

How Long?



A Study of the Revelation

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This work has been made with the hope that together we can search the scripture and develop a greater understanding of it. Hopefully, it will make your study of this topic more edifying, more profitable, and more enjoyable. It is not intended to take the place of your responsibility to prepare for the studies. Please devote adequate time to the material before our study, so we can all be edified by one another (Hebrews 10:24-25).

The picture on the front of this book was painted by Pat Marvenko Smith and is titled "The fifth seal; souls of the martyrs (REV. 6:9-11)". The other artist pictures in this book are also by Pat Smith. Art used by Pat Marvenko Smith, copyright 1992. To order prints visit her "Revelation Illustrated" site, <http://revelationillustrated.com>.

All verse references are taken from the New American Standard Bible Updated (1995).

IN PREPARATION

Read Revelation 1.

How does verses 1 and 9 describe John and his state at the time of writing?

After reading chapter one, what do you find to be the purpose in writing the book, as stated by John? How does John's stated purpose affect any interpretation one takes of the book?

What is different about how this book was revealed to the writer in contrast with the other books of the New Testament according to verse one?

What promise is made to those that study the book according to verse three?

What is coming out of the mouth of the Lord in verse 16 and with which verse in your New Testament does verse 16 correlate?

Revelation contains things that can be difficult to understand. What does verse twenty do for us that most of the book does not?

The Revelation of Jesus Christ

"The Revelation" is a title given by John the author as the book begins with this phrase. The book, although very Hebrew in content (there are over 300 Old Testament references in The Revelation), was written originally in Greek as was the rest of the New Testament. The Greek word that begins the book is "ἀποκάλυψις" which is written in English characters as "apokalypsis". The English translation of this word is apocalypse, thus people refer to the book sometimes as John's apocalypse. The meaning is simply "an unveiling". With this book the Lord makes known to His disciples things that were formerly hidden.

The Author of The Revelation

John is stated as the author of the book repeatedly throughout the book in chapters 1, 21 and 22. The only personal information that we are given is that he was a servant of Jesus (1:1), he was a brother and companion in tribulation (1:9), and that he was "on the island called Patmos because of the word of God and the testimony of Jesus" (1:9). There is not enough information given internally to pinpoint exactly which John it was that wrote the book, but history and tradition ascribe it to the apostle John, brother of James, son of Zebedee, writer of the gospel and epistles by the same name. Thus, between he and Luke, most of our New Testament was written.

The Keys

There are two very important keys to understanding the book that are given in the very first verse. The first key is the purpose of the book. Here the Lord gives HIS purpose for revealing the book to us through His servant John. His purpose is to reveal "things which must soon take place". The King James Version words it as, "things which must shortly come to pass". Thus, the very first verse tells us that Jesus is revealing to

John things that were about to happen! It is not a book about things hundreds or thousands of years away, it is about things that were about to happen and were therefore important for those reading to hear! Any interpretation of the book that devolves into fanciful ideas of future occurrences has missed the purpose that was stated in verse one!

The second key to understanding the book is found in the same verse. While newer translations use the words “gave” or “communicated” in verse one, the King James renders it best in accordance with the original word. The King James reads, “he sent and **signified** it”. Though we pronounce the word in English as “sig-nify”, we can understand the meaning better by thinking of it as “sign-ify”. Jesus is communicating The Revelation through signs! Any interpretation of the book that picks and chooses what it wants to be literal is in error. The book is primarily figurative and we must understand everything as such unless the context gives us reason to take the passage literal. For instance, in verse twenty Jesus explains what the figurative signs mean. The context then gives us reason to take verse twenty literally. Thus, The Revelation is to be understood the opposite of all other books, figurative unless there is a reason in the context to take it literally.

Chronological Markers in The Revelation

Most everyone is in complete agreement about the author of the book. Probably the biggest dispute in regard to the book involves the date that the book was written. Many scholars believe the book was written in 95–96 AD while others believe that it was written in 64–66 AD. What does it matter, you may ask? Although the date does not make much difference in regard to interpretation of most books of your bible, it does make a difference in understanding The Revelation. However, make no mistake, the book can be understood without putting it in conflict with the rest of the Bible regardless of the date you believe it was written.

There are a number of passages in the book that give us some clue as to the date that it was written. For the purposes of this study, we will consider the book from the perspective of it being written 64–66 AD. There are a number of reasons why I believe this date to be the proper reason, as there are also a number of reasons that I believe the later date to be incorrect. Here are a few pro 64–66 AD reasons:

1. “Things which must soon take place” (1:1) – The Revelation is a book to comfort people who are suffering. They have been persecuted by the harlot of chapters 17 and 18 and they cry out for vindication. Those of the fifth seal are crying out from under the altar, “How long, O Lord,



holy and true, will you refrain from judging and avenging our blood...?" (6:10) The Revelation was written about judgment that was about to come upon the harlot to comfort those saints who had been hurting. The earlier dating of the book puts that vindication with 4-5 years rather than 200-300 years.



2. The Beast – In Revelation 17 we are introduced to the harlot riding on a seven headed beast. The seven heads are said to represent seven kings. This beast represents Rome, regardless of the date you take. Those seven heads are the first seven emperors. The book is written when five had fallen, one is, and one was yet to come. These emperors were, in order, Julius → Augustus → Tiberius → Caligula → Claudius → **Nero** → Vespasian. The book was written during the time of the sixth king, Nero, which would be in the mid sixties.

Vespasian would then be the seventh. It was he who ruled when Jerusalem was destroyed. His son Titus did the destroying, who would be the eighth emperor, but was part of the seven. (17:11) It was not until much later that the majority of historians came to see Augustus as the first emperor. Josephus* for one counts Augustus as number two and Tiberius as three. There were three men, Galba, Otho and Vitellius that “ruled” between Nero and Vespasian, but they all ruled in a one year period sometimes concurrently, and they never really ruled.

3. Gematria – Gematria was a way of assigning numbers to letters, adding them up, and getting the number of a persons name. The writing to the right was found on a wall in the buried city of Pompeii. The city was buried in the eruption of Vesuvius in 79 AD. The official name of Nero was “Neron Kaiser”. When the name is written in Hebrew and the Hebrew system of gematria is used, the total of the name is 666, the mark of the beast. It is also interesting to note that some ancient manuscripts, in fact, the oldest, has the number as 616. When Nero’s name is written in Latin it is simply, Nero Caesar, which gives the total 616. This demonstrates not only that Nero is indeed the most likely candidate for the identity of the beast, but also that ancients thought it was so to such a degree that the Latin copyists thought the 666 to be a scribal error to be corrected! (Revelation 13:18)

*I love her
whose
number is
545*

4. Domitian Persecution? – Domitian was emperor from 81-96 AD after Titus and was the emperor during the time of the later dating of the book. The reason people often take the later date is because it is taken for granted that he was a great persecutor of the church. However, there is no evidence contemporary with Domitian that he ever persecuted Christians because they were Christians! The earliest “evidence” is Eusebius who wrote around 300 AD. His sources were not reliable and were 75 years after the time of Domitian! Secular historian Brian W. Jones writes in his biography of

Domitian entitled “The Emperor Domitian” on page 114 the following: “No pagan writer accused Domitian of persecuting Christians, though Nero’s activities in this regard were recorded...the ancient pagan sources have not a single word on Domitian’s alleged attacks on the Christians.”

5. The Ancient Consensus – The last reason I give for an earlier dating of the book is that this was the ancient understanding. It has not been until much later, within the last few hundred years, that students of the Bible began to switch to a later dating of the book. Brian W. Jones writes on page 114 concerning the belief in a Domitian persecution that the tradition “reached its full extent not on Domitian’s death, but fifteen hundred years later, in the writings of Cardinal Caesar Baronius. From a frail, almost non-existent basis, it gradually developed and grew large.” Thus, the vast majority did not even believe in a Domitian persecution to date the book during that time. Robert Young, author of “Young’s Literal Translation of the Bible”, wrote a commentary on Revelation that included the following statement:

“It was written in Patmos about A.D. 68, whither John had been banished by Domitius Nero, as stated in the title of the Syriac version of the book; and with this concurs the express statement of Irenaeus in A.D. 175, who says it happened in the reign of Domitianou – i.e., Domitius (Nero). Sulpicius, Orosius, etc., stupidly mistaking Domitianou for Domitianikos, supposed Irenaeus to refer to Domitian, A.D. 95, and most succeeding writers have fallen into the same blunder. The internal testimony is wholly in favor of the early date.”

