater than the government. All the scenes in Revelation 13 aptly fit Christian challenges in late 1st century Rome, and have also fit Christian challenges in a myriad of other places and times since then. Governments and their propaganda support structure tend to devolve into beasts that oppress God’s people. Such a pattern will persist in this world until the Lord comes again.

The mark of the beast is contrary to the seal of God previously mentioned in 7:2, and opposes the thinking and doing of the word as pictured in Deut 6:8-9 (forehead and hand). For believers in the 1st century and early 2nd century it was a receipt to prove they had burned incense at an imperial shrine, necessary to do business in much of the empire. I understand that Christians in India have noted the Hindu mark on the forehead as a “mark of the beast” in their own cultural challenges.

Note that the 2nd beast does great signs, 13:13-14 (and see 2 Thess 2:9), perhaps analogous to the Egyptian magicians who opposed Moses and Aaron in Exodus 7ff. Sometimes such signs may be trickery, sometimes they may be supernatural working of Satan. Remember that Satan was allowed to manipulate people and weather in Job 1, and disease in Job 2 and 2 Corinthians 12.

Many an answer has been proposed for the # of the beast in 13:18. Since Hebrew, Greek, and Latin letters were all used as numerals, many combinations from each language have been proposed, including Nero Caesar and Lateinos (for Romans) in the century after John. However, the most likely resolution (in my opinion) isn’t so much math as scripture

association. Man was made on the 6th day. It is man's number. Nebuchadnezzar's great image in Daniel 3 that is a backdrop for the enforced worship of Rev 13 was 60 cubits high and 6 cubits wide. So we have important connections to humanness, and Babylon, that involve 6 and 66. Just for a bonus, a writer named Irenaeus in the 2nd century included "lateinos" in his list of possible numerical combinations, but wrote that the image in Daniel 3 (60 & 6) plus the flood occurring to destroy the wickedness of the world and fallen angels in Noah's 600th year was the most likely intent.

There is no great "end times" prophecy of a specific individual with a code-name and a mark that will somehow be slipped into the culture. The elements of these prophecies were all happening in the generation John first wrote to, and have been played out over and over again in nations and peoples all over the world. Notice in 16:13 the unholy trio of dragon and beasts vomit up unclean spirits (demons) who continue their work.

While dragons and beasts (the devil and human authority structures) are rampaging in the world, there is something else entirely going on, in 14:1ff. The redeemed of chapter 7, the army of the Lord in a sense (as the numbered Israelites in Numbers 1 were of age to serve in battle), is seen on Mt Zion, which must be the Zion of Hebrews 12:22, not the geographical location conquered by David. The redeemed are marked too, with the Father's name, 14:1, as 3:12 for the faithful conquerors. Their singing has divine power and is vocal but sounds like harps (recall 5:8). The heart attuned to the Lord is the harp of God.

When Israel approached Mt Sinai in Exodus 19:15 they were to be celibate for 3 days ("on the 3rd day", a passage anticipating the resurrection of Jesus). Here the dedication is greater in 14:4. Following Jesus wherever he goes (14:4) was something the disciples could not yet do before he was crucified (John 13:36-37) but Christians are called to follow even into prison or death (Luke 14:27).

The 3 angels in 14:6-13 proclaim that there is good news... but you have to accept and be faithful. Worship the creator, not created things. Babylon has been an implied subject several times from Old Testament reference points, but is named for the 1st time in 14:8, echoing Jeremiah 51:8 and Isaiah 21:9, with surrounding prophecies. "The great" comes from Nebuchadnezzar's arrogance in Daniel 4:30. Babylon fell in 538 BC, after

70 years, but what she represents goes back to Genesis 11 and continues until the end. Isaiah 34:9-10 used the same language for Edom's destruction as for Babylon here in 14:11. Rome was another version of Babylon. Babylon is the world city that opposes God and worships manliness, and created things, and indulges in every vice. Her fall is assured, and is revisited in chapters 17-19.

Once again, what the saints need in troubled times, 14:12.

Death (in the Lord) is one doorway into God's rest, 14:13, see Hebrews 4:9ff.

In a sense the 3 angels have summarized the Christian epoch, and 14:14-20 is the conclusion. There is the harvest of the grain in 14-16, which is gathered as in the parable, Matthew 13:24-30, 35-43. The 1st angel with a sickle looks very much like Christ, and is his agent. The 2nd angel is nondescript for us, commanded by the angel of the altar fire, where the voice of the witnesses had called previously for justice. Justice is the other side of harvest, the grapes that are destined for the winepress of God's wrath. See Joel 3:13 and Isaiah 63:1-6. Outside the (holy) city, wrath does not enter the city of God. It's an either/or harvest image, and those destined for wrath are many, considering 14:29.