Organization and the Main Point of The Revelation

The book has five main sections. The introduction in chapter 1, the letters to the churches in chapters 2–3, the heavenly apocalypse in chapters 4–11, the earthly apocalypse in chapters 12–20, and the introductions to the New City in chapters 21–22. The second half of the book is largely a retelling of the first half, but from an earthly perspective. The judgment that was to come upon the harlot of chapters 17–18 is the main point of the book. The preceding chapters are those of warning about that judgment and the following chapters are the aftermath.

*From Josephus’ Antiquities of the Jews, Book XVIII, Chapter Two: “Caesar, the second emperor of the Romans, the duration of whose reign was fifty-seven years, besides six months and two days (of which time Antonius ruled together with him fourteen years; but the duration of his life was seventy-seven years); upon whose death Tiberius Nero, his wife Julia’s son, succeeded. He was now the third emperor”. This Jewish historian, along with others, counted Julius as the first emperor, Augustus as the second, Tiberius as the third, etc. Though modern history counts Augustus as the first emperor, it is evident that at least the Jews (and also the Roman senate) views Julius as first.

Letters to the Seven Churches

IN PREPARATION

Read Revelation 2 - 3.

Were the seven churches of Asia in chapters two and three the only Asian churches the Bible reveals? If not, can you name another Asian church that is in your New Testament?

Why do you think these letters are addressed "to the angel of.."? What does this phrase likely mean?

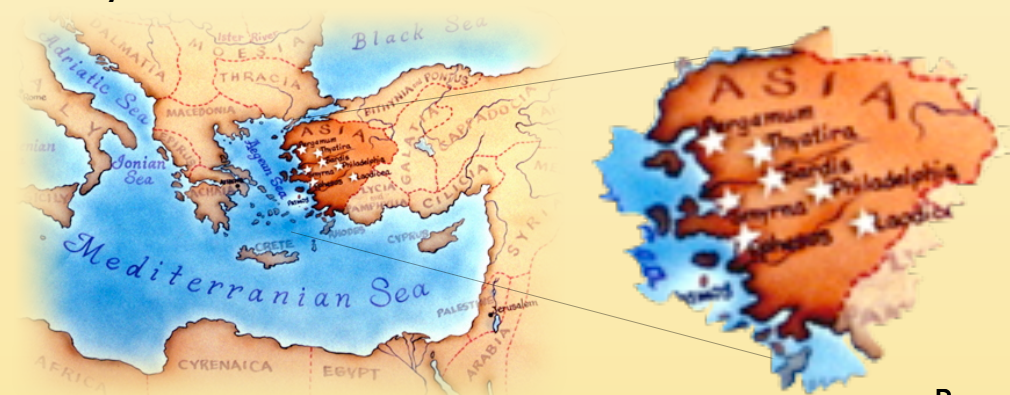
How does Jesus begin and end each letter to the seven churches? What is the significance of this greeting and ending?

Why do you think that Jesus speaks to the seven churches in the order that He does?

When Paul greeted the churches to which he wrote, he largely used the same introduction. Why do you think that Jesus greets each church with a different way of referring to Himself?

"I Know..."

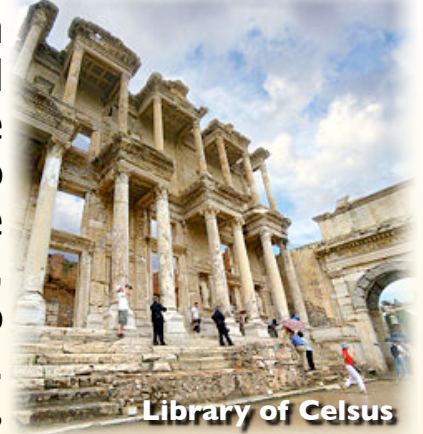
When we think of The Revelation the first thought that often comes to mind is the letters to the seven churches of Asia. Many Revelation studies begin and end here and with good reason. These letters were written to seven churches that were experiencing outside tribulation. They are letters of encouragement and warning. The subject matter is very important and applicable to the Christian today. The Lord begins each of the letters with the phrase, "I know...", and indeed He does. He knew exactly what these churches were up to, where they were when they began, where they were then, and where they were headed. He knows what was in their hearts and he knew what they said and did behind closed doors! The main thing that we should understand when considering these letters is that we serve the same master. He knows now just as He did then. Do we behave as saints as we should? He knows! Do we love each other as should a local church? He knows! Do we stand against false doctrine and work diligently to proclaim the truth to the lost? He knows! These brethren were encountering times of trouble and were expected to do right. How much more so we today who encounter little trouble?



Letters to the Seven Churches

Ephesus

Ephesus is the first church to which Jesus has John write. From this starting point on the map you will note that the churches are ordered clockwise according to their place on the map. Ephesus was no small town. With a population of 250,000, it was the second largest city in the empire and the world, second only to Rome. The Lord begins his address to them saying He walks among the seven lampstands. Those lampstands are shown to be the seven churches in chapter one. Jesus was amongst those churches and He is today also!



Library of Celsus

The Good

Ephesus had a lot of good things going for it. They toiled and persevered. The ability to endure is a requirement of God. James says in chapter one that by endurance we are approved and receive a crown. They were also taking Paul's words from Acts 20 to heart. Paul told them that they were going to have to be on guard for those that would not spare the flock and they were apparently busy testing any doctrine and the people who carried them. Specifically, they were standing against the deeds of the Nicolaitans. We do not know who they were or what they believed, but we know that they were wrong. Even in the church today we can easily see the tendency to grow weary and depart or follow heresies. These brethren had figured out how to maintain.

The Bad

Jesus has one thing against them, they had left their first love. Though we are not exactly sure as to what their first love was, we can discern it by contrasting that for which they were commended. Every commendation they were given had to do with maintenance. They were standing firm and countering false doctrine, but there is no mention of them working for growth. Paul says in Acts 20 that he labored with them in the beginning. We can be assured that Paul was working to convert the lost. It was to this they needed to return.

The Verdict

They needed to think back to what they once did and return. It was that simple. If they did not, they would lose their right to shine the His light!



Smyrna Agora

Smyrna

Smyrna was a very ancient city at the time of The Revelation. There had been a civilization there from around BC 3000! The city that was contemporary with the Revelation had been in existence from about BC 687. It was a large port city that was easily defended due to its geographic position. When wars would take place, Smyrna was a key location that opposing forces would seek to take. The city is still inhabited today with the modern name of “İzmir”. İzmir has a population of 3.8 million. The “Agora” was kind of like a modern city hall where business, instruction and court proceedings were carried out. Smyrna was known for its pagan temples, as was Ephesus.

The Good

Jesus introduces Himself to this church as the One who was dead but is alive. As He goes on to speak of their persecution and suffering, we see that this greeting is the one that would benefit them the most. They needed to know that the one they served could not be destroyed by death so that they would be comforted. What was the source of their tribulation? Jews! Jesus calls them people who called themselves Jews but were not. This is one place that shows us the significance of Jerusalem being destroyed to those of Asia. The Asian Christians were suffering at the hands of the Jews, but they would be judged! Jesus encourages these good brethren to hold fast, not give up. As a word of encouragement, Jesus tells them that their tribulation would last for ten days. While there is no reason to take this ten days literally, it does simply demonstrate to them that the tribulation would last a short time. That is, keep enduring because in a short time it will be over! These brethren did not have earthly possessions, but they were rich in Christ, the wealth that counts! (See James 2:5; I Timothy 6:17–18) It is to this church that Jesus said the oft quoted verse, “Be faithful until death, and I will give you the crown of life.” (2:10)



Agora Columns

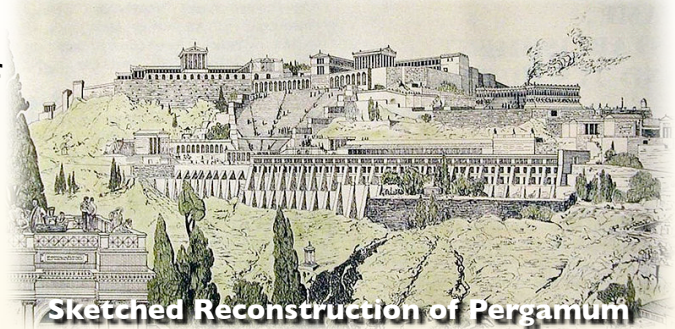
The Bad

Smyrna is one of two churches that Jesus does not give words of condemnation! They simply need to continue as they were.

Letters to the Seven Churches

Pergamum

Pergamum, more commonly known as Pergamon. It was actually a center of emperor worship as they built a temple for the worship of Augustus in BC 29. There were also temples and altars to many different Greek and Roman gods. There is little wonder why the Lord calls it



Sketched Reconstruction of Pergamum

the location of “Satan’s throne” and the place where “Satan dwells”. Some have thought that the Lord refers to the “Great Altar of Pergamon” that is pictured below in reconstruction when He speaks of Satan’s throne. This church was having problems with false doctrine and ways. Thus, the Lord introduces Himself as the “One who has the sharp two-edged sword”. They may get away with such wicked heresies amongst men, but the Lord’s words has the ability to sort things like this out. (Hebrews 4:12)

The Good

These brethren were largely holding fast the name of the Lord. This church has experienced a martyr. Antipas was slain at the hands of the wicked men. Instead of allowing such an occurrence to silence them and cause them to deny the Lord, they continued to believe! It is difficult for us to imagine losing our lives for the sake of the kingdom, but these people knew what it meant first hand. We need to work diligently to increase our faith. The brethren were ready ahead of time for when the testing came, as we should be.

The Bad

Although the church had held fast in the face of death, there were a number of problems. The problems all stem from false teaching. They were being tested by the deeds and beliefs of the Nicolaitans, but some of the brethren had fallen for it. They also had some that held the teaching of Balaam that it was okay to eat things sacrificed to idols and to fornicate. Notice that it says they **held**, not **practiced** these things. Sin of the mind!



Great Altar of Pergamon

The Verdict Repent or Jesus would war with them!

IN PREPARATION

Read Revelation 2 - 3.

How will we be judged, as groups or individuals? What passages, here or elsewhere, do you find to explain your position?

Can God be pleased with a few people in a church while being displeased with the rest? What passages do you find, here or elsewhere, to explain your position?

The Lord reproveth people and churches. What reason does chapter three give for the reproof of the Lord? Can you find another passage in your Bible that speaks of the benefit of the Lord's discipline? (hint: Hebrews)

How does the Lord knock? (3:20)

What effect does Revelation 3:20 have on the Calvinistic doctrine of "irresistible grace"?

What will those who invite the Lord in get to do?

Thyatira

Thyatira was a city that was well known for its work guilds. There are more known work guilds in Thyatira than any city of its time. There are inscriptions that speak of guilds of fabric workers, dyers, leather workers, potters, bakers, and slave dealers. The one that stands out the most in respect to our study is the guild of bronze workers. Jesus introduces Himself as the one whose feet are like burnished bronze. This would have been an introduction that would have been well understood by the people of the city.

The Good

The Lord begins by telling the church that they excel in love, faith, service and perseverance. They are actually the opposite of the church in Ephesus. This church was doing greater deeds of late than they did in the first! They had grown in service and love. However...

The Bad

Just as lop-sided as Ephesus was in maintenance as opposed to increase, this church is in increase as opposed to maintenance. That is, they are not working to keep the false doctrine out while working to increase. We do not know who Jezebel was, but this is likely a name given by Jesus to describe what she was doing. Just as Jezebel of old brought Baal worship into Israel, so was this woman doing in Thyatira!

The Verdict

Those who have been with her were going to be punished. Those who did not hold to the teaching would not be burdened. (2:24)

Sardis

Sardis was a city of prime importance in the ancient Lydian kingdom. The Lydian kingdom was well known for its industrial arts and Sardis was the chief manufacturing city in that kingdom. The city sat at the foot of Mount Tmolus and was likely destroyed by earthquake several times. One of those times was in 17 AD, but it was rebuilt.



Synagogue in Sardis

The Good

The Lord has established a pattern with these seven churches of saying something that is commendable about the church and then telling them what they needed to correct, if anything. Sadly, the church at Sardis apparently had nothing to commend because the Lord begins immediately with their problems.

The Bad

This church was asleep. Jesus says of them that they “have a name that you are alive, but you are dead.” How common this is amongst churches today. They are still operating and by all appearance alive to those on the outside, but they are dead. There is no love. There is no work towards growth. There is only commandment keeping for the sake of keeping commandments!

Time and again the scripture tells the Christian that they must be sober. Be on the alert the warning goes! This is the message of the parable of the virgins in Matthew 25. These brethren were not living their life in a state of preparedness. We need to be ready for the coming of the Lord. If they did not, the Lord was going to return as a thief and catch them unaware.

The Verdict

Wake up! There is still a bit of hope for this church. They just need to simply strengthen the things left that were about to die. There were also at this church some that had not soiled their garments. They are overcomers and the Lord tells the rest to look to them!

Philadelphia

Philadelphia is now the modern city of Alaşehir. It was a relatively new city at the time of the writing of The Revelation. It was founded in BC 189 by King Eumenes II. The word “Philadelphia” means brotherly love. History records that he named the city this because of the love he had for his brother Attalus II. It was a city that was well known for its temples and worship centers. However, archaeology has revealed nothing more than some foundation stones and a few columns because the ancient city was repeatedly destroyed by a series of ancient earthquakes. The same earthquake that destroyed Sardis in 17 AD also destroyed Philadelphia.

The Good

Jesus describes himself as the one “who opens and no one will shut, and who shuts and no one opens”. This is an interesting phrase because it argues solidly against the premillennial notion that somehow the Jews shut the door on Jesus and thwarted His plan for a kingdom! Jesus announces Himself to Philadelphia in this manner because He had indeed opened a door for them! They had made use of the little power that they had, kept His word, and kept His name. They had persevered. Jesus said at John 15:2 that the Father prunes every branch that bears so it can produce more fruit. This is an excellent example of a church bearing fruit and then being given the ability to bear more fruit!

Once again we see that the church was dealing with the Jews. They were falsely calling themselves this and were actually the synagogue of Satan, a phrase we say before in 2:9. This is further proof that a judgment on Jerusalem would mean much for those here in Asia Minor. The church in Philadelphia had done such a good job that they were going to be protected from the great hour of suffering!

The Bad

The church at Philadelphia is the second of the two churches that the Lord does not pronounce any condemnation. They apparently were doing even better than Smyrna as they would be entirely protected from the tribulation!

Blessings

1) Pillar in the Temple 2) Not Go Out Anymore 3) God’s Name Written on Them 4) Name of City Written on Them 5) New Name Written on Them

Laodicea

Laodicea was a booming metropolis in the time of The Revelation. There are still amazingly well preserved ruins there today that are a testament to the greatness of the city. Josephus records that there was a large Jewish population in the city and that they were vocal against any encroachment by any leader against their right to worship as they saw fit. (Josephus, XIV, X, 20)



Laodicean Ruins

The Good

This church is like Sardis in that the Lord has nothing good to say of it. However, it is apparent that this church was in worse shape than Sardis.

The Bad

The church at Sardis was asleep at the wheel and they needed to wake up. The church at Laodicea was in worse shape. While it can certainly be said that they were asleep just like Sardis, they also had the problem of delusion. The church at Sardis likely knew things were bad, however, the church at Laodicea did not have a clue. Every thought they had in regard to their standing before the Lord was exactly the opposite of reality!

The root problem with this church was the love of money. Paul said that this was the root of all sorts of evil and Laodicea is a case study in Paul's point! They loved money and had it. Therefore they thought that they did not need anything, even the Lord. How easy it is when we are doing well to delude ourselves into thinking that we are that way by our own strength.

The Verdict

They had a long way to go. The first step was acknowledging that they had a problem! They needed to see the truth. Undoubtedly this letter from John would have been quite the eye opener. These brethren were going to have to persevere through the testing of their faith to come out approved on the other side! Once again the Lord says that He disciplines those that He loves. Even though they have decided they do not need Him, He still loves them!

4

The Throne Scene

IN PREPARATION

Read Revelation 4 - 5.

Where are the events of chapters four and five taking place?

Ezekiel, Isaiah, and Daniel all say visions about thrones. What did God look like in Ezekiel's vision?

What do the seven lamps represent?

What is the one thing that is missing from the throne scene in chapter four that is found in chapter five?

What two contradictory figures are used to represent the Lord in this chapter? How do you explain the use of the opposite figures?

Chapter four focuses on describing the scene. The focus shifts to one particular thing in chapter five. What is it?

What do the harps and bowls of incense represent?

Why was the lamb worthy to open the seal?

Do you think these chapters are a literal representation of the throne room?

The Old Testament Throne Scene

One of the most beautiful descriptions in our Bible is the one that John writes of the throne of God. Can you imagine! What a beautiful and awe inspiring scene this must have been! John is given insight into the very throne of God and into the creatures that surround Him giving Him the praise that He so richly deserves!

As we consider this throne scene, we need to understand one thing. This is a figurative representation of the throne of God. The Father is represented as "a jasper stone and a sardius in appearance; and there was a rainbow around the throne, like an emerald in appearance." We understand that the Father is not a precious stone, but He is being described by John in the best way that can be done with words. John saw amazing things and there is just so far that our language can go describing them.



The Emerald Throne Scene

However, one thing that this throne scene does is convey the indescribable beauty of the presence of the Father. If everything in Heaven is exactly as John describes, it would be a splendid scene. Then to consider that He is using figures that cannot truly do the reality justice, it will be truly amazing!