Revelation 15

Another sign, so a shift again in perspective, not a chronology. 7 angels with 7 "last" plagues, finishing God's wrath (eg Romans 1:18ff), the temporal judgment of nations before the final harvest.

In the throne scene of 4:5 the sea of glass was like crystal, clear and bright. In 2 there is a sea of glass, again, but this time fire is mingled in. The sea in 4 was like a lens through which God could look down upon the world he created. But human wickedness has brought a fiery distortion to the scene this time. In the same way, the river of life at God's throne in Rev 22 was seen as a river of fire in Dan 7:10, when Babylon reigned over the nations.

The song of Moses (15:3) might be the victory song of Exodus 15, after crossing the Red Sea, but seems more likely to be the song of Deuteronomy 32 (see Deut 31:19-30). The song of Moses in Deut 32 speaks of God's works, the rebellion of the nations, God choosing Israel to

be a new nation belonging to him, Israel following the other nations in worshipping demons, and God's vindication of his purposes. The song of Moses set the stage for the coming of the Messiah to do what the nation of Israel left unfinished because of sin, redeeming the nations for God. The new song of Moses and the Lamb celebrates victory over the beastly forces of the world (15:1-2) and the redeemed of all nations coming to worship God. Deut 32 presents the problems of a post-Babel world following demons and worshipping idols, while Rev 15:3-4 celebrates the divine solution.

The 7 angels in 15:6 are garbed appropriately for priestly service in the heavenly sanctuary. The word "witness" in v5 is that word applied to Stephen who died for his witness of Jesus, martyr.

Instead of bowls of incense (5:8), this time it's bowls of wrath (15:7). Curiously, the sanctuary is inaccessible during the outpouring of the 7 bowls of wrath, as it was when God's glory filled the Tabernacle in Exodus 40 and the temple in 1 Kings 8:11. That happened when the tabernacle and temple were consecrated, and the ark put in place. When the priests came out (1 Kings 8:10) the cloud of glory filled the temple and no one could go in. So also here. There must be a process of sanctification underway, a necessary purging for God's glory to dwell among men.

Note similarities in the bowls to the plagues on Egypt, and the reason for the plagues in 16:5-7 (when the altar echoes the angel, that again is consistent with the former prayers of the saints for justice). Notice the response to calamity in 16:9, 11, as previously in 9:20-21.

The final confrontation, so to speak, anticipated in 16:12-16, isn't the sort of battle the unholy trinity desires, it's a futile shaking of fists toward the sky with no hope of success.

Notice the admonition of 16:15, and remember the garments were available in 3:4-5 and 3:18. Don't be like Adam and Eve when they sinned, be a priest properly garbed (Ex 20:26, 28:42).

Armageddon (only one "d" in the Greek) is almost always associated with Megiddo. John transliterated a compound Hebrew term into Greek letters. The "har" at the beginning means mountain. The ancient city of Megiddo in the valley of Jezreel is not on a mountain, it's in the middle of a

plain, a large valley. And it has two “d”s. All Old Testament prophecies of the final battle when God overthrows the nations make Jerusalem the centerpiece, and Jerusalem in Revelation is the holy city, not the geographical city. Megiddo would be an odd destination. However, there is a Hebrew expression that would transliterate into Greek letters as “har-magedon” (as is the text) in Isaiah 14:13 where the “king of Babylon” says, “I will set my throne on high; I will sit on the mount of assembly...” The Hebrew for “mount of assembly”, referring to God’s throne room, transliterates just fine into John’s spelling of Armageddon. The prophecy here in Rev 16:16 is about uniting the nations against God’s New Covenant people, a final effort to overthrow God’s government on earth, as also in 20:7-9. Not a war with conventional weapons, but a battle for minds and souls which certainly includes violence and persecution.

The last plague that wrenches the earth has all the tokens of divine judgment again. See also Ezekiel 38:19-22 for a similar overthrow of the forces who seek to overthrow God’s people.