It is important to note that when John is shown the throne scene, he is being shown “what must take place after these things.” (4:1) While the main thing that stands out to us is the beauty of this scene, the fact is that the main point is the events that were taking place. These are standing around the throne praising God because of what was about to happen. What, you ask, was about to happen? Judgment!

The twenty-four elders and the living creatures were offering praise to God. The words of the elders are “Worthy are You, our Lord and our God, to receive glory and honor and power; for You created all things, and because of Your will they existed, and were created.” They are acknowledging that every thing that has ever come into being is due to the will of God. Since He has created all things, He likewise has the right to judge all things. While chapter four revolves around the praise that was being given to the Lord and a description of the throne, the focus is about to change...

The New Testament Scene

Chapter five begins the New Testament throne scene. The focus of this scene shifts to the hand of God. We were not told this in the preceding chapter, but we now see that the Father is holding a scroll. This scroll will be the focus of the next few chapters. It is a peculiar scroll in that it is sealed with seven seals!



24 Elders Casting Crowns

Once the scroll is mentioned, 5:2 presents the shout of a strong angel. The angel asks the question, “Who is worthy to open the book and to break its seals?” No doubt, when someone sees a scroll in the hand of the Father they would like to know what it contains. All of Heaven, along with John, is focused on the scroll and finding out what is inside of it.

Revelation 5:3 records that Heaven, earth, and under the earth was searched for someone that could open the scroll, but there was no one found that could. John is convinced that this means that the scroll would never be opened. He begins to weep. He did not know what was in the scroll, but he knew that it was of great significance. However, he is comforted by one of the elders who explains that there is one who can open it, “the Lion that is from the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, has overcome so as to open the book and its seven seals.” He is speaking of Jesus Christ! This is why we speak of this chapter as the New Testament throne scene, for this is the picture after Christ has ascended to be in the throne room once more. John looks back to the throne area to see the “lion”. Imagine his surprise when the “lion” is actually a slain lamb!



Opening the Scroll

Jesus approaches the Father and takes the scroll into His hand. Now the throne scene erupts once more. The worship now is directed at the Overcomer, Jesus Christ! The living creatures and the elders fall down before the Lord with harps and golden bowls of incense before the Lord. Those bowls of incense represent, John says, the prayers of the saints. The indication is clear. The saints had been hurting and were crying out to the Lord and HE HEARS! This is a beautiful picture of the love and care that the Lord has for us! Hebrews 4 speaks of us boldly approaching the throne. Revelation 5 gives us a vivid description of this. Our prayers do not just go into the air and are forgotten. They have an important part right in the very throne room of the creator!

The Lord is described as having seven eyes and seven horns in this chapter. We see that number seven pop up repeatedly in the book. It is indicative of completion. Jesus not only sees, He sees perfectly! He is

praised by the heavenly host because He had earned the right to open the scroll. He did so by laying down his life and purchasing people from every “tribe and tongue and people and nation”. The gospel is for all because Jesus’ blood is for all and works for all mankind!

Judah was promised at Genesis 49:8–10 that he would rule “Until Shiloh comes”. To Shiloh would be “the obedience of the peoples”. This promise that was made two millennia prior were being pictured as fulfilled here in Revelation 5. Jesus is above and is ruling. He alone has the right to judge and to care for His people. He earned that right by laying down His life for mankind. By His death, “God highly exalted Him, and bestowed on Him the name which is above every name”. (Philippians 2:9) How different a picture from that man on earth that was looked down upon by the Jews! Now He is in Heaven and about to judge those that had persecuted Him and put Him to death!

Throne Scene Lessons

- 1) The throne is a place of praise. While people look at Heaven as a place to hang out in a mansion, that is not the way the Bible ever presents it. It is a place to give glory and honor to the Father that is due Him.
- 2) Jesus cares for the redeemed. Though we may often feel forgotten in this world, these chapters and others like it make it clear that we are not forgotten. The Lord remembers and will do just as He has promised.
- 3) These chapters are the foundation for the book. They present the Lord in His rightful place as judge and conqueror. There is a war between the Lord and His people and Satan and his people. Jesus has the power to win that battle and will do so!
- 4) God is on His throne ruling. However much it may look like things are not going well upon this earth, we must always keep in mind that God is indeed up there and is in control.
- 5) Satan only thought that the death of Jesus meant that Satan had won.

IN PREPARATION

Read Revelation 6 - 8:5.

What similar thing is found when each of the first four seals are opened? What do you think the color of each of these represent?

What is under the fifth seal? What importance do you think that this fifth seal has in the overall story of the book?

What do those under the altar cry and what were they given?

Do you think that the sixth seal is representative of the end of the world? What similarities do you find between this seal and Matthew 24:1-35? What is the first half of Matthew 24 referencing?

Chapter seven records a time period between the opening of the sixth seal and the final (seventh) seal. What is taking place during this "interlude"?

Chapter eight records the opening of the seventh seal. What happens when the seventh seal is opened?

Seven Seals

The scroll that was in the hand of the Father had seven seals upon it. In this section of the book the seals are going to be opened. With the opening of each seal a part of the judgment takes place. Each seal represents a different event that took place leading up to the destruction of the harlot.

The first four seals reveal what people commonly call the "four horsemen of Revelation". This is not the only time in our Bible that we are given the figure of four horsemen. Zechariah describes four very similar horses at 1:7-11 and 6:1-8. This calls to our mind that The Revelation is a very Hebrew book. Many (if not most) of the signs are Hebrew. Sometimes the pictures may be alluding to the same events that we find elsewhere in our Bible, but sometimes the same pictures may be used to describe different events. We must study the context very carefully to see which is the case.

The Lord breaks the first seal at 6:1 and an angel calls for the first horse and horsemen to "Come". The first horse is the white horse. White is used in our Bible as a symbol of victory. It is very likely that this horse is used to represent Julius Caesar and the rise of the Roman empire. Daniel 8-11



speaks of a kingdom coming into power that would oppress and eventually overthrow the children of Israel.

The second horse is red. The context makes it clear that the red represents bloodshed. This horse was granted to take peace from the earth. Men were going to slay one another. As a symbol of this the horseman was given a sword. The Romans would conquer the world and this horse likely represents their army and military might.

The third horse is black. The rider has a pair of scales in his hand that he uses to measure payment for goods. The prices given are exorbitant. An entire days wage for a small amount of barley! This rider represents famine and distress that would come due to the war. Armies of this time would commonly surround a city and cut off any supplies to it. The people would surrender or starve. This is actually exactly what happened to Jerusalem when Titus came to conquer it. He besieged the city for five and half months before it fell. Josephus even records that during the Roman/Jewish war that grains were scarce while oil and wine abounded. However, it is important to note that these are symbols. The point is not to pinpoint what would be scarce but to demonstrate that famine and distress would precede the judgment of the harlot!

The fourth horse is ashen. The King James Version calls the horse pale. The NET calls it “pale green”. The original language reads “chloros” which means greenish-yellow. This color is used to indicate sickness and death, which is precisely what the horseman busied himself causing!

The Fifth Seal

This seal is of great importance to the story of Revelation! The judgments that take place are for the benefit of these that are under the altar. They were killed by the harlot and they cry out for their blood to be avenged. They cry, “How long, O Lord, holy and true, will You refrain from judging and



avenging our blood on those who dwell on the earth?” They want to know when they will be vindicated. It is important to note here that these people are not charging the Lord with failing to judge, but are simply praising Him for His ability and willingness to judge. They know that He is faithful and true and want to know when the time for judgment will be.

The answer is not long. They are each given a white robe to indicate their purity and are told to rest awhile longer. They are simply waiting for their number to be filled. When the cup of iniquity is full, then the Lord will bring judgment. These faithful martyrs are the center of The Revelation. God remembers His people. This brings to mind the words as quoted by Paul, “Never take your own revenge, beloved, but leave room for the wrath of God, for it is written, “Vengeance is Mine, I will repay,” says the Lord”. (Romans 12:19) Indeed God will repay!

The Sixth Seal

This seal causes problems for many people because it sure sounds like the end of the world. The sun is darkened and the moon becomes blood. The stars fall and the heavens are separated. However, consider what Peter says is going to happen at the end. He says that after everyone is raised that the earth and the elements are going to melt away with an intense heat. That is what this universe is reserved for. Not only that, but these things are nonsense if taken literally. Consider the stars falling from Heaven. That is makes no sense when literally taken. The stars cannot fall to the earth for that would require gravity and them being smaller than the earth. These are figures to picture the upsetting of world powers.

Matthew 24 uses many of the same figures. Isaiah 29:5–6, Haggai 2:6, 21–22 shows that earthquakes represent national upheavals. The darkening of the sun and moon as blood represent the terrible state of things in Isaiah 13:10, Isaiah 24:21–23 and Jeremiah 15:9. The falling of stars refers to the fall of national leaders in Matthew 24:29 and Daniel 8:10. The time surrounding the judgment of the harlot and beast was going to upset the political landscape tremendously. Why? Because Satan was being allowed to deceive the nations. (Revelation 20) Jesus used the falling rocks illustration of Revelation 6:16 at Luke 23:28–30.

The First Interlude

There is a timespan between the opening of the fifth and sixth seals. It is a time of quiet. We might call it the quiet before the storm today. The four angels are holding back the judgment until something can be accomplished. This is the sealing of the 144,000.

Who were the 144,000? Revelation 7:14 says that “these are the ones who come out of the great tribulation, and they have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the lamb.” For a more specific answer we turn to Ezekiel 9–22. This section of Ezekiel records the first destruction of the city. However, everyone would not be harmed. There were a select group that would be spared. Ezekiel 9:4 says that the angel was to go through the midst of Jerusalem and “put a mark on the foreheads of the men who sigh and groan over all the abominations which are being committed in its midst...do not touch any man or whom is the mark”.

The ones who were living righteous in the time of the first destruction would be spared. Thus, the 144,000 have received a mark in the final destruction of the city so that they might be spared also! Matthew 24:15–18 gives the signs for the Christians to look for. When they saw the abomination of desolation, they were to leave if they had not already. Josephus records that there is no record of any Christian being harmed in the destruction of the city! They were marked and spared by God in the final destruction just as they were in the first! The heavenly host then praises God for His justice.

The Seventh Seal

The time has come to open the seventh seal. This is the beginning of the end. With the opening of the seventh seal there was silence for half an hour. Then there were seven angels with trumpets. An angel came forth and threw fire to the earth. With this signal the seven angels began to sound their trumpets. The sounding of these trumpets marks the events of the destruction of the harlot!

The Sounding of the Trumpets

IN PREPARATION

Read Revelation 8:6 - 11:19.

We have seen the number seven many times since this study began (seven churches, angels, seals, lampstands, trumpets), what do you think is important, if anything, about the number seven?

What was the purpose of the trumpet as recorded in Judges 3:27?

What must be done before the final trumpet can be sounded?

What word describing God's disposition in conjunction with the hailstones is used in Ezekiel 13:13?

What identity does chapter nine give to the fallen star?

What does the key represent?

How long are the locusts allowed to sting and how are they described? Are these literal locusts?

What does John do at the end of chapter 10? What is he then instructed to do?

What was still in existence and is being measured in chapter eleven?

The 30 Minutes of Silence

The seven trumpets each picture the judgment of the harlot of chapters 17-18. Remember that The Revelation is the retelling of the same story twice. We have the same judgment from a heavenly perspective in chapters 6-11 and from an earthly perspective in 12-20.

Before the trumpets sound there is silence in heaven for 30 minutes. When we look at Matthew 24:21, Jesus says of the destruction of Jerusalem that it would be the most horrible judgment that had ever or would ever happen on this earth. These were the chosen people of God! They were selected by Him and promised great blessings if they would do as He instructed. It was through these people that the Messiah had come and mankind was reconciled to God! This was nothing to be taken lightly. Now that the judgment is about to begin there is a silent period for reflection over the removal of the Jewish nation!

The Prayers of the Saints

Jesus indicated at Matthew 24 that the events of the destruction of Jerusalem was going to be a frightening time. Not only for the Jew, but also for the Christian. The Christian would have the benefit of warning, but it would be frightening none the less. The Lord in His eternal kindness does one thing that truly speaks to His nature here in this chapter. Before the judgment begins, He remembers His people. They have been praying for judgment and help. Before judgment begins He hears their prayers! What a marvelous King we serve!

The Sounding of the Seven Trumpets

1. The First Trumpet – The first trumpet brings hail and fire mixed with blood. Ezekiel 13:11–16 presents hail as an instrument of war. The Lord was going to judge the people because of the wickedness with another nation. Hail is used as a figure of this. The battle pictures in The Revelation is a fierce one that would even scar and harm the earth!
2. The Second Trumpet – Mountains were often used to symbolize world power in the Old Testament. Jeremiah 51:24–25 records the following: “But I will repay Babylon and all the inhabitants of Chaldea for all their evil that they have done in Zion before your eyes,” declares the LORD. “Behold, I am against you, O destroying mountain, Who destroys the whole earth,” declares the LORD, “And I will stretch out My hand against you, And roll you down from the crags, And I will make you a burnt out mountain.” The use of a mountain to symbolize a world power is also used in Isaiah 2 to speak of the kingdom of the Lord! This trumpet seems to indicate that there would be warfare at sea also. Josephus in his “Wars” book gives a gruesome account of the Roman – Jewish battles at sea. The Romans did not even allow those who got safely to land to survive. They would meet them on the beach and destroy them!
3. The Third Trumpet – With the sounding of this trumpet we have a falling star. The star is called Wormwood. This is a reference to the bitterness of it. The star is said to have cause the water to be bitter and toxic to those that drank it. Webster defines wormwood as “a European plant that has silvery silky-haired leaves and drooping yellow nearly globular flower heads and yields a bitter dark green oil used in absinthe; something bitter or grievous”. We can find wormwood referenced in the Old Testament many times. (Deuteronomy 29:18; Jeremiah 9:13–16, 23:15; Lamentation 2:15, 19; Amos 5:7) Babylon is described as a fallen star in Isaiah 14:12. This figure in the Old Testament mean that a powerful nation or figure had fallen. Many efforts to pinpoint the person have been made. Some even think it to be Josephus at Galilee!

The Sounding of the Seven Trumpets

4. The Fourth Trumpet – As this trumpet sounds a third of the sun, moon and stars were struck. This would cause a third of them to be darkened. When this figure is used in the Old Testament, it is usually to represent the Lord’s light being removed from a people or nation. We can find examples of this at Isaiah 13:9–11 and Ezekiel 32:4–8. The text in Ezekiel is in reference to judgment on Egypt. Notice the following: “And when [I] extinguish you, I will cover the heavens and darken their stars; I will cover the sun with a cloud And the moon will not give its light. 8 “All the shining lights in the heavens I will darken over you And will set darkness on your land,” Declares the Lord GOD.” The idea here is that they will be destroyed. He says in the same passage that the ravines would be full of them! To pinpoint an actual event, this could be a reference to the fall of Galilee in the war. Judea, Galilee and Perea were the three regions of Israel in the first century. Some people also consider Samaria, but the Jew certainly did not! When Galilee fell, it would be easy to understand that as a third being turned off.

The Flying Eagle

At this point there is a break between the sounding of the fourth and fifth trumpets. This eagle flies about announcing that the final three trumpets are terrible. This break likely correlates to the time period after the fall of Nero. Vespasian was waiting at Jerusalem for word to destroy. Nero went insane, was about to be murdered, so he killed himself. After his death, three “emperors” would try to take over, but none were successful. Ultimately Vespasian marches back to Rome and becomes emperor, only to send his son Titus back to Jerusalem to finish what he had started. The break in the sounding of the trumpets likely correlates to this event.

The Sounding of the Seven Trumpets

5. The Fifth Trumpet – With the sounding of the fifth trumpet we are introduced to the angel named “destroyer”. This is apparently a picture of Satan. He is given the key to the abyss and he opens it. From it come locusts. These are not any kind of locusts that we

know. They have the ability to sting like scorpions. They are allowed to torment, but not kill, people for five months. Although many try to tie this to a locust infestation in the first century, the text is clear that these are figurative locusts. They harm people rather than plants and they sting!

6. The Sixth Trumpet – The sounding of the sixth trumpet brings about a vast army. The army is numbered at 200,000,000. This is not the actual number of the army (it was actually pretty close to the population of the world) but it is simply a huge number to indicate the vast power of the Roman army. This army kills a third of the people of the earth. Josephus says that about 1.1 million Jews lost their lives in Jerusalem, which would have been about a third of the Jewish population.

The Mighty Angel and the Little Book

We have another pause at this point between the sixth and seventh trumpet. A mighty angel has a little book. John starts to write what the thunders say of this book, but he is commanded to stop. The book will affect the whole earth, but it is not for man to know. John is commanded to eat the book as were Ezekiel (2:8–3:3) and Jeremiah (15:16ff). The word of God tasted sweet, but the implications of it were terrifying. John is told that he must prophesy the things that he has seen to others.