The prostitute in Rev 17 is the polar opposite of the radiant woman in chapter 12, and her behavior is the opposite of the 144,000 who belong to Christ. Note the typical prophetic conflation of idolatry, sexual immorality, intoxication, and cruelty. These behaviors are inextricably interwoven. Her “splendor” is the opposite of how Christian women are instructed to beautify themselves. The filth of her cup is not to be overlooked, but too wretched to talk about. The scarlet beast looks back to 13:1ff. While the beast was the Roman version of Babylon, she is the overarching reality of the perversion that drives the human beasts of the world. The beast was Rome in 13:1ff, and came from the sea. But it also came from the abyss (17:8, 11:7). It’s a recurring human endeavor, building afresh the errors of the past, chasing distortions of beauty and power and pleasure. The 7 kings can be worked out as Roman emperors, the 7 hills as the Roman geography, but the “was and is not and is to come” theme (v8,11) reflect the reality that in terms of politics and religion and economics and pride and greed and selfishness, these things always come back around in this world. John isn’t getting a history lesson per se, but a human nature lesson, that the heart is deceitful above all things (Jeremiah 17:9) and that the intention of man’s heart is evil continually (Genesis 8:21).

The prostitute is the overarching Babylon whose fall was announced in 14:8, the Babel aspiration for human greatness on humanity’s own terms

that has been diluted for a time by the dividing of the nations but never gone away, as seen in Egypt and Assyria and Babylon and Persia and Greece and Rome, and countless lesser nations. She is not to be marveled at, 17:6-7, something to remember when we look at the “achievements” of nations today. She is bound for destruction, taking with her all those who choose her path. She is Folly in Proverbs, in contrast to Wisdom, and the world city in Isaiah (24-26) in contrast to the city of God.

Rev 17:13 harks back to Genesis 11:1, 6.

Note the contrast of two peoples again in 17:8.

Note the nature of the Lamb here, in 17:14. His inevitable triumph over all opponents is in process, and the chosen faithful share it, as in Daniel 7:27. The question in 13:4 is definitively answered in 17:14.

Compare again the “great city” of 11:8 and 17:18. This is not a geographical location, it is every city that is not God’s city (recall Hebrews 11:10, 16, 13:15). It is the opposite of the New Jerusalem. Her end (17:16) is just like the end of Jerusalem when she prostituted herself to the nations in Ezek 23:25-29, 47. That harlot also had an intoxicating cup in hand, Ezek 23:31-34. The same rebellious spirit over and over.

Much of Revelation 18 parallels prophetic words about the fall of ancient Babylon, Edom, Tyre, and others. The lament for Tyre in Ezekiel 27 has many similar observations.

V2-3 read like an abandoned city, but really it’s a haunted city, full of detestable things but very much engaged in commerce and influence. Demons and unclean spirits have their place in Babylon, in conjunction with intoxication and sexual immorality.

V4 isn’t the first time God’s people have been called to exit Babylon. Daniel’s Babylon was the Chaldean people, the very people Abraham was called to leave behind in Genesis 12:1 (11:28). Lot was called out of Sodom (Genesis 19:15, and the people of Israel were called out of Babylon in Jeremiah 50:8, 51:6, and others. Jeremiah 51 provides a litany for ancient Babylon that is also much like this description of the final doom of the great city.

She gets what she gave, 18:6. Her pride was her doom, 18:7. The kings of the earth, unrepentant, mourn her destruction, 18:9-10.

18:9-10 echo Ezekiel 26:16ff, the fall of Tyre.

The reactions of rulers and merchants stress the broken values of the world. Unconcerned about cruelty and injustice, inequity and selfishness, immorality and violence, they mourn the loss of commerce and luxury and wealth.

All that is lost in Babylon, ie no light of a lamp in 18:23, is in contrast to all that is gained in the city of God, no need of a lamp in 21:23-24. No bridegroom or bride, vs the wedding supper of the Lamb. The contrast of night and day is being set before us.

Revelation 19, celebration of the fall of Babylon; the wedding supper of the Lamb; King of Kings and Lord of Lords

Chapter 18 concluded with the lament for Babylon, which is immediately followed in 19 with the great heavenly multitude (remember 7:9-17) cheering the Lord's victory over injustice and immorality.

“Hallelujah” is a Hebrew compound word transliterated into Greek. The Hebrew words meant “praise yah” (rendered “praise the LORD”), with “yah” being a short form of YaHWeH, God's name from Exodus 3:15. In the New Testament the word is only in Rev 19:1, 3, 4, 6. In the Old Testament hallelu-jah is in the Psalms 24 times, almost always the first or last word of the Psalm (except Psalm 135:3). Psalm 104:35 is in keeping with Revelation 19:1-3. See also Psa 105, 106, 111-117, 146-150.

The final appearance of the elders and cherubim in Revelation is their worship in 19:4. They also worshiped in 5:14, when the Lamb was revealed, in 7:11, when the great multitude was sealed, and in 11:16 when the last trumpet was blown.