7. The Seventh Trumpet – With this trumpet the heavenly apocalypse draws to a close. God’s judgment of the harlot is complete. Before the trumpet blows, John is commanded to measure the temple. This verse indicates to us that at the time The Revelation was written that the temple still stood. John is measuring the temple because it is about to be destroyed. The Revelation often uses the time period of 42 months, 1260 days, times, time and half a time all to equal 3.5 years. This verse is interesting because it is exactly how long the Roman Jewish war lasted. His two witnesses, Moses and the Prophets, would continue to witness in the city for 42 months. Then the city would be destroyed. Who would destroy them? The beast. (11:7) This ties these events to the latter half.

The Earthly Apocalypse (Seven Bowls of Wrath)

IN PREPARATION

Read Revelation 12 - 16.

What does the dragon represent?

What does the dragon do at 12:4 that could not possibly be literal?

What does the Hebrew writer record at 2:14-15 about Satan?

Satan realizes in chapter twelve that his plan of harming the woman and her child had been thwarted. To whom does he then turn his focus?

Where did the sea beast of chapter 13 get his power?

How long was the beast allowed to act? (13:5)

Chapter 14 begins to discuss the judgment of the beast and Babylon. How would you describe its severity? Compare your answer with Matthew 24:21.

What was in the seven bowls?

How many times over did God say He would punish Israel for their disobedience? (Leviticus 26:18, 21, 24, 28)

What does Revelation 16:16 say about the "battle of Armageddon"?

The Earthly Apocalypse

As mentioned earlier, The Revelation tells the same story twice. The first time is from the viewpoint of if you were in heaven. The second telling (12-20) is what the judgment would look like from the earth. The seven bowls of wrath are used to illustrate these events as were the trumpets in the first half.

The Woman

The earthly apocalypse begins with a woman clothed with the sun. She is wearing a crown of twelve stars. She is with child and is crying out in labor pain. Some have supposed this woman to represent Mary. The answer is that she kind of does. Actually, she represents the faithful remnant from which the Savior would come. It is apparent that the child that she is having is a reference to Jesus. Isaiah 6:12-13 speaks of the faithful remnant of Israel: "The LORD has removed men far away, And the forsaken places are many in the midst of the land. "Yet there will be a tenth portion in it, And it will again be subject to burning, Like a terebinth or an oak Whose stump remains when it is felled. The holy seed is its stump."

A few of the Israelites would remain faithful and from them the Savior would come. The dragon, who is Satan, is standing by waiting for the child to be born. This is a perfect picture of the events that the gospels reveal. Herod was waiting to destroy the children once he realized that the wise men had deceived him and were not coming back. Satan was literally waiting to

The Earthly Apocalypse (Seven Bowls of Wrath)



The Woman and the Dragon

destroy the Savior from birth. This shows us that Satan had formulated a plan from the beginning and had deceived nations into being complicit in his plan. When he was unsuccessful in destroying the child who eventually conquered death and ascended “to God and to His throne”, he turned his attention to the church. For a time the church was protected, Acts records a period of about 3.5 years, from the persecution of Satan. However, with the beating of the apostles in Acts 5 the persecution began to heat up. Satan would work against the church for the history of Acts. He would fight them in any way that he could, but would be unsuccessful. Just when he

thought he had won, with Paul for instance, it turned out to just further the gospel. (Paul preached the word unhindered while in custody in Acts 28) When he could not destroy the remnant, he would just declare all out war with all the saints! (12:17)

The Sea Beast and The Land Beast

Chapter 13 introduces us to two beasts. The first beast come from the sea. It has seven heads and ten horns. Regardless of your view of late or early date, no one disputes the identity of the sea beast. It is the Roman empire. The beast has seven heads. Those seven heads are seven emperors. Beginning with Julius Caesar, we find that the one that is would be Nero. The Revelation was written during the time of Nero. The one to come would be Vespasian, the ruler who would oversee the destruction of Jerusalem by his son Titus. This beast also has ten horns. The text says that these ten horns are ten kings who had not yet received a kingdom. This would likely refer to some local puppet kings who would soon receive a kingdom such as the Herods.

This beast was like a leopard indicating speed (Habakuk 1:8), had feet as a bear indicating crushing power (Daniel 7:7) and the mouth of a lion

The Earthly Apocalypse (Seven Bowls of Wrath)

indicating vicious power (Joel 1:6). We see that the power it had came from Satan! Once again, Revelation 20 pictures Satan as having been busy deceiving nations. He had deceived Rome into doing his will. They would pay for this mistake.

The wounded head that was slain but had healed is interesting. This head is most likely a reference to Julius Caesar. He was killed because he was taking all the power away from the senate. They thought that by murdering him they would stop the usurpation of power. The imperial effort appeared dead. However, after a brief period longer with the triumvirate, Augustus consolidated all power and became emperor. Thus, the head received a fatal wound, but it was healed.

Rome burned in July of 64 and Nero began his persecution of Christians in November of that year. In June of 68 his persecution ended with his suicide. How long from November of 64 to June of 68? 42 months! (13:5)

The land beast at 13:11 is akin to the sea beast. This beast has horns like a lamb but speaks as a dragon. We might say it was a “wolf in sheep’s clothing”. This beast represents the emperor, pagan worship, and worship of the emperor. This beast performs signs and leads men astray. The beast has a number. It is the number of a man. This number is 666 (read six hundred and sixty-six, not six-six-six) and is that of a man. This number most likely means Nero through the system of Gematria as previously explained. This beast would persecute Christians and anyone else that would not give glory to the emperor. Only those that served Nero would be allowed to function in society.

The 144,000

We see the 144,000 once again at chapter 14. They are singing a new song that no one can learn. The 144,000 were the only ones that could learn the song because they were the only ones who had ever, or would ever, experience what they did. Jesus makes it clear in Matthew 24 that the tribulation of these days was the worst the world would ever see. Only they could sing this song.

The Earthly Apocalypse (Seven Bowls of Wrath)

The Seven Final Plagues

The time has come for the judgment to be witnessed upon the earth. Chapter 14 ends with the city being pressed. Notice that it is pressed from without. This is a perfect picture of what happened with Jerusalem. The Romans besieged the city, starved them down, fired into the city, and then when it was weak enough they stormed it. Josephus records that the blood flowed deep enough to put out fires in the city!

Bowl One – Malignant Sore on those with the beast's mark and worshippers of his image. (16:2)

Bowl Two – The sea becomes blood like that of a dead man. This plague killed everything in the sea. (16:3)

Bowl Three – The rivers and springs become blood. Those under the altar see this as vengeance for their blood. This ties in with the final three trumpets. (16:4–7)

Bowl Four – The sun scorches the people. It is important to notice here that even in the face of obvious judgment the people do not turn to God, they blaspheme to the end. This is a perfect representation of what Josephus says of Jerusalem in the end. Wickedness was rampant in the city in the final days. (16:8–9)

Bowl Five – Now some judgment is placed on the beast. This bowl is poured out on his throne. This correlates likely with the death of Nero and the disarray that followed. (16:10–11)

Bowl Six – This bowl dries up the Euphrates. It allows for others to be gathered to aid the armies in the destruction of Rome. The dragon was busy gathering armies to do away with Jerusalem. Satan wants the city gone to try and harm servants of God and Rome wants it gone because it is a thorn.

Bowl Seven – Just before the final bowl, the Lord reminds his servants to be sober. Armies were gathered in the sixth bowl. This would be the abomination of desolation, the sign to leave, given in Matthew 24. With this bowl the city is destroyed. Babylon is fallen. "It is done" a voice from the throne shouts. This is the same thing that happened after the seventh trumpet sounded at 10:7.

Judgment of the Beast and Harlot

IN PREPARATION

Read Revelation 17 - 19.

Why would Revelation refer to the harlot as “Babylon”?

Why was the city fallen?

Upon what was the harlot drunk?

What do the waters upon which the harlot sits represent?

Who does Isaiah 1:21 and Jeremiah 2:20 portray as a harlot?

Why would kings, nations and merchants mourn over the fall of Babylon?

What does Revelation 18:24 say was found in her (the harlot)? Compare this to Matthew 23:34-39.

Why do those in Heaven celebrate over the judgment of the Harlot in Revelation 19?

Who is the bride of the Lamb in 19:7?

Who is the rider of the white horse in chapter 19?

Who else is brought to judgment in chapter 19?

Chapters 17–19 give us a detailed picture of the harlot and the beast that were judged. Up to this point the judgment has simply been pictured, but there has been little effort to explain who or what these characters are. This section of The Revelation remedies this.

The Harlot

The Harlot is usually understood as a reference to the city of Rome. However, it is impossible to find a place in history where the nation of Rome turned against the city in a decisive battle. However, when we see the harlot as Jerusalem, it is easy to find the decisive battle where Rome finally turned on and destroyed the city.

The first thing that we note is that the beast is carrying the Harlot. This was certainly true historically of Jerusalem. Jerusalem got away with things that no other city could. They had standoffs against Roman armies over whether they could fly their standards in the city with the result that the army lowered their standards! They refused the construction of idols in their city with the result that they were left alone! What other city could do this? Only one that was protected by God for a time. However, once that time was fulfilled, the destruction would be terrible!

The second thing to note is the charge against the harlot. She has committed immorality with all the kings of the earth. God had charged the Israelites with being a harlot and committing spiritual



Judgment of the Beast and Harlot

adultery repeatedly. (Isaiah 1:21; Jeremiah 2:20) This was possible for Israel because it was married to God. How could Rome or the city of Rome do this? Rome was not married to God! Israel was. They were His chosen people.

The third thing to note is the description of the harlot. She is in purple and scarlet and is adorned with precious stones and pearls. This is certainly a fitting description of Jerusalem as our New Testament bears out. Think back to the beginning of Matthew 24. What were the apostles doing? They were amazed at the splendor of the city and the temple! Jerusalem was a beautiful place to behold, as was this harlot.

The next thing of note is the cup that the harlot holds. It is gold and beautiful on the outside, but on the inside is full of abominations. Does this sound familiar? Think about Matthew 23:25 when Jesus accused the Jewish leaders of cleaning the outside of the dish while leaving the inside filthy! What was the harlots cup filthy with? The blood of the saints and the witnesses of Jesus. Jesus told the Jews in Matthew 23 that THEY were guilty of the blood of the slain witnesses! When Jesus was to be put to death THEY cried out that HIS blood should be upon THEIR heads! Indeed the day had come to pay for their transgressions. (Revelation 18:24)

Lastly, John is told at 17:18 that the harlot represents a great city. This city reigns over the kings of the earth. It is due to this verse that many have concluded the harlot to be the city of Rome. However, to deny that Jerusalem had influence (reigns) over the whole earth is to deny history. All nations and cities would be affected by the fall of Jerusalem! Consider 11:8. Here John speaks of the “great city...where also their Lord was crucified.” This is speaking of Jerusalem as is 17:18!

The Beast

The beast is described as many waters at the beginning of the chapter. After the harlot was mentioned as being on the waters, she is then shown as riding on the back of the beast. The waters were nations and peoples and tongues. This is a perfect description of Rome as Rome was a

conglomeration of just that. Rome did not invade and force its customs. Rome would conquer and yet allow the people to remain culturally as they were were.

The beast is described as having seven mountains. Rome is historically known as the city of seven hills. Those seven heads not only represent seven mountains, but they also represent seven kings. This would be the first seven emperors of the Roman empire. We note that the eighth is part of the seven. This would refer to Titus who would be the eighth emperor but destroyed Jerusalem under his father Vespasian.

The beast is described as making war with the lamb. This certainly happened. Rome would begin to persecute Christians under Nero and would do it a number of times over the subsequent 250 years. However, notice at 17:14 that the lamb would overcome the beast. This is exactly what history records. Rome did not conquer Christianity, Christianity conquered Rome. The number of Christians grew until it was finally recognized as a legal religion!

The Judgment of the Harlot

The Lord makes it clear at 17:17 that by God's will the harlot would be destroyed by the beast. An important question arises. Was there ever a time where the Roman empire destroyed the city of Rome? Absolutely not. Rome was conquered just as described earlier. Christians would take it over one soul at a time and Rome would ultimately collapse under its own weight. However, when we understand the harlot to be Jerusalem, we can point to a definitive point where Rome turned on and destroyed Jerusalem, 70 AD.

Chapter eighteen records the judgment of the harlot. She is fallen. Jerusalem was a city that required much. Think of all the feasts that took place and all the people in the city and the amount of goods that were needed to accommodate those things. Thus, when we read Revelation 18 we see that the merchants would mourn her loss. They had become wealthy by selling their goods to Jerusalem. Jerusalem was not known as a producer of goods, but it was certainly known as a consumer!

Judgment of the Beast and Harlot

The Judgment of the Beast

The Lord has finally avenged His bondservants! (19:2) There is rejoicing in heaven over the judgment. This is something that had been building for 600 years! (Actually, all the way back to Abel) This break for rejoicing indicates the passage of time. After the judgment of the harlot, it would be some time before the beast would be judged. As recorded in chapter 18, the beast would have to be given time to make war with the lamb.



Chapter 19 records the Lord coming upon a white horse and destroying the beast with the sharp sword of His mouth! This is exactly what happened to the beast, Rome. It was conquered by the word of God. By people converting to Christ, one soul at a time.

The beast would have to pay for its persecution of the saints just as the harlot did! Indeed, vengeance is the Lord's and He can fully accomplish it in ways that we can only imagine!

The judgment of the beast and the dragon would also give comfort to the saints. Not only would the harlot no longer harm them, they know that the time of the beast is limited!

Exercise: In each of the readings below, list who was responsible for the persecution of the Christians and what their motivation was.

Acts 4:1-4 _____ Acts 13:44-52 _____

Acts 5:17-42 _____ Acts 14:19-20 _____

Acts 7 _____ Acts 16:16-34 _____

Acts 8 _____ Acts 17:5-15 _____

Acts 9:23-26 _____ Acts 19:23-41 _____

Acts 12:1-5 _____ Acts 21:27-40 _____

The Binding of Satan and the Great Judgment

IN PREPARATION

Read Revelation 20.

Who is bound in this chapter, what is he bound from, and for how long?

Where does this chapter say that Jesus will reign for 1000 years?

Who is said to be reigning with Christ?

When Satan is released, what will he do?

What will be the end result of the dragon?

What is depicted at the end of this chapter?

Will anyone be able to avoid this event?

Who will be present?

What will happen to those whose names are not found?

A Difficult Chapter

Revelation 20 is one of the more difficult passages to understand in our Bible. Some might even consider it the most difficult. One thing that we can certainly do is discount the false doctrine that surrounds this chapter. What has happened is the same thing that has happened with the rest of the apocalyptic literature in our Bible. Men have interpreted the Bible in light of their understanding of apocalyptic literature rather than the other way around. Any understanding of Revelation 20 (or any other passage) that puts it in contradiction with another passage is incorrect. Thus, we can do away with much of what the world teaches about this chapter because it contradicts other passages!

Premillennialism

The premillennialist has many problems here in Revelation 20. The first thing to consider is the millennium from which millennialism gets its name. The idea is that the Lord is going to return to this earth and reign for 1000 years after the tribulation period. The tribulation is taken from Matthew 24:9 and used in reference to the end of time. However, Matthew makes it clear that the Lord is giving signs that have to do with the destruction of Jerusalem in the first half of this chapter. (Matthew 24:1-3) The tribulation has nothing to do with the end of time, but the end of the Jewish nation. This is another argument that the Lord is referring to Jerusalem as the harlot because Revelation 7:14 speaks of the “great tribulation” in regard to the

events in Revelation just as Jesus says in Matthew 24 that there would never be a greater tribulation than the one surrounding the destruction of Jerusalem.

After this supposed tribulation period (7 years taken from the 70 weeks of Daniel), the Lord is going to return to this earth, conquer, and set up a literal kingdom in Jerusalem where He will reign for 1000 years. The biggest problem with this idea is that it is found nowhere in Revelation 20, the rest of the book, or the Bible. Notice Revelation 20:4. The passage says “they came to life and reigned **with** Christ for a thousand years.” It is not a thousand year reign of Christ but a thousand year reign of people with Him. This verse says nothing of limiting Christ’s reign to any period!

Also, who is it that is going to reign with Him? Is it all saints? No! It is those “who had been beheaded because of their testimony of Jesus and because of the word of God, and those who had not worshiped the beast or his image”. The ones beheaded are those from under the altar. The ones that did not worship the beast were the saints who were being persecuted by Rome. Our Bible is abundantly clear that the beast is Rome and most true premillennialists would agree. Thus the concept of us reigning with Him in this purported 1000 year kingdom is completely fabricated!

The rapture idea is taken from I Thessalonians 4:13–18. The idea is that at some time in the future the Lord is going to return to take up His saints and then return with them after seven years (tribulation). However, notice that at verse 17 the passage says we will meet the Lord in the air and “so we shall always be with the Lord”. We are going to be in the air with the Lord and no passage ever mentions Him walking this earth again!

These beliefs are widespread and are obviously false with just a little examination. We must never interpret simple passages in light of difficult ones. We always take the simple and use them to interpret the difficult!

So what, then, is it talking about?

The Binding of Satan

Satan is bound in chapter twenty in a very specific way. Verse 3 says that Satan would be bound for a thousand years so that he could no longer deceive the nations as he had done in the case of the sea and land beast until the thousand years were completed. Verse three says that at the end of the thousand years he would be released for a short time, meaning that he would be allowed to deceive the nations once more for a brief time. Picking up the story of Satan again at verse 7 we learn that he will successfully deceive the nations to the extent that the church will be surrounded by Gog and Magog. Before he can take the church God intervenes with fire from heaven. Satan is then thrown into the lake of fire.