God's people will all be glad to see God's justice fulfilled.

As in 19:1, again in 19:6 a great multitude (7:9) cried out, voices that are plentiful, melodious, and with divine power. Celebrating the downfall the prostitute in v2, and the wedding of the radiant bride in v7. She was

become what the Psalmist envisioned, Psalm 45:10-17. She is, of course, the people of God intimately bound to the Lamb forever (see Isa 61:10; Ephesians 5:22ff, John 3:28-30, Revelation 21:2). The clothing of the saints in white linen relates to Eph 5:25-27 and Isa 61:10, and has been mentioned several times in Revelation, from 3:4-5 onward. As pictured in several of Jesus' parables, we want to be a guest at the wedding supper, an attendant, a servant, the bride.

Angels as angels (messengers of God) don't accept human worship of themselves, 19:10 and again in 22:8. Faithful angels are doing God's will as servants, right along with those who follow Jesus.

The identification of "the testimony of Jesus" as "the spirit of prophecy" upholds the idea that all of the Bible is a unified message pointing to Jesus.

The first statement in 19:11 indicates a shift of scene, not a chronological continuation. We've come to the cosmic conclusion of Babylon's fall and the wedding supper of the Lamb, now here's another angle. Back in 16:16 the unholy trinity was attempting to gather the world's forces for battle. Here (and again in chapter 20:7ff) is the resolution of that "battle" when the Lord crushes his enemies, with the host of heaven behind him (v14), which includes those who died for Christ and were clothed in white linen, includes the "144,000" sealed with God's seal, includes the "great multitude" who follow the Lamb wherever he goes. See also 1 Thess 4:15-17, Jude 1:14-15. Consider the similarity of 19:8 and 19:14.

Jesus surely is the rider on the white horse in 19:11ff. The titles and names are uniquely his, the prophecies of the rod of iron and the winepress of wrath have already come up in reference to Jesus. His responsibilities and veracity as attested in v11 are affirmed elsewhere, many times. See Psalm 96:13 in particular.

People sometimes ask whether there are/will be animals in heaven. Well, at least horses. But really several scriptures refer to a Garden of Eden (Paradise) renewal, including Revelation 2:7, 22:1ff. Also, Isaiah's "new heavens and new earth" (Isaiah 65:17) includes "the wolf and the lamb... the lion... the ox" all living together in peace and harmony as herbivores (see also Isaiah 11:1-9, where v4-5 depicts what we see here in Rev 19:11ff).

Note that what happened in 14:19 is being enacted here in 19:15.

The sword from his mouth is the word of God in other scriptures, the words on his right thigh in v16 hark back to the deliverer Ehud, who had a double edged sword bound to his thigh under his robe (Judges 3:16). Elements described in this vision again embrace the divine nature of Jesus and his roles as king, prophet, priest, sacrificial lamb, son of man and son of God, and servant of all.

The summoning of the birds (19:17) for a feast of unburied casualties is in contrast to the other supper in 19:9. As it is either Babylon or Jerusalem, either Folly or Wisdom, it is either the wedding supper of the Lamb or the “great supper of God.”

The gathered armies of 16:16/19:19 are crushed by the Lamb and his forces. The beasts of chapter 13, called the beast and false prophet here as in 16:13, are thrown alive into the lake of fire, which will come up again in chapter 20. Their demise is final and permanent, reminding us by the language of 19:20b of the condemnation of Korah and his allies in Numbers 16:30ff, when Israelites pursued what God had not given them.

Note that while all the armies of heaven, including the saints, were called to battle, the victory in 19:21 is wholly ascribed to the King of Kings and the sword (word of God) of his mouth.

Revelation 20 opens with a period of time mentioned nowhere else in the Bible. The only other references to 1,000 years is a hypothetical life span in Ecclesiastes 6:6, and the statement in Ps 90:4 that to God a thousand years is just like yesterday, or a watch in the night, which is echoed by Peter in 2 Pet 3:8 to say that God isn't limited by time and doesn't need to be in a hurry about the 2nd coming. Perhaps those thoughts ought to temper the statement here about a thousand years.

It is unreasonable, given numerous statements about disciples living as though the Lord may return at any moment (see Rev 3:3, 16:15, or 2 Pet 3:10, and Rev 3:11, 22:7, 12, and especially 22:20). John who had the vision did not expect the Lord to linger 1,000 years before he came again. The Lord wanted believers to think in terms of being ready every moment for his coming, not expecting that it would be 1,000 years and more (or 1260 and more). This prophecy in 20:1-10 wasn't meant to be read that

way. As with other time periods in Revelation, the 1000 years is apparently a symbol, 10x10x10, a number of fullness in God's plan.

In Revelation 12:9 "Satan, the deceiver of the whole world... was thrown down to the earth..." That's what he already was, before he was defeated in the cosmic war. Here in 20:3 he's bound so that "he might not deceive the nations any longer," so his influence is curtailed.

The abyss, previously seen in 9:1-2 & 11, is here a place for the dragon's incarceration, for 1,000 years in 20:1-7. We can actually surmise what precipitated the chaining of the dragon, because Jesus used similar language in Matthew 12:28-29, where he said he would "bind the strong man" who was Satan, in order to plunder his goods, which is setting people free from sin. See also Matt. 16:17-20, John 12:30-32, Heb. 2:14-15, I John 3:8.

If Satan was bound so that he could "not deceive the nations any longer," would sin go away? No, James 1:13-15 speaks to the fact humans are quite capable of sinning on their own without supernatural influence. The deceiving of the nations isn't so much about people sinning as about Satan's cosmic influence on the kingdoms of this world. As Jesus overcame principalities and powers a major change happened in this world, undercutting Satan's power, calling the nations to repentance, but not compelling hearts to change (Acts 17:30). The nations had a chance to better themselves, to rise above beastly behavior, but the limited duration of Satan's incarceration speaks to the inclination to serve Mammon rather than God. Surely his release after a time is triggered by the nations wanting their own way, the dragon's way, rather than God's way.

20:4 aligns with Daniel 7:9ff. It also aligns with Rev 3:21 which connects to Ephesians 2:5-6. There Paul states that God "made us alive together with Christ... and raised us up with him and seated us with him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus." Those who have authority to judge are the followers of the Lamb (1 Cor 6:2-3; and esp. the apostles, Matt.19:28).

In this passage John saw enthroned souls reigning with Christ, whereas in the resurrection at the 2nd coming the glorified saints will receive a "spiritual body" (I Cor. 15:35ff). These souls in Rev 20 have participated in the "first resurrection", which is that of Jesus Christ (I Cor. 15:20, Rom 6:2-11, Eph 2:5-6), which Christians take part in through baptism, moving

from bondage to freedom. In Christ death is overcome, the Christian has "crossed over from death to life" (John 5:24), will "not die" (John 6:48-51), and "will never see death" (John 8:52), and "though he die, yet shall he live" (John 11:26). Old Testament saints generally anticipated (often with dread) to descend into "Sheol", (the grave or hades), New Testament saints look forward to being with Christ when out of the body (Acts 7:59, Phil. 2:21-24, 2 Cor 5:8), and then receiving glorious immortality in spiritual bodies when he comes again (I Thess. 4:14-17, 1 Cor 15:20, 42ff). Final judgment occurs immediately after the bodily resurrection of the good and the bad (John 5:28-29, Revelation 20:11-15), but being with the Lord by participating in his first resurrection has already begun. Thus these "souls" live and reign with Christ from the time he received the kingdom until the end when all enemies, including death, are destroyed. The **thrones** which these souls occupy were set in place when Jesus ascended to his Father's throne (Daniel 7:9-14, w/Acts 2:31-35, Luke 22:69) which set the pattern for his return in the clouds (Acts 1:11, Revelation 1:7).

The ones who reign are "souls", not yet having the bodily resurrection. Some were "beheaded" for their steadfast devotion Christ, all of them were faithful under duress, not compromising. Consider Rom. 12:2, II Cor. 1:9. They "lived" (ASV, NKJV for example, not "came to life") because death's power over them is broken, and they reign the fullness of the 1000 years, in contrast to the kings of this world who reign only one hour (Rev. 17:12). Their life and glory are only with Christ (20:4, 6). The **second death**, later defined as the lake of fire (20:14), has no power over the Lord's people, who reign as priests (note that John here says "will be" emphasizing a future continuance, for all who come to Christ, but this is also an accomplished fact, Revelation 1:6, 1 Peter 2:9). The "first resurrection" is one of the inner man, spiritual, from death in sin to life in the resurrected Christ, while the second resurrection is bodily, mortal to immortal. On the other hand, the first death is bodily mortality, the death of the flesh, but the "second death" includes the whole person, body, soul and spirit. John doesn't use the terms "second resurrection" or "first death", and both may be thought of as essentially universal experiences.

20:7-10, when Satan is released for his "little time" (v.3) he will again deceive the nations. We should surmise that Satan has been released, and that the deception is underway, living with an expectation of the 2nd coming of Jesus. Perhaps Satan's release is accomplished by corrupt mankind (recall ch. 9) to whom God has given authority and dominion, rather than by

direct action of God, preferring darkness rather than light. The nations from the four corners of the earth, all the ungodly world, join for battle, as in 16:16, and as was seen from a different angle in 19:19ff. Both 19:19ff and 20:7ff describe the annihilation of all who oppose God. There is no pitched battle, but the power of God ends the rebellion against Him, as it always has (recall Babel, or Egypt, or any of the past efforts). However, this time the end of the rebellion is total and final and initiates judgment. The armies of the earth are here called **Gog** and **Magog**, showing us that this is the same thing Ezekiel was talking about in Ezek. 38-39, an attack mounted against God's people residing in this world, and so an attack on God. According to Ezekiel, the people of God are those on whom God pours His Spirit (Ezek. 39:29). Those God saves from destruction are the "camp of God's people" (Rev 20:9), reminding us of Israel in the wilderness (recall 12:6), seeking a home becoming God's nation. The camp is "the city he loves" where our citizenship already is, in heaven. Christians, in the flesh and the spirit, have come the city of God (Heb. 12:22).

Those in the lake of fire include the devil, the false prophet, and the beast (19:20, 20:10). As previously in chapter 13, we need not assume that all three of these are "persons", as we will see that other non-persons as well as persons are thrown into this lake. "Death and Hades" are personified as enemies of God just as the "beast and false prophet" have been (20:14). The interlude of 1,000 years was probably symbolic, certainly had a beginning and an end, but the time of suffering is not, it goes on "day and night" forever.

20:11-15, the last scene of judgment is unveiled, as John sees a great white throne, the judgment seat of Christ (2 Cor. 5:10, 1 Cor. 4:5, John 5:24ff). The present creation is removed, no longer useful (20:11, Heb. 12:26-29, 2 Pet. 3:10ff), to be superseded by a new home for man with God (ch. 21). Before the throne are gathered all who have ever lived (20:12), to be examined by what they've done in the flesh, and most crucial of all, whether or not their names are in the Lamb's book of life (20:15). When the issue of human sin is finally settled the role of death and hades has been fulfilled and they're cast into the Lake of fire (20:14), bringing the listed tally of those cast in to 5, and then the 6th, anyone whose name is not in the book of life. Six, six, six, man's number (13:18). In creation man came on the sixth day, at judgment he is sixth into the lake of fire. All who fall short of resting in God's seventh day completion of creation, and stop with man's imperfection, are cast into the lake of fire rather than entering

God's sabbath rest (Heb. 4). The only escape from human imperfection is the gift of God in Jesus Christ (Rom. 3:22-24). Remember that the **book of life** (20:15) is the Lamb's book (13:8).

21:1-8, from the lake of fire, the scene changes to the home of the Lord's people. As in every previous vision of judgment there are exactly two outcomes, no more and no less. Either there is defeat and condemnation, or there is glory and joy. There never is a third possibility.

The first heaven and earth, physical, are gone (21:1, Genesis 1:1, Isaiah 65:17-66:24), not able to abide the Lord's full presence (20:11). The new home of the new man is revealed (consider also Rom. 8:18-25, 1 Cor 15:50ff). There is no longer any sea, neither the tossing and turning of double minded masses of men, nor the crystal sea through which God looks down on a creation that had been separated from Him by a curse, nor the laver for washing to prepare to come into God's presence. Also, there is now just one city (21:2), built by God and not man (Heb. 11:10,16). It is a planned city with a unified purpose reflected in its structure. In a sense we have already come to this city (Heb. 12:22), which is the church, the bride of the Lamb, but the fullness of her glory is yet to be revealed when the Lord glorifies those who are His (2 Pet. 1:19, 3:13). Our current citizenship in this city, as the bride we are the city, securing our future by ongoing purification in Christ (Eph. 5:25-27).

The one seated on the throne who speaks (21:3) may be the Father (4:2-3, 5:6), to whom the kingdom returns when death is destroyed (1 Cor 15:24-28, Rev 20:14, but that event within the god-head won't displace the Lamb from his throne, anymore than the Lamb's appearance displaced the Father. Remember Rev 3:21 with 22:5, and 5:13, 11:15.

God "makes everything new" (21:5). He "will be with them" (21:3), and "wipes every tear from their eyes" (21:4). He "gives to drink the water of life" (21:6, recall John 4:7ff, 7:38-39, see Isaiah 55), and so on. Thus, we are called upon to overcome and inherit, to be a son of God, not one who turns back to the futility of sin (Heb. 10:35-39), and dies the second death. The cost of victory is not ours to bear (21:6), overcoming is by the blood of the Lamb (12:11, 17:14).

"It is done" in 21:6 was heard at the pouring of the last bowl, 16:17. Old Babylon is gone, New Jerusalem has come.

21:9-14, John gets a close up look at the city that is "coming down out of heaven from God", not built by man. Nevertheless, man has a very important part in the structure of the city. It is a city of "12"s, reminding us that the citizens of God's city are those who have accepted partnership with Him, who have worked together with Him. The fact that John's tour guide is an angel previously associated with wrath (21:9) reinforces the idea that angels are ministering spirits (Heb. 1:14). This one's nature is equally suited to pronouncing God's judgments against rebellious men and giving a tour of the city of rest. Both salvation and condemnation originate in the righteousness of God and terminate in man, with angels serving as messengers.

The glory of the heavenly city is God's glory (21:11), which even now is reflected (though dimly) in His people (II Cor. 3:18). The city is encompassed by **1 wall**, very high, with **12 gates**, and twelve angelic gate keepers (21:12). The twelve gates have the names of twelve tribes of Israel (see ch. 7), and the gates are evenly dispersed three to a side, just as at one time Israel camped around the tabernacle which housed the Lord's presence among His people, 3 tribes on each side (Num. 2). We are reminded too that the Lord's people came in from the four corners of the earth, from every nation. Under the wall are twelve foundations (21:14) with the names of the twelve apostles (Eph. 2:20), more of God's covenant partnership with people in building this city. To enter the city, one must go through an Israel gate hung on an apostolic foundation, reminding us of the two covenants (testaments), Old and New.

21:15-21, John was previously told to measure the temple (11:1) and we were not told of the measurements. Here we are told of the measurements of the city taken by the angel. We don't know our own immediate future as part of the temple of God, nor just how soon Christ will return, but we are to know what to expect in glory. The measuring rod of gold is pure and stable, a reliable standard.

The city is a square, really a cube (21:16), perfectly symmetrical, all planned. Its dimensions are huge, large enough to comfortably house far more people than have ever lived, let alone the remnant who will be saved, great multitude that they are. This city is not for man of flesh, but man in his glorified spiritual body (1 Cor. 15), which is better by far. The length, height, and width of the city are multiples of twelve and 1000 (21:16-17), suggesting divine covenant blessings and completeness. The wall also has

a height (or width) of 12x12 cubits. We know that the wall is pictured as clear stone, perhaps cut diamond in modern terms (21:18) and the city itself pure gold, apparently pure to the point of transparency. Thus the city is pictured as being beyond human imagining in value, strength and stability. Among the stones of the foundations are some we can identify, some we cannot, though many commentators have tried. The picture of precious stones used even as a foundation for the city wall, and the idea of myriad beautiful colors ought to suffice. The vestments of the high priest and the splendor of the tabernacle and temple are all here in the city structure. Of the gates we are told that each is a single pearl (21:21), the most valuable jewel of the era when John wrote, and of a size that boggles the mind. The pearl was prized in Roman times above all other jewels, and was the perfect product of suffering, needing no shaping by human hands to achieve its form and beauty. Each of these qualities apply to the gates of the heavenly city, Jesus being the reality of the entrance gate (John 10:9). Note that the city is pictured as having one **street** (21:21). This street of gold will be seen to lead to the throne of God (22:1-2), perhaps laid out as a spiral or a helix to serve the entire city, winding both downward and outward from the throne, overhung by the tree of life on both sides.

21:22-27, unlike the present heaven and earth there is no temple structure in the new heaven and earth. There is no need of the structure, because God is there among His people and always accessible. God's presence makes the whole city the holy of holies (which was a cube in tabernacle and temple). Likewise, the physical need for light no longer exists, because the Lord is the light of His people(21:23). We are reminded again that God's Israel consists of people of all nations, who walk by His light, the light that will fill His city (21:24), and that the best of the splendor of the kings of the earth flows into it (Matt.. 5:5, I Pet. 2:9). Of course, God reckons the glory and honor of the nations differently than do the masses of humanity. To Him those whose names are written in the Lamb's book of life *are* the glory and honor of the nations.

22:1-6, among the other singularities of the massive city, John is shown the one river, the river of life, that flows from the one throne of the Father and the Lamb, flowing down the middle of the one street (22:1-2). There is also one tree, the tree of life, that stands over the river, on both sides. These things of course remind us of the original garden paradise where man lived (Gen.2), but now we see God dwelling with man, providing

all that is needed for full and happy life, healing old wounds for His people from every nation. The curse (Gen. 3, Rev 22:3) is gone, and man's destiny is fulfilled, a destiny of serving in God's creation and reigning with him, as God had expressed from the very beginning (Gen. 1:28, 2:15). But, man in this new setting will not fall again for he is perfected and walks in the light of God. We are further reminded (v.6) that this is in keeping with God's continuous past work through His previous prophetic spokesmen. On the word "soon," or "shortly," or "quickly," note verse 7, and consider II Pet. 3:8.

Conclusion and Epilogue, with a reminder of our purpose as priests and our purpose as the bride.

22:7-11, the words of Jesus, that He is coming soon! This is meant as encouragement to the saints, the promise of blessing for heeding His prophetic message to hold fast until He comes. John in his exuberance for this message confuses the message with the messenger (again see 19:10), and needs to be reminded that the angel (messenger) is not to be the object of devotion. If John, in his enthusiasm, could make such an error, it is no wonder we need to be on our guard against worshipping messengers, exalting men or angels beyond their stature. The true messenger of God wants no such attention.

Unlike some previous prophetic messages (Dan. 12:9, for example), this message was for the immediate benefit of the Lord's people, and would help them to keep on doing what they were doing (are doing). It is a choice, whether to heed the book, to do right and be holy, or not. God doesn't force anyone to be good or bad, but let's us choose our own conduct, based on a knowledge of consequences, and respond accordingly. God insists that we make our own choices, but also that we know the consequences.

22:12-16, again for emphasis we are reminded that Jesus is coming soon, bringing consequences, rewards based on human choices, human actions. Also again, for emphasis, we are reminded as in chapter one that he is in control of the flow of history (22:13), from beginning to end, keeping order. Where we sit in the middle of things there may be an appearance of chaos. Where he sits all things are proceeding according to plan. When he pronounces a blessing then, he is sure of its validity (22:14).

The exclusivity of the heavenly city is again emphasized (22:15). We

must choose whether we will be cleansed and serve God, or remain dirty and serve anything else whatsoever. What the "other" is doesn't matter. The basic and meaningful choice is God or not God (Joshua 24:14-15). In Revelation this information comes from Jesus (recall 1:1-3). He holds the offices of authority that give this pronouncement validity. He knows what he is talking about as the anointed of God.

As the "Root and Offspring of David" (22:16) we can see that David originates in Jesus, his creator and Lord, even as Jesus later comes from David in the flesh. Jesus is the star that always shines, never falls to earth. though he came down to earth as a man, his brightness didn't fade. He wasn't tainted or tarnished by his life in the flesh which was lived free from sin.

22:17-21, the Spirit, who has been described as sevenfold, as lamps before the throne, and as the eyes of the Lord going throughout the earth, as well as the Spirit of the prophets, is here linked with the ongoing invitation to "come!" The Spirit actively seeks, invites souls to be saved by the blood of the Lamb. He doesn't work alone because the bride of the Lamb, the heavenly city, the church, says "come!" as well. It is her nature to seek to share salvation, as her espoused husband does. This is the nature of the church (Eph. 3:10-11) whenever she is in harmony with the Spirit. However, each Christian, each priest of God, is enjoined to do his part, to hear and say "come!" as well (22:17). We were told, "Blessed is he who hears the words of the prophecy of this book and takes to heart what is written in it" (1:3). Apparently "taking it to heart" demands sharing it with others, for now we read, "let him who hears say, 'Come!'" We are blessed in sharing the Lamb's invitation to be saved. We are blessed to freely have the gift of life that comes from the throne of God and the Lamb.

As in other scriptures, we are seriously warned not to alter the message of this book, either by adding to it or taking away from it (22:18-19). What has been testified to by Jesus is not to be changed by lesser men, and it certainly cannot be improved upon. Accepting the Lord's invitation means accepting his word and his will. Changing these equals rejecting him and means exclusion from his presence.

Jesus says he is coming **soon** (22:20), and John was all for it. Having read the book, and been reminded that he knows what he is doing, that he is in charge and trustworthy, let's echo John's appeal, "Amen. Come Lord

Jesus." And until he does, "The grace of the Lord Jesus be with God's people. Amen." Revelation guarantees that prayer to be answered. The Lord has been, is, and will be fulfilling that prayer until the former prayer is answered in his return and his grace is climaxed in glory.