Another thousand year period is running apparently concurrently with the binding of Satan, that is, the reign of the saints with Christ. Verse 4 explains that these are the saints who had been “beheaded because of their testimony of Jesus”. These are the martyrs that are under the altar of the fifth seal. Jesus told them that their number was not yet complete back at 6:11. When they asked “how long?” the Lord answered with “a little while longer”. Chapter twenty has the answer to their question. They would reign with Christ after the beasts were judged and cast into the lake. Chapter twenty calls this reign the first resurrection. It is not a literal resurrection, but rather their cause is resurrected. They are shown to be victorious. Satan and the beasts may have thought they were winning as those saints were martyred, but in reality it would be the saints that would be victorious and reign with Christ.

The question inevitably comes about, “When will the thousand years end?” The answer is that we do not know. All we know is that at some time in the future Satan will be released to deceive nations and it will be shortly before the end comes. Some may wonder how this passage can coexist with passages in our New Testament that indicate the Lord will return without signs as a thief. The answer it would seem is that chapter twenty does not contain a sign. For a sign to be a sign, there must be inspired men to interpret the sign, which there no longer are. All we will ever be able to do is look backwards at the deceiving of nations and identify it. There is not enough detail nor are their inspired men to identify it as a sign ahead of time.

The Great Judgment

The end of the chapter pictures the final day of judgment. The dragon, Satan, will be cast into the lake of fire. He loses! We know that he does. Once he receives his judgment, then will everyone else!

There is not a person that has ever walked this earth that will escape that final day of judgment. Paul makes it clear that every knee is going to bow and that all will have to give an account of the deeds that they have done in the flesh, whether they be good or bad! (Romans 14:11)

In chapter 20 John says that he saw the dead, “great and small, standing before the throne, and book were opened”. In these books were written all the deeds that the people had done. Will there literally be books that the Lord reads from? We do not know. It is unlikely as a book is a physical thing and we are going to a spiritual place. What it does demonstrate to us is the quality of a book in that it does not lie! When something is written in a book, it is there. There will be no way to pass one over on the Lord. Whether it is recorded in a book or His memory, it is of no consequence. He knows what we have done just as He knew what the seven Asian churches had been busy doing. We will give an account.

The Revelation demonstrates very vividly the severity of God! For those that were under the altar it was a good thing because they were pure and therefore on the proper side of God’s judgment! Certainly we do not want to bear the brunt of judgment from the Almighty who has demonstrated in the harlot and the beast and the dragon His perfect judgment and ability to avenge!



The Dragon Cast Into the Pit

IN PREPARATION

Read Revelation 21-22.

Does a “new heaven” and a “new earth” necessarily refer to Heaven?

What does your New Testament repeatedly present as Christ’s bride?

Where does the city come from?

What is described as being the foundation of this city?

Who are the only ones that will be allowed into the city?

What does chapter 22:1-2 say is found in the city that had been lost for ages?

What is John commanded to do at Revelation 22:10? Compare this with Daniel 12:4.

Where does 22:15 say the wicked people are?

How does Jesus end The Revelation and the period of revelation at 22:17?

The New Jerusalem

The Revelation ends with one of the most beautiful pictures the mind can comprehend, the description of the New Jerusalem. It is a beautiful thing. Revelation 11 records John measuring the old Jerusalem in preparation for its destruction and the book ends with John measuring the new Jerusalem for its grand opening!

What is the identity of this city? It has been traditionally taught that it is speaking of Heaven. However, this brings a few questions to mind:

- 1) When is Heaven ever called His bride?
- 2) How can Heaven come down out of Heaven?
- 3) In what way is Heaven founded on the twelve apostles?



The answers to these questions may lead us to a slightly different conclusion from what we have traditionally understood! The fact is that many people think of Heaven very physically. This is a common property in other religions.

For instance, the men who bombed the twin towers did it so they could go to paradise with Allah. The paradise that these men envision is with 72 virgins. They can drink all the alcohol they want and not get drunk! It is a physical place!

Sadly, many in the church think about Heaven in a similar way. The conception is that Jesus has gone away to build me a mansion. I may have a sorry house here, but one day I am going to live in a mansion. My brethren will live on the same block and we will get together with one another for the occasional party! Heaven is thought of as a place where the streets are gold, things are beautiful, and best of all we get to be with God and ask Him all the questions that we did not have answered here on this earth!

This is not the scriptural presentation of Heaven. When we were given glimpses into the throne earlier in the book, we see that Heaven is a place of worship. It is a place where we no longer have the ailments of this life and get to praise God forever more!

So, back to our questions.

1) When is Heaven ever called the bride of the lamb? It never is. Your New Testament uses the image of a bride in application to the church. Paul makes extended application of this word picture in Ephesians 5 where he compares the husband and wife relationship to the Lord and His church. The bride of the lamb is the church!

2) How can Heaven come down out of Heaven? The answer is that it cannot. Notice at 21:2 that this city was coming down out of Heaven.

3) In what way is Heaven founded on the 12 apostles? The answer is that it is not. Jesus actually told the twelve apostles that He was going to go away and prepare a place for them. This is the “mansion” passage in John 14:2. Heaven was prepared for the apostles by the Lord. However, this city is founded by the apostles. (Revelation 21:14) Your Bible identifies

the church as being founded upon the 12 apostles! Ephesians 2:19–22 records: “God’s household, 2having been built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus Himself being the corner stone, in whom the whole building, being fitted together, is growing into a holy temple in the Lord, in whom you also are being built together into a dwelling of God in the Spirit.” The church is built on the foundation of the apostles with Jesus as the corner stone off of which they built.

The Difference

There is no denying that the language of Revelation 21–22 has application to Heaven. It can be used of Heaven with no problem. Heaven is when the church age is over and that kingdom is delivered to the Father to be with God for all eternity! However, we miss a huge point when we think only of the future and miss the great blessings that are already here! He is caring for us now! Think about how the Lord lovingly paused judgment simply to hear the prayers of His faithful servants. He cares for us now as well as in the future! The church is His bride. Christ is not betrothed to a place (Heaven), He is betrothed to a people! The church!

What About...

The greatest question is how can it be talking about the church when He says that in this city there will be no more tears, death, etc. (21:4) It is certainly true that when we get to Heaven there will literally be no crying or death any longer. We will realize fully that wondrous state one day! However, it is important to note that in a figurative sense we have these things right now. John 6:51 says that if we are in Christ we HAVE eternal life. We will live forever. In Christ there is no death. How many times do we say that it is actually a happy occasion when a Christian departs this life? God wipes our tears because we know that they have life! It is certainly true that these are true of Heaven, but we should never neglect to see that we have realized these things now in a spiritual sense!

The Tree of Life

The story of the Bible largely comes down to the tree of life. In Genesis it was lost by Adam and Eve. They had the ability to choose between the

tree of knowledge or the tree of life. They chose knowledge against the Lord's will and the tree of life was removed. Revelation 21-22 reunites us with it! In Christ we have access to the tree! We can overcome death and have eternal life!

As a reminder, right in the middle of chapter 21 at verse 8 we are reminded of those that live wickedly. Their place is in the lake of fire! We must be in Christ to have life and be a part of the city. The wicked are outside. (22:15) Our earthly cities are susceptible to wicked men, but the Holy City of God is policed by Him. Nothing wicked enters in!

John is once again overcome by the majesty of what he beheld. He attempts to worship the angel that is showing him these things at 22:8-9 and is once again told to stand up. Finally the church would shine through in its beauty. It came to this earth in Acts 2 when it was established on the day of Pentecost. The apostles, Paul especially, worked diligently to get the Jews to accept it. Instead they largely persecuted it. Revelation 11 records John measuring the city for its destruction. Once it is out of the way in Revelation 17-19, the New City can shine forth in all its glory!

An Invitation

We never close a service without offering an invitation. How many times have you heard that?! It is with good precedent. The Lord closes The Revelation and the Bible with an invitation. Anyone who hears and is thirsty is welcome to come take the water of life without cost. (22:17) The only thing they must do is be careful to observe it completely. Do not add to or take away from it for that bring condemnation!

Jesus ended by telling John that He was coming quickly. This is best understood in light of the book. That is, He was coming in judgment on the harlot quickly. However, it makes a great thought for us. He is going to return at an hour we do not expect. Do we hasten His coming as did John, "Amen. Come, Lord Jesus", or do we dread that mighty day of the Lord? May "the grace of the Lord Jesus be with all. Amen"

This book belongs to:
