

# Book of Revelation

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# Chapter 1

## Introduction

### 1.1 Authorship of the Apocalypse

#### 1.1.1 External evidence

1. Polycarp the disciple of John (69-115): John lived and buried in Ephesus
2. The external evidence for authorship by John the apostle is earlier, clearer, more definite, and more positive for Revelation than for the traditional authorship of any other NT book.
3. Testimony of the earliest Fathers is unanimous in favor of the apostolic authorship and authority of the book. These includes:
  - (a) Papias
  - (b) Justin Martyr (100-165)
  - (c) Muratorian Fragment
  - (d) Irenaeus (120-202)
  - (e) Clement of Alexandria (152-217)
  - (f) Tertullian (150-225)
  - (g) Hippolytus
  - (h) Origen (185-253)
  - (i) Methodius.

#### 1.1.2 Internal evidence

1. The book of revelation itself testifies that Apostle John is the author (*Re. 1:9, Re. 22:8-9*).

2. Only John's gospel and Revelation use **Word logos** for Christ (*Jn. 1:1, Re. 19:13*).
3. Both has no. 7 pattern. (7 signs, 7-day passion, 7 church, 7 seal, etc.)
4. Close similarity between the vocabulary in Johns gospel and Revelation
  - (a) Signify or indicate **semaino**: (*Rev 1:1, Jh 12:33*)
  - (b) Pierce **daqar**: (*Re. 1:7, Jh. 19:37*)
  - (c) Fellowship or share **Koinoneo**: (*Re. 1:9, 1 Jh. 1:3*)
  - (d) Tribulation **thlipsis**: (*Re. 1:9, Jh. 16:33*)
  - (e) Over comer is found 7 times in John and 15 times in Revelation.
  - (f) Lamb 30 times in Revelation and 7 Times in John.
  - (g) There are numerous other words which occur only in Revelation and other John's writings: e.g. tabernacle, lamb, I come, I anoint, I manifest, to name a few.
  - (h) In addition, there are numerous syntax and styles, evident in Greek though not obvious in English occur only Revelation and other writings of John. What is listed above is only about 1% of all the internal evidences scholars have identified.
  - (i) This does not means that there is no differences between Revelation and the rest of John's writings. The differences can be attributed to the different nature of revelation and the purpose of these materials.

## 1.2 Date of the Apocalypse

The last decade of the first century, about A.D. 95, is the traditional time assigned to the book of Revelation. Persecution under Domitian reached even to the province of Asia where John was. During this time John was exiled to Patmos where he wrote the Apocalypse (*Rev. 1:9*).

Roman Emperors	Time	Key Events
Nero	54-69	Paul, Peter martyrdom, John arrives Asia
Vespasian	69-79	Temple destruction, peace in Rome
Titus	79-81	Peace in Rome
Domitian	81-96	Exiled many Christian, John to Patmos Book of Revelation written
Nerva	96-98	Peace in Rome, John back to Ephesus
Trajan	98-117	Gospel of John, Johns death

## 1.3 Hermeneutics for Interpreting the Apocalypse

Approaches for interpreting the the Book of Revelation



### 1.3.1 Preterist approach

**Argument:** The book portrays the first-century conditions in the Roman Empire, thereby emphasizing its historical background.

**Critic:** Extreme spiritualisation that results in the second coming of Christ already took place (AD 70). But this negates the personal second coming of Christ specifically promised in this book; e.g. *Re. 11:15*.

### 1.3.2 Tradition-historical approach

**Argument:** The background material in this book is a mix of Greek mythology and Jewish tradition.

**Critic:** It is true that there are many OT terms used in this book, but, this approach cannot explain the second coming of Christ.

### 1.3.3 Continuous-historical approach

**Argument:** The book shows a panoramic view of the church history from John's time until the second advent.

**Critic:** This approach matches historic events to various seal, trumpet, and bowl series. Needless to say that this approach is reading into the scripture. E.g. the fallen star following the fifth trumpet is Mohammed. (*Re. 9:1*)

### 1.3.4 Timeless-symbolic or idealist approach

**Argument:** The book represents the eternal conflict of good and evil in every age, especially when the reader lives. The book does not refer to specific events, but expresses the basic spiritual principles according to which God acts throughout history.

**Critic:** It is true that there are basic spiritual principles with which God governs our universe. But this view disregard the prophetic nature of the book. In addition, it allegorise every event. Further, the personal return of Jesus Christ to earth is not accounted in this view. This view is the result of *Contextualization* concept.

**Contextualization:** The liberal World Council of Churches in 1972 coined this term. This means that one can assign meaning to the text of Scripture based on cultural and socio-political factors in contemporary society. This leads to many interpretations of the scripture based on the personal preference of the reader.

### 1.3.5 The futurist approach

1. The widely accepted view of the most conservative Christians.
2. Only view that recognises the prophetic style of the book.
3. It follows a normal literal interpretation which leads to the premillennial return of Christ.
4. It uses normal principles of grammar and facts of history to understand.
5. Even though human authors wrote with their imprint in their writing, but God is the real author of every book of the Bible.
6. Some have resorted to combining this view with other views. But it will result only in confusion.
7. **Grammatical-historical method of exegesis:** This is the conservative view which leads to unique interpretation although it may lead diverse personal application or present significance. E.g. Do not murder. Meaning is same all through history. But application to a first century gladiator is different from a twenty-first century pregnant woman.
8. What about symbols and visions in this book? This also has to interpret literally keeping in mind the symbols and visions are means of communicating just as in normal language. If something has to be interpreted symbolically that will be mentioned in the text itself. E.g.:
9. The 144,000 in Rev. 7:4 is to be understood literally for there is nothing in the text to mean otherwise (*Re. 7:4*).
10. The city where the two witnesses will be slain is called **spiritually** Sodom and Egypt, indicating a figurative meaning rather than a literal one (*Re. 11:8*).

## 1.4 General

### 1.4.1 Purpose

1. Difficulty with this book: hidden, obscure, multiple interpretation, not relevant, etc.
2. But, it reveals the person of Jesus Christ
3. A book to be unlocked (*Da. 12:9, Re. 22:10*).

## 1.4.2 Profit

1. Seven fold promise of being **blessed** (*Re. 1:3, Re. 14:13, Re. 16:15, Re. 19:9, Re. 20:6, Re. 22:7, Re. 22:14*).
2. Unlocking require understanding of the rest of the Bible.
3. Response: Prayer to come transforms all areas of life.

## 1.4.3 Interpretation

1. **Idealist**: Moral stories for instruction but contradict OT prophecy.
2. **Preterits**: Happened in the history but does not fit well with prophecy related to second coming.
3. **Historical**: Happening in the history but need history to interpret the Bible.
4. **Futuristic**: Will happen (esp. 4-22) and it explains OT prophecy, so biblical.

## 1.4.4 Notes

1. 278/404 verses allude OT
2. Affirms full deity of JC
3. It reveals, not conceals
4. Only prophetic book in NT
5. Ring: Joins Genesis and Rev.
6. Pyramid: Base Genesis, Crown Rev.
7. Contrast I and II coming
8. Secondary: Judgment, Hope etc.
9. Claims inspiration (*Re. 1:2, Re. 22:6*)
10. Warning (*Re. 22:18-19*)

## 1.4.5 Features

### A Numbers

1. No. 7 Churches, seals, trumpets, bowls, Spirits, etc. (hepta: 54/87)
2. No. 4 Living creatures, bound angels, winds, corners, etc., (30/42)
3. No. 3 Triads: e.g. holy holy holy (4:8), woe woe woe (8:13), etc.
4. No. 10 Related to Satan: days of persecution, horns, crowns, etc. (11/27)
5. No. 12 Related to Christ: tribes, stars, gates, angels, foundation, name, etc.

### B Contrasts (examples)

1. Christ and Satan; Light and darkness, Life and death, Heaven and hell; Love hate
2. Father, Son, Holy Spirit and devil, beast, false prophets, Son of God and anti-Christ
3. Who was, who is, who is to come (1:4, 1:8; 4:8) and who once was, and is not, and gone for destruction (*Re. 1:4, Re. 1:8, Re. 4:8, Re. 17:8*).
4. **Son:** the lamb that was slain and **Beast:** one head with fatal wound that was healed
5. **Believer:**
  - (a) seal of the living God on the forehead (*Re. 7:3*).
  - (b) bear the name of the Lamb and Father (*Re. 14:1*).
6. **Unbelievers:**
  - (a) mark of the beast on the forehead (*13:16*).
  - (b) bear the mark of the beast (*13:17-18*).
7. Victory of Christ and His followers. Defeat of anti-Christ and his followers

### C Emphasis

1. Fallen-fallen (18:2), Woe-woe (18:10, 16, 19), Song of Moses-Song of Lamb (15:3,4)

## D Parallels

1. Letters to 7 churches: each has
  - (a) address
  - (b) appearance of JC
  - (c) evaluation
  - (d) praise / reproof
  - (e) exhortation
  - (f) promise
  - (g) command
2. Johns description of Jesus parallels in Ch. 1 and 2-3:
  - (a) seven stars (1:16, 2:1)
  - (b) golden lamp stands (1:13, 2:1)
  - (c) first and the last (1:17-18, 2:8)
  - (d) double edged sword (1:16, 2:12)
  - (e) eyes with fire (1:14-15, 2:18)
  - (f) seven spirits and stars (1:4,6, 3:1)
  - (g) one who holds the key (1:18, 3:7),
  - (h) faithful witness (1:5, 3:14)

### 1.4.6 Outline-I

1. Chronological/Historical (1:19)
  - (a) The things which you have seen (Ch. 1)
  - (b) Things which are (Ch. 2-3)
  - (c) Things which will take place (Ch. 4-22)
2. Thematic/Theological
  - (a) Christ enthroned in heaven (1-5)
  - (b) Christ enthroned on earth (6-20)
  - (c) Christ enthroned on new heaven/earth (21-22)

## 1.4.7 Outline-II

- I** Christ glorified (1) Past: Purpose of the book
- II** Christ evaluates (2-3) Present: letters to 7 churches
- III** Christs first cycle of judgments (4-7) Future, seven seals
- IV** Christs second cycle of judgments (8-11) Seven trumpets
- V** Christ confronts enemies (12-14) Anti-Christ
- VI** Christs third cycle of judgments (15-18) Seven bowls
- VII** Christ triumphs (19-22) II coming, Millennium, Heaven

## **Part I**

# **Preparation of the Prophet: His Past Vision (1:1–20)**

## Chapter 2

# Prologue of the Apocalypse (1:1–8)

The first chapter describes how God prepared John to receive the revelation contained in this book. It has two parts:

1. the **prologue** of the book (1:1-8), and
2. the **vision** of Christ (1:9-20).

## 2.1 Preface (1:1-3)

The prologue contains:

1. a preface which includes **title** and the **content** of the revelation (1:1-3),
2. the book's **address** and a **doxology** (1:4-6), and,
3. the **theme** of the book (1:7-8).

The preface gives an overview of seven broad features:

1. the title of the book (v 1),
2. the channels used for communication (v 1),
3. the content which is the fulfilment of the OT prophecies (v 1)
4. the time of fulfillment which is near (v 1),
5. elaboration on the method of communication (v 1),



6. a brief allusion to the prophetic process (v 2), and
7. the practical purpose of the book (v 3).

**1:1. Revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave Him to show His servants — things which must shortly take place. And He sent and signified it by His angel to His servant John,**

1. **Title:** The book starts with a title pointing to its content.
2. **Revelation Apokalypsis:** The essential nature of the book is revelation. The word **Apo** means away and **kalypsis** means a cover. Thus the word revelation means **uncovering** something that was concealed. Hence, the book reveals mysteries.
3. **Of Jesus Christ:** Jesus is the agent of revelation (immediate theme) as well the object of revelation (ultimate theme). Its central theme is to reveal or uncover the glory of Jesus hidden in the incarnation.
4. **Channels of communication for the revelation:** Father ⇒ Son ⇒ Angels ⇒ John ⇒ Servants.
5. **God gave Him:** Shows the divine source of the book which is from God the Father.
6. **Servants doulois** are the human recipients of this book, the members of the seven churches in chapters 2 and 3. The Greek word literally means slaves.
7. **Content of the book** to be shown to the churches is future events.
8. **Things must soon take place:** It shows the prophetic nature of the book. The expectation of the kingdom of God began in Daniel 2 in now unfolded. The book of Revelation gives a detailed account of events that must take place resulting in the institution of the everlasting kingdom that will replace other earthly, temporary kingdoms (*Da 2:28, Mt 24:6, Re 4:1, Re 22:6*).

### **Time of fulfillment of the revelation**

9. **Shortly:** indicates that things in this book is going to happen very soon. It serves as a comfort to those who are persecuted. Then how do we account 1900 years passed after John wrote these things? Remember that the way God measures time is different from ours. Note the use of **after this** by Daniel (*Dan 2:29, Dan 2:45*) and **not yet** by Jesus (*Mat 24:6, Mark 13:7*).

### **Method of communicating the revelation**

10. **Signified:** Show communication of the message by signs. This does not means, this book should be interpreted symbolically. Signs and symbols are part of the process used to convey the revelation. This book should also be interpreted literally, i.e. the normal grammatical-historical system of interpretation.

11. **Angels:** Though Christ spoke to John directly at some time, there are many occasions where angels spoke (*Rev 17:1; 21:9*).
12. **John:** The human author is apostle John and is written to authenticate the book as genuine, i.e. inspired by the Holy Spirit. As is true with all prophecy, it is important that the prophet's name be given so that the reader may know the credentials of the writer. For this reason, no writing of Scripture that is prophetic in a narrower sense is ever anonymous.

### **1:2. who bore witness to the word of God, and to the testimony of Jesus Christ, to all things that he saw.**

1. **Bore witness to the word of God:** It refers to the declaration that John is making in this book that it has come from God and is hence the word of God.
2. **Testimony of Jesus Christ:** The testimony given by Jesus Christ is that what He communicated to John in this book is the word of God.
3. **Witness *emartyrēsen* and Testimony *martyria*:** By the way, from the Greek words for witness and testimony came the English word **martyr**, implying that martyrs are giving witness or testimony to their faith Jesus by their death. Martyrdom is not any failure of Christ or a Christian, but is an opportunity to witness to the world.
4. **To all things that he saw:** It shows the prophetic nature of this book. John used the words '*I saw*' several times in this book (*Rev 4:1; 5:1; 6:1*)

### **1:3. Blessed is he who reads and those who hear the words of this prophecy, and keep those things which are written in it; for the time is near.**

#### **The practical purpose of the revelation**

1. **Blessed:** There is seven fold blessing attached with this book (*Re. 1:3, Re. 14:13, Re. 16:15, Re. 19:9, Re. 20:6, Re. 22:14, Re. 22:7*). This reminds of the blessings announced by Jesus in the sermon on the mount (*Mt 5:3, Mt 5:4, Mt 5:5, Mt 5:6, Mt 5:7, Mt 5:8, Mt 5:9, Mt 5:10*).
2. **Time is near:** Urgency and readiness of His coming. Time normally refers to the the end times when the earthly kingdom of Israel will be instituted (*Acts 1:7, Acts 3:20, 1 Thess. 5:1*). The events of this book are the last of the stage of what God has foreordained to humanity. Hence, it is **near** or **soon**.

## **2.2 Address and doxology (1:4–6)**

**General:** Any epistle will the writer, the addressees, and the greeting. The writer is **John**, the addressees are the **to the seven churches that are in Asia**, and the greeting is **grace to you and peace**.

**1:4. John, to the seven churches which are in Asia: Grace to you and peace from Him who is and who was and who is to come, and from the seven Spirits who are before His throne,**

### Address

1. **John:** Another internal evidence that the author is Apostle John.
2. **To the seven churches that are in Asia:** John specifically address them for he was ministering to these churches where he spent last about 30 years of his life and ministry.
3. **Grace:** From this word the English word greetings came. The word means the distinctive spiritual benefit that belongs to Christians. The word also implies the favor of God has been freely showered on us, though we deserve the opposite.
4. **Peace:** The Hebrew equivalent is **Shalom** and is a familiar greetings of the Old Testament. A person can experience and know that he has peace with God through Jesus Christ (*Jdg 6:23, Ro 5:1*).

### The source of the greeting

5. **Who is and who was and who is to come:** Trinitarian blessing pointing to the eternal existence of God. Similar usage in this book includes few (*Re 1:8, Re 4:8, Re 11:17, Re 16:5*).
6. **From the seven spirits who are before His throne:** Some think this not Holy Spirit, but angels, since Here Holy Spirit cannot be seven and spirit can also refer to angles in Greek. However, angles cannot be the source of blessing and cannot be equated with God. OT give a clue to the identity of the seven spirits, which is the Holy Spirit (*Zac. 4:2-7*). Similar usage is found elsewhere in this book also (*Re. 4:5, Re. 5:6*).

**1:5. and from Jesus Christ, the faithful witness, the firstborn from the dead, and the ruler over the kings of the earth. To Him who loved us and washed us from our sins in His own blood,**

1. **Jesus Christ:** Normally referred in the second position, but here in the third position, possibly to elaborate on Him in the following verses.
2. **Faithful witness:** It is an allusion to throne of David mentioned in Psalm 89 which is considered as a commentary of David Covenant (*2 Sa 7:8-18; Ps. 89:36-37*).
3. **Firstborn from the dead:** refers to the promised seed of David who will sit on David's throne is "the first-born from among the dead ones and others will be raised from the dead, but Jesus Christ is the first one raised from the dead (*Ps 89:27; Col 1:18; 1 Co 15:23*).

4. **Ruler of the kings of the earth:** This anticipates the fulfillment of God's promise to make David's seed "the highest of the kings of the earth" (*Ps 89:27; Re 19:16*). The three titles taken from Psalm 89 points to the promises made to David regarding an eternal kingdom.

### The doxology

5. **To the one who loves us:** Here Christ's love for His own is pictured as continuing in the present. This is the only NT instance where His love is so described. Usually NT tells of His past love. (This inference is based on the Greek grammar).
6. **Washed us from our sins in His own blood:** A better translation is Loosed us from sins implying sin has a master-slave relation. The blood Jesus shed at Calvary was the purchase price to obtain our release.
7. From the beginning portion of this doxology, we can see that the praise is ascribed "to the one who has an abiding love for believers which is demonstrated by His completed past work of redemption from sins by means of His blood shed for them.

### **1:6. and has made us kings and priests to His God and Father, to Him be glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen.**

1. **Kings:** Kingdom is a better translation which means a collective designation for all believers in Christ. It is an evidence of the love of Christ. The book shows the present kingdoms will fade away and the future kingdom gains significance. It reaches a climax in chapter 20 where the saints in Christ's rule with Christ (*Re 20:4*).
2. **Priests:** Another evidence of Christ's on-going love for believers is His appointment of them as priests. Corporately they are a "kingdom," but individually they are "priests". The priestly office established by the OT law was hereditary, and only members of Aaron's family were eligible. Jesus Christ has provided a new family relationship by which all believers have a priestly ministry to God. Their opportunity for priestly service is a continuing theme in the remainder of this book (*Exo 19:6; Isa 61:6; 1 Pet. 2:5-9, Re 5:10, Re 20:6*).
3. **His God and Father;** the priestly service is directed to God the Father of Jesus Christ.
4. **To Him be glory and dominion forever and ever:** Glory and dominion is attributes of Jesus Christ who sits on the throne. The duration of this praise is forever.
5. **Amen:** This was the common solemn response to show approval of the words of others, probably including a commitment to what is expressed in those words also. The word is transliteration of the Hebrew word **amen** which means **to be firm**. Exalted doxology. Response to revelation is worship

## 2.3 Theme (1:7–8)

**1:7.** Behold, He is coming with clouds, and every eye will see Him, even they who pierced Him. And all the tribes (families) of the earth will mourn because of Him. Even so, Amen.

1. **Behold:** The word indicates importance of what is being conveyed after this word. The content of this verse is from two OT passages (*Da 7:13; Zec 12:10*).
2. **He is coming:** The certainty and imminence of his coming. Necessity of His coming:
  - (a) Promise of the Father (*Gen 49:10; Ps 2:8*).
  - (b) Promise of Jesus (*John 14:2; Luke 19:11*).
  - (c) Holy Spirit guarantees (*Jh 15:26; Jh 16:13; Jh 14:26*).
  - (d) Program of the Church requires it - Rapture and longing for Christ (*Ro 14:10; I Co 3:12; I Co 4:5; II Co 5:10; Phi 1:6; I Th 4:18*).
  - (e) Judging unbelievers and Satan (*Joel 3:1; Joel 3:9; Isa 11:1; Mic 4:1; Mat 25:31; Rom 16:20; I John 3:8*).
  - (f) Program of Israel (*Rom 11; Je 31:35*).
  - (g) Christs humiliation demands an exaltation (*Ph 2:10; Mt 26:63*).
3. **With clouds:** Shows the presence of God and He is coming from above. His coming is heavenly origin (*Ex 13:21; Ex 19:16; Ex 40:34; 2 Ki 8:10; Act 1:9*).
4. **Every eye ... even they pierced:** The scope of His coming - two groups of people: the Romans and Jews who actually crucified Jesus. Here, obviously earlier generation of Jews and Romans is dead and will not be alive to witness the Lord's return, but a class of people similar to them in opposing Christ will be among those future witnesses.
5. **Every eye** indicates the whole humanity will witness His coming. Thus, all the families of the earth will mourn over Him with remorse because of the severity of punishment inflicted upon them in connection with His return. The return of Christ is anything but a comfort to those who continue in their rebellion against Him (*Re 9:21; Ze 12:10; Jh 19:37*).
6. **All the tribes** refers to the tribes of Israel.

**1:8.** "I am the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End," says the Lord [God], "who is and who was and who is to come [coming], the Almighty."

1. **Alpha and Omega** refers to God the Father who attest to the facts in the previous verse about the coming of Christ. These words shows the certainty of His coming due to omniscience, omnipotence, eternally of God.

2. **Beginning and the End:** It expresses both eternity and also infinitude, which means the boundless life which embraces all while it transcends all (*Isa 41:4; Isa 44:6; Isa 48:12*).
3. **who is and who was and who is to come:** As already discussed in v4, this refers to the eternal Being of the past and present who is to come in judgment.
4. **Almighty** refers to the one who has authority over all. The term focuses on God's sovereignty, and authority. Thus, the omnipotent one will surely implement what His prophet has predicted by way of future judgment.

## Chapter 3

# Vision of the Glorified Christ and Commission to Write (1:9–20)

This portion give details of John's first revelatory encounter with Christ on the island of his exile. It has three parts:

1. The circumstances of his first commission to write (1:9–11).
2. The source of the commission (1:12–16).
3. A more detailed statement of what he was to write (1:17–20).

### 3.1 First commission to write (1:9–11)

**1:9.** I, John, both your brother and companion in the tribulation and kingdom and patience of Jesus Christ, was on the island that is called Patmos for the word of God and for the testimony of Jesus Christ.

1. **I John:** Third time John refers to himself who received the commission to write.
2. **Your brother and companion:** Humility of John is seen here. Remember that the state of some of the churches like Laodicea was very pathetic. Nevertheless, John still calls them his brethren. He is also sharing with fellow believers in Christian suffering and patient endurance. Another word for sharing is fellowship. Sharing with Christ and his people is a very common theme in the NT (*Ro 12:13; Ph 4:14; 1Pet 4:13; 1Jh 1:3; Ro 5:3; Ro 8:35; Re 2:2; Re 2:19; Re 3:10*).
3. **Tribulation:** General suffering associated with Christian life (*John 16:33; Ac 14:22; 2 Ti 3:12*).

4. **Kingdom:** the millennial kingdom described more fully in Revelation 20. Anticipation of this kingdom and the deliverance that will come at the end is an integral part of present Christian experience (*2 Th 1:5; Jas 2:5*).
5. **Patience:** It is a quality that is constantly connected with Christian living (*Ro 5:3; Re 2:2*).
6. **Was on Patmos for the Word of God:** Patmos is an island of Asia Minor, near Miletus. Being a rocky and barren place, it was chosen as a criminal settlement by the Romans. Early Christian tradition says John was sent here during Domitian's reign over Rome (A.D. 81–96) and was forced to work in the mines. John was later permitted to return to Ephesus
7. **For the Word of God:** John was in the island, not as a criminal, but for the sake of Christian faith. John was sent to Patmos as a prisoner, an imprisonment by the Roman emperor because of his preaching of the gospel in Ephesus and the rest of Asia. John never blames the Roman emperor for imprisonment, instead, gives a spiritual reason.

**1:10. I was in the Spirit on the Lord's Day, and I heard behind me a loud voice, as of a trumpet,**

1. **In the Spirit:** Supernatural human state controlled by the Holy Spirit where God gives revelation. It is state in which the ordinary faculties of the flesh are suspended, and the inward senses opened. God brings a man's spirit into direct contact with the invisible spiritual world and with the things in God's own mind, yet in ways accommodated to finite human perception. Luke calls it "trance" because the spirit is taken temporarily from the ordinary range of contact to one that is wholly new and superior. This was not a revelation through a dream because. John never slept during the process. His spirit was wide awake, and its powers were exercised with exalted clarity (*Ezk 2:2; Ezk 3:12; Ezk 3:14; Act 10:9; Act 11:5; Act 22:17; Ro 8:9*).
2. **Lord's Day:** It is the customary way of referring to Sunday by the end of the second century because it was the day of the week on which the Lord was raised from the dead. This practice of calling Sunday as the Lord's Day was probably started by John. Some think it is referring to the end time, but closer examination of the language and contemporary usage, it refers to Sunday. However, 'day of the Lord' is normally used to refer the end time (*Mk 16:2; Act 20:7; 1 Co 11:20; 1 Co 16:2*).
3. **Loud voice:** It indicate the solemnity or importance of what is to be revealed (*Ex 19:16; Rev 5:2; Rev 5:12; Rev 6:10; Rev 7:2; Rev 8:13; Rev 10:3; Rev 11:12; Rev 12:10; Rev 14:2; Rev 14:15; Rev 14:18; Rev 16:1; Rev 16:17; Rev 19:1; Rev 19:17; Rev 21:3*).
4. **Trumpet:** It shows the authority and importance of the message. Paul uses the word sound of trumpet is something that give clear meaning. Also, trumpet is used in this book trumpet related to battlefield prompting action in a war (*1 Co 14:8 Re 8:2; Re 8:6; Re 9:14*).



**1:11.** saying, “I am the Alpha and the Omega, the First and the Last,” and, “What you see, write in a book and send it to the seven churches which are in Asia: to Ephesus, to Smyrna, to Pergamos, to Thyatira, to Sardis, to Philadelphia, and to Laodicea.”

1. **What you see write:** The commission to write is given 12 times in this below and below are the 11 other verses. And, John has to write what the Lord is going to show him. It is an authoritative command of the Lord (*Rev 1:19; Rev 2:1; Rev 2:8; Rev 2:12; Rev 2:18; Rev 3:1; Rev 3:7; Rev 3:14; Rev 14:13; Rev 19:9; Rev 21:5*).
2. **Book/scroll biblion:** It is a roll made of papyrus, a plant grown in Egypt. It was less expensive than parchment which was made from animal skins (*2 Ti 4:13*).
3. **Seven churches which are in Asia:** These seven churches are located in the province of Asia. These cities were centers of seven districts, which made them well-suited to publicize the message further, once they received it. The order of the names of the seven cities indicates the route the messenger would follow in delivering the book. These cities were strategically located: some are populous, some rich, some influential. There are few other cities more prominent than these existed: Colosse, Hierapolis, and Troas. However, the churches in these cities are chosen for they serve as representative of all other churches then and now.

## 3.2 The source of the commission (1:12–16)

**1:12.** Then I turned to see the voice that spoke with me. And having turned I saw seven golden lamp stands,

1. **Turned to see the voice:** The voice which John heard came from the back and he turned back. Though voice cannot be seen, it is evident that John turned to see the source of this voice.
2. **Seven golden lamp stands:** The lamp stands are symbolic of churches. How do we know? John himself explain it verse 20. Seven indicate completeness and these seven churches are complete representation of all the churches. Gold is precious and so is also church and lamp stand gives light so also the church should give light to the dark world (*Ex 25:31-40; Zec 4:2; Mt. 5:14; Phil 2:15; Rev 1:20*).

**1:13.** and in the midst of the seven lamp stands One like the Son of Man, clothed with a garment down to the feet and girded about the chest with a golden band.

1. **Midst of the lamp stand:** Christ empowers the church by His promised presence and active involvement with the church (*Mt 18:20 Mt 28:20; Jh 14:18 Jh 14:23; Heb 13:5*).

2. From here onwards, John describes ten phrases concerning Jesus. Each of these phrases are used in chapter 2 and 3 while addressing the seven churches. These are given below.
3. **[1/10] Son of Man:** Presence of Christ with the church is a comforts to her members. The Son of Man is the messianic title. Further, this title also qualifies him to judge the church (*Dan 7:13 Mark 13:26; Acts 7:56; John 5:27; Acts 17:31*).
4. **[2/10] Clothed in robes reaching the feet:** Two ideas come from this: Priesthood and Royal authority. Such robes are worn by Priests and also Royal officials having great authority. Priests to show mercy of God to His people and Royalty indicates judgement of God against His enemies (*Ex 28:4; Le 16:4; 1Ki 22:10; Is 6:1; Da 10:5; Ezk 9:2*).
5. **[3/10] Girded about the chest with a golden band** or Girded at the breast with a golden girdle: John is reminded about the the divine messenger of Daniel and also acted as a foreshadow of the judgement inflicted through angels of the last seven plagues (*Dan 10:5 Rev 15:6*).

**1:14. His head and hair were white like wool, as white as snow, and His eyes like a flame of fire;**

1. **[4/10] Head and hair were white like wool:** Refers to Daniel where it is attributed to Father and here to Christ. This is consistent in NT where several attributed of the Father is ascribed to the Son pointing to his deity. It shows the eternity of Christ and assures eternal life to church (*Dan 7:9*).
2. **[5/10] Eyes like flame of fire** or as lamps of fire or as torches of fire. It shows the fierceness of Christ against his enemies resulting in their judgement. It also convey the penetrating vision and the associated supernatural intelligence of Christ in what is seen. A demonstration of it is seen in chapter 2 and 3 where he penetrates into the actions, words, and motives of the members of the church. Same with dealing with the unbelieving world (*Dan 10:6; Rev 2:18; Rev 19:12; Mk 3:5; Mk 10:21; Lk 22:61*).

**1:15. His feet were like fine brass, as if refined in furnace, and His voice as the sound of many waters;**

1. **[6/10] Feet like bronze, as if refined in furnace** or His feet were like gleaming bronze as when it is aglow in a furnace: Feet is symbolic of movement and here it refers to Christ's active movement in the church and also in this world. Refined in furnace or glowing of the metal is an indication of the purity and glory of God. In short, Christ is moving in the midst of the church to impart purity by rendering of judgment when there is a shortcoming. *Psa 12:6 Ezk 1:7 Ezk 1:13 Ezk 1:27 Dan 10:6 Dan 12:10 Zec 13:9 Rev 2:18 Rev 3:18*

2. **[7/10] Voice like sound of many waters:** This suggest a powerful force and hence Christ speaks authoritatively to write the message especially to the seven churches. *Psa 94:3 Isa 17:13 Ezk 43:2 Dan 10:6 Rev 14:2 Rev 19:6*

**1:16. He had in His right hand seven stars, out of His mouth went a sharp two-edged sword, and His countenance was like the sun shining its strength.**

1. **[8/10] He had in His right hand seven stars** or holding in His right hand seven stars: This indicates Christ's absolute authority and complete control over the churches as well as their messengers (or representatives or elders). *Eph 4:15 Eph 5:23 Col 1:18 Rev 2:1 Rev 3:1*
2. **[9/10] Out of His mouth went a sharp two-edged sword:** Christ protects the church from enemies of the church. Jesus is portrayed as a warrior defeating his enemies in battle and the pronouncement of his sentence of judgment upon them by his sharp sword. *Isa 11:4 Isa 49:2 Eph 6:17 2The 2:8 Heb 4:12 Rev 2:16 Rev 19:15*
3. **[10/10] His countenance was like the sun shining its strength** or His appearance was as the sun shines in its strength: It is a portion from the song of Deborah and Barak from the book of Judges referring to those who love the Lord. Same is spoken of the righteous. John also may be remembering of his transfiguration experience. The last feature forms the climax of his initial vision with its allusion to the overwhelming nature of the glory of the ascended Christ. *Jud 5:31 Mat 13:43 Mat 17:12 2Cor 4:6*

This first vision of John, then, included an indication of Jesus':

1. Messianic office with its associated functions
2. Judgment of the unrighteous and comfort of the suffering righteous,
3. High rank that fits Him as an agent of imposing divine wrath,
4. His activity in imposing that wrath, His preexistence with God the Father,
5. His penetrating intelligence to perform righteous judgment,
6. His movement among the churches to enforce standards of moral purity,
7. His identification with the Father in the power of His utterance,
8. His authority over the seven messengers and the churches they represent,
9. His power to overcome His enemies and pronounce judgment upon them, and
10. His return to earth to implement judgment upon mankind.

### 3.3 The commission restated and amplified (1:17–20)

1. Reaction of John (17)
2. Reassurance by Jesus (18-19)
3. Recommissioning (20)

**1:17. And when I saw Him, I fell at His feet as dead. But He laid His right hand on me, saying to me, "Do not be afraid; I am the First and the Last.**

1. **Fell at his feet:** It show the state of mind of John. He was afraid and fall prostrate. Similar response can also be seen by other who received the visions. *Ezk 3:23 Ezk 44:4 Dan 8:17 Dan 10:9 Mat 17:6*
2. **As dead:** He was in a state where he looked like lifeless.
3. **Laid His right hand on me:** To bring comfort and assurance to John who was terribly afraid. This reminds of the transfiguration experience and similar experience of Daniel. *Mat 17:6-7 Dan 10:10-18*
4. **Saying to me, "Do not be afraid:** Brings comfort to a person in affliction. *Isa 44:2 Mat 14:27 Luk 1:13,30 Act 27:24*
5. **[1/3] I am the First and the Last:** I am is the divine title of the God of the OT which is also attributed to Jesus. John now assured that he is with Jesus, who is the God of Israel. This is a great comfort to John. *Exo 3:14 Isa 41:4 Isa 43:10 Isa 44:6 Isa 48:12 Joh 8:58 Mat 14:27 Mark 6:50 Joh 6:20*

**1:18. I am He who lives, and was dead, and behold, I am alive forevermore. Amen. And I have the keys of Hades and of Death.**

1. **I am He who lives** or The living one: This is a usual description of God in both OT and NT. This phrase conveys that God has life in His essential nature. This contrasts Him to the dead or inanimate gods of the gentiles. Jesus has abiding life and is independent of the creation. *Jos 3:10 Psa 42:2 Mat 16:16 Heb 3:12*
2. **Was Dead, and behold, I am alive forevermore:** Three contrasts can be seen here:
  - (a) Jesus was dead, but now He is alive.
  - (b) The death of Jesus was temporary, but now He lives for evermore.
  - (c) John fell at his feet **as** dead, but the death of Jesus was real.
3. **Living forever:** This is a description of the God the Father in the OT and NT. In this verse, it is attributed to Jesus, pointing to his deity. *Dan 4:34 Dan 12:7 Rev 4:9 Rev 4:10*

4. **[2/3] I am He who lives, and was dead, and behold, I am alive forevermore:** this points to two contrasting aspects: (i) the ever-abiding life possessed by Jesus independent of the world and (ii) to His humiliation even to the point of undergoing physical death
5. **[3/3] I have the keys of Hades and of Death:** Key is symbolic of authority. As seen earlier, He is the eternal one (1:17b) and has life in Himself (1:18a), He has power to give life. It can be death permanently or to release from it. *John 5:26–28*

## 6. Three self-descriptions of Jesus

- (a) I am the First and the Last
- (b) I am He who lives, and was dead, and behold, I am alive forevermore
- (c) I have the keys of Hades and of Death

## 1:19. Write the things which you have seen, and the things which are, and the things which will take place after this.

1. **Note:** John's Patmos experience:
  - (a) an appearance of Christ (Rev. 1:12–16),
  - (b) a reminder of His conquest of death (Rev. 1:17–18), and
  - (c) a commission to write (1:19–20)

Rev 1:12-20 is similar to:

- (a) Jesus appeared to the disciple (Mt 28:16f)
  - (b) reminded of His authority (Mt 28:18) and
  - (c) gave commission (Mt. 28:19-20).
2. **Write:** Note that this is a restatement of the commission to write (Rev 1:11)
3. **Book division based on V19**

- (a) the things which you have seen, and
- (b) the things which are, and
- (c) the things which will take place after this

Three fold division of this book marked by *Rev 1:9, Rev 1:20, and Rev 4:1*

1	Rev 1:9 - 1:19	Past	Vision of Christ
2-3	Rev 1:20 - 3:22	Present	State of the church
4-22	Rev 4:1 - 22:6	Future	Revelation about future

**1:20. The mystery of the seven stars which you saw in My right hand, and the seven golden lamp stands: The seven stars are the angels of the seven churches, and the seven lamp stands which you saw are the seven churches.**

1. **Mystery**: the inner meaning of a symbolical vision. Hidden to man but now divinely revealed. The opposite of 'mystery' is 'Revelation'. The notion that this book is mysterious is purely ignorance. *Dan 2:47 Rev 17:7*
2. **Angels aggello**: Four views on the identity of angels:
  - (a) They are holy angels as involved in other revelations Da 10:13, 20, 21, 12:1 and stars symbolize angels Job 38:7, Is 14:12f. **Problem**: Unlikely that God gave revelation to John, John to angels and then angel to the church
  - (b) Personified spirit of the church. Rev 7:1, 9:11, 14:18, 16:5. The message goes to the whole church. **Problem**: Lamp stand is objective and hence angel may not be symbolic. Double symbolism is unlikely (star to angel to church)
  - (c) Highest authority of the church Nu 24:17, Is 14:12, Da 12:3, Jude 13. **Problem**: NT teaches plurality in leadership
  - (d) Human messenger representing the church. Epaphroditus, Epaphras, messengers/delegate. **Problem**: Least problematic. *Phil 2:25 Phil 4:18 Col 4:12 Mat 11:10 Luke 7:24 2 Cor 8:23 Luke 9:52 Jas 2:25*

## **Part II**

# **Preparation of the People: Their Present Condition (2:1–3:22)**

# Chapter 4

## Ephesus: Loveless Orthodoxy (2:1–7)

Revelation 2 and 3 portrays the current state of the churches. The events in chapters 4 to 22 should motivate the church to live up to the standards shown in chapters 2 and 3 which the Lord expect from His churches. These chapters are highly practical. The general structure of the letters to the churches in Revelation 2 and 3:

1. Address opening each letter,
2. Attribute of the speaker, derived from chapter 1,
3. Complete knowledge about the people of the church,
4. State of the church, which is described by the way of praise, warning, promise,
5. Promise of the Lords imminent return,
6. Universal command for all the churches to hear and obey, and
7. Blessing promised to the over comer.

**Note:** Though the call is universal, it was conveyed individually to each church. The promised blessing anticipates millennial and eternal blessings described later in the book.

### 4.1 Address opening the letter (2:1a)

**2:1a.** To the angel of the church of Ephesus write ...

1. **The angel of the church:** whose identity can be concluded as an individual representing the church (See details in Rev. 1:20).



## 2. Church Ekklesia:

- (a) The Greek word **Ekklesia** for church is derived from two words **Ek** meaning **out of** and **kleo** means **I call**. Thus church means **called out** group from all the previous relationship in order to constitute a body with special relation to God (*Acts 15:14; Rom. 9:24; 1 Cor. 10:32*).
- (b) **Universal church**: a technical term denoting group all Christians, of all a ages (from Pentecost to rapture), figuratively referred as **the body of Christ**. (*Mat. 16:18; Col. 1:18; Col. 1:24*).
- (c) Local church: a particular assembly in a given location or all the assemblies in a given city. (*Rom. 16:1; Rom. 16:5; 1 Cor. 1:2; 1 Cor. 16:19; Col. 4:15*).

## 3. Ephesus:

- (a) Largest and prominent metropolis in the province of Asia Minor. Commercially, it was the largest city in the Roman province of Asia. The city had annual athletic games which attracted large crowds from all over Asia. The patron goddess of the city is Artemis (in Latin) or Diana (in Greek). The 425-foot long by 220-foot wide temple was one of the seven wonders of the ancient world. Each of its 120 columns was donated by a king. The image of Artemis was one of the most sacred objects of worship in the ancient world, but it was not beautiful. Besides being a religious center, the temple was a gathering place for criminals and the scene of widespread immorality.
- (b) Paul had an unusual ministry in this city. (*Act 18:1-20; Act 19:24-35*). *Act 20:17-38*).
- (c) Tradition says that Apostle John ministered in Ephesus AD 66 until his death.
- (d) 9 NT books are connected with Ephesus – John, 1 Cor., Eph., 1, 2 Timothy, 1, 2, 3 John, Rev.

## 4.2 Attributes of the speaker (2:1b)

**2:1. . . . These things says He who holds the seven stars in His right hand, who walks in the midst of the seven golden lamp stands:**

- 1. **These things says He**: Authoritative words found 7 times in Rev. 2 & 3 and it introduces a strong, authoritative, emphatic assertion.
- 2. **Holds seven stars in His right hand**: It indicates authority over the church and her messengers. *Re 1:13 Re 1:16*
- 3. **Walks in the midst**: His constant movement among and watchful eye over the churches indicates his constant watch over the church.

## 4.3 Knowledge about the people of the Church (2:2,3)

**2:2. I know your works, your labor, your patience, and that you cannot bear those who are evil. And you have tested those who say they are apostles and are not, and have found them liars;**

1. **Know oida**: Absolute, clear, and complete knowledge of spiritual accomplishments of the church. Contrast **ginosko** which means progress of knowledge.
2. **Works ta erga**: Good works and conduct of life. Mention of it is also found in the letters to others churches in Revelation 2 and 3.
3. **Labor kopon**: Hard work or toil to the point of exhaustion and is an outward view of work (*1 Thes 1:3; Rev 14:13*).
4. **Patience or perseverance hypomonen**: endurance with respect to circumstances or hindrances encountered and is an inward view of work. Perseverance triumphs over all opposition.
5. **Bear bastasai those who are evil kakous**: To carry the burden of not tolerating evil people in the church. We are exhorted to bear the weak brothers but not of their evil. (*Gal 6:2*). Evil **kakous** means wicked or good for nothing in regard to the things in which they ought to excel as good. This word is also used to refer cowardly soldier or a lazy student, and so here it refers to a professing Christian who does not live up to proper standards.
6. **Tested epeirasas**: Points to deception that needs to be exposed. Lord appreciate this and tolerating the falseness of Christians in the church is not a virtue.
7. **False pseudeis apostles apostolous**:
  - (a) It is possible (*Cor. 11:13-15*).
  - (b) Sign of true apostle (*1 Cor. 9:1, 2 Cor. 12:12*).

**2:3. and you have persevered and have patience, and have labored for My name's sake and have not become weary.**

1. **Endurance hypomonen**: continued bearing up of the evil. Following words elaborate this concept.
2. **Bearing ebastasas**: Because of Christ, they did not accommodate the evil ones, but endured hardship in resisting them.
3. **My name**: Spreading gospel even in the midst of persecution and preserving purity the content of the gospel. (*Mat. 10:22, (Mat. 24:9)*).

## 4.4 State of the Church (2:4)

**2:4. Nevertheless I have this against you, that you have left your first love.**

1. **Love:** Love is sacrificial action for the good of others. Brotherly love cannot be separated from first. Love is not reciprocation, but takes initiative, sacrificial in nature and meets the real need of the object. Love is inseparable from obeying the commandments and purity in life. Love brethren is a command from the Lord and is a proof of discipleship. The command to love is a very serious one and it is the proof that we love God. Basis for true love for brethren is love God and obey God's commandment. Ephesian church had such love (*Mat 22:37; Joh 13:34-35; Rom 13:8; Act 20:37; Eph 1:15*).
2. **First love:** Love of the first days and the solution to this problem is to return to the first works indicate that the problem is lack of certain work. Christ expects a growth in works (*Rev 2:5; Rev 2:19*).
3. **Leaving the first love:** Two explanations are possible:
  - (a) Love of Ephesian church is decreased. But they were all believers. However, Paul warns them of people turning away and Paul is charging them correct those who are in opposition. First love is characteristic of believers and their zeal and hard work is commendable. These people were not unbelievers, but believers and their love is reduced. There is no special reason for the same can be attributed. (*Eph 4:2; Eph 5:2; 1 Tim 1:5-6; 2 The 3:14-15; 2 Tim 2:24-26*).
  - (b) Members of the Ephesian church had no real faith for their love is zero. They lost their first love and warning to remove the lamp stand is strong language and they cannot be believers even if they had genuine love in the beginning. The problem with this position is that the church was commended for their labor which was difficult for unbelievers to do. (*Act 20:37; Eph 1:15*).
  - (c) **Conclusion:** Both positions need to be combined. Consider 40 years between Eph 1 and Rev 2. The first generation was faithful and holding on to the doctrine, but the second generation held on to orthodoxy with true love or true faith. That is the church started accommodating unbelievers and if this continues, Lord will remove the lamp stand in the sense that the church will be filled with unbelievers and it is no longer to be a true church.

## 4.5 Promise of the Lord's return (2:5-6)

**2:5. Remember therefore from where you have fallen; repent and do the first works, or else I will come to you quickly and remove your lamp stand from its place—unless you repent.**

1. **Remember**: Keep on remembering the former condition.
2. **From where you have fallen**: Departure from the first love is like falling from a cliff.
3. **Repentance (*metanoeson*)**: change of attitude with an action that results. Means confess sins and return to the standard and will of God.
4. **Do the first works (*prota ta erga poison*)**: start doing the works that accompanied the early days of the church. Love and work are intimately related, feeling may or may not come. Note that hating what Christ hate is a virtue, but does not substitute the need that motive to be based on love.
5. **Or else (*eideme*)**: conveys the consequence of not heeding to this.
6. **Come to you quickly (*erchomai*)**: Reasons to point out that this is not a special visit to the church, but the second coming:
  - (a) The word coming is normally referred to the second coming,
  - (b) Remove lamp stand literally happened at the temple during Roman conquest. There is close connection between the temple destruction and the second coming and the removal of lamp stand,
  - (c) Abandoning of first love is a characteristics of the second coming. (*Mat 24:12*).
  - (d) To think that Christ will come separately for the judgment invalidate the imminent return of Christ, and
  - (e) To say Ephesian church no longer today fulfilling removal of lamp stand is not tenable since good churches were also removed.

**2:6. But this you have, that you hate the deeds of the Nicolaitans, which I also hate.**

1. **But**: In spite of the loss of love, Lord introduce a serious matter in the context of His coming.
2. **Hate (*miso*)**: Though they left their first love, they have not left their hatred for evil which is quite different from the Pergamum. Lord Himself hate abomination and impurity (*Isa 61:8; Jer 44:4; Amos 5:21; Zech 8:17*).
3. **Nicolaitans**: Irenaeus writes them as the Nicolas of Antioch, a Jewish proselyte who said to have apostatized. This is also supported by Tertullian, Hippolytus, Dorotheus of Tyre, Jerome, Augustine, Eusebius, etc. They were licentious (sexually unrestrained, unrestrained by moral law), antinomian (a person who maintained that Christians are freed from the moral law by virtue of the Gospel of grace) Gnostic (claimed superior knowledge of spiritual matter outside Bible) They are heretical sect, retained pagan practices and immorality, although some say it is not Nicolas, but his followers are the

cause. Some also say Himenaeus and Philitus of are Nicolatians. The wide spread charge of the early church cannot be neglected. Church has the same attitude as that of Christ which is commendable (*Act 6:5; 2 Tim 2:17*).

## 4.6 Command to hear and obey (2:7a)

**2:7. He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.**

1. **Let him ...** Personal invitation to obey and is the basis for blessing of Rev 1:3. We also see similar invitation in Gospels. This invitation is to all the churches. *Rev 1:3; Mat 11:15; Mat 13:9; Mat 13:43; Mark 4:9; Mark 4:23; Luke 8:8; Luke 14:15;*
2. **Ear:** Ability to perceive and understand. Pay special attention to what Holy Spirit says.

## 4.7 Promise to the over comer (2:7b)

**2:7b. To him who overcomes I will give to eat from the tree of life, which is in the midst of the Paradise of God.”**

1. **Over comer:** Three view are possible: (i) some will lose salvation, (ii) special reward to some Christians, (iii) reward to all Christians.
  - (a) **Some will lose salvation:** The possibility of losing salvation is there (*Rev 3:5*). **Response:** But Rev 3:5 does not imply Christ will erase. E.g: Like I am telling my wife that I will not divorce her is not to convey the possibility but the impossibility. Also, the rest of the Scripture teaches the eternal security and assurance of salvation. Hence this position is not tenable.
  - (b) **Special reward to some:** They could be martyrs or they could be more spiritual Christians. **Response:** Eating tree of life is like having eternal life and it cannot be for selected Christians *Gen 2:9; Gen 3:22; Rev 22:2; Rev 2:14*).
  - (c) **Reward to all Christians:** Sin barred the tree of life and overcoming sin give access to the tree of life. All the promises are for the believers entering kingdom.
2. **I will grant Tree of life:** Eating from the tree of life denotes granting eternal life which is a gift God is giving.
3. **Paradise:** The word has Persian roots indicating pleasure garden with wild animals. Here used as the abode of God (*Luke 23:43; 2 Cor 12:4*).

# Chapter 5

## Smyrna: Martyrdom (2:8–11)

### 5.1 Address opening the letter (2:8a)

**2:8a.** And to the angel of the church in Smyrna write ...

1. **Smyrna:** Smyrna is commercial, wealthy, beautiful city, and has harbour and trade route passing it. Smyrna is about 35-40 miles north of Ephesus. Smyrna is noted as a centre of learning, especially science and medicine. Homer was born and brought up in this city. City worshipped Greek goddess Cybele. City had good relationship with Rome and also worshipped the emperor. Domitian (81-96) made emperor worship compulsory for all citizens. Each year they had to burn incense before the emperor and a certificate is issued. The believers experienced severe persecution and all the hardships that accompany it. Polycarp was burned alive at the age of 86 in this city as the 12th martyr. The strong Jewish community also opposed Christians and often helped the Romans. Smyrna means bitter in Greek and its Hebrew equivalent means myrrh used for embalming. Application: Many Christian's life is characterised by bitterness to God, others, or their circumstances.

### 5.2 Attributes of the speaker (2:8b)

**2:8b.** ... These things says the First and the Last, who was dead, and came to life:

1. **The first and the Last:** A title used by Isaiah for the God of Israel and points to eternality of Jesus . It encourages the church which is going through persecution. (*Isa 41:4,6; Isa 48:12; Rev 22:13*).
2. **Was dead, but came to life:** the eternal one became a part of time and human history. But it was a single occurrence in history (death) and a continuous state of existence

in life. Just as He experienced death and rose in triumph over it, so the martyrs also will have eternal life.

## 5.3 Knowledge about the people of the Church (2:9)

**2:9. I know your works, tribulation, and poverty (but you are rich); and I know the blasphemy of those who say they are Jews and are not, but are a synagogue of Satan.**

1. **Tribulation:** church was undergoing great tribulation and is commended for its endurance of this suffering.
2. **Poverty:** more than the material poverty, the poverty resulted from confiscation of goods and imprisonment because of the faith. Note that this city was rich to the point that one historian commented that "To some this was the ideal city on earth". The poverty was only to persecuted believers.
3. **Rich:** poor materially, but rich spiritually before God; unlike Laodicea. Application: Material prosperity is not of ultimate value, however, spiritual resources are far more lasting and important from the perspective of Christ.
4. **Blasphemy:** It could be against God directly or by false charges laid before the magistrates about Christian resulting in their imprisonment. Early church as accused of (1) cannibalism - eat the body and blood of Christ, (2) lust, (3) immorality, (4) breaking up homes, (5) atheism since there are no idols, (6) political disloyalty since they are citizens of the KoG, and (7) incendiarism, that is riot and agitation.
5. **Jews:** three groups persecuted the church, namely the pagans, the heretics, and the Jews. In many cases, ironically, Jews surpassed the heathen in their hostility (*Acts 13:50; Acts 14:2,5,19; Acts 17:5; Acts 26:2; 1 Thes 2:14-15*).
6. **They are not:** They are not Jews not because they not the physical descendants of Abraham, but because they have not met the inward condition to be a true Jew (*Rom 2:28-29*).
7. **Synagogue of Satan:** not referring to any building, but they assembled and planned their assault on the church, putting themselves at the disposal of the devil to carry out his will.

## 5.4 State of the Church (10)

**2:10. Do not fear any of those things which you are about to suffer. Indeed, the devil is about to throw some of you into prison, that you may be tested, and**

**you will have tribulation ten days. Be faithful until death, and I will give you the crown of life.**

1. **Do not fear:** even in the midst of trials, Jesus doesn't want the church to be concerned. However, to relieve their fear, Lord is not promising deliverance or his imminent return.
2. **Behold:** Call for special attention to this announcement.
3. **Devil is about to throw:** the advance knowledge of the persecution shows His sovereign wisdom in allowing it to happen, but the real author is Satan who effectively use Jews and Romans. Devils purpose to force the church to reject the faith in the wake of persecutions.
4. **That you may be tested:** the passive form of the word indicate God is not the author, but Satan and the objective is test or try or tempt them so that they may reject the faith whereas when God test, it is to approve. God permits testing and He is involved indirectly, however, note the declared role of Satan in enticing believer to renounce the faith. (*Jas 1:2-3; 1 Pet 1:6-7*).
5. **Ten days:** points to an intensification of the persecution and refers to a definite period time to which the church will be subjected. Such limited period of persecution is well known in Biblical history. One illustration, not the fulfillment, is the persecution of Polycarp in this city in the mid-second century. (*Num 14:33; Est 3:13; Ezek 4:6; Mat 12:40*).
6. **Be faithful until death:** keep on proving yourselves faithful, and the extent to which the faithfulness should go is unto death even if it is violent, complete and absolute. It is not that everyone will have to go through, but everyone must be willing. Ones willingness to give his life the ultimate proof of his loyalty as a Christian disciple.
7. **Crown of life:** it is a garland of victory awarded to victorious athletes. The struggle and victory leads naturally to the promise of an eschatological victory over evil both here and in 3:11. Note that faithfulness is means of earning eternal life, but that such perseverance through suffering furnishes tangible assurance that they will receive eternal life through their faith in Christ. Again, the only incentive for faithfulness given to Smyrna is life after death, whether that death comes my martyrdom or otherwise. It is appropriate that this promise came from the lips of him who died and came back to life (*1 Cor 9:24-25; Gal 2:2; Phil 3:14; 2 Tim 2:5; 1 Pet 5:4; 2 Tim 4:8; Jas 1:12*).

## **5.5 Promise of the Lords return**

1. Absent for this church



## 5.6 Command to hear and obey (2:11a)

**2:11a.** He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches . . .”

1. Same as that of the earlier church

## 5.7 Promise to the over comer (2:11b)

**2:11b.** . . .He who overcomes shall not be hurt by the second death.”’

1. **Not hurt by the second death:** Strongest negative assertion about the future which the Greek language is capable. Unbelievers are given over to second death, but the over comers are exempted. It is not annihilation, but conscious unending punishment. The promise can be traced back to Genesis (*Dan 12:2; John 5:29; Rev 20:14; Rev 21:8; Gen 2:17; Gen 3:22; Rev 20:6*).

# Chapter 6

## Pergamum: Indiscriminate Tolerance (2:12–17)

### 6.1 Address opening the letter (2:12a)

**2:12.** And to the angel of the church in Pergamos write, 'These things says He who has the sharp two-edged sword:

1. **Pergamum:** Located about 55 miles north of Smyrna whose name means parchment where parchment was first manufactured. Parchments were writing material made from animal skin. It was the capital of the province of Asia and used its wealth to build temples devoted to the worship of Zeus, Athena, Dionysos, and Asklepios. Shrines of Asklepios was famous of healing and attracted people from all over the world. They feed non-poisonous snake and the sick had to spent the night and if the snake (god) touches the sick, he/she will be healed. It was the first city in Asia to have temple devoted to the worship of Roman emperor. Worship of the Caesar was the most intense here compared to other cities. City had a very famous library and was second only to the Alexandria and had about two lakh books.

### 6.2 Attributes of the speaker (2:12b)

**2:12.** And to the angel of the church in Pergamos write, 'These things says He who has the sharp two-edged sword:

1. **Sharp two-edged sword:** judicial authority of Christ combining the force of a warrior defeating his enemies in battle and pronouncing judgment upon them (Rev 1:16, 2:16, 19:15, 21). Also note that the proconsul of Pergamum has the right of the sword that

enables him to kill anyone at will, and sharp two edges sword is an indication of the higher authority of Christ.

## 6.3 Knowledge about the people of the Church (2:13)

**2:13.** I know your works, and where you dwell, where Satan's throne is. And you hold fast to My name, and did not deny My faith even in the days in which Antipas was My faithful martyr, who was killed among you, where Satan dwells.

1. **Where you dwell:** Home or permanent residence and has some moral significance. It is frequently used in Revelation to point to a class of people who are not simply on the earth, but whose sole interests are in it and are bounded by it and is not characteristics of Christian Rev 6:10 Phil 3:20
2. **Where the throne of Satan is:** Throne indicates some power and throne of Satan implies Satan controls the affairs, although limited. Emperor worship was most prominent in Pergamum and set as a leading city. A temple was erected to the divine Augustus and goddess Roma was in the city since BC 29. A special priesthood also was devoted. Rome as the most recent and strongest agent of Satan because of its totalitarian demands for absolute allegiance to the state and because in her all paganism and worldliness. This new Caesar-worship was the strongest hindrance to existence and growth of the church.
3. **Hold fast:** In spite of Satan's permanent residence, they Christians are faithful. Unwillingness to deny faith in Christ.
4. **My name (to onoma):** Objective sense of referring to all that Jesus is including His deity, authority, lordship over God's entire universe. Personal faithfulness to Christ in spite of adverse pressure.
5. **Antipas:** Nothing certain is known about this man except from this verse. Tradition suggests that he was burned to death during the reign of Domitian.
6. **Martyr:** It is a usual NT word for witness. Similar way, Christ also refers himself as the faithful witness. And here, Jesus giving Antipas how own title because he was true witness. Witness and martyr are gradually becoming synonym Psa 89:37 Act 1:8 Act 22:20 Rev 1:15 Rev 17:6

## 6.4 State of the Church (2:14)

**2:14.** But I have a few things against you, because you have there those who hold the doctrine of Balaam, who taught Balak to put a stumbling block before the children of Israel, to eat things sacrificed to idols, and to commit sexual immorality.

1. **I have few things against you:** Contrasting the commendation, though few, but serious complaints have been made. The ground of the complaint is the indifference to the teachings of Balaam and hat of Nicolaitans arising out of fear rather than ignorance.
2. **You have there:** Right inside the church there are people who holds false doctrine although the whole church does not hold. Nonetheless, the church is condemned for tolerating them.
3. **Doctrine of Balaam:** The word Balaam in Hebrew means the swallower of the people (Num 22-25, Num. 31:16, 2 Pet 2:15, Jude 11. Balaam sold his gift for profit. His teaching is to eat things scarified to idol and to commit fornication. He was making money by selling his gifts and responsible for defection. (Note Balaam has greater condemnation than Balak). They taught it was legitimate for Christians to participate in pagan festivals. He is the father of religious syncretism (all religions are same).
4. **Stumbling block:** The trap Balaam put was to send Moabite woman to lure Israelites to fornication leading to idolatry and resultant alienation from God.
5. **Eat things sacrificed to idols:** The sins of participation in idolatrous feasts and sexual immorality were so characteristic of the pagan surroundings in Asia Minor. Civil and religious life in this community were so intertwines that intermarriage with the heathen and spiritual compromise were inevitably real issues for the church (1 Cor 8:7-13, 10:19-30, 6:15-18).
6. **Commit sexual immorality:** The literal sin of fornication was closely associate with this city's pagan feasts and was an inescapable consequence of them. The compromise's had given their approval to this practice also. It is no wonder that Christ voices this strong complaint against the church for not raising its voice in protest.

**2:15. Thus you also have those who hold the doctrine of the Nicolaitans, which thing I hate.**

1. **Doctrine of the Nicolaitans:** They are distinct from the earlier group but similar. The end of both are same, but the paths are different. They stretched the grace and liberty of the Christian faith to the extent of permitting eating meat scarified to idols and fornication (1 Cor 8:4-10). They advocated a harmonious relation with the Greco-roman society.

## 6.5 Promise of the Lords return (2:16)

**2:16. Repent, or else I will come to you quickly and will fight against them with the sword of My mouth.**

1. **repent (*metanoeson*):** Lord issues an urgent command to repent. There is an urgency for it they fail, then the Lord will punish the church.

2. **Or else:** If the church fails to repent, there is punishment at the return of Christ.
3. **Come to you quickly:** It refers to his second advent. Quickly implies coming imminent (3:11, 22:7, 12, 20). I will make war is also an eschatological reference (Rev. 19:11-15). If they fail to repent then they will be on the wrong side when Christ returns. It is not any historical judgment but second coming.
4. **I will make war against them:** Since the command to repent is to the church, this war is against all those who fail to repent: that is those who hold the wrong doctrine and those who tolerate them
5. **Sword of My mouth:** The conquest is by force as in Rev 19:11-21. This is a call to the church at Pergamum to demonstrate its genuineness by repenting of its lenience toward the errorists who had become part of that local fellowship and failure to do so would mean dreadful consequence for them

## 6.6 Command to hear and obey (2:17a)

**2:17a. He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches ...**

1. **Hear:** Similar to 2:7 & 11 it calls for attention of listeners that these are something significant.

## 6.7 Promise to the over comer (2:17b)

**2:17b. ... To him who overcomes I will give some of the hidden manna to eat. And I will give him a white stone, and on the stone a new name written which no one knows except him who receives it."**

1. **Overcomes (*nikonti*):** Does not say what to conquer, but the victory over the hostile forces are implied. The grammar suggests that it is not a final victory at the end of life, but one who stands for faith all throughout his life because he keeps overcoming whatever enemy oppose.
2. **Hidden manna:** Jewish tradition taught that Jeremiah hid the ark before the destruction of Jerusalem, and it will not be recovered until Israel is restored in future. Rev 11:19 notes the heavenly location of the true ark of which the earthly ark is a picture Heb 8:5, 9:24. Manna representing the heavenly food of Gods people is in contrast to the earthly food scarified to the idols. Just like the promise to the earlier churches related to OT (Eph to Gen 2, Smyrna to Gen 3), this promise looks back to Ex. 16:32-34. Note, Israel was eating this manna when they met Balaam. Hence it is symbolic of a future reward, an allusion to Christ as the true manna, and the present satisfaction of believers with this spiritual bread as a foretaste of future fullness.

3. **White stone:** Three strong possibility: (i) The breastplate of the high priest had twelve stones, each of which had the name of a tribe written on it (Exod. 28:21). Similarly, a white stone with the name of the individual believer written on it is always in Gods presence. Problem: In OT stones are colored and wore by the High Priest. In Rev the stone is white and given by the high priest to the believer. (ii) The stone may be a translucent precious stone like a diamond on which the name of Christ is written. The name of Christ is written on the foreheads of the saints (3:12; 14:1; 22:4). Problem: There is no secrecy in it. (iii) Roman practice of giving white stone to the victors with their name on it which has special privileges such as entry to the Roman entertainment and banquets. This coincides with the victors feast in Rev 3:20, 19:9 and the allusion of hidden manna to the feast. This is most preferred meaning due to constant reminder of the Messianic feast.
4. **Name no one know except him who receives it:** It is qualitatively superior name. Note that the believer is holding to the name of Jesus and in return he will get a new superior name. It is secretive and trying to understand it is futile. However, new name points to the unique personal marks and signs of Gods adoption due to the new relationship (Gen 32:38, 41:39-45, Isa 62:2, 65:15). The possession of the stone as well as the new name is a peculiar privilege of the believer.

# Chapter 7

## Thyatira: Compromise (2:18–29)

### 7.1 Address opening the letter (2:18a)

**2:18a.** And to the angel of the church in Thyatira write ...

1. **Thyatira:** Smallest of the seven cities but the longest of all the letters. Rich in agriculture and commerce, but weak in natural fortifications to protect it from invasions. It was located in a valley and served as defense gate to Pergamum which is the capital. City had several trade guilds for worker of wool, linen, garments, dyes, leather, tanning, pottery, baking, slave trade, bronze smiting, etc. Membership is compulsory to be a trader. Lydia was from this city and was a seller of purple (*Act 16:14*). It is predominantly gentile population. Apollo was the chief deity, emperor worship was not strong, but each guild had their own patron god who need to be worshipped by every member. The guild festivals include eating food sacrificed to idols and immoral activities. Christians lacked zeal for godly life and doctrine and tolerated those erring. Falsehood and idolatry permeated almost the whole church. The church might have been started by Paul (*Act 19:10*).

### 7.2 Attributes of the speaker (2:18b)

**2:18b.** ... These things says the Son of God, who has eyes like a flame of fire, and His feet like fine brass:

1. **Son of God:** The only direct use in Rev, indirectly in 1:6, 2:27, 3:5, 21, 14:1 and directly in John 1:34, 49, 3:18, 5:25, 10:36, 11:4, 27, 20:31. Equivalent of Messiah (*Luke 4:41*). Church needs to be reminded of who really is her head (*Mat 11:27, Mat 16:16, Mat 26:63-64, Luke 10:22, John 11:4, John 19:7*).

2. **One who has the eyes as a flame of fire:** Surpassing intelligence with ability to search the hearts and minds of man, a prerogative of God (*Dan 10:6*).
3. **Feet like fine brass:** Moves in the midst of the churches to purge out the church from all moral impurity.

## 7.3 Knowledge about the people of the Church (2:19)

**2:19. I know your works, love, service, faith, and your patience; and as for your works, the last are more than the first.**

1. **works (erga):** A neutral word, it could be good or bad, the context determines the meaning. Works are the mirror of the character of the churches and is mentioned in all the seven churches (2:2, 5, 22, 26, 3:1, 8, 15). Considerable praise is given followed by blame. Works are elaborated as love, faith, service and endurance. The first two are internal (abstract qualities or motives) and the last two the external evidence of the internal reality.
2. **Love (agapen):** Love is demonstrated in service to other and faith is showing through endurance of hardship imposed through persecution. The only church commended for both love and service. Love is the emblem of discipleship (*John 13:35*).
3. **Faith (pistis):** Faith is a firm persuasion, a conviction based hearing of God, Christ, or spiritual things from Bible (*Heb 13:1,6*).
4. **Service (diakonia):** is ministry to meet the needs of others. It is voluntary service unlike that of a slave (doulos) who has an obligation to serve the master (*Acts 11:29; Rom 15:25; 1 Cor 16:15; 2 Cor 8:4; 2 Cor 9:1; Heb 6:10*).
5. **Endurance hypomonen:** Result of strong faith, sustained in hardships imposed through persecution. To withstand such pressure without wavering is expected of all followers of Christ (*Mat. 16:24-26*).
6. **Last works are more than the first:** As time progressed their works also grew. It is commendable and this is an exemplary in spite of all the weaknesses.

## 7.4 State of the Church (2:20-24)

**2:20. Nevertheless I have a few things against you, because you allow that woman Jezebel, who calls herself a prophetess, to teach and seduce My servants to commit sexual immorality and eat things sacrificed to idols.**

1. **You tolerate:** Danger to the church is not external, but internal; not pagan gods but false prophet.



2. **Jezebel**: Symbolical name of some prominent woman of the church who influenced the church in a wrong way just as Jezebel who also claimed to be a prophetess and misled Ahab and the people of Israel. Here, Jezebel is the personification of heresy (*1 Ki 18:4,19, 2 Ki 9:22*).
3. **who calls herself prophetess**: Claim not accepted by Jesus Christ. The only woman called as prophetess in NT is Anna and daughters of Philip engaged in prophesying (*Luke 2:36, Act 21:9*). In the first-century church a prophet was an inspired messenger of God who ranked high, just behind the apostles, in the capability of edifying the church (*1 Cor. 12:28*).
4. **she teaches (disaskei)**: She teaches which is not permitted in the church (*1 Tim 2:12*).
5. **she seduces (planao)**: This word occurs very frequent in the book of Rev than any other book. 1 John also has several references. Departure from fundamental faith (*Rev 13:14, 18:23*) and is also the title of devil (*Rev 12:9*). She also might have taught wrong things like Nicolaitans stating that idol is nothing, so going to temple and partaking a common meal for the sake of business is okay (*1 Cor. 8:4*). She also might have claim deeper truths (*2:24*). Impact of her teaching on other within the church (children) is other churches also (*2:23*). In that sense, this is worse than Ephesus and Pergamum churches.

**2:21. And I gave her time to repent of her sexual immorality, and she did not repent.**

1. **gave time to repent**: She departed from faith long back. Lord warned her., probably through John (*1 Jh 2:19, 4:1-3*).
2. **sexual immorality**: There is close relation between spiritual faithfulness and marital faithfulness (*Jer 3:6, Ezk 23:29, Hos 9:1*). It is not clear how much physical involvement was there, definitely here there was literal immorality as evident from v 20.
3. **did not repent**: She has no inclination to repent in spite of the warning.

**2:22. Indeed I will cast her into a sickbed, and those who commit adultery with her into great tribulation, unless they repent of their deeds.**

1. **Cast her into a bed**: The word sick was added by translators. It could mean:
  - (a) Sick bed - contrasting the adulterous bed of pleasure. *Ex 21:18. Ps 41:3, 1Cor 11:27-29*. Problem: Sickness is normally a discipline by the Lord to believers, and it is too less for the crime of Jezebel,
  - (b) Death bed (*1Cor 11:29-30, 2 Ki 1:4*). Problem: Unlikely, such usage is less and the word killing mentioned below,
  - (c) Sending to hell. The word casting is used by Jesus referring to sending to hell (*Mat 3:10, 5:29, 7:19, 13:42, 50, 18:8, 9; Mk 9:45, 47, Luke 3:9, John 15:6*). Problem: stretching too much, and

(d) Period of eschatological tribulation coming at the coming of the Lord.

Woman and her follower would then have same destiny. Bed is symbolic of pestilence and death and even eternal hell. Rev 2:5, 2:16, 2:25 all points to eschatological.

2. **those who commit adultery with her:** Pointing to literal adultery and literal punishment which is death (Lev. 20:10), but the extent is unknown. Not that the whole Church participated, but it permitted/tolerated the same exposing the weakness.
3. **into great tribulation:** The first reference of this word in the book, and points to the eschatological events. Rev 4-19 describes the unparalleled misery. Jesus also used great tribulation pointing to the end time (Mt 24:21)

**2:23. I will kill her children with death, and all the churches shall know that I am He who searches the minds and hearts. And I will give to each one of you according to your works.**

1. **I will kill:** The other face of the Lord, the Son of God, one who judges.
2. **her children:** The one who whole heartily support her doctrine (antinomian)
3. **death (ethnato):** Pestilence resulting out of the great tribulation, a serious tone of the punishment indicates that they will be killed with the pestilence (Ezk 33:27, Rev 6:8, 18:8, 2Sam 24:13).
4. **all churches:** Broader purpose is that all the churches should be warned about.
5. **know:** Churches will know by observation the true person of Jesus: both his omniscience and omnipotence.
6. **I am He who searches the minds (nephrous) and hearts (kardias):** The prerogative of God (omniscience) to read the heart and minds. His knowledge is intimate that pierces below superficial appearance (Jer 11:20, 17:10, 20:12, Ps 7:9, Prov 24:12). The word kidney is used to designate mind, his will, affections etc.
7. **give each one according to your works:** Works are the basis of judgment (Ps 62:12, Prov 24:12, Jer 17:10, Rom 2:6, 2 Tim 4:14, Rev 20:12-13, Mat 7:16-20, 16:27, Rev 18:6, 20:12, 13, 22:12). Reward is to each one in the church. Works when done continually reflects the motive (1Cor 4:5).

**2:24. Now to you I say, and to the rest in Thyatira, as many as do not have this doctrine, who have not known the depths of Satan, as they say, I will put on you no other burden.**

1. **to you the rest:** First time a remnant is singled out who do not participate with the pagan practice. Remnant is unlikely to be a minority as the works shown in 2:19. Two things characterize them: correct doctrine, and not known the depths of Satan.

2. **as many as do not have this doctrine:** this remnant were completely free from any contact with her false teaching and they wisely distanced themselves from it.
3. **who have not known the depths of Satan:** Tradition reveals that a number of pagan religious and heretical sects boasted of their knowledge of the deep things. It amounts to claim of esoteric knowledge, superior morality, and higher law. If a man is to know them, he must have supernatural help. They used the same language which Paul used in 1Cor 2:10, Rom 11:33, Eph 3:18. This was their way of claiming they could indulge in idol feasts, including their immorality, without sinning. They viewed this remnant as weaker ones. They even claimed sinless (1Joh 1:10, 3:10) and ridiculed the genuine Christians which is a typical characteristics of heretics. They claim to venture into Satans strongholds to demonstrate the powerlessness of the enemy over him, or else to learn the real nature of sin in this firsthand way. They even went to the extent of claiming their actions would help the weaker brethren to strengthen him. A Gnostic will tell that such knowledge help him to understand the earthly things are unreal and harmless. He is sure of his sinlessness, his immune to sin for he is free in spirit.
4. **I do not cast on you another burden (baros):** The burden is to resist Jezebel and her group, and staying away from her evil practices which itself invites ridicule. The word mean a weightier or important matter (Mat 23:23, 2 Cor 10:10, 1 Thes 2:6) which the Lord is giving. Hence, the meaning is: I put upon you no other weighty admonition than this: Hold fast what you have.

## 7.5 Promise of the Lords return (2:25)

**2:25. But hold fast what you have till I come.**

1. **hold fast (krateo):** It is a common metaphor to describe strict adherence to a tradition or teaching either in a good or bad sense (2Thes 2:15, Rev 2:13, 3:11, Mk 7:3, 8, Rev 2:13-15). Here the emphasis is on continuing with its focus on urgency.
2. **what you have:** the valued possession they have which is resisting wrong doctrine and lifestyle.
3. **till I come:** They have to hold this till Jesus come and the period is indefinite.

## 7.6 Command to hear and obey (2:29)

**2:29. He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.**

1. **... has an ear ... let him hear:** similar to earlier three churches Rev 2:7, 11, 17.

## 7.7 Promise to the overcomer (2:26-28)

**2:26. And he who overcomes, and keeps My works until the end, to him I will give power over the nations—**

1. **the one who overcomes (ho nikon)**: Not a member of special class of Christian having higher spirituality but refer to a description of what is expected of true believers.
2. **and keeps (Kai ho teron)**: is the same individual as ho nikon. The over comer also obeys the Word. The word tereo is used 12 times in John and 6 times in 1 John, and 9 times in revelation, all referring to obeying the Word.
3. **the works (ta erga)**: works being performed in compliance with Gods commands.
4. **until the end**: maintain an obedient life and may coincide with the return of Christ.
5. **I will give power over the nations**: Believers will share in His eschatological rule with authority/power. This alludes to Ps 2:8 and is the only overcomer who receives double promise. This promise is the first definitive reference in Revelation to the coming millennial kingdom which Jesus is to establish when He returns to earth.

**2:27. He shall rule them with a rod of iron; They shall be dashed to pieces like the potter's vessels” as I also have received from My Father;**

1. **I destroy (poimanei)**: The Greek word translates as shepherd or rules. It is a rule of violent destruction of the enemies or nations.
2. **rod of iron**: Alludes to Ps 2:9 and symbolizes a royal scepter of some kind with which a rigorous rule is achieved.
3. **as vessels of a potter shattered to pieces**: A graphic picture of the collapse of the enemies of the Messiah when He confronts them.
4. **I also have received from My Father**: the source of Messianic power is from the Father (Ps 2:7-8) and Jesus will delegate this power to his people.

**2:28. and I will give him the morning star.**

1. **morning star**: In the messianic kingdom the righteous will shine like stars indicating royalty (*Dan 12:3, Mat 2:2, Mat 13:43*). The overcomer has a role of not only destroying the enemies but also ruling/shining with Him. Note Rev 20:6, 22:16 indicate that Jesus is also called as morning stars.

# Chapter 8

## Sardis: Complacency (3:1–6)

### 8.1 Address opening the letter (3:1a)

**3:1a.** And to the angel of the church in Sardis write...

1. **Sardis:** Located at an elevated plateau and the terrain made it a militarily strong city. It was the capital of the region of Lydia. They had a Jewish synagogue and Josephus wrote that the Jews were wealthy. The patron god is Artemis whom they believed could restore life and they also worshipped the emperor.
2. Do not know how the church was formed, but it grew careless and indifferent to spiritual things and gradually declined. Nothing is mentioned about opposition from Jews, pagans, etc.

See Photos in ??

### 8.2 Attributes of the speaker (3:1b)

**3:1b.** ... These things says He who has the seven Spirits of God and the seven stars ...

1. **Seven Spirits of God:** As already noted in 1:4, it refers to the Holy Spirit (*Zec 4:2-10, Rev 5:6*). Coincidentally, these verses also confirms Holy Spirit proceeds from Christ also and symbolizes omniscience of the Holy Spirit. (*John 15:26, (Rom 8:9)*).
2. **Holds seven stars:** similar to 1:16 and 2:1 it designates the Lord's authority and control, extends to the whole church. It is a stern warning similar to the church at Ephesus.

## 8.3 Knowledge about the people of the Church (3:1c)

**3:1c. ...I know your works, that you have a name that you are alive, but you are dead**

1. **I know your works:** Lord knows clearly all the areas of life of every individual, and in particular the deeds of the church.
2. **you have a name (*Onoma*):** In Hebrew thought name denoted inner reality but in Greek it spoke of an external such as rank, authority, fame, reputation, or character. Individual members of the church had good reputation. It generally refers to nominal (name sake) Christian.
3. **alive (*zes*):** indicate spiritual life contrasting *bios* referring to physical life.
4. **yet you are dead (*nekros*):** dead refers to spiritual death. The church has reached a stage where it is not able to make any new converts. They are active externally, giving an impression of being alive. They made peace with the surrounding society and fit in comfortably with their culture Sardis was sunk into deep sleep and near death (*Mat 8:22, 2 Tim 3:5, Jas 2:17*).

## 8.4 State of the Church (3:2-3a,4)

**3:2. Be watchful, and strengthen the things which remain, that are ready to die, for I have not found your works perfect before God.**

1. **Be watchful:** Prove yourself to be watchful, be alert against enemy. City fall to Persians in BC 549 and to Antiochus the Great in BC 195 which could have been avoided even with minimal watch (City has long cliff, difficult to come, so left unguarded, but enemy attacked).
2. **Things which remain:** The rest of the people who are not spiritually dead must work together to rebuild the church.
3. **That are ready to die:** those believers if not acted then church will fully die. A glimmer of hope.
4. **Perfect:** the quantify and more importantly the quality of work is lacking, work needs to be motivated by love and faith will only have value before God.
5. **Before my God:** Gods evaluation is quite different from mans (*1 Sam 16:7*).

**3:3a. Remember therefore how you have received and heard; hold fast and repent. . .**

1. **Therefore:** gracious call to take advantage of the solution the believers problem of stagnancy.

2. **Remember (*mnemouneue*):** command to keep the rich spiritual heritage of the past as motivating force in their restoration (Gal 5:7, Col 2:6, Heb 3:14, 10:32), i.e. remember how they have received the gospel.
3. **Hold fast (*tere*):** keep on keeping the remaining things, give attention to strengthening of the remnant.
4. **Repent (*metanoeson*):** a call for a quick and decisive change of thought and behavior. Confess and turn away from their spiritual lethargy. Note I repent (*metaneo*) means a regret over wrongdoings in the past which results in a change of lifestyle for the better; but, I regret (*metamelomai*) refers to a remorseful desire to undo things already done but has no implication of a change of heart.

**3:4. You have a few names even in Sardis who have not defiled their garments; and they shall walk with Me in white, for they are worthy.**

1. **Few names. . . not defiled their garments:** A minority in the church had not soiled/polluted their garments. Pagan thinks soiled cloths disqualifies the worship and dishonors god he tried to worship. It refers to those who have not soiled the purity of their Christian lives by falling into sin. Any sin which Christians may fall can contaminate. (*Rev 7:14; Rev 1:5*).
2. **Walk with Me in white:** Christ will replace their humanly preserved clean garments with those that are white by divine standards. Note Christ also has such garments (*Mat 17:2; Mark 9:3; Luke 9:29*). unfallen angels *Mat 28:3 Mark 16:5 Act 1:10 Rev 15:6 Rev 19:8, 14*  
Indicates personal companionship of Christ is a great motivation to live a life different from the vast majority.
3. **For the are worthy:** They are not inherently worthy, but relative worthiness, since only the Lord is worthy *Rev 5:2; Lk 21:36; Eph 4:1; Phil 1:27*

## 8.5 Promise of the Lords return (3:3b)

**3:3b. . . . Therefore if you will not watch, I will come upon you as a thief, and you will not know what hour I will come upon you.**

1. **Therefore:** it seems like a threat than a promise if the church do not repent, although there is only a slight hope.
2. **You watch:** waiting for His coming is a sign of spiritual life.
3. **Come as a thief:** NT teaches clearly of His unexpected coming: (*Mat 24:42; Luke 12:40; 1 Thes 5:2; 2 Pet 3:10; Rev 16:15*). Note also that His coming is not conditioned on human response, for his coming is sovereignly determined by the Father.

Nevertheless, from the perspective of Israel, several other developments happens. For instance, the repentance of the Nation of Israel (*Rom 11:25-26*).

4. **You will no know:** church has absolutely not way of knowing when He is coming, so don't be smarter than God by trying to find out or believe those who claim. Sardis understand this better for they were completely surprised by the enemies (BC 549 Cyrcus, BC 195 Antiochus the Great).

## 8.6 Command to hear and obey (3:6)

### 3:6. He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches

1. **He who has ear let him hear:** an individual call of Jesus. Note Jesus is the only one in the Scripture to use this invitation and reserves it for special occasions. (*Mat 11:15; Mat 13:9; Mat 13:43; Mark 9:7*).
2. **Spirit says:** Christ is the speaker. Holy Spirit is the one inspires the spirit of the apostle. The Apostle is the mouth piece of Christ and his words goes to the churches.

## 8.7 Promise to the overcomer (3:5)

### 3:5. He who overcomes shall be clothed in white garments, and I will not blot out his name from the Book of Life; but I will confess his name before My Father and before His angels.

1. **Overcomer:** Overcomer is same as not failing like the majority of the Sardis church.
2. **White garments:** white is symbolic of purity or glory or victory (*Rev 3:18; Rev 6:11; Rev 7:9; Rev 7:13-14*; It refers to eternal state of purity alluding to Joshua the high priest was given (*Zec 3:4-10*). There is a linkage to priestly function indicating the acceptability before God and the divine recognition of their office and ministry as priests of God. (*Exo 28:39-42; Ezek 44:17*).
3. **Not blot out his name from the Book of Life:**
  - (a) OT usage is connected with judgment against the enemies of God (*Exo 32:32; Duet 9:14 Duet 25:19; Psa 69:28*). Opposite of it refers to a blessing (*Isa 4:3; Dan 12:1; Mal 3:16*).
  - (b) NT also uses it in the context of blessing (*Luke 10:20; Phil 4:3, Rev 21:27*).
  - (c) NT also uses in the context of judgement (*Rev 13:8; Rev 17:8; Rev 20:12; Rev 20:15*).



(d) In some sense Christ died for the whole world and the name of everyone is written in the book of life, but the benefit is potential only. It becomes actual only when one accepts/believes Him before his death. (*John 1:29; John 3:16; John 4:42; 1 John 2:2; 1 John 4:14*).

4. **Confess his name before Father:** Jesus will acknowledge us before Father the Judge. Sardis is ashamed of the name of Christ now, but the value of that name will be known later. (*Mat 10:32; Luke 12:8-9*).

## Chapter 9

# Philadelphia: Promised Deliverance 3:7–13

Rev. 3:7-13. "And to the angel of the church in Philadelphia write, "These things says He who is holy, He who is true, "He who has the key of David, He who opens and no one shuts, and shuts and no one opens": 8 "I know your works. See, I have set before you an open door, and no one can shut it; for you have a little strength, have kept My word, and have not denied My name. 9 Indeed I will make those of the synagogue of Satan, who say they are Jews and are not, but lie—indeed I will make them come and worship before your feet, and to know that I have loved you. 10 Because you have kept My command to persevere, I also will keep you from the hour of trial which shall come upon the whole world, to test those who dwell on the earth. 11 Behold, I am coming quickly! Hold fast what you have, that no one may take your crown. 12 He who overcomes, I will make him a pillar in the temple of My God, and he shall go out no more. I will write on him the name of My God and the name of the city of My God, the New Jerusalem, which comes down out of heaven from My God. And I will write on him My new name. 13 "He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches."'

### 9.1 Address opening the letter 3:7a

**3:7a.** And to the angel of the church in Philadelphia write. . .

1. **Philadelphia:** The city's name was chosen in recognition of the loyalty of Alltalus II to his brother Eumenes II. It was a city in the path of a major trade and communication route in the Roman Empire. It had suffered major loss due to a great earthquake in AD 19 and the people lived with great fear. Their religion was typical Graeco-Asian in nature. This is not a very wealthy city.

2. **Philadelphia - Biblical references:** *Rom 12:10; 1 Thes 4:9; Heb 13:1; 1 Pet 1:22; 2 Pet 1:7; Rev 1:11*).

## 9.2 Attributes of the speaker 3:7b

**3:7b. . . . These things says He who is holy, He who is true, He who has the key of David, He who opens and no one shuts, and shuts and no one opens**

1. **The holy one *ho hagios*:** Some times refers to the Father *Is 40:25, Rev 4:8, 6:20*, but often it is the title for Messiah especially in NT *Ps 16:10, Mk 1:24, Lk 1:35, Jh 6:69, Act 4:27, 30, 1Jh 2:20*). He has set apart or exclusively belong to God.
2. **The true one *ho alethinos*:** Christ is genuine, He is real, He is the embodiment of perfection, and contrast the false *Jh 1:9; 4:37; 7:28; 8:16; 1Jh 5:20*). Christ is true to His word and can be trusted to keep His promises. His reliability derives from His being the genuine Messiah who can be relied upon. The only hope to the persecuted church is that her Messiah is true and genuine one. Hence, he can be trusted.
3. **Possess the key of David:** Eliakim fulfilled as a **type** *Is 22:20-22*). He has access to the treasury of David. Nevertheless, Jesus fulfilled in the full sense *Rev 5:5; Rev 22:16*). It means that Jesus is the authentic Messiah who controls the entrance to the Messianic kingdom *Rev 1:18; Matt 28:18; Heb 3:5-6*). This assertion is significant in the context of local Jews who were not accepting Jesus as their Messiah. This letter is considered by the scholars as the most distinctly eschatological of the seven epistles. This is very clear and strong message to the Jews.
4. **Who opens and no one shuts . . . :** Jesus alone has the power to admit into or exclude from His kingdom. He also shared this to some extend with His church *Is 22:22*).

## 9.3 Knowledge about the people of the Church 3:8)

**3:8. I know your works. See, I have set before you an open door, and no one can shut it; for you have a little strength, have kept My word, and have not denied My name.**

1. **I know:** Jesus is omniscient and knows every situation in Philadelphia.
2. **See/Behold:** The words following are parenthetical words of encouragement to unique to this church. They are not a command but as a promise.
3. **Set before you an open door:** Open door is explained three ways in NT:
  - (a) Jesus is the one who gives salvation *Jh 10:7*). This is not the sense here since the church is already saved.

- (b) Jesus gives ministry opportunities *1 Cor 16:9; 2 Cor 2:12; Col 4:3*). This also may not be sense here since it can hardly be an encouragement to a small and persecuted church.
  - (c) Jesus promises a sure entrance to the Messianic kingdom, which Jews were longing, is now promised to this church. This goes along with the thoughts in V7 and V9 *Rev 5:5; Lk 1:32; Ezk 37:24; Hos 3:5*).
4. **No one will shut:** goes along with the above, that no one can restrict their entry to Messianic kingdom, especially in the context of Jewish opposition in V9.
  5. **You have little power:** not in a negative sense, but acknowledges the fact that the church has limited influence because of its numerical smallness.
  6. **Kept My word and not denied My name:** the construct suggests a specific historical trial faced by the people. Apparently Jews might have created some situation to compromise their faith, but the church has survived the crisis without faltering even though they were few in number.

## 9.4 State of the Church 3:9-10

**3:9. Indeed I will make those of the synagogue of Satan, who say they are Jews and are not, but lie, indeed I will make them come and worship before your feet, and to know that I have loved you.**

1. **Behold I will make those:** It is not explicitly mentioned what the Lord will make. This verse points to what the Lord is going to do with the enemies of the church, especially the Jews. Hence, the idea from the whole verse is that Lord is giving some of the members of the synagogue as their converts.
2. **Synagogue of Satan:** They are professing Jews and cannot be the real ones since they rejected the Messiah as well as those believed in Him. Their claim that they are the real Jew is denied by Jesus.
3. **Behold I will make them . . . :** This points to a future repentance of Israel resulting in respectful treatment of the church. This is an apparent reversal of the OT promises (*Isa 45:14; 49:23; 60:14; Ezk 36:23; 37:28; Zech 8:20-23*). However, it also points who gets the respect depends on how one is related to Messiah. Israel will respect the church once they repent and be blessed after the establishment of the kingdom.
4. **I have loved you:** Today the false Jews are mocking the church when the church claims that they are the object of God's love. But in the fullness of time Israel will acknowledge the church.

**3:10. Because you have kept My command to persevere, I also will keep you from the hour of trial which shall come upon the whole world, to test those who dwell on the earth.**

1. **Persevere *hypomone*:** means the endurance that is required from the disciple. The Lord Himself set an example *2 Thes 3:5; Heb 12:3*).
2. **I also will keep *tereso*:** These words shows the watchful care of Jesus over the church. The promise to the church is some mode of complete preservation and protection during this crisis hour.
3. **the hour of trial:** Two options are possible during the tribulation which will happen immediately before the return of the Lord. They are:

(a) The church will be preserved while present during the period.

**Proof:**

Here, Christ does not ask for believers to be take out of the world, but to be kept away from the presence of the evil one. *John 17:15*.

**Critique:** This cannot be due to:

- i. This cannot be due to:
  - ii. there it is preservation from the evil, but here it is from the tribulation
  - iii. there the disciples are already in the midst of the evil, but here, the church is not in the midst of the tribulation
  - iv. there the spiritual realm is in view, but here it is the world system is in view.
  - v. saints in the tribulation period will face persecution including martyrdom (*Rev 6:9-11; 7:9-14*) which contradicts the promise.
- (b) The church will be preserved by means of the removal from the scene of the suffering. The reasons supporting this are

**Proof**

- i. context suggests it is a promise rather than a threat. Hence, it makes sense only if church is not on the earth when the Lord is pouring out His wrath and intense persecution by the Anti Christ on humanity.
- ii. the hour of trial indicates and focus on a period of time from which they are preserved. This we understand as the great tribulation prophesied by Jesus (*Mat24:21*).
- iii. similar construct is seen in *Jh 12:27*. Here, the prayer of Jesus was not for a grace to go through it. Instead the prayer was for an altogether avoidance.
- iv. the most natural meaning of keeping from the hour is not preserving through it but keep away safely.

Note: that this does not refer directly to rapture, but it guarantees protection from the great tribulation which we understand as church is removed from the scene.

4. **The whole inhabited earth:** This denotes not merely the people in the locality. The whole mankind will see the day of the Lord. *Dan 12:1 Joel 2:31 Mk 13:19 2 Thes 2:3-12 Rev 7:14 Rev 14:7*

## 9.5 Promise of the Lords return 3:11

**3:11. Behold, I am coming quickly! Hold fast what you have, that no one may take your crown.**

1. **I am coming quickly:** deliverance of the faithful will happen with His coming and it quickly indicate the imminent return of the Lord. It serves as warning to the unfaithful to repent and encouragement to the faithful. A quick coming implies it cannot be referring to Rev 19:11-21 where several events should takes place.
2. **Hold fast what you have:** the expected response of the faithful till the short period before His coming. What the church has is precious treasure.
3. **No one may take your crown:** thief will not take the crown for himself, but to deny the privilege of the faithful. Crown is given to the victor and holding fast to what is already have is a secure way of preserving the crown.

## 9.6 Command to hear and obey 3:13

**3:13. He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.”’**

1. **He who has ear let him hear:** an individual call of Jesus (Mat 11:15, 13:9, 13:43, Mark 9:4, 23, Lk 8:8, 14:35). Note Jesus is the only one in the Scripture to use this invitation and reserves it for special occasions.
2. **Spirit says:** Christ is the speaker and the Holy Spirit is the one inspires the spirit of the apostle who is the mouth piece of Christ, whose words goes to the churches.

## 9.7 Promise to the overcomer 3:12

**3:12. He who overcomes, I will make him a pillar in the temple of My God, and he shall go out no more. I will write on him the name of My God and the name of the city of My God, the New Jerusalem, which comes down out of heaven from My God. And I will write on him My new name.**

1. **He who overcomes:** the promises draws heavily on the eternal and absolutely assured blessing draws from (Rev 21-22) and includes an open recognition of them as the people of God. This overcomer is the one who keeps on holding fast.
2. **Pillar in the temple of God:** This is a figurative language since there is no temple in the new Jerusalem They will be permanent, like a pillar in the Temple, and will stand when all else has fallen This indicates the permanent stature of the overcomer. *Rev 21:22*).
3. **My God:** This word is used four time in this verse indicating a strong relation He has with God.
4. **He shall go out no more:** again the permanence of the relation with Christ and that this relation is inseparable.
5. **I will write on:** three fold writing indicate absolute assurance of eternal life.
6. **Name of My God:** belong to God and having the divine power.
7. **Name of the city of My God:** permanent citizenship in the new Jerusalem *Rev 21:2-10*).
8. **My new name:** full revelation of His character for we now know only in part and will have full assurance of who Christ is.

# Chapter 10

## Laodicea: Lukewarmness (3:14–22)

### 10.1 Address opening the letter (3:14a)

**3:14a.** And to the angel of the church of the Laodiceans write. . .

1. **Laodicea:** Laos means people and diko means rule and the place name indicated the rule of the people. Note that this church has the most solemn message and the sharpest rebuke. There is no commendation except an encouragement to repent and overcome. City might have been established by Antiochus II around BC 250 and was named after his wife Laodice. Population consists of Syrians, Greeks, and Jews. City was very rich due to commerce, manufacturing (esp. of soft wool), medicine. The city had a famous school of medicine, specially famous for an eye ointment, and followed Hierophilios, a Greek physician regarded as one of the earliest anatomists .

2. **Biblical references:** The church might have started by some close associate of Paul (*Act 19:1; Col 1:7*).

Paul had great concern about this church (*Col 2:1*).

He also sent letter to this church (*Col 4:16*).

Which is this letter from Laodicea? Some scholars have reasons to believe that it is same as the Ephesians.

### 10.2 Attributes of the speaker (3:14b)

**3:14b.** . . . These things says the Amen, the Faithful and True Witness, the Beginning of the creation of God:



1. **The Amen:** This Hebrew word means true, verily, certain, etc. (*Is 65:16; Jer 28:6*). Here, it refers to Jesus who is credible and what He says will truly be accomplished.
2. **The witness (*ho martyrs*):** the word is used in legal sense, historical sense (faithful life of Jesus), or ethical sense (those who died because of faith). Christ is a reliable witness to the divine revelation which God the Father has given to Him. He can be trusted that He will never exaggerate or suppress the truth. He is reliable both in character and message (*Ps 89:37; Rev 1:4-5*).
3. **The faithful (*pistos*):** The word means one who is trustworthy and this is a title given to Jesus (*1 Joh 1:9*). Note that this in contrast to the unfaithfulness of the Laodicea church.
4. **The true (*alethinos*):** the witness of Christ is true and genuine. This is the highest perfection of a witness.
5. **The Beginning of the creation of God:** liberals teaches that Christ is not exceptional. They essentially teach that God created Christ first and then He created all things. Such liberal teachings makes the church lukewarm. But the truth is different. (*Col 1:15-20*). He is not the first one created, but the originator or initiator of life. Low view of Christ maintained by many prompted Paul to wrote Colossians and asked them to read it to the Laodiceans. (*Col 4:16*). There is a close similarity between this letter and Paul's letter to Colossae a nearby city. Christ is unique and therefore pre-eminent. He has supreme authority and power to execute His word, including the warnings and promises in the message to follow. There are many references that highlight the importance of Jesus Christ (*Eph 2:6; Col 1:27; Col 2; Col 2:1-3; Col 3:1*).

## 10.3 Knowledge about the people of the Church (3:15)

**3:15. I know your works, that you are neither cold nor hot. I could wish you were cold or hot.**

1. **I know:** divine comprehension that is absolute because it is based on omniscience unlike human's progressive knowledge by observation.
2. **Works (*erga*):** are more than deeds which reflects life and conduct in general including outward spiritual activities. They are the evidence of the inward spiritual condition the Lord alone sees and know directly. It is by means of these that men prove what they are.
3. **Cold (*psychros*):** pictures an unbeliever who has rejected the gospel openly and aggressively and is the clear contrast of hot.
4. **Hot (*zestos*):** It means fervent or I boil and points to a person who spiritually healthy (*Act 18:25; Rom 12:11*).

5. **Wish (*ophelon*)**: shows the frustration of the Lord or a holy impatience over the half hearted devotion to Him.
6. **Hot or cold**: Lukewarm is state of professing Christianity, but untouched by its fire. State of coldness/hotness is more conducive to a person coming to Christ than the state of lukewarm (*John 9:41, Act 9:1*).

## 10.4 State of the Church (3:16)

**3:16. So then, because you are lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will vomit you out of My mouth.**

1. **Lukewarm (*chliaros*)**: the word used only here. Neighboring Hierapolis had hot springs with medicinal values, and Colosse had cool water good for drinking. Water brought to the city was neither hot or cold. Lukewarm is not spiritual immaturity, complacency, or poor testimony. It is professing faith seen externally and without any conviction in the heart. They think that the external profession is sufficient. There might be genuine believers in this church, that is why it is called a church. The believers are numerically so small to have any influence on the church.
2. **I will (*mellow*)**: the word indicates: (i) about to do the action, with a possibility to avert, meaning the church has still chance to repent, (ii) the action is imminent indicating the sudden return of Christ.
3. **Vomit (*emesai*)**: the word is used only here in the NT and indicates the Lord's utter abhorrence of the condition of the church at Laodicea. OT has many equivalences (*Prov 26:11; Isa 19:14; Isa 28:8; Jer 48:26*).

**3:17. Because you say, 'I am rich, have become wealthy, and have need of nothing' and do not know that you are wretched, miserable, poor, blind, and naked**

1. **Because**: this verse is the basis for the counsel in the next verse and elaborated the lukewarm nature.
2. **I am rich**: historically Laodicea is a rich city which might have contributed to their belief that they are spiritually rich. Part of the church's problem is its inability to make a distinction between the material riches and spiritual riches. Gnostic spirit, which thinks the knowledge as an indicator of spiritual riches, might have also contributed to their wrong self-assessment.
3. **I have become rich**: is an assertion that they became rich by their own efforts.
4. **Have need of nothing**: reflects that the church is happy with its state and this complacency is dangerous: the material richness is their spiritual poverty (rich in pride, but poor in grace)!

5. **Do not know that you are:** is a strong denial of their assessment by the Lord- the whole church is guilty and He pronounces His assessment which is true.
6. **Wretched (*talaiporos*):** the word found here as well as in (*Rom 7:24*). Paul knew his true state very well. But this church is unaware of its true state.
7. **Miserable (*eleeinos*):** the word found here as well as in (*1 Cor 15:19*). This word shows the extreme pitiable state since one who do not realize that he is heading eternal damnation.
8. **Poor (*ptochos*):** derived from the word of begging and hence means beggar.
9. **Blind (*typhlos*):** mental blindness like the state of Pharisees (*Mat 23:17*). Note that this city is famous for its eye ointment is interesting.
10. **Naked (*gymnos*):** Note this is also a shameful assessment to a city famous for its wools. The one who is NOT saved is like naked before the Lord (*Gen 3:10, Mat 22:11-12; Rev 6:11; Rev 7:9-14*).

**3:18. I counsel you to buy from Me gold refined in the fire, that you may be rich; and white garments, that you may be clothed, that the shame of your nakedness may not be revealed; and anoint your eyes with eye salve, that you may see.**

1. **I counsel:** an invitation that leads and draws near rather than a demand.
2. **Buy from Me:** the feeling of self-sufficiency is baseless and they are required to depend of Jesus.
3. **Gold refined by fire:** is picture of high quality faith. Such a faith is capable of with-standing trials and will results in good works. This is a direct solution to the spiritual poverty of this church (*Luke 12:21; 1 Tim 6:18; Jas 1:3; Jas 2:5; 1 Pet 1:7; Prov 17:3; Zech 13:9*).
4. **White garments that you may be clothed:** indicates receiving a new heart inclined to do righteous deeds. This also implies imputed righteousness as the basis of this clothing.
5. **The shame of your nakedness may not be revealed:** A believer must put on the garment comes at the time of salvation. In other words, the boldness to stand before God comes from the righteousness imputed from the Lord Jesus. Exposing the shame comes only at the time of His coming. One who rely anything other than the righteousness of Christ will have to face condemnation from God. This is the shame of the one who profess faith, but not truly saved (*2 Sam 10:4; Isa 20:4; Ezk 16:35-43 ; Hos 2:3,9; Nah 3:5; 2 Cor 5:2-3; Heb 4:13*).

6. **Anoint your eyes with eye salve, that you may see:** eye salve is a medicine used for eyes and it pictures illuminating grace or anointing of the Holy Spirit along with the convicting ministry of the Holy Spirit (*1 Joh 2:20,27; John 9:6; John 16:8-11*).
7. **Note:** the city was an important financial center, manufacturer of woollen garments, and medical center famous for its eye medicine, but the church was ironically lacking in genuine faith (gold), righteousness (garments), and vision/discernment (eye salve).

## 10.5 Promise of the Lords return (3:19-20)

**3:19. As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten. Therefore be zealous and repent.**

1. **Note:** Some think 19-22 is a common closure to all the churches, but it is more appropriate to be that of this church.
2. **As many as I love (*ean philo*):** Strange that Christ loves this church.
  - (a) the basis of this admonition is out of His love to the church, even though there is an external profession only (*Prov 3:12; Heb 12:6*).
  - (b) The phrase *I am about to (mello)* in v 16 shows the possibility of averting the action indicate it is a warning.
  - (c) the basis of this love is conditional as we see from the word therefore
  - (d) Similar blessing to those who respond is promised (*Rev 16:15*)
  - (e) the love of Christ here is not agape the unconditional one, but phileo which is emotional or less deep than the former. Christ extends special treatment to a church in spite of its lukewarm condition.
3. **Rebuke:** verbal rebuke to bring a person to acknowledge his fault
4. **Chasten:** corrects a person by action.
5. **Zealos and Repent:** One issue here: how can one be zealous first without repentance? This can be resolved when we understand that this is a figure of speech called **hysteron proteron** (i.e."later earlier" is a rhetorical device by placing the first key word of the idea refers to something that happens little later than the second key word. The goal is to call attention to the more important idea by placing it first. E.g. thunder and the lightning). The repentance leading to a clear change of heart followed by continuing zeal (hot) instead of lukewarm. The act of repentance is necessary to be truly zealous.

**3:20. Behold, I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears My voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and dine with him, and he with Me.**

1. **Behold:** Lord calls for a special attention to what He is saying, for it points to the future blessing. The word **behold** has special eschatological significance in the book of revelation.
2. **I stand:** These words indicate that the Lord has taken a deliberate decision to wait.
3. **Knocks:** This word is referring to an action that is ongoing.
4. **Door:** Popularly people think that the door refers to the human heart which points to evangelisation. Nevertheless, here it refers to the nearness of his coming (*Mat 24:33; Mark 13:29; Luke 12:36; Jas 5:9; SoS 5:2*). Christ presents Himself at the verge of entering and hence urges the church to respond favourably to his commands.
5. **Note.** This verse is commonly used in the evangelistic context. However, as seen above, its primary context is eschatological. That is when the Lord comes, He will have marriage supper. Supper is an indication of intimate fellowship. Fellowship between a believer and the Lord happens at two phases: first, at the time of salvation, second at the time of second coming. The evangelistic implication of this verse is secondary only. Because of His long suffering, He keeps on knocking, but at some point of time, unknown to humans, that knocking will come to an end (*1 Pet 3:20, 2 Pet 3:9*).
6. **Hears My voice and opens the door:** Opening the door was in response to the voice and knock (Act 12:13-14). Spiritually, this is a climatic decision of a person turning to Christ. It is an opportunity for those who have not yet experienced conversion to Christ to do so and thereby make ready for His return. It is not an invitation to a backsliding Christian to come back to active fellowship with the Lord.
7. **I will come in to him and dine with him, and he with Me:** Supper points to an intimate fellowship with the Lord. However, this is not a reference to Lords Table. Instead, it is promise that will be realized in the Messianic kingdom. It is both personal and intimate. This is also a mutual fellowship (*Mat 26:29; Mark 14:25; Luke 22:30; Luke 12:37; John 6:56; John 10:38; John 14:20; John 15:4-5; John 17:21*).

Thus, the true Christian has, in a sense, already begun fellowship with Christ immediately after born-again, but in another sense, his ultimate fellowship with Him will happen after the second advent of Christ.

## 10.6 Command to hear and obey (3:22)

### 3:22. The one who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches

1. This is a comprehensive warning to the church to hear and apply what has been written. This warning is not only to itself, but also to the other six.

2. The message to Laodicea had particular relevance to the church in that city, but the seven-fold repetition of this command to 'let him hear' shows the likelihood that some of the lessons were also needed in the other six churches.
3. Are these messages then applicable to our church as well to all the churches?

## 10.7 Promise to the over-comer (3:21)

**3:21. To him who overcomes I will grant to sit with Me on My throne, as I also overcame and sat down with My Father on His throne.**

1. **Sit with me on My throne:** This points to the promise of Jesus that apostles and all believers will be ruling with Him. (*Mat 19:28; Luke 22:29-30; 1 Cor 6:2*). Also note that this throne is the one promised to Jesus by the Father (*Psalms 122:5; Ezek 43:7; Luke 1:32*).

## **Part III**

# **Publication of the Prophecy: Its Future Expectation (4:1–22:5)**

# Chapter 11

## The One Sitting on the Throne (4:1–11)

### 11.1 Overview

1. After writing in chapter 1 the vision of the glorified Christ and in chapters 2 and 3 of the present conditions in the churches, through the seven letters, John now turns in chapter 4 onward the series of visions about future judgement. This begins the major prophetic portion of the book.
2. First, chapters 4 and 5 pictures the throne room in heaven from where the scroll (judgement) eventually come.
3. Chapter 4 focuses on God the Creator (Father) who delivers the seven-sealed scroll, and chapter 5 on God the Redeemer (Jesus), the only one found worthy to take it and open the seals.
4. Chapter 4 describes John's transition to a state that enabled him to view the appearance of the person sitting on the throne in heaven and related heavenly scenes.
5. Chapters 2 and 3 are happening on the earth and 4 onwards the scene changes to heaven (occasionally it comes to earth as in Chapter 12 and 13)

### 11.2 Invitation to heaven

- 4:1. After these things I looked, and behold, a door opened in heaven, and the first sound that I heard [was] as [that] of a trumpet, speaking with me, saying, "Come up here, and I will show you things that must happen after these things."**



1. **After these things:** points change in scene from Christ in authority over the churches and their messengers to a vision of the court in heaven. These words are very important as it indicate a distinct separation of church from these events (6-19) applicable for Israel. These word appear a second time also in this verse.
2. **I looked:** recognition of the prophetic vision.
3. **Behold:** the response, which is an invitation to the reader to come and have a look. Special attention needed to be given to this door as it opens to heaven.
4. **Door opened:** It is not a closed door, but kept opened. Door to the heaven is now opened through the work of Christ. John did not opened the door. Entry to heaven is an opportunity given by God, not by human effort!
5. **In heaven:** the doors location which is the dwelling place of God. John is transported to heaven and stays there till Rev 12 where he seems to be on the earth. He will be again transported to heaven in Rev 14.
6. **First voice:** that of the glorified Christ (1:10).
7. **Trumpet:** authoritative and calls for special attention.
8. **Come up here:** revelation to the heavenly mysteries (*Exo 19:20; Rom 10:6; 2 Cor 12:2*)
9. **I will show you:** the revelation Father has given to John and in turn to the churches.
10. **Must take place:** these events are certain and according to the will of God. Not to satisfy the human curiosity but to show who is in control of the affairs

## 11.3 The Heavenly Throne

**4:2. Immediately I was in the Spirit; and behold, a throne set in heaven, and One sat on the throne.**

1. **Immediately:** Johns instant translation into a prophetic trance.
2. **I was in the Spirit:** John returned to his normal senses after the first vision ended in 3:22 and now returns to the same state in which he had been to receive the second vision.
3. **Behold:** marks a new special diving intervention.
4. **Throne (thronos):** OT pictures heaven itself as Gods throne and sees Him enthroned in heaven. This word is used 13 times this chapter and 37 time in the whole book). The focus of this chapter is Gods sovereignty exercised in judgment. Though veil reign for a time on the earth God will ultimately prevail. (*Isa 6:1; Isa 66:1; 1 Ki 22:19; Ps 11:4; Ps 47:8; Ezk 1:26; Dan 7:9*)

5. **One:** This person is God the Father. He is distinguished from the Lamb (*Rev 5:5,7; Rev 6:16; Rev 7:10*) He is also distinguished from the Spirit (*Rev 4:5*)
6. **Sitting:** denotes the activity of reigning and continuation of the priestly functions (*Heb 1:3; Heb 10:12; Heb 12:2*) Revelation pictures God as the one who sits on the throne

**4:3. And He who sat there was like a jasper and a sardius stone in appearance; and there was a rainbow around the throne, in appearance like an emerald.**

1. He who sat there was **like:** A variety of symbols are used to broadly describe the glory of God (*Ex 24:10; 1 Ki 22:19; Ezk 1:26-28; Dan 7:9*) However, details are significant and there must be a reason for the use of each symbol for the revelation was signified (*Rev 1:1*).
2. **Jasper:** modern Jasper is opaque, taking clue from (*Rev 21:11*) the stone must be diamond radiating bright white light. It symbolizes the holiness and majesty of God.
3. **Sardis:** a fiery deep red stone most likely carnelian (quartz) and it symbolizes justice or anger of God seen in the judgment (*Ezk 1:4*). Note that the city of Sardis was named after this stone.
4. **Rainbow (iris):** It is reminiscence of the covenant God made with Noah (*Gen 9:11-13*). It symbolizes the mercy or covenantal faithfulness of God. Note that there will be no triumph of Gods sovereignty at the expense of His mercy.
5. **Emerald:** This precious stone is green in color and represents the grace and mercy of God. Note that this is the colour of the rainbow and probably different shades of green may be its appearance.

**4:4. Around the throne were twenty-four thrones, and on the thrones I saw twenty-four elders sitting, clothed in white robes; and they had crowns of gold on their heads.**

1. **Thrones:** not specified their sizes but arranged around the throne. They are symbolic of authority.
2. **Elders (presbyterous):** denotes official position of authority. What is their identity? Two possibilities exists: they can be either men or angels.

(a) Reason why they are **men** and the associated problems:

- i. The word normally applied to men in the bible who are rulers or representatives (*1 Chr 24:7-19; Act 14:23; Act 15:6; Act 20:17; Act 21:18; Heb 11:2*). **But** angels are also referred. The word elder implies one having authority. (*Isa 24:23*).

- ii. White robes are generally for the redeemed (3:5, 18) but angels also appear white (*John 20:12; Mat 28:3; Mark 16:5; Acts 1:10*).
  - iii. Crowns of gold is usually given as a reward to the redeemed (3:11), but golden crown can also refer to royal dignity associated with the throne of God (*1Ki 22:19; Ps 89:7*).
  - iv. The number 24 symbolizes the 12 tribal fathers of Israel (*Ex 4:29; 12:21; 19:7; 24:1; Heb 11:2*) and the 12 apostles of the church (*Mt 19:28; Lk 22:30; Act 14:23; 20:17; 21:18*) and *Rev 21:12-14* verifies this, but to conceive the redeemed as fusion of Israel and Church is foreign to the early church. *Rev 21:12-14*).
- (a) Reasons why they are likely to be **angles** although few problems exist
- i. *Lk 2:13-14* and *1 Pet 1:12* indicate angles are interested in the redemption of humanity (*Luke 2:13-14; 1 Pet 1:10-12*).
  - ii. The book distinguishes elders from the saints (*7:13-14; 14:3; 19:4-8*). (*Rev 7:13-14; Rev 14:3; Rev 19:4-8*).
  - iii. They are closer to angels than saints are (*Rev 7:9-11; Rev 19:1-4*).
  - iv. Chapter 4 is too early for the saints to occupy the throne (*Rev 20:4*).
  - v. One of the elder acts as an agent of revelation, which is an angelic activity (*Rev 7:13-14; Rev 1:1; Rev 17:3; Rev 22:6*).

Hence, these 24 elders are a special class of angels with high authority in the court of God (*1Ki 22:19; Ps 89:7; Is 24:23*).

## 11.4 Activities around the throne

**4:5. And from the throne proceeded lightnings, thunderings, and voices. Seven lamps of fire were burning before the throne, which are the seven Spirits of God.**

1. **Lightnings, thundering, and voices:** a reverent way of saying that the one who sits upon the throne is responsible for them. Similar things happened in OT (*Ex 9:23; 19:16*). Also, *1Sam 7:10; 12:17-18; Ps 29:3*; and *Ezk 1:4, 13, 24*. All these indicates the glory of God, His omnipotence, judgment against the sinful world. It also depicts the wrath of God as seen with 7th seal (8:5), 7th trumpet (11:19), and 7th bowl (16:18).
2. **Seven lamps of fire:** they should be distinguished from the earlier lamp stands (1:12, 20) which are calm and soft indoor fire. On the other hand, the lamps of fire indicates blazing and fierce torches (*Rev 8:8; Rev 8:10*). They also indicate Gods war march against the humanity (*Jud 7:20; Nah 2:3-4*).

3. **Seven Spirits of God:** point to Holy Spirit (1:4). Here, His role is as the consumer of the ungodly. All these show the picture of heaven about to launch a massive program to purify Gods creation.

**4:6. Before the throne there was a sea of glass, like crystal. And in the midst of the throne, and around the throne, were four living creatures full of eyes in front and in back.**

1. **Sea:** OT mentions about watery expanse between earth and haven or a clear ether in which the throne of God is supported. (Gen 1:7; Ex 24:10-11; 1Ki 7:23; Job 37:18; Ps 104:3; Ezk 1:22, 26). It shows the splendor of the throne of God. It enhances Gods separateness from His creature just as the sea separates John from the throne. Walvoord connects this with both the lavers in the Tabernacle (Ex 30:18-21, 1Ki 7:38-39) and the molten sea in Solomons temple (1Ki 7:23-37) intended for priestly purification. It then points to the picture of purity needed because of the holiness of God, calmness, and majesty of Gods throne and the sanctifying power of the Word of God.
2. **Four living creatures:** Some connect them with four gospel (Mathew to lion – Jesus as King, Mark to ox – Jesus as a Servant of the Lord, Luke to man – Humanity of Jesus, and John to Eagle – Deity of Jesus) but it is very difficult to derive from the bible. They symbolizes the attributes of God
  - (a) lion for courage,
  - (b) ox for patience,
  - (c) man for sympathy, and
  - (d) eagle for soaring aspiration.

The living beings are worshipper and these attributes pertain to God. These four picture the standards of the tribes of Israel (Num 2:2, 10, 18, 25) but in Rev 5:13 they are distinguished from the creation. However, note that they are exalted order of angels due to their proximity to God, they have judicial authority due to their participation in judgment (6:1, 3, 5, 7), they represent animate creation (4:9-11, 15:7), and, their description points them to seraphim (Isa 6:2) and cherubim (Ezk 1:4-14; 9:3; 10:1, 2ff, 20ff) although some details differ.

3. **Full of eyes:** emphasizes alertness and comprehensive knowledge of these beings.

**4:7. The first living creature was like a lion, the second living creature like a calf, the third living creature had a face like a man, and the fourth living creature was like a flying eagle.**

1. **Like:** or similar to indicates some kind of representation. Hence, lion indicates nobility or royalty, ox pictures the strength or meekness, face that of a man is emblematic of intelligence and reason, and flying eagle is symbolic of swiftness and separation.

**4:8. The four living creatures, each having six wings, were full of eyes around and within. And they do not rest day or night, saying: “Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty, Who was and is and is to come!”**

1. **Wings:** depicts swiftness and unlimited mobility in responding to Gods command (Ps 18:10! Ezk 10:16). Taking clue from Is 6:2, covering the eyes with two wings indicate holy awe, covering the feet with two wings points to humility at the presence of a Holy God, and the two wings to fly symbolizes obedience because they are ready to carry out His commandments.
2. **Eyes around and within:** signify alertness and comprehensive knowledge and they are able to move with their wings without obstructing the vision.
3. **Do not rest day or night:** denotes continuous praise. It does not mean that they do not do anything else. Rev 6:1, 3, 5, 7 show they have other responsibilities. This is similar to the night and day usage of Paul (1The 2:9; 2The 3:8) .
4. **Holy, holy, holy:** refers to the threefold ascription (*Trisagion*) of the holiness, which is the very nature of the Trinitarian God who is clearly distinguished from the creation.
5. **Lord God Almighty:** is title by which Father is known in this book (1:8) and points to the omnipotence.
6. **Who was, who is and who is to come:** is also a title of the Father (Rev 1:4, 8; 11:17) points to the eternal nature of God unlike the finiteness of the creation who also look forward to His coming (Rom 8:19-22) which was fulfilled in Rev 20:11; 21:1.

**4:9. Whenever the living creatures give glory and honor and thanks to Him who sits on the throne, who lives forever and ever,**

1. **Whenever:** indicate as noted earlier the worship is not non-stop and the elder await the signal of the four living beings.
2. **Glory, honor and thanks:** describe the content of the song where the first two points to the perfections of God (holiness, omnipotence, and eternity) and the last indicates the gratitude evidenced in the creation.
3. **Lives forever and ever:** is another way of describing the eternal nature of God (Dan 6:26; Deut 32:40)

**4:10. the twenty-four elders fall down before Him who sits on the throne and worship Him who lives forever and ever, and cast their crowns before the throne, saying:**

1. **Fall down:** the elders probably out of submission to the living beings initiate the worship. This is the first of the six times they prostrate (5:8, 14; 7:11; 11:16; 19:4). Three times joined by the four living being (5:8; 7:11; 19:4) and once by all angels (7:11). This act indicate that they consider them nothing in spite of the proximity to the throne, their deep reverence and complete humility.

2. **Cast their crown:** which they might have received from God they voluntarily surrender by casting them before the throne so that greater honor may be accrued to God

**4:11. You are worthy, O Lord, To receive glory and honor and power; For You created all things, And by Your will they exist and were created."**

1. **You are worthy:** is the song focus more on the wonders of Gods creation as evidence of His glory and power. This song addressed directly to God. The word worthy was popularly used by Romans to address the emperor in triumphal procession.
2. **Our:** indicate they they are the redeemed saints. However, angels are also part of the redeemed in broad sense.
3. **Glory and honor and power:** the first two are same as v 4:9 and ascription of power is because of the creative work of God (Ps 336-9; 102:25; 136:5-9).
4. **By Your will:** God created all things for Himself and for His own pleasure.
5. **You created . . . exist and were created:** threefold statement give emphasis of the creative work out of nothing.
6. **Note:** The vision points to the headquarters of the holy omnipotent and eternal God who requires His standards to be seen by His creation. If they did not meet His standards, then His wrath must inflict penalties upon the rebellious who are among the works of His hand.

# Chapter 12

## Seven-sealed Scroll of the Lamb (5:1–14)

### Overview

1. Rev. 4 reveals the heavenly throne where Father is worshiped.
2. Rev. 5 reveals a scroll and the one who is qualified to open it.
3. Four new scenes
  - (a) 5:1. seven-sealed scroll in the Father's possession
  - (b) 5:2–5. Credentials necessary to open the scroll
  - (c) 5:6–10. Transfer of the scroll to the Lamb.
  - (d) 5:11–14. Universal tribute to the worthy Lamb.

### 12.1 The seven-sealed scroll with the Father (5:1)

**5:1.** And I saw in the right hand of Him who sat on the throne a scroll written inside and on the back, sealed with seven seals.

1. **I saw:** Seven sealed scroll in the Father's possession. What John saw was the four new scenes (5:1; 5:2-5; 5:6-10; 5:11-14) of the vision currently in progress. The scroll comprises essentially the remainder of this revelation.
2. **Hand:** the scroll lies on the open palm of the one sitting upon the throne. The position of the scroll in God's possession indicated its divine source, the supreme authority of the revelation contained in it and the assurance of adequate power to translate its contents into action.

3. **Scroll (bible)**: was made by procession either papyrus or skin from different kinds of animals and several OT parallels exist (*Isa 29:11; Jer 36:10-25; Ezk 2:9-10; Dan 12:4*).
4. **Inside and on the back**: refers to inside the scroll before unrolling and to the backside of the scroll after it is unrolled. Note that considering the time and location of John, it could not have been in a book form but in the form of a scroll. Note that the scroll reflects the kind of contract that was common in Roman and Jewish world. Full contract written inside and the summary outside and used in all legal transactions (*Jer 32:10-14*).
5. **written**: What is written? At least six answers are proposed: (i) the new covenant with humanity, (ii) will of inheritance, (iii) same as the book of life, (iv) redemptive plan of God, (v) Christ's contract-deed to the world he created, and (vi) the counsels of God enacted from chapter 6 onward. The last one is to be adopted as it matches with the rest of the book. Thus the contents of the scroll is a history of the future that give the successive steps leading to the inauguration of the world-kingdom of Jesus. Although there is no reading mentioned but the contents are enacted. Later discussions will show that the seven seal contains the seven trumpet judgments (*Rev 8:6-11:15*) and that the seven trumpet contains the seven bowls of wrath (*rev 16-19*). It is a scroll of doom (*Dan 10:21*). The eternal and almighty God of *Rev 4* presents this seven-sealed scroll the decrees of His will regarding the consummation of His kingdom. Later when the Lamb breaks the seal, it is not merely a disclosure of the contents of the scroll, but an activation of those contents. The hidden destiny of the world is about to end (*Isa 29:11; Dan 8:26*). The purging effect of God's wrath will touch the entire sphere of God's creation (*4:11, Rom 8:18-25*). The effect of sin will disappear, and earth will be restored to its rightful owner.
6. **Written inside and back**: symbolizes the fullness of the contents (*Ezk 2:10*). The decrees of God contained herein are extensive and comprehensive. They constitute the whole counsel of God regarding the future of the world and no further revelation may be anticipated (*Rev 22:18*).
7. **Sealed with seven seals**: means the seals are secure and the scroll is closed (*Isa 29:11-12*).

## 12.2 Credentials necessary to open the scroll (5:2-5)

**5:2. Then I saw a strong angel proclaiming with a loud voice, "Who is worthy to open the scroll and to loose its seals?"**

1. **Then**: Credentials necessary to open the scroll is discussed here. The issue of worthiness is first raised by the strong angel.



2. **Strong Angel:** Gabriel functions as a messenger of God (Dan 8:16; 9:21; Luke 1:19; 26) and was the one who ordered Daniel to close and seal the book. Michael is an arc-angel and has special interest in the events of the last days (Dan 12:1-3; Jude 9). If it is either of the case, then John would have mentioned. Because it is not, he is best left unnamed and identified only as a might angel who performs Gods will.
3. **Loud voice:** is a demonstration of his strength.
4. **Who is worthy:** refers to the quality of the person that can be either the inner moral one or the external ability to open the seven-sealed scroll. Here it refers to worthiness to the both the office of Christ and His moral competency. Rev 5:9 bases His worthiness based on His redemptive death and in 5:5 the worthiness is tied to His Messianic office.
5. **To open the scroll and even to break its seals:** both are nearly identical activities (5:5). It is not only telling the prophesies of the scroll, but also the ability to make them come true as evident from chapter 6 onwards where the Lamb breaks the seals and execute the actions.

**5:3. And no one in heaven or on the earth or under the earth was able to open the scroll, or to look at it.**

1. **No one was able:** apparently, a search among the creation to find out whether anyone is capable of opening the seal revealed the absence of anyone. The creation is utterly incapable of enacting the contents of the scroll.
2. **In heaven or on the earth or under the earth:** is three fold division of the creative world (Ex 20:4, 11, Ps 146:6; Phil 2:10) and clearly refers to the whole universe. The angles in heaven, the people on the earth, and the departed souls and daemons under the earth are all incapable of the job.
3. **Look at it:** because of the inability to enact the contents of the scroll, no one is able to read it.

**5:4. So I wept much, because no one was found worthy to open and read the scroll, or to look at it.**

1. **Because:** why John wept? John feared the events portrayed in the scroll may not be fulfilled, that is the plan of God to establish his kingdom is likely to be postponed indefinitely. It means more suffering the people of God and continuation of the reign of evil and sin on the world.

**5:5. But one of the elders said to me, "Do not weep. Behold, the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, has prevailed to open the scroll and to loose its seven seals."**

1. **Elder:** merely function as a mediator as angels do (Rev 7:13; 17:1; 21:9).

2. **Stop crying:** such sorrow is in appropriate just as Jesus said (Lk 7:13; 8:52). It is appropriate to the joyful occasion.
3. **Prevailed:** or overcame is powerful word used in the context of the victories of Gods people (2:7; 11; 12:12; 15:2). Jesus also will conquer the enemies of His Kingdom.
4. **Lion of Judah:** or the lion who is of the tribe of Judah (Gen 49:9). Lion indicate strength, majesty, courage, etc. which resembles the qualities of the king of the jungle.
5. **Root of David:** or the off spring of David. Jesus will the head of the new Kingdom (Isa 11:1; 10; Jer 23:5; 33:15). However, here to focus is the suffering of Jesus to bring salvation and his identification with humanity.

## 12.3 Transfer of the scroll to the Lamb (5:6-10)

**5:6. And I looked, and behold, in the midst of the throne and of the four living creatures, and in the midst of the elders, stood a Lamb as though it had been slain, having seven horns and seven eyes, which are the seven Spirits of God sent out into all the earth.**

1. **In the midst:** Lamb is standing in the centre of all the angelic creatures, both living beings and elders, who surround the throne (Rev 7:17) however beside the father *Act 7:56 Heb 10:12*
2. **Lamb (arnion):** semi-technical term to describe the crucified Messiah used only in John 21:5 (translated as little Lamb) outside Rev where it occurs 29 times; a related term amnos used in John 1:29, 36, Act 8:32; 1Pet 1:19 and translated as Lamb. Jesus combines the meekness and gentleness of a Lamb with the majesty of a lion. *John 21:9*
3. **Standing as one slain:** which speaks of the supreme self-sacrifice leads to His supreme power. The marks of his death are visible, but because of His resurrection, they are not fatal. This is a present and eternal reality which enabled Him to open the seven-sealed scroll. The slain is a picture of the Passover Lamb in the gospel of John (1:29; 19:14; 31-36) and Isa 53:7. *John 1:29 Isa 53:7*
4. **Seven horns:** horn is a symbol of strength or power and the number seven indicates perfection, then the picture is that of an all-powerful warrior and king (Num 23:22; Deut 33:17; Dan 7:20-21; 8:5).  
*Dan 7:21*
5. **Seven eyes:** representing perfect sight, intelligence, and wisdom in their fullness, that is omniscience. Nothing escapes the notice of the Lamb. *Zech 4:10*

6. **Seven Spirits of God sent out into all the earth:** Holy Spirit proceeds from the Son, just as the Son proceeds from the Father and He is sent as an official representative. Holy Spirit is Christ's agent on the earth. This close relationship is represented symbolically through horn and eyes *Jh 15:26*

**5:7. Then He came and took the scroll out of the right hand of Him who sat on the throne.**

1. **He came and took:**

- (a) Lamb is already at the center at the right hand of Father, now position Himself to accept the scroll from the Father. The scene reminds of Dan 7:9-14.

*Dan 7:9-14*

- (b) By permitting the Lamb to take the scroll, the one sitting upon the throne authorizes the Lamb in a symbolic way to execute His plan for the redemption of the world.
- (c) Note that: John might have seen the Lamb as lamb at the beginning and now the human form which is required for the actions like receiving the scroll, opening the seal, riding on the horse etc. (6:1, 3, 5, 6, 9, 12; 8:1, 19:11).
- (d) What occurs here is dramatic description of transaction that affects the future course of the world including all mankind.

**5:8. Now when He had taken the scroll, the four living creatures and the twenty-four elders fell down before the Lamb, each having a harp, and golden bowls full of incense, which are the prayers of the saints.**

1. **Fell down before the Lamb:** evokes an overwhelming response from the angelic beings. Christ is worthy to receive the scroll implies fulfillment of its contents leading the institution of the promised kingdom. (App: be excited about the prospects of Gods purposes – it is true worship).
2. **Each one having:** grammar, priestly function of the elders, and descriptive role of the living beings all favour to the possibility that only the elders have the harp and bowl.
3. **Harp:** most used OT instrument for worship. It indicates joy and gladness (1 Chr 25:1, 6; 2 Chr 29:25; Ps 71:22; 92:3; 149:3).
4. **Golden bowl:** a container with large open mouth used for offering incense by the priests ministering at the alter (Ex 27:3; Num 4:14; 2Chr 4:21-22; Zech 14:20).
5. **Full of incense, which are the prayer of the saints:** describe the worship of heaven. Efficacy of an offering as acceptable comes only when accompanied by incense. It is a symbol of the prayers of the saints ascending from earth to heaven (Ps 141:2; Luke 1:10). Rev 8:3 also confirm the Jewish notion that the angels are the carriers of the prayers of men.

## 6. Saints:

- (a) The identity of these saints could be all NT saints is unlikely since they would be praising than praying in the heaven.
- (b) On the other hand Rev 6:9-11; 12:17; 13:7-10 all points to the presence of saints during the tribulation who cry to God for vengeance.

*Rev 6:10*

- (c) This is a legitimate payer *Lk 18:7-8*
- (d) Their prayer is symbolic of paving the way to opening of the seven seals.
- (e) Application: role of prayer in fulfilling Gods plan.

**5:9. And they sang a new song, saying: “You are worthy to take the scroll, And to open its seals; For You were slain, And have redeemed us to God by Your blood Out of every tribe and tongue and people and nation,**

- 1. **They:** transferring of the scroll prompted the 4 living beings (4:8) and 24 elders to sing the song. The rest of creation also joined them later (5:13).
- 2. **New:** in a deeper sense of the new things which is more glories than the past things (Ps 33:3; 40:3; 96:1; 98:1; 144:9; 149:1; Isa 42:9-10). Newness is in relation to the quality than temporal.
- 3. **Worthy:** is the theme of the new song just like the Father in 4:11 so is also the Son here. He too is God. In addition, the reason for worthiness is twofold: his slain and his redemption.
- 4. **Slain:** referring the death of Jesus on the cross, an action once for all completed (13:8).
- 5. **Redeemed:**
  - (a) Christ has purchased the saints by His death.
  - (b) Redeem is a slave market term (1 Cor 6:20; 7:23; Gal 3:13; 1 Pet 1:18-19; 2 Pet 2:1). *1 Cor 6:20*
  - (c) Also note that in the immediate and broader context this redemption is not merely from the sin, but of an emancipation that results in the creation of a new people of God to rule upon the earth (5:10)
  - (d) Application: the redemption in us is from slaves to rulers!
- 6. **To God by Your blood:** purchased for serving God and the cost of it is very high.
- 7. **Out of every:**
  - (a) The phrase indicates from all conceivable background.

- (b) It is not universal but partial as only those who put faith on the Lord alone receives salvation *1 Jh 2:2*
  - (c) Phrase used in Rev 7:9; 11:9; 13:7; 14:6 has it origin in Daniel 3:4, 7, 29; 5:19; 6:25; 7:14. *Dan 7:14*
  - (d) Application: not to blame background.
8. **Tribe:** same descent, belong to same clan united by family lineage.
  9. **Tongue:** people speaking same language.
  10. **People:** unites a people of same race or interests.
  11. **Nation:** bound together by political unity. People of every lineage, language, race, and political orientation receives the benefit of Christs redemption.

**5:10. And have made us kings and priests to our God; And we shall reign on the earth."**

1. **Kings and priests:**
  - (a) the result of the redemption is establishment as kings and priests (1:6, 20:6).
  - (b) The redeemed also will also share with Jesus in the rule in the millennial kingdom *1 Cor 6:3*
  - (c) Priest will have access to the throne of God *Ex 19:6 1 Pet 2:5*
2. **Reign on earth:** believers will rule with the Lord both in the millennial kingdom and in the eternal state (*Rev 20:4; Rev 22:5*).

## 12.4 Universal tribute to the worthy Lamb (5:11–14)

**5:11. Then I looked, and I heard the voice of many angels around the throne, the living creatures, and the elders; and the number of them was ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousands of thousands,**

1. **Then I looked:** is a universal tribute to the worth Lamb.
2. **Many angels:** all kinds of angels now join the worship. The number defies calculation, but denotes extremely high number *Dan 7:10 Ps 68:17*

**5:12. saying with a loud voice: "Worthy is the Lamb who was slain To receive power and riches and wisdom, And strength and honor and glory and blessing!"**

1. **Worthy:** angelic worship for the redemption and angels are interested in the redemptive work (Eph 3:10; 1Pet 1:12). Seven words in this doxology.

2. **Power:** omnipotence (1Chr 29:11-12).
3. **Riches:** unconditional riches in all realms including the spiritual befitting an all-sufficient God (2Cor 8:9; Eph 3:8).
4. **Wisdom:** attribute of God that demonstrates itself in the conscious and purposeful creation and government of the world, appointing limits and goals in the execution of His will and the moulding of the destiny (1Cor 1:24, 30).
5. **Strength:** the ability of the Lord whether he actively exerted or not (Lk 11:22; Eph 6:10; 2 Thes 1:9).
6. **Honour:** due to His sacrificial death (Heb 2:9; Phil 2:11).
7. **Glory:** higher than honour, indicating the divine and heavenly radiance, the loftiness and majesty.
8. **Blessing:** or praise is that quality of Christ, which evokes mans thankful response for the benefits, received.

**5:13. And every creature which is in heaven and on the earth and under the earth and such as are in the sea, and all that are in them, I heard saying: "Blessing and honor and glory and power Be to Him who sits on the throne, And to the Lamb, forever and ever!"**

1. **Throne and Lamb:** received the praise of the whole creation.
2. **Creature:** Implied is that every intelligent animated creation (Ps 146:6, 2Per 2:4; Jude 6; Phil 2:9-11). Note it is anticipatory.

**5:14. Then the four living creatures said, "Amen!" And the twenty-four elders fell down and worshiped Him who lives forever and ever.**

1. **Amen:** the closing of the doxology, which the four started and 24 elder terminated it.

# Chapter 13

## First Six Seals, “The Beginning of Birth Pains” (6:1-17)

### 13.1 Five important questions related to chapter 6

1. **Are the events which begin with the breaking of the first seal past or future?**

Though many have tried to find fulfillment in the past, there are solid reasons for believing that the revelation concerns events yet future. after this Rev 4:1 what will take place later Rev 1:19 We cannot prove these events from history. So, the seven seals are future events.

2. **What is the relationship of the seals to the Rapture of the church?**

Rapture is a future event in Ch 2 &3 Rev 2:25, 28; Rev 3:10–11 Since neither the Rapture nor the church are the subject of Revelation 6–18, then Rapture of the church takes place before chapter 4 (pre-tribulation)

3. **What is the relationship of the seals to Daniel 9:27?**

Israel's program, concluding in the 70th week of Daniel, is related to the events described in chapter 6 onwards leading up to the Second Coming.

4. **Does Rev 6 deal with the 7 years or 3.5 years of Daniel 9:27**

The last three and one-half years is referred to as “the Great Tribulation” or “a time of great distress”? (Jer. 30:7; Dan. 12:1; Matt. 24:21)

The Book of Revelation never uses a seven-year figure but frequently refers to three and one-half years or 42 months (11:2; 13:5). Because the events of chapter 6 and afterward seem to coincide with the Great Tribulation rather than with the time of peace in the first half of the seven years (1 Thes. 5:3), there are good reasons for

concluding that these great events are compacted in the last three and one-half years before Christ's return to the earth.

5. **What is the relationship of the events of Revelation to Christ's sermon on the end times? (Mat 24–25)**

Event	Olivet Discourse	Revelation
War	Mat 24:6–7	Rev 6:3–4
Famine	Mat 24:7	Rev 6:5–6
Death	Mat 24:7–9	Rev 6:7–8
Martyrdom	Mat 24:9–10, 16–22	Rev 6:9–11
Sun and moon darkened with stars falling	Mat 24:29	Rev 6:12–14
Divine judgment	Mat 24:32–25:26	Rev 6:15–17

## 13.2 First seal: peaceful conquest (6:1–2)

**6:1. Now I saw when the Lamb opened one of the seals; and I heard one of the four living creatures saying with a voice like thunder, “Come and see.”**

1. **And I looked (I saw)** points to the new aspect of the ongoing revelation. In one sense the core of the revelation begins here. It also show the active role of John. Note: the first four seal openings have similar feature making them as one group. Features include (i) utterance from one of the four living beings and (ii) followed by the appearance of a colored horse and (iii) his rider who has some sort of power over the earth.
2. **Lamp (arnion)** is the opener of the seal for He alone is worthy
3. **One (first) of the seven seals** which protects the contents of the scroll. The seven seals parallels Mat 24 and happens at the beginning of tribulation (Some call Mt 24-25, Mk 13, and Luke 21 as Little Apocalypse given by Jesus on Tue before His Crucifixion). Jesus divides the period into two: beginning of the birth pangs (Mt 24:8) and the Great Tribulation (Mt 24:21). The former parallels the first four signs. *Mt 24:4-14*
4. **Voice of the thunder** is an indication of judgment (Mk 3:17, Jh 12:28-29, Ex 20:18).
5. **Come (and see)** is an invitation to the first horseman as evidenced by the response below where the horseman arrived. The same is true for the other three commands in V 4, 5, and 8.

**6:2. And I looked, and behold, a white horse. He who sat on it had a bow; and a crown was given to him, and he went out conquering and to conquer.**



1. **I looked, and behold** does not indicate the content of scroll is shown or read, instead it was enacted in the following events.
2. **White horse**: Imagery of the four horses in 6:1-8 is similar to the prophecy of Zechariah, and the afflictions resemble those predicted by Jeremiah. The color and the purpose of horses in Zech are slightly different here. Horses are generally associated with war and judgment *Zech 1:7-11; Zech 6:1-8 Jer 14:12; Jer 24:10, Jer 42:17. Job 39:19-25; Ps 76:5-6; Prov 21:31.*
3. **He who sat on it**: Several proposals are put forth for the identity of the rider which includes Christ, Word, Gospel, Anti-Christ, Roman emperor, Parthians, etc. What is consistent with the OT imagery and the rest of the three horses is that the rider is not an individual but personification of a movement that will work against Christ and His Kingdom. Although He has resemblance to Jesus Christ, however, several reasons rejects the idea: (i) here it is Jesus who breaks the seal and it is unlikely He is the rider, (ii) this happens at the beginning of the tribulation period where as Jesus comes at the end of the tribulation period, (iii) it is unlikely that Jesus is called into action by a living being, (iv) the rest of the three horses are associated with negative, and (v) treat the Jesus at par with the rest of the riders. *Rev 19:11-16*
4. **Had a bow (echon toxon)**: bow is associated with warrior and victory *Zech 9:13-14*. Here arrow is not mentioned, and hence it is reasonable to conclude although there is potential of war, the victory was obtained with out war. World-wide pseudo peace is characteristic of the first seal.
5. **A crown was given to him (edothē auto stefhanos)**: The crown was not acquired by the merit of the rider, but it was given divinely to him. Crown is an indicator of authority or victory and here the movement represented by the rider was vicarious in establishing authority and world wide peace, though it is for short as we see below. The word em was given is used in the book as the divine permission for evil powers to carry out their wicked mission (9:1, 3, 3; 13:5, 7, 14, 15).
6. **Conquering and to conquer** The victory was brought through peaceful means and was marked by a long series of victories. The victory seems complete world-wide although temporary.

### 13.3 Second seal: warfare and bloodshed (6:3–4)

- (a) **Second seal** happens after the *beginnings of birth-pains* (Mat. 24:8, 2 The 1:6).
- (b) This is fixed based on the parallel between *tribulation* period mentioned by Jesus in Mt. 24:6-7.
- (c) Again this will happen in the first half of the seven year period as indicated by Mt. 24:15; Mk 13:14.

(d) It is further confirmed by the rider carrying the sword pointing to war.

(e) Most likely the sword is given to the enemies of God so that they might destroy one another.

**6:4. Another horse, fiery red, went out. And it was granted to the one who sat on it to take peace from the earth, and that people should kill one another; and there was given to him a great sword.**

1. **Another** indicates another of the same kind as that of the first horse.
2. **Fiery red** points to the affliction due to bloodshed in its maximum intensity.
3. **One who sat on it** can be best understood as the personified representative of the war.
4. **It was given to him** shows that he is an agent appointed by God.
5. **Peace** refers to the normal state of affairs of the whole world. Of course this peace was a false one unlike the eternal peace that is going to come. The peace and war in the first and second seal indicated they are happening sequentially.
6. **Earth** denote that the impact of the seal is world wide and not limited to the Jewish world.
7. **People should kill one another**: One form of judgment; that people are the instruments in the hand of God.
8. **Sword** here is long one carried in battle and symbolically it spoke of bloodshed, violent death, war, etc (Rom 8:35; 13:4; Mt. 10:34).

## 13.4 Third seal: widespread famine (6:5–6)

**6:5. When He opened the third seal, I heard the third living creature say, “Come and see.” So I looked, and behold, a black horse, and he who sat on it had a pair of scales in his hand.**

1. **Black horse** suggests a time of lamentation and mourning resulting from scarcity of food and anxiety created by this shortage. The rider is the personification of the famine. It is also possible to have the famine as the effect of the war under the second seal *La 4:8-9; 2Ki 6:25; Act 11:28*.
2. **Balance (zygon)** indicate careful weighing of food as its supply is short. Eating food by weight denotes condition of famine *Ezk 4:16-17*).

**6:6. And I heard a voice in the midst of the four living creatures saying, “A quart of wheat for a denarius, and three quarts of barley for a denarius; and do not harm the oil and the wine.”**

1. **Voice:** source of the voice who gave this announcement seems mysterious; but that should not discourage inquiry. Since the voice came from the midst, it is either the Lamb or God. God seem likely as He sent similar famines earlier (*2Ki 8:1; Hag 1:11; 2:16-17*).
2. **A quart (measure) of barley** is quantity of daily food just sufficient to keep one person's life. Barley is considered to be poor man diet.
3. **Denarius** was the average day's wage for working man. A person can earn three measure of barley for his family.
4. **Do not harm oil and wine:** Oil and wine are very common food along with grain (*Deut 11:14; Joel 2:19; Hag 1:11*).

However, oil and wine are expensive and restrain on it indicates that although the famine is extensive, the rich is less affected. However, this will be the most severe famine ever to grip the world up to that time.

## 13.5 Fourth seal: death to a fourth of earth's inhabitants (6:7-8)

**6:7. When He opened the fourth seal, I heard the voice of the fourth living creature saying, "Come and see."**

1. **Fourth seal:** This again happens in the first half of the tribulation and all the four afflictions happens simultaneously.

**6:8. So I looked, and behold, a pale horse. And the name of him who sat on it was Death, and Hades followed with him. And power was given to them over a fourth of the earth, to kill with sword, with hunger, with death, and by the beasts of the earth.**

1. **Pale** is the colour of death and decay. It images a face bleached because of terror or a corpse in the advanced state of corruption.
2. **Rider** on the horse is the personification of death or pestilence.
3. **Hades** is the inseparable companion of death and condition into which all humans pass at the time of physical death. Note: believers will go immediately into the presence of the Lord.
4. **Fourth of the earth:** The impact of this seal is beyond imagination. Taking current world population of 7 billion, this number is nearly 1.75 billion (20 times the world war II)! World war II took maximum about 8.5 crores, which was less than 4 percent of then world population.

5. **Sword, hunger, death, beasts:** Recall Ezekiel's warning to Jerusalem in *Ezk 4:12-21*. Sword is a symbol of death by violent means. Famine will be more severe. Death may also be due to deadly diseases. Lastly, the wild beasts will take the life of defenceless. Remember, these are only the beginning of the birth pains! Things are going to be worse.

## 13.6 Fifth seal: prayers for divine vengeance (6:9–11)

**6:9.** When He opened the fifth seal, I saw under the altar the souls of those who had been slain for the word of God and for the testimony which they held.

1. **Fifth seal** differs from the rest. There is no call from the living being, there neither any horse or any rider. The first four affected the political, economic and social realm causing great chaos. And a natural offshoot is martyrdom. Jesus also warned about in Olivet discourse (*Mat 24:9-10*; *Mark 13:9-13*; *Luke 21:12-17*). Fifth seal is not martyrdom, for seals are judgment of God against enemies of God and not against the redeemed. Instead, the fifth seal is the cry of the martyrs for God's judgment, God hears their prayer, and vindicates them. God will definitely punish, but the prayers confirm this. The future of the humanity is getting worse only.
2. **Note:** The timing of the opening of the seals is after the fourth as they follow strict sequence. Hence, the prayers are by those martyred during the tribulation and their murderers still alive.
3. **Alter:** Since dead people don't pray on the earth, the alter point to the throne of God which is both the kingly place and temple of prayer.
4. **Soul:** the souls of the martyred believers in heaven and their bodies will be resurrected only in *Rev 20:4*. They gave their lives for their faith during the first half of the seven year period because those killed them still alive.
5. **Because of the Word of God** is the reason why they gave up their life, that is their testimony or public allegiance to Jesus Christ

**6:10.** And they cried with a loud voice, saying, "How long, O Lord, holy and true, until You judge and avenge our blood on those who dwell on the earth?"

1. **Cry:** Their plea to God is in the form of a question. This contrast the prayer of Stephen (*Act 7:10*. How do we understand this prayer of vengeance, like the one in *Psalms 74:10* A prayer for pardon is more appropriate during the age of Grace. But when grace has exhausted and the long-suffering is ended, then what is left is only the judgment. It is not just a thirst for vengeance with an evil mind, but a protest against the iniquity for upholding the righteousness.

2. **Loud voice** is an indication of the fervent prayer (*Rom 9:27; Gal 4:6*).
3. **How long** is a well know cry of those undergoing suffering. This question is there in the lips of the righteous since the days of Abel.
4. **Holy and true:** God is Holy and hence He cannot tolerate sin. He is faithful to His Word and He has to do justice. Note however, they are not telling God what to do, how to do, and when to do.
5. **Those who dwell on the earth:** They are not merely people on the earth, but those who rebel against God and His purposes. They are ungodly and they have all their agenda confined to this earth. Revelation consistently uses this terminology (*Rev 3:10; 8:13; 11:10; 13:8; 13:12; 17:2; 17:8*)

**6:11. Then a white robe was given to each of them; and it was said to them that they should rest a little while longer, until both the number of their fellow servants and their brethren, who would be killed as they were, was completed.**

1. **White robe** is an indication of reward which pictures blessedness and beauty of holiness and glory (*Rev 3:5, 7:9, 14*). This does not mean that they already have glorified body (*1Co 15:35ff, 2Cor 5:1ff, Phil 3:21*), which will be received only at the return of Christ (*Rev 20:4-5*).
2. **They should rest** is an exhortation to stop their cry and enjoy the heaven which is part of their state in heaven.
3. **Little while longer:** It is an indication of short time (*Jh 7:33; Jh 12:35; Rev 10:6*). The angel announces there is no delay indicating the waiting period is over as God promised. Here, it could be the intense period of persecution by Satan (*Rev 12:12; Rev 20:1-3*).
4. **Until:** The reason for waiting is more martyrs to join the lot. It appears that God has pre-determined some number of martyrs.
5. **Servant and (even) brothers** are not two class of believer, the latter make it specific.

## **13.7 Sixth seal: cosmic and terrestrial disturbances (6:12–17)**

**6:12. I looked when He opened the sixth seal, and behold, there was a great earthquake; and the sun became black as sackcloth of hair, and the moon became like blood.**

1. **Note:** Two relevant questions: (1) whether these events are to be understood literally or symbolically, and (2) the timing of these events in the seven year tribulation period.

2. **Question 1.** Some argue that OT uses figurative language (*Is 2:12-19*) and rolling up of the sky and the shaking of the stars picture the punishment of the fallen angels and enemies of Jesus (*Is 34:2-4*) and Jesus applied *Hos 10:8*) to the Jerusalem destruction and not the cosmic catastrophes (*Luk 23:28-31*). However, these should be taken literally due to the following reasons:

- (a) Rev 6:15-17 is literal, and hence 6:12-14 should be literal;
- (b) Similar distinctions are made in (*Hag 2:21-22*. The seal would hardly contain two descriptions of the same thing;
- (c) Jesus took the words literally as evident from Mt 24:7; Mk 13:8; (*Lk 21:11*.
- (d) The response of the people demands awesome things are happened and a literal understating only make sense here. Hence, these things needs to be understood literally.

However, two precautions:

- (a) combining symbolic and literal is inconsistent and hence to be avoided,
- (b) resist hyper-literalness, that is the language is semi-poetic or hyperbole. Falling of the stars, rolling of heaven are apparent. Moving of mountains and island from their places (6:14) were universal and complete, there would be no hiding places left for men to seek (6:15-16).

At the same time, these events are severe, unparalleled and shattering enough to points to the end. Human life continues after these disruptions.

3. **Question 2.** Time of its fulfillment.

- (a) It is unlikely that it is just before the coming of the Lord since people have time to hide which not possible just before His coming. Further, seventh seal has not opened, great persecution and devastation is coming later only (*Mt 24:29*, (*Rev 16:18*). Hence, these events should be around the middle of the tribulation period.
  - (b) Comparing Mat 24:7 and 24:15, these earthquakes are in the first half of tribulation.
4. **A great earth-quake (*seismos megas*):** These are the forerunner of the great earth quake that is going to come at the end (*Is 2:19; 29:6; Hag 2:6, 7; (Zech 14:4,5.) Trauma of earthquake is severe*
5. **Sun became black:** Literal darkness of the sun is common (*Is 13:10; 50:3; Ezk 32:7-8; Joel 2:10, 31; Amos 8:9; Mt 24:29, Mk 13:24-25; Luke 21:25*)
6. **Moon became like blood** is a kind of total eclipse (*Joel 2:31; Act 2:20*).

**6:13. And the stars of heaven fell to the earth, as a fig tree drops its late figs when it is shaken by a mighty wind.**

1. **Stars (*asteres*)** has a broad meaning covering large heavenly bodies such as sun to small meteoroids. Here, it is unparalleled outbreak of meteors and comets. This will be a fearful sign causing terror in the hearts of the people. These astral movement is so violent that it is likened to a fig tree that loses its unripe figs in a severe wind storm. The sight will be awe-inspiring because these heavenly bodies will appear to be dropping like figs from a tree.

**6:14. Then the sky receded as a scroll when it is rolled up, and every mountain and island was moved out of its place.**

1. **Sky receded:** Fourth disturbance affects the whole expanse of heaven as man sees it. However, this is not the ultimate passage of heavens which comes later. (Rev 20:11; Rev 21:1; Ps 102:25-26; Mat 24:35; Mark 13:31; Heb 1:10-12; 2 Pet 3:10; *Rev 20:11 Heb 1:10-12*). This sign will give an impression that the universe is coming to an end.
2. **Mountain and island moved:** Attention now turns to the earth. There is not OT parallel to this. Since Jesus used moving mountain in a figurative way to challenge disciple's faith (Mat 21:21; Mk 11:23; 1 Cor 13:2), this need not be figurative. The non-literal part is clearly indicated using the words *as* or *like*. Every mountain and shifting up of the earth's crust etc. are hyperbolic; meaning it was not a complete removal since human life was possible even after that. Further, complete abolition is going to happen later at the seventh bowl judgment of *Rev 16:20*.

**6:15. And the kings of the earth, the great men, the rich men, the commanders, the mighty men, every slave and every free man, hid themselves in the caves and in the rocks of the mountains,**

1. The impact of all these on humans is devastating and all class of human are affected. Here, a seven fold classification is given.
2. **Kings** are highest rulers or heads of state like the ministers.
3. **Great men** or chief ones are high officials like the bureaucrats.
4. **Commanders** are officers in charge of thousand soldiers in Roman army and refers to the top military leaders.
5. **Mighty** are those who exercised great influence over significant number of people whether through force or personality or any other means (Like SriSriRavishankar or Tendulkar etc.).
6. **Rich** are the ones who control the trade and economy.

7. **Slave** are the working class of the society.
8. **Free** are the common people who have no special influence on the society.
9. **Hid themselves**: All divisions of the people responded in the same way. Frightened by the impression of the end of the natural world, the only alternative available to the natural man was to hide. Look how irrational was the working of the natural mind: taking refuge on the same mountains that are shaky.

**6:16. and said to the mountains and rocks, "Fall on us and hide us from the face of Him who sits on the throne and from the wrath of the Lamb!"**

1. **Fall on us**: The desperate thinking of the humanity was to think it better to perish here than to remain and face the one sitting upon the throne and wrath of the Lamb. Similar cries are recorded earlier in the Scripture (Is 2:10,19,21; Hos 10:8; Lk 23:30). Although these are national calamity of Israel, they are to some degree prophetic of the sixth seal. *Note* that what sinner dread most is not death, but to stand before a holy and righteous God (*Hos 10:8*).
2. **Wrath of the Lamb**: Lamb is normally harmless and quiet, and that is true with Jesus in His incarnation. However, we see Him different at the temple cleansing (Mk 3:5). But we see the this Lamb different in this book (Rev 5:6). He is compared to Lion in Rev 5:5. Paradoxically the contrasting characters merge in one person. This is the wrath of sacrificial love whose only option after rejection is to punish evil with utmost severity. Interestingly people will realize the catastrophes are from the Lamb.

**6:17. For the great day of His wrath has come, and who is able to stand?"**

1. **Great day** is a title borrowed from OT (*Joel 2:11, 31; Zeph 1:14; Mal 4:5; Mat 7:22; 1 Thes 5:2; 2 Pet 3:10*).
2. **His wrath**: mankind now only correctly concluded that all these catastrophe's of this and earlier seals are the wrath of God and the Lord Jesus. Note that this word is used in a *broad* sense covering the entire end time plan commencing from the rapture, the seven year period, the second coming of the Lord and establishment of the millennium (Isa 30:23-25; Isa 35:1-10; Joel 3:18; Zech 14:6-11). The climax of this day is the battle of Armageddon and the bodily return of Jesus to the earth (*Joel 3:18*).
3. **His wrath**: Who can survive on this earth if this is the situation. Answer is no one. The despair of the mankind is complete. (*Nah 1:6*).

## Applications

- (a) Effect of Prayer
- (b) Transience of Cosmic bodies
- (c) Wrath of the Lamb



# Chapter 14

## Slaves of God (7:1–17)

The statement that no one will survive the wrath of God implied by the terrified humanity is corrected by two new visions recorded after the sixth seal. The first related to the angelic action of restrain and sealing.

### 14.1 Those on Earth: The 1,44,000 (7:1-8)

The visions of ch 7 separating 6th and 7th seal contrasts the preparedness of God's people and the unpreparedness of the humanity. Even though the condition of the world is fast deteriorating, God is faithful in taking care of the need of His servants. Further, the status of the believers at this point is radically different from that of the rebelling humanity.

**7:1.** After these things I saw four angels standing at the four corners of the earth, holding the four winds of the earth, that the wind should not blow on the earth, on the sea, or on any tree.

1. **After these things:** Natural meaning of this places these events after the sixth seal. It answers the question of 6:17 by showing the survival of the faithful and even their spiritual prosperity even during the troubled times. The sealing is to protect the believers from the trumpet judgment. Hence, it is reasonable to place this just before the middle of the seventieth week.
2. **Four angels:** are similar to the angel of fire (*Rev 14:8*) and the angel of water (*Rev 16:5*). and have charge of the forces of nature with specific responsibility assigned to them.
3. **Four corners:** designate four directions (*Is 11:12; Rev 20:8; Jer 49:36; Mat 24:31*). Language is figurative to indicate the worldwide nature of the angel's responsibility. The word *four* is used three time again points the universal scope.

4. **Holding the four winds** shows that the angels are restraining the wind from blowing and causing destruction (*Jer 49:36-38; Dan 7:2; Hos 13:15*).

These winds are symbolic of the destruction that is going to happen, but is restrained seemingly till the first two trumpet (*Rev 8:6-9*).

The sealing protects the servants from the effect of the trumpets just like OT servants (*Rev 9:4; Ezk 9:4-5*).

5. **Wind should not blow** indicate destruction is about to begin, only sealing is remaining before its commencement.

**7:2. Then I saw another angel ascending from the east, having the seal of the living God. And he cried with a loud voice to the four angels to whom it was granted to harm the earth and the sea,**

1. **Another:** indicates this is an angel just the earlier four and not Christ or Holy Spirit or arc angel etc. Further, the use of we in the next verse confirms this conclusion.
2. **Ascending from** indicates the angel was in action and now coming to deliver this message. He is coming from the east of Patmos and going in the direction of Palestine.
3. **East (rising of the sun)** is significant in Bible: Paradise was in the east (*Gen 2:8*). the glory of God comes to the temple from the east (*Ezk 43:2*).

Magi came from the east (*Mat 2:1*).

Jesus is called *day-spring* which is associated with east (*Luk 1:78*).

judgment come from east (*Rev 16:12*). and Jesus is called *morning star* which is associated with east (*Rev 22:16*).

The most significant to the Israel is that the Messiah will come from the East towards Palestine and is cause of joy and encouragement.

4. **Seal sphragis** was usually a signet ring used by kings to give validity to official documents or to mark the property *Gen 41:42; Est 3:10; Est 8:2; Dan 6:17*).

To believers, it is a rich word indicating ownership (*I Co 1:22*).

authentication

(*Jh 6:27*).

and protection (*Eph 1:14; Eph 4:30*).

5. **Of the living God** indicates that the seal contain the name of God and the Lamb (*Rev 14:1; Isa 44:5*).

This is unlike the **mark charagma**, which is the word to describe the label placed on the followers of the beast (*Rev 13:6,7*) used in pagan practices and has a negative connotation. The title *living God* also denotes the unending nature of God's existence

and makes the seal so unique. This is a significant allusion to OT where righteous is marked to protect them from the impending massacre in Jerusalem (Ezk 9:4).

6. **Cried with loud voice** pointing to the urgency of his mission which is to protect the righteous before the outbreak of destruction on the earth by the next seal.

**7:3. saying, “Do not harm the earth, the sea, or the trees till we have sealed the servants of our God on their foreheads.”**

1. **Saying:** The message of this angel explicitly fixed the sequence of the sealing and the release of the four winds.
2. **Do not hurt:** it tells the four angels to continue their restraint of judgmental action against the cosmos on which they have control.
3. **Until we have sealed:** These angels have to do the sealing and the other angels must wait. *Purpose of sealing:* Many explain sealing as baptism, protection from demons, protection from physical death, eternal destruction, etc. The context strongly suggests that the protection is from the judgment brought by the the four winds of the seventh seal which also includes the seven trumpets. This explanation is confirmed by the parallel situation of Ezk 9:4-7 where the faithful are sealed for protection from the destruction. Note that they are protected against the judgment from God which was directed against the enemies of God and not from the enemies of God.
4. **Servants (slaves) of our God:** *Identity of the servants:* although servants are used broadly in the NT, the context requires them to be a narrow group as evident from the list of twelve tribes.
5. **Foreheads:** the seal was a sign of consecration to God and forehead is the most conspicuous, the most noble, and the part by which a person is identified. It will be clear to whom these slaves belong and whom they serve.

**7:4. And I heard the number of those who were sealed. One hundred and forty-four thousand of all the tribes of the children of Israel were sealed:**

1. **And I heard:** The sealing has taken place. From an unidentified source John heard the number of those sealed.
2. **1,44,000:** Whether this number is (a) symbolic or (b) literal?
  - (a) **Symbolic:** Many understand this number as symbolic of the vastness and perfection of God's people. Reasons:  $1,44,000 = 12 \times 12 \times 1000$ . The number 12 is squared and multiplied by 1000 indicating perfection. Number 12 is special as there are 12 tribes and 12 apostles. The dimension of the city is 12,000 (Rev 21:16). The tree of life in Rev 22:2 has 12 fruits. There are 24 (double of 12) thrones and 24 elder in Rev 4:4. However, the motivation of those holding the symbolic view is to show that 144000 refers to the NT church.

- (b) **Literal:** The portion strongly support a literal understanding of this number. John uses the word *multitudes* for denoting vastness. Further, these numbers were added explicitly (12x12,000) indicating they are not symbolic. We read a similar record of a large number when God reserved 7,000 prophets in the days of Ahab (*1Ki 19:18; Ro 11:4*).
  - (c) **Who are they?** This is not the total number of believers during that time. Instead, they are a special group of Jews set aside for the purpose of witnessing to the rebellious world. They will be protected from the impending divine destruction. Nevertheless, they will face martyrdom apparently after their witness is over. (*Rev 14:1-5*).
  - (d) **Why they were sealed?** They were sealed (or marked) for
    - i. not for taking them safely through the great tribulation,
    - ii. not for martyrdom,
    - iii. not saving during this time,
    - iv. but, for giving special protection from the wrath of God while they witness, though afterwards they will be martyred.
  - (e) **Their time?** The period of their witness will be the last half of the seventieth week.
3. **Tribe:** every tribe of Israel will be represented in this group.
4. **Children of Israel:** Some think this refers to the spiritual Israel which is church. Some reasons why this is not church.
- (a) It is true that some NT passages shows that church is spiritual Israel (*Eph 2:12; Gal 6:16*).
  - (b) However, to identify 144000 as church has serious difficulties. The most important one is to divide the church into twelve. Whereas the following verses (5-8) clearly divide 144000 into 12 distinct groups. Hence, the term '**children of Israel**' literally refers to the physical descendants of Jacob. This alone will account for the detailed division of 5-8. This is also the earliest Christian tradition. Israel and church is clearly distinguished elsewhere in this book (*Rev 21:12*).
  - (c) Paul clearly distinguishes Israel and Church in Rom 9-11.
  - (d) OT records 20 times the list of the twelve tribe. Some omissions and additions are common. However, always the number is 12.
  - (e) They are also distinguished from the multitude of Rev 7:9 which come from all tribes and nations (*Rev 7:9*).
  - (f) It can be verified in Scripture through a literal understanding of the promise to ethnic Israel in the OT and NT that Israel has not and will not lose her distinctive national identity before God.

- (g) Now, what about the lost tribes of Israel. It is true that it may be lost from human point of view. God knows them and has the power to keep their identity hidden from the eyes of the world.
- (h) In conclusion, these are a sub-group of the faithful Israel entrusted with a responsibility to witness for Christ during the world's darkest hour.

**7:5. of the tribe of Judah twelve thousand were sealed; of the tribe of Reuben twelve thousand were sealed; of the tribe of Gad twelve thousand were sealed;**

**7:6. of the tribe of Asher twelve thousand were sealed; of the tribe of Naphtali twelve thousand were sealed; of the tribe of Manasseh twelve thousand were sealed;**

**7:7. of the tribe of Simeon twelve thousand were sealed; of the tribe of Levi twelve thousand were sealed; of the tribe of Issachar twelve thousand were sealed;**

**7:8. of the tribe of Zebulun twelve thousand were sealed; of the tribe of Joseph twelve thousand were sealed; of the tribe of Benjamin twelve thousand were sealed.**

1. **Tribe of:** The OT lists the twelve tribe 21 times: (1) Ge 29:32-35:18; (2) Gen 35:22-26; (3) Ge 46:8-25; (4) Ge 49:3-17; (5) Ex 1:2-5; (6) Nu 1:5-15; (7) Nu 2:3-31; (8) Nu 13:4-15; (9) Nu 26:4-51; (10) Nu 34:19-28; (11) De 27:12-13; (12) De 33:16-22; (13) Jos 13:7-22:34; (14) Jud 5:12-18; (15) 1Ch 2:1-8:40; (16) 1Ch 12:24-37; (17) 1Ch 27:16-22; (18) Ezk 48:1-7; (19) Ezk 23-28; (20) Ezk 31-34; and (21) Rev 7:5-8.
2. These lists differ each other. Various order is followed in their listing.
3. Few highlights of Revelation list: (i) it agrees with none of them, (ii) Levi is included, (iii) Judah heads the list. Messianic expectation is coming from Judah (*Gen 49:10; 1 Chr 5:2; Heb 7:14; Rev 5:5*). (iv) Dan is omitted and possible reason could be its participation and leadership in idolatry (Judg 1:34; 18:14-31; 1Ki 11:26; 12:28-30). (v) Absence of Ephraim, may not be an issue since Joseph is included, (vi) Manasseh is included in spite of Joseph's inclusion resulting in a kind of double counting. Manasseh was faithful son of Joseph and Joseph was given double portion (Gen 37:3; Josh 17:16-17). Explanations above may not be satisfactory, but what is certain is that these are the ones protected by the sealing.

### **Application:**

1. **Never be pessimistic:** God has the power to protect us even in the midst of extreme destruction on the earth.
2. **God preserves His people:** Just like God preserves the 12 tribe, He will also preserve us to eternity.

## Rev 7:1-8 addl. notes. :

1. **Two groups:** first, those described in verses 1-8 are the Jewish evangelists who will be preserved on earth. They will enter the millennial kingdom alive (?). The second group to escape divine fury (9-17) are those who will be martyred and thereby ushered into the blissful rest of heaven, where they will be preserved.
2. **Wrath Restrained:** Four corners of the earth holding back the four winds of the earth (Jer. 49:36; Matt. 24:31). Unsophisticated skeptics imagine that John's poetic reference to the four corners of the earth reflects a primitive notion that the earth is flat and square. But the phrase actually refers to the whole earth by designating the four primary points on the compass (north, south, east, and west), from which directions the four winds (i.e., all the winds) of the earth originate. No wind would blow on the earth or on the sea or on any tree is an incredible display of power.
3. **Saints Sealed:** God marked Israel with blood on their doorposts and lintels to spare them when He killed Egypt's firstborn. He marked Rahab with a scarlet cord to keep her and those with her from being killed. But the illustration that most nearly parallels the present passage comes from Ezekiel 9:36. They are referred to as bond-servants indicates they are already redeemed. This passage also teaches that the so-called ten lost tribes' were, in fact, never lost (cf. 21:12; Matt. 19:28; Luke 22:30; James 1:1).
4. **12 Tribes:** In the Old Testament lists, sometimes the order of birth is followed (Gen. 29:32-35:18?). At other times, it is the order of Jacob's blessing them (Gen. 49:3-27?), the order of encampment (?Num. 2:3-31?), the order of the census before the invasion of Canaan (?Num. 26:4-51?), the order of blessing and cursing (?Deut. 27:12-13?), the order of Moses' blessing (?Deut. 33:6-25?), the order of the princes? (?Num. 1:5-15), the order of inheritance (Josh. 13:7-22:34), the order by the wives and concubines (1 Chron. 2:1-8:40), and the order of the gates of the city (Ezek. 48:31-34). Though Israel failed in its mission to be a witness nation in the Old Testament, that will not be the case in the future. From the Jewish people will come the greatest missionary force the world has ever known. The result of their effort will be a redeemed Israel, as promised by God, and innumerable redeemed Gentiles.

**Rev 7:1-. After these things I saw four angels standing at the four corners of the earth, holding the four winds of the earth, that the wind should not blow on the earth, on the sea, or on any tree. 2 Then I saw another angel ascending from the east, having the seal of the living God. And he cried with a loud voice to the four angels to whom it was granted to harm the earth and the sea, 3 saying, "Do not harm the earth, the sea, or the trees till we have sealed the servants of our God on their foreheads." 4 And I heard the number of those who were sealed. One hundred and forty-four thousand of all the tribes of the children of Israel were sealed: 5 of the tribe of Judah twelve thousand were sealed; of the tribe of Reuben twelve**

thousand were sealed; of the tribe of Gad twelve thousand were sealed; 6 of the tribe of Asher twelve thousand were sealed; of the tribe of Naphtali twelve thousand were sealed; of the tribe of Manasseh twelve thousand were sealed; 7 of the tribe of Simeon twelve thousand were sealed; of the tribe of Levi twelve thousand were sealed; of the tribe of Issachar twelve thousand were sealed; 9 of the tribe of Zebulun twelve thousand were sealed; of the tribe of Joseph twelve thousand were sealed; of the tribe of Benjamin twelve thousand were sealed.

## 14.2 Those in Heaven: The Innumerable Multitude (7:9-17)

**7:9.** After these things I looked, and behold, a great multitude which no one could number, of all nations, tribes, peoples, and tongues, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes, with palm branches in their hands,

1. **After these things:** The scene contrast the panic of earth's inhabitants and the worship of a group in heaven. This vision shows that the 144000 are not the only group maintained witness on the earth. Three distinctions are to be noted between the former and current vision: (i) there the number was definite but here it is indefinite, (ii) there the group was from Israel but here they are from every nation, and (iii) there the group was prepared to face the imminent peril, but here they are victorious and secure. These multitudes come from the days during the great tribulation.
2. **A great multitude:** can be identified as the Gentile and Jewish believer who have died either natural or violent deaths during the period of the first six seals and come out from the Great Tribulation, as evidenced by placing of this vision after the six seals and before the seventh. The vision happens during the seven year period, just before the middle of the seven year period.
3. **Of all nations, tribes, peoples, and tongues** is a four fold division of humanity which indicates the universal source of these people. However, this does not mean that everyone on the earth will be saved, as we see in Rev 11:9-10 others from these group rejoice over the death of the two witnesses.
4. **Standing before the throne and before the Lamb:** is an indication of the worthiness and victory of these people.
5. **Clothed with white robes:** is an indication of the rejoicing coming out of the victory and the righteousness obtained through the death of Christ.

6. **Palm branches in their hands:** further confirm the victory symbolism of the robes. The palm branches were associated with joy and triumph (*Jh 12:13*).

Palm branches were also used in the construction of tents during the festival of the tabernacle (*Lev 23:40*).

This multitude is exuberant in celebration of its victory.

**7:10. and crying out with a loud voice, saying, "Salvation belongs to our God who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb!"**

1. **Cry out:** They kept on crying in loud voice is strong expression reflecting the depth of gratitude of the crowd and a determination to give credit to God and the Lamb.
2. **Salvation:** The word denotes deliverance from sin in a generic sense, and here the connotation is with respect to the victory in the midst of persecution similar to the victory over the dragon in Rev 12:10; and the victory over Babylon and the persecutor of the saints as in Rev 19:1. Remember the background of this cry has strong connection with the Feast of the Tabernacles evident from the Palm tree and verse 7:15. Jewish tradition says during the feast of the tabernacle they use to sing hosanna as a victory song (*Deut 16:13-15; Neh 8:15; 2 Macc. 10:6-7*).

This annual time of joyfulness among the Jews gives glimpse of the excitement of this multitude in heaven.

3. **Our God ... Lamb:** Victory is ascribed to God now is a possession of this multitude.

**7:11. All the angels stood around the throne and the elders and the four living creatures, and fell on their faces before the throne and worshiped God,**

1. **Angels:** Although angels do not experience victory and salvation in the same sense as humans, they still rejoice over a repentant sinner (*Lk 15:10*) and have an intense desire to know more about the salvation that is available to men (*1Pe 1:12*).
2. **Worshipped God prosekynesan to theo** It is a regular practice of angelic orders (*Rev 4:10; 5:14; 11:16; 19:4*) and appropriate of men also (*Rev 19:10; 22:9*).

**7:12. saying: "Amen! Blessing and glory and wisdom, Thanksgiving and honor and power and might, Be to our God forever and ever. Amen."**

1. **Saying Amen ... Amen:** Two Amen in this verse. First Amen is to the words of worship of the multitude given in the previous verses. Second Amen is to their own words of worship given in this verse.
2. **Blessing Eulogia:** It is what is due to God. Considering God as a blessed being.



3. **Glory Doxa**: It is the honor derived from good reputation.
4. **Wisdom Sophia**: Divine knowledge of God exhibited in the plan of salvation.
5. **Thanksgiving Eucharistia**: Gratitude to God for the accomplishment at the end of tribulation.
6. **Honor Time**: recognition of God's provision of salvation.
7. **Power Dynamis**: Show the omnipotence of God, i.e His ability to act effectively against all opposition. God has delivered them from all the evil forces on the earth.
8. **Strength Ischys**: refers to a quality one possesses, whether he exerts it or not.
9. **Our God**: Like the redeemed (7:10), the angels also claim that God belongs to them. It is for ever and ever.

**7:13. Then one of the elders answered, saying to me, "Who are these arrayed in white robes, and where did they come from?"**

1. **One of the elders answered**: A dialog between one of the 24 elders and John begins. Note that these visions were not given to amaze us, but to reveal some truths. The dialogue was initiated by the elder in the form of a question. The purpose is to identify who are these multitudes. Such dialogues and interventions are common in Scriptures (Jer 1:11-13; Amos 7:8; 8:2; Zech 4:2-5, Josh 9:8, Jonah 1:8).
2. **In white robes**: The elder is interested in revealing who they are. The white robe is the vivid distinguishing feature of this group.
3. **Where did they come from?** The second aspect that is of interest is their origin. Their count is not of interest here. The grammar suggests that this group may include those keep coming during the great tribulation.

**7:14. And I said to him, "Sir, you know." So he said to me, "These are the ones who come out of the great tribulation, and washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.**

1. **Sir, you know**: Sir means 'My Lord' **kyrie mou**. Note that this address is another reason why these elders are not human being, but they are angelic beings. John was surprised by the question and replied with respect to the angel. This address shows deep reverence and respect John shows to heavenly beings. Such address happened earlier also (Dan 10:16-17; Zech 1:9; 4:5, 13; Gen 19:2; Rev 19:10; 22:8-9).
2. **You know**: These words are both a confession of ignorance and an indirect request for information. The grammar suggest the nuance that the elder/angel already knows the answer. John could not recognize the multitudes probably because they were from the tribulation period. Note also that this is yet another reason why the multitudes does not belong to the NT church.

3. **Coming out from:** The identifying mark of the innumerable multitude is that they are coming out from the great tribulation. The grammar suggests they keep coming. Nevertheless, the interesting fact is that the saints enjoy the heaven immediately after their death although the resurrection of their bodies awaits the personal return of Christ (Rev 20:4).
4. **The Great Tribulation:** This is not: (i) simply general persecution during the time of John, (ii) Jerusalem destruction, (iii) persecutions throughout the church age. The article **the** distinguishes it from the rest. This must be the future world wide great day of wrath of God and of the Lamb  
(Rev 2:22; Rev 3:10, Rev 6:17; 1 The 5:3; 2 The 1:6-10; Mt 24:15,21,22; Dan 9:27).  
It will be period that will exceed all past and future sorrows endured by the earth whose length will be 1260 days.  $1260 = 1260/30 = 42 \text{ months} = 42/12 = 3.5 \text{ years} = 7/2 \text{ years}$ . (Rev 11:3; Rev 13:5).
5. **Washed . . . white:** Gen 49:11;  
Ex 19:10 give background of it where washing denotes cleansing (Isa 64:6; Zech 3:3; Ps 51:7). Note that washing in blood to make something white is paradoxical today, but the Jewish thinking was different.
6. **Blood of the Lamb:** Not just any blood even if they are the martyrs will not cleanse but only that of Jesus (Rev 1:5; 5:9; Rom 3:25; 5:9; Eph 1:7; Col 1:20; Heb 9:14; 1Pet 1:2, 19; 1Joh 1:7).
7. **Made white:** The Greek construction points to this cleansing in the past for their faith in the work of Christ.

**7:15. Therefore they are before the throne of God, and serve Him day and night in His temple. And He who sits on the throne will dwell among them.**

1. **Therefore:** They are before the throne of God due to the cleansing work by the Lamb.
2. **Serve Him:** Standing before the throne means to serve Him continually. The service is primarily acts of worship.
3. **Day and night** is an idiomatic way of saying continuously since the distinction does not exists in heaven (Rev 22:5).
4. **In His temple:** Although there is no temple in heaven (Rev 21:22), there will be temple on the earth during the millennium (Isa 56:7;  
Ezk 40-44). However, this is a picture of the whole heaven as a sanctuary in which God's people are priests. The temple is heaven itself and the view is that of saints after their death, but awaiting the final eternal state of glory that will take place in Rev 21:22.

5. **And:** Three provision of the saints are listed below.
6. **Dwell** (*tabernacle*). First provision- The presence of God to protect the people from all harm (Ex 13:21-22; 40:34-38; 1Ki 8:13; Lev 26:11-12; Jh 1:14; Rev 12:12; 13:6; 21:3). It is a fulfillment of the OT promise that God will dwell in the midst of His people (Lev 26:11-12; Ezek 37:37; Zech 2:10, 11; 8:3, 8).

**7:16. They shall neither hunger anymore nor thirst anymore; the sun shall not strike them, nor any heat;**

1. **Hunger ... thirst:** Second provision; More than the physical satisfaction, spiritual is viewed here (Isa 49:10; Jh 4:14; 6:35; 7:37). Saved people will thirst for God, but will be satisfied always.
2. **Sun ... heat:** Third provision; God's protection from the heat (Isa 49:10) contrasting those on the earth (16:9).

**7:17. for the Lamb who is in the midst of the throne will shepherd them and lead them to living fountains of waters. And God will wipe away every tear from their eyes."**

1. **For:** The reason why multitude is able to have all the provision and protection is given in this verse. Both the Lamb and God is involved in fulfilling this promise. The presence of the Lamb contrasts the state on the earth and the heaven.
2. **Shepherd:** Jesus as the shepherd is a common concept. If so, the Lamb is characterized by patient submission to the shepherd who will patiently care for His sheep. (Jh 10:11, 14; Heb 13:20, 1Pet 2:25; 5:2-4)
3. **Lead:** Like a blind man is lead, He will lead His people.
4. **Tears:** From every sorrow. The ultimate fulfillment of these seven promises (7:15-17) will come in the eternal state described in Rev 21-21.

# Chapter 15

## Seventh Seal and the First Six Trumpets (8:1-9:21)

### 15.1 The Seventh Seal: The Seven Trumpets Awaited (8:1)

**8:1.** And when he opened the seventh seal, there came a silence in heaven for about half hour.

1. **And when he opened:** It is a continuation of the seal series from 6:12.
2. **Seventh seal:** It resulted in an unexpected event which is silence in heaven. The silence is a preparatory action for the judgment about to happen. Similar occurrences in the OT in connection with reverence for God and awesome expectation of judgment further proves this point (*Hab 2:20 Zeph 1:7 Zech 2:13*).
3. **Silence:** What is the content of the seventh seal? Some see seven seals and seven trumpets as parallel but distinct events. The other possibility is **telescopic** view where the seventh seal composed of seven trumpets, which chronologically follow the six seals. The former is based on the similarity between 6:12-17 and Mat 24:29 and this case is weak. Reasons for the correctness of the telescopic view:
  - (a) there is no specific content for the seventh seal,
  - (b) seven angels appear in 8:2 and 8:6 indicates they are sequential actions,
  - (c) severity of the judgments increases as the seals and trumpets open.

All these indicate they are chronologically progressing events.

4. **Half hour:** Although heaven is not limited by time, but for the sake of John, God limited the period of silence to a human understandable form.

## 15.2 Setting of the Trumpets: The Prayers of the Saints (8:2–6)

**8:2. And I saw the seven angels who stand before God, and seven trumpets were given to them.**

1. **And I saw:** After the half an hour of silence, John saw the preparations for the seven trumpets (8:2-6) and then the sounding of the first four trumpets (8:7-12).
2. **Stand:** The Greek indicates they were standing for some time. The position before God indicated their readiness to serve which is initiating the trumpet calls. Although unlikely, some think one of this angle is Gabriel based on *Lk 1:19*.
3. **Trumpets** were used in ceremonial possession, assembling people for war and warning of the coming of the day of the Lord and in announcing new year. Here, they are precursors of divine judgment in the Day of the Lord (*Josh 6:4; 1Chr 15:24; Num 10:9-10; Joel 2:1; Num 29:1; Zeph 1:14-16*).

**8:3. And another angel having a golden censer came and stood at the altar, and much incense was given to him that he might dispense it on behalf of the prayers of all the saints on the golden altar which is before the throne.**

1. **Another angel:** This does not mean that the angel is mediating the prayer which only Christ can do. The angels only enforces or facilitates the prayer. This being is not Christ, but only an angel as evident from the word **another** which denotes of the same kind.
2. **Alter:** Are there two alters, one for burnt offering and the other for incense, as some think according to this verse? No, it is only the alter of incense because: (a) Rev 9:13; 14:18; 16:7 exclude the possibility of alter of burnt offering, (b) Only alter of incense was made of gold and (c) the alter of incense must have been the source ? (*Ex 30:1; Isa 6:6; Ezk 10:2*).
3. **Golden censer:** or fire pan which carry the frankincense (*1Chr 9:29*).
4. **Was given:** The next step was for the angel to receive from God much incense to offer on the altar for the prayers of the saints. God is the source is clear from other portions like Rev 6:2f; 7:2; 9:1f; 16:8; 19:8; 20:4.
5. **Incense** has a prominent place in OT and reminds that intercessory prayer is like sweet perfume before the Lord. Here the prayer is like hot coal on which the incense falls which produces much aroma. (*Ex 30:34-38*).
6. **On behalf of:** It does not indicate any mediator role but it enforces the prayer (like a loud speaker). The prayers are the cries of the saints during the tribulation for justice (8:4-5; 6:9-10; 9:13; 14:18).

#### 8:4. And the smoke of the incense ascended before God with the prayers of the saints from the hand of the angel.

1. **Smoke** is that resulting from the burning of the incense and it followed an upward route to arrive in the presence of God. Prayers unanswered until now is going to get an immediate reply. Note that the prayer of the saints is distinct from the contribution of the angels, however they are acceptable before God.

#### 8:5. And the angel took the incense, and filled it from the fire of the altar and cast [it] to the earth; and [peals of] thunder and voices and [flashes of] lightning and an earthquake occurred.

1. **Incense, and filled it from the fire of the altar and cast to the earth** is an indication of the beginning of the judgment. There is a strong connection between the prayers of the saints and divine wrath about to fall on the earth (*Ezek 10:2-7*).
2. **Fire of the altar and cast to the earth:** Fire is symbol of torment of the wicked. Remember the question **How long** in 6:10. Casting the fire is an indication of the beginning of the punishment. The interaction between the sovereignty of God and the prayers of His people is a mystery. Saints pray, but God decided timing and execution details.
3. **Thunder, voices, lightning, and earthquake** contrast the silence (8:1) with physical disturbances accompany the manifestation of God's wrath on the earth. (*Ex 19:16-19; Rev 11:19; Rev 16:18*).

#### 8:6. And the seven angels who had the seven trumpets prepared themselves that they might sound

1. **The seven angels** are the ones blowing the trumpets and they reappear here.
2. **Prepared themselves** may be arranging themselves in some order and ready for the action. Like the seven seals, the first four trumpets differ from the last three. The first four trumpets uses the forces of nature to achieve the destruction. The last three consists of demonic attacks on humanity. Some trumpets parallels plagues in Egypt: (i) First trumpet parallels seventh plague (ii) second trumpet resembles ninth plague (iii) fourth trumpet is similar to ninth plague and (iv) fifth trumpet parallels eighth plague. These judgment are against the enemies of God and steps will be taken to deliver saints. (*Ex 9:24; Ex 9:19; Ex 10:21; Ex 10:12*).

## 15.3 First Trumpet: Burning of a Third of Vegetation (8:7)

**Introductory notes on the 7 trumpets:** The Seven Trumpets are divine judgments described in the Book of Revelation, chapters 8 to 11.

**Hail and Fire Mixed with Blood** (8:7) Hail and fire, mixed with blood, are thrown to the earth. A third of the earth, trees, and all green grass are burned up.

**Burning Mountain Thrown into the Sea** (8:8-9) Something like a great burning mountain is cast into the sea. A third of the sea becomes blood, a third of sea creatures die, and a third of ships are destroyed.

**Wormwood – Bitter Waters** (8:10-11) A great star called Wormwood falls from heaven, poisoning a third of the rivers and springs, making the waters bitter. Many people die from drinking the bitter water.

**Darkening of Sun, Moon, and Stars** (8:12) A third of the sun, moon, and stars are darkened. There is less light during the day and night.

**First Woe – Locusts from the Abyss** (9:1-11) A fallen star opens the abyss, releasing smoke and locusts with the power to torment people without God's seal for five months. Their leader is called Abaddon (Hebrew) or Apollyon (Greek).

**Second Woe – Four Angels and the Euphrates** (9:13-21) Four angels bound at the Euphrates River are released to kill a third of mankind. They lead an army of 200 million mounted troops who bring destruction by fire, smoke, and sulfur.

**Third Woe – The Kingdom Proclaimed** (11:15-19) Loud voices proclaim, "The kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of our Lord and of His Christ." The temple of God in heaven is opened, and the ark of His covenant is seen. There are flashes of lightning, rumblings, thunder, an earthquake, and heavy hail.

1. **Purpose of the 7 trumpets:** The text describes different kinds of **trumpets**, which are divine punishments. The first four trumpets hurt the physical realm (grass, trees, sea, rivers, sun, moon, and stars) and only indirectly affect people. But the fifth, sixth, and seventh trumpets are in the spiritual realm and directly target humans. These are called first, second, and third woes. The trumpet punishments are meant to make people who don't believe in God change their ways, though this rarely happens. They are more serious than earlier **seal** judgments, but even worse **bowl** judgments are still coming. These trumpet judgments are not for God's followers; they are for those who are against God. These trumpet judgments now beginning were those held back in 7:3 until the servants of God were sealed. (Rev 7:3).

2. **Literal vs. Symbolic interpretation of Revelation?**

- (a) The Book of Revelation can be understood as symbolic **not** expecting everything to be realistic. For instance, a burning star falling into rivers seem illogical. Those who believe it is symbolic think these strange details are just part of how symbolic writings work.

- (b) Revelation says it's a prophecy, not just a symbolic story. Prophecies don't always need symbolic meanings. Old Testament prophets believed that the amazing events in Egypt from Moses' time would happen again. Deliverance from Egypt is pattern of His deliverance in future. (*Is 11:16; Jer 23:7; Ezek 38:22; Mic 7:15*). (*Amos 4:10; Amos 8:8*).
- (c) How we understand prophecies should be the same as how we understand historical narratives. If we think differently, we're judging the text instead of understanding its message.
- (d) The idea that apocalyptic writings can't be logical because they're artistic is wrong. This thought often comes from comparing Revelation to other non-biblical writings, but Revelation is different because it's from God. It's more of a prophecy than a typical apocalyptic book, meaning it should be understood differently.
- (e) It is possible that a prophetic writing can be scientifically and logically consistent at the same time artistically effective in its imagery. No one will oppose this because rationality and artistry are not mutually exclusive.
- (f) On the other hand, symbolic interpretation leads to hopeless contradictions, especially when trying to harmonize the whole text. For example, some try to argue the grass and tress of Rev 8:7 are symbolic of different people. But, then it contradicts Rev 9:4 where both are distinct (*Rev 8:7; Rev 9:4*).

Hence, a Literal interpretation is preferred in understanding the book of Revelation. Hence, several of the trumpets resembles the plagues of the Egypt, here also a literal understanding is preferred.

**8:7. And the first sounded; and hail and fire mixed with blood came, and were cast into the earth; and the third part of the earth was burned up, and the third part of the trees were burned up, and all green grass was burned up.**

1. **The first:** The trumpet series started and the first effect is the arrival of **hail** and **fire** mixed with **blood**. This event looks like what might happen during a volcanic eruption, which John, the writer, may have seen. However, it is very similar to the seventh plague in the Book of Exodus, where hail and fire fell, but with the added element of blood. This mix of fire and blood also reminds us of Joel's **Day of the Lord**. (*Ex 9:24; (Ex 9:26; Joel 2:30;*
2. **Were cast into the earth:** God is the agent of this unparalleled destruction on the earth. While similar natural disasters have happened throughout history, none have been this terrible. How truly awful this event will be depends on whether these descriptions are meant to be understood literally or as symbols. Three effects of the trumpet:
  - (a) **Earth:** vegetation were burned up like the Egyptian plague (*Ex 9:25*).



- (b) **Trees:** A third of the trees were burned. Fruit trees are important for humans.
- (c) **All grass:** If all grass were burned, then it contradicts *Rev 9:4*; The contradiction can be resolved by considering (a) only the grass in one third area, (b) possibility of grass growing later, or (c) grass is green is a seasonal phenomena, and hence, the all the grass at that point burnt up. Hence, all can be literal all.

## 15.4 Second Trumpet: Destruction of a Third of Sea Life (8:8–9)

**8:8.** And the second angel sounded; and [something] like a great mountain burning with fire was cast into the sea; and the third part of the sea became blood,

1. **Like a great mountain:** Some think the mountain is symbolic of Babylon, Rome, Zion, or some other country on the earth. However, the word **like** gives a clue that it is not an actual mountain, but a large burning mass. This is similar to the falling stars of *Rev 6:13*. This is an example of literal approach with provision for figurative language. That is, the term **great mountain burning with fire** is symbolic, while the **sea** is literal. The identity of the sea is not known.
2. **Became blood:** Possible that sea actually turned to blood as in Egypt. It is difficult to believe this to a modern person. Man is in no position to question the extent and manner of what God devises and implements. (*Ex 7:20; Ps 78:43-44*).

**8:9.** and the third part of the creatures which were in the sea, which had life, died, and the third part of the ships were destroyed.

1. **The third part:** The extent of this trumpet judgment is that it affected one third of the sea and one third of the sea creatures died and one third of the ships were damaged. One can only imagine the environmental impact of this.
2. **Creatures** are primarily fishes in the sea and they died because of the blood, similar to what happened in Egypt. Creature implies a Creator and creation, and He has the right to take their life. *Ex 7:21*
3. **Ships** destruction implies it affected the crew as well.

## 15.5 Third Trumpet: Poisoning of a Third of the Fresh Water (8:10–11)

**8:10.** And the third angel sounded; and a great star burning as torch fell from heaven, and fell upon the third part of the rivers and upon the fountains of waters.

1. **Great star**: Some symbolically interpret this as a false teacher, a harmful influence, or even an angel. Literal understanding identify it as a meteor.
2. **Torch lampas** was used in those days to denote falling meteors.
3. **Rivers . . . fountains of waters**: When this star falls, it pollutes one-third of the rivers and all the springs. This event is similar to the first plague in Egypt, where the drinking water was contaminated. This type of pollution was a common sign of God's punishment for all people's general ungodliness.

**8:11. And the name of the star us called Wormwood. And the third of the water became wormwood, and many among men died from the waters, because they were made bitter.**

1. **Wormwood**: The word not found anywhere else in the NT. It is plant with bitter taste. It was a symbol of divine punishment in OT. It is poisonous and may lead to death. (*Jer 9:15; Jer 23:15; Lam 3:15, 19*).
2. **Many** but not all, who drank the water died. Everyone who drank it suffered, but not all suffered death. Note that the purpose of these first four judgments is to punish, not necessarily to kill.

## 15.6 Fourth Trumpet: Darkening of a Third of the Heavenly Bodies (8:12–13)

**8:12. And the fourth angel sounded; and the third part of the sun and the third part of the moon and the third part of the stars were stricken, so that the third part of them was darkened and the day did not brighten for a third part of it, and the night was likewise.**

1. **Stricken eplege**: Sun, moon, and stars receive the impact of the punishment. The word is related to plague and occurs in Ex 9:31-32 (LXX). We do not know the mechanism of how God did this or what instrument he used.
2. **Darkened** is a symbol of judgment throughout OT. The ninth plague is a symbol of judgment throughout OT. The Day of the Lord is associated with darkness. Some interpret this as removal of truth or the spiritual darkness associated with Mohammedanism or the collapse of long-standing governments in the western empire. However, a literal interpretation leads this to an actual reduction of light as warning for more severe judgments to come. (*Ex 10:21; Amos 5:18; Isa 13:10; Joel 2:2; Mark 13:24*).
3. **Day did not brighten for a third part**: How the sun, moon, and stars becoming partially darker can shorten the amount of daylight and nighttime light is a bit of a mystery. However, just because we don't understand how it happens doesn't mean

the author is being inconsistent. A partial dimming of light result in shorter periods of light. The impact will clearly be huge. Many parts of life, like farming, travel, health, and work, will suffer from this plague. On top of that, the darkness itself hints at even worse plagues to come, adding to the fear.

**8:13. And I looked, and I heard an eagle flying in mid-heaven saying with a loud voice, Woe woe woe to those who dwell on the earth because of the rest of the trumpet-sounds of the three angles who are about to sound**

1. **Eagle aetou:** is best supported by manuscripts than angel **aggelou**. Since eagles can't speak, some think this should be seen as symbolic. However, we see in Gen 3:1-5 and Num 22:28-30 serpent and donkey is speaking. Eagle is a strong and swift bird. Sometimes eagle is used with negative connotation. At on extreme, the eagle speaks of the salvation of God's new age. but at the other, it is bird of prey, associated with blood, death, and rotting flesh. (*Deut 28:49; Hos 8:1; Hab 1:8*). *Lk 17:37; (Deut 32:9-11; Ex 19:4). Job 39:27-30;*
2. **Mid-heaven:** The position of eagle is mid-heaven where all can see and hear him for the disasters he announces will affect earth-dwellers in every part of the world.
3. **Woe Woe Woe:** Eagle's announcement is brief, notwithstanding the severity of the earlier trumpets, greater judgment is going to happen. Woe indicates great calamity is going to come. Double woe indicates severity as in and in Rev 18:10; 16; 19. Triple woe refers to the three remaining trumpets (Rev 9:1, 12; 11:14) which are going to be more severe.
4. **Those who dwell on the earth:** The upcoming punishment is aimed at the same wicked people that the martyrs prayed for vengeance against. This means the current events are a further answer to those prayers (*Re 6:10; Ezk 16:23*).

## 15.7 Fifth Trumpet: Demonic Locust Plague (9:1–12)

The fifth trumpet, like the last three seals, is a distinct event that introduces the final three trumpets. The seventh trumpet mirrors the seventh seal, as it concludes the entire sequence and contains the next set of events which is seven bowls. The fifth trumpet is described in two parts: the effects of the locusts (1-6) and the features of the locusts themselves (7-12).

### 15.7.1 Impact of the locusts (9:1-6)

**9:1. And the fifth angel sounded and I saw a star, fallen from heaven into the earth, and the key of the pit of the abyss was given to him.**

**Star (astera):** This text explains that the star mentioned is different from the stars in the sixth seal (6:13) and third trumpet (8:10). The star is a living, intelligent being because it is given and uses **the key of the pit of the abyss**. The identity of this being has been the subject of much speculation. Many explain him as Satan, Antichrist, Mohamed, etc. Satan could be a possibility, but he will be introduced later. So this star must be an unfallen angel dispatched on a divine mission to advance the next stage of God's punishment against the rebellious earth-dwellers.

**Key:** No angel has the power to release these fallen angles unless given by God.

**Abyss (abysos phrear)** or bottomless pit: Two wrong views are prevalent: (i) abyss represents all evil in the world. This is only an imagination. (ii) the abyss is same as hell. But hell is better described by stronger words like **lake of fire**. Best possibility is that the abyss is a temporary prison for fallen angels, some of whom are to be released. The word also used in NT as some sort of deep well with a lid on the earth where demons dwell. This view is supported by several biblical passages such as: (*Lk 8:31; Ro 10:7; (Rev 9:11; Rev 11:7; Rev 17:8)*).

**9:2. And he opened the pit of the abyss, and smoke came up from the pit as smoke of a great furnace, and the sun and the air were darkened because of the smoke of the pit.**

**Smoke:** An angelic figure uses a key to open a pit, causing smoke to pour out like from a volcano. This smoke is a real, physical event, not a metaphor. The massive amount of smoke, which is a sign of divine judgment, is so thick that it blocks the sun and darkens the sky. This is different from a previous event where the sun's light was weakened, as here the smoke actively obstructs the light from reaching the earth. (*Gen 19:28; Ex 19:18;*

**9:3. Ans locusts came out of the smoke into the earth, and authority was given to them as scorpions of the earth have authority.**

**Locusts:** This trumpet parallels the eighth of the Egyptian plagues (Ex 10:12-20). Locusts are destructive (Deut 28:38; 2 Chr 7:13; Joel 2:25) and they are huge in number (Ps 105:34; Nah 3:15). The central OT passage is Joel 1-2 where locust visits before the Day of the Lord. But these locusts are not ordinary ones. They have a leader (9:11), thy have power to hurt men, they breed in the center of earth, do not eat grass (9:4), etc. Who are they: some say human armies, others say they are symbolic of God's judgment. Best explanation is that they are demons or fallen angels who assume a locust-like form. They attack people rather than green vegetation which shows their demonic nature. They have a shape which no human being have ever seen. Rev 16:13 also shows demons can take any form like frogs.

**Scorpion** belongs to the largest and most malignant of all insect tribes. It ranks with snake in its hostility toward man. The misery of humanity is unparalleled. (*Lk 10:19; Lk 11:12*).

**9:4. And it was said to them that they should not hurt the grass of the earth or any green [thing] or any tree, except [they should hurt] men, such ones as do not have the seal of God upon their foreheads.**

**They should not:** God must be telling this and He exercises His sovereign control. Demons can go only to the extent He permits.

**Hurt men:** Ironically the group of people who are in rebellion against God are the victims of the demons who themselves are in rebellion against God. This is a classic example of the utter confusion and the irrationality of the forces of evil which logically should have formed an alliance with their victims.

**Seal:** As seen in Rev 7:4-8, the 1,44,000 servants of God are exempted from the locusts.

**9:5. And it was given to them that they should not kill them, but that they should be tormented for five months and their torment [was] as the torment of a scorpion when it stings a man.**

**Should not kill:** Demons were given further limitation that they can torment but not kill and the time period is also fixed. Under the third trumpet death was possible, but not here.

**Torment** is acute physical or mental pain and is connected with the punishment of highest degree.

**Five months** is best understood literally and non-literal understanding had lead diverse interpretation leading to confusion.

**9:6. And in those days men will seek death and will in no way find it, and they will desire to die, and death will flee from them.**

**Seek death:** The torment is so severe that men would seek with an intense desire for death. It is unlike Paul's desire for death (Phil 1:23) where he want it for greater glory. Here, it is to escape from the misery.

**Will flee:** Death will be rare and aggressively run away from those who are pursuing it. Need God's grace even to die!

### 15.7.2 Characteristics of the locusts (9:9-12)

**9:7. And the likeness of the locusts [were] similar to horses prepared for battle, and upon their heads [somethings] like crowns as of gold, and their faces [were] as faces of men.**

**Likeness:** several times John uses the words **like** to portray the locusts. He describes it beginning with the head and move towards tail. These cannot be referring to natural locusts or human army because one needs to stretch the imagination. The description points to the demonic locusts. They are best understood as descriptions of supernatural features of the locusts like demons.

**Horses prepared for the battle:** They have the resemblance of an army.

**Crowns** are distinctive feature of the locust and thus indicates victory for five months.

**Faces of men:** indicates that they have appearance of man, and may poses intelligence.

**9:8. And they had hair as the hair of women, and their teeth [were] as [those] of lions,**

**Hair:** Ordinary locusts have very short hair, but here they are long one. This is also another characteristics of demonic locusts.

**Teeth:** Ordinary locusts have teeth, but here the teeth is powerful as it is compared to that of lion. However, in spite of their fierceness, they do not tear down the victims.

**9:9. and they had breastplates as breastplates of iron, and the sound of their wings [was] as the sound of chariots of many horses running into battle.**

**Breastplate. . . Iron:** Two additional features resemble aspects of forces on the battle field. Breastplate and Iron points to an armour protecting front and back of the chest of a soldier. Iron indicated strength. Together they indicated invincibility (Rev 1:9; Eph 6:14; 1 Thes 5:8).

**Sound:** The movement of the wings produces loud rushing sound similar to that of a marching army. Its effect is more psychological and points to the hopelessness of resisting them (Joel 2:4-5; 2Ki 7:6; Jer 47:3).

**9:10. And they have tails like scorpions and stings, and their authority in their tails is to hurt men for five months.**

**Tails:** The scorpion-like power to inflict pain, or **torment**, comes from their tails, which are equipped with stings. The Greek word for **stings** is also used to describe an ox-goad. This power to **hurt** is a more specific description of the torment mentioned earlier and is limited to a period of five months. *Act 26:14; 1Co 15:55*).

**9:11. They have a kings over them, the angel of the abyss, whose name in Hebrew is Abaddon and in Greek he has the name Appollyon**

**King:** They have their leader. It is another indication that they are different from the ordinary locusts. He is a king, he has two names and he is an angel. He cannot be Satan because: (a) Satan is not bound in absyris, (b) Satan is free to move on earth and on heaven. (c) Satan's entry will be more dramatic. Hence, this is best understood as a higher order fallen angel who is obeyed by all the fallen angels in the abyss. So this fallen angel rules the locusts from the abyss. (*Pr 30:27*). (*Eph 6:12*). (*Rev 12:3, 9*).

**Abaddon . . . Appollyon:** Abaddon means destroyer and *Appollyon* is the translation from Hebrew to Greek. Such bilingual translation is characteristic of John in the gospel and revelation.

**9:12. The first woe has passed away behold, two woes still come after these things.**

With the description of the fifth trumpet complete, the first woe is complete, and now the two more woe is remaining. Mankind will welcome the completion of the first woe but there is no time to relax as the next woe is just arriving. The next woe continues till 11:14 with a parenthetical stuff in 10:1-11:13. This also shows the woes are consecutive.

## 15.8 Sixth Trumpet: Death to a Third of Earth's Inhabitants (9:13–21)

### 15.8.1 The deadly attack (9:13-19)

With the sixth trumpet, the severity of the judgments increases even more than with the fifth. A voice from the golden altar responds to the sounding of the sixth angel.

**9:13. And the sixth angel sounded, and I heard a voice from the horns of the golden altar which is before God,**

Here the angel not only **sounded** the trumpet, but also did some actions in the following verses. The **voice from the alter** John heard cannot be from God as God is the subject in a similar usage in Rev 16. Most likely, it is the angel in Rev 8. This angel is connected to the golden altar and to the prayer of the saints for judgment (*Rev 16:7*; *Rev 8:3*). The altar has four **horns** and voice might be coming from the midst of it. Horns are seen as an indication of the sovereignty of God and His judicial judgment.

**9:14. saying to the sixth angel who had the trumpet, "Loose the four angels who are bound at the great river Euphrates."**

**Sixth** angel is the one who has the trumpet. This is one of the seven angels responsible for the seven trumpets (8:2, 6).

**The four angels who are bound:** The article [the](#) indicates that these angels are familiar, but their familiarity is unknown and nowhere they are mentioned in the Bible. The context suggest that they are evil angels and apparently the leaders of the invading hosts. They should not be confused with the four good angels of (*Rev 7:1*).

**Great river Eupretes:** This is the river that the enemies of God will cross prior to the last conflict before the Millennium. This river is of 2800 km long and starts in Turkey and pass through Syria, Iraq and Iran. It separated Israle from her chief enemies: Assyria and Babylon. The name referes not merely the river, but the whole region drained by the river. (*Gen 2:14; Gen 15:18; Deut 1:7; Josh 1:4*). (*Rev 16:12*).

**9:15. And four angels, who were prepared for the hour and day and month and year, were loosed that they might kill a third of men.**

**Prepared:** Although they were fallen angels, they are divinely prepared. Similar instances are there in the Scripture (*Mat 25:34, 41*).

**The Hour and day and month and year:** the hour refers to the appointed time for the action of these four angels. God's actions are not accidental, but planned and precise in time to the point of an hour. All the events in history are fully under the control of God and they happen precisely at the time decided by Him.

**Kill a third of men:** The goal of these angels is not merely to harm, but to inflict death. This death is literal, just as previous judgments were physical. Verse 20 also confirms this by focusing the judgment on those who are unrepentant, suggesting that those who have repented have escaped death.

**A third:** The number of those killed increases from one-fourth under the fourth seal (*Rev 6:8*) to one-third under the sixth trumpet (*Rev 9:18*). This will result in half of humanity being wiped out. It's important to note that those who have been sealed by God will not be affected by these trumpet judgments.

**9:16. And the number of the armies of cavalry [was] twenty thousands of ten thousands; I heard the number of them.**

**Army:** Abruptly, armies that kill a large portion of humanity appear on the scene. The origin of the army is not given. However, it is implied that the four fallen angels did something that resulted into an army of horsemen. It is possible that these armies are humans since the evil one could use a human army as his agents. However, they are most likely demons, as is evident from their descriptions below. The horses are the destructive agents along with the riders. Both the horses and the riders wear breastplates, and the fire coming out of their mouths indicates they must be of supernatural origin. They are not ordinary horses. We have also noted that the agents in the previous trumpet were also supernatural.



**200 million ... I heard:** This number represents the size of the army; many believe it is too large to consist of humans. The Chinese army, for example, is 2.2 million, and the combined strength of the top 30 countries is only 16 million. The maximum world army size in human history was 30 million, so 200 million is not a problem if the army is composed of demons. Furthermore, this number is intended to be precise. In contrast, other verses (like 5:11 or 7:9) use imprecise language for large numbers. The number was not counted by John, but rather revealed to him, and he heard it and recorded it for us.

**9:17. And thus I saw the horses in the vision and those sitting upon them, having breastplates of fire and hyacinth and brimstone and the heads of the horses [were] as heads of lions, and from their mouths issued forth fire and smoke and brimstone.**

**Horses** are mentioned in the Bible in connection with war. Note that horses are the main subject in these discussion rather than the rider. Hence, breastplate is applicable for both horse and its rider. The rider has only defense armour and not any offensive ones.

**Haycynth ... brimstone:** Breastplate made of materials such as *fire* and *haycynth* and *brimstone* is difficult to conceive, hence, the color connotation (red, blue, and yellow) should be preferred. They indicate wrath of God. *Ex 25:4; Ex 27:16). (Gen 19:24, 28).*

**Lion:** the army combines the swiftness of horse and terror (10:3), ferocity (9:8), and destructiveness (13:2). the mouth of the horse was the most destructive.

**9:17. From these three plagues were killed the third [part] of men, from the fire and the smoke and the brimstone which issued from their mouths.**

**Plague:** is the same word used in LXX. It describes the destructive power of the horses. This word is going to appear several times from here (Rev 9:20; 11:6; 13:3, 12, 14; 15:1, 6, 8; 16:9, 21; 18:4, 8; 21:9; 22:18). The fire, smoke, and brimstone (sulphur), each plays a role in the largest death-toll in human history upto that point.

**From (ek) and By (apo):** The text uses two different prepositions, "ek" and "apo," to emphasize the three ways people will die. While they have slightly different meanings, they both point to the source of the destruction.

**The (tou... tou... tou):** The repeated use of the definite article "the" before each of the three destructive elements (fire, smoke, and sulfur) highlights that each one is a separate cause of death. Together, they are responsible for a massive death toll. *Ex 11:1*

**9:19. For the authority of the horses is in their mouth and in their tails; for their tails are like serpents, having heads and with them they do harm.**

**For** This word appears twice to explain how the demonic horses can do so much damage. (i) First, it explains that their power is in their **mouths** and **tails**. The tails are mentioned here for the first time. The second **for** then clarifies the new detail about the tails: they are like snakes with heads, able to inflict painful bites. Note: While the tails weren't actual snakes, they functioned like them, causing physical harm. Just as the locusts in the previous trumpet plague inflicted pain like a scorpion's sting, these horses cause a similar or worse pain, and are also able to kill.

### 15.8.2 The response of the survivors (9:20–21)

We may think that the loss of a third of the earth's population and the suffering due to various calamities would cause the survivors to be more responsive to God. However, to our surprise, it will not happen showing how hard is human heart when it comes to God.

**9:20. And the rest of men, who were not killed by these plagues, did not even repent of the works of their hands, that they should not worship the demons and the idols of gold and of silver and of brass and of stone and of wood, which can neither see nor hear nor walk,**

**The rest** denotes those who are spared or escaped from the death caused by fire, smoke, and brimstone.

**Not even:** This adverb shows the absolute failure of the survivors of the sixth trumpet to respond to God by changing their ways, beliefs, or attitudes toward God, despite the horrific events they had just witnessed.

**Repent:** This word is frequent in chapters 2-3 as it was a recurring theme in the messages to the seven churches. The rest of the book, every mention of repentance is negative, indicating that while God's care is evident to his people, the opportunities for people of the world to repent are rare. Even then, they would use the opportunity. Repent denotes a change of mind in rejection of all that is against God.

**Works of their hands:** They refused to change their minds because of what they were doing which in the Bible refers to idolatry. Idol worship has always been a major problem of humanity. Even a catastrophe is not enough to make people stop. Worshiping idols is the main reason for God's anger because it takes away the glory that belongs to Him alone.

**Demons:** Idolatry has strong connection with demons. The survivors continued to worship idols made of various materials like gold, silver, and wood. Repentance would have led them to stop this behavior, but their refusal to change keeps the practice going. *Duet 32:17 Psa 106:37 1 Cor. 10:21*

**9:21. and they did not repent of their murders or of their sorcerers or of their fornication or of their thefts.**

**And they did not repent:** In the previous verse they were accused of idolatry which is direct sin against God. In this verse they were accused of four sins. The first three are social sins in the sense that they are visibly against humanity and are listed in the ten commandments. These are murder, fornication, and theft.

**Sorceries:** This sin is a broad term that encompasses various harmful practices, including witchcraft, magic spells, use of charms, use of drugs, etc. It is considered a severe sin, equivalent to idolatry, murder, and fornication. (*Re 21:8; Rev 22:15*).

**Note:** After the sixth trumpet which is also the second, the seventh trumpet doesn't follow immediately. Instead, its sounding is delayed while two events prepare the way: (i) the declaration that there will be no more delay (10:1–11) and (ii) the measuring of the temple and its worshipers (11:1–14).

# Chapter 16

## Preface to the Seventh Trumpet (10:1-11:14)

With the completion of the sixth trumpet, also called the second woe, the seventh trumpet does not come immediately, but awaits the preparation which includes: (a) the announcement of the end of delay (10:1-11) and (b) the measurement of the temple and its worshippers (11:1-14).

### 16.1 Announcement of the End of Delay (10:1-11)

#### 16.1.1 The announcement of the end of delay (10:1-11)

Just as two visions between sixth and seventh seal, here also two visions between sixth and seventh trumpets. They are: (a) angel with little scroll (10:1-11) and (b) the two witnesses (11:1-13). This section do not contain any judgment to earth-dwellers, but consoles the believers with the sovereignty and faithfulness of God.

#### A A climatic announcement (10:1-7)

**10:1.** And I saw another strong angel descending from heaven, clothed in a cloud, and the rainbow was over his head, and his face shine as the sun, and his feet were as pillars of fire,

**Strong angel:** Many try to identify the being as Gabriel or Michael, but it is only a guess work. Some try to identify him as Christ. However swearing in God's name by this being 10:6 and identification as angle rejects this possibility. The best possibility is that this angle is similar to but distinct from the angel in 5:2 and 18:21.

**Descending:** John sees him indicates he also moved from heaven to earth.

**Clothed in a cloud** enhances the glory of angel's appearance and points to their mission of judgment: 9/24 occurrence of cloud in NT is in connection to judgment (*Mt 24:30*).

**Rainbow iris:** indicated the divine majesty (4:3), but also mercy in the midst of judgment like in the days of Noah. The face of the angel is compared to the

**Sun:** It is showing glory and majesty.

**Pillars of fire:** The feet and the leg is like pillars of fire reminds the columns of fire that mercifully led the Israelite under Moses. This also reinforces judgment (*Ex 13:21-22*).

**10:2. and he had in his hand a little scroll opened. And he placed his right foot on the sea and his left on the land,**

**Little scroll biblaridion:** This word is found only here in the NT. This scroll is different from 5:1, but it contains a portion of the big scroll. It must carry through the end if it includes the mystery of God (10:7). It also relates to re-commissioning in 10:11. A parallel case exist in OT. The prophet ate the scroll which turned out to be God's command and commissioning of the prophet. The bitterness of the coming judgments parallel the bitterness John experiences. John's prophetic call is renewed. (*Ezk 3:1-4, 10-11*).

**Opened** The scroll is an allusion to Ezekiel signifying the revealed counsels of God. It contrasts the undisclosed meaning of the seven thunder-voices (10:3).

*Ezk 2:9-10*

**Sea and the land:** The strong angel then put his right foot on the which shows his intention to take possession of both. The gigantic size of the angel indicates his message is to the whole world (*Deut 11:24; Ex 20:4, 11; Ps 69:34; Rev 7:2*).

**10:3. and he cried with a great voice as a lion roars. And when he cried, the seven [peals of] thunder uttered their own voices.**

**Cried out:** The strong angel accompanied by thunder cried out with a great voice indicating power and vengeance. Loud cries are characteristics of Revelation (1:10; 5:2, 12; 6:10; 7:2, 10; 8:13; 14:7, 9, 15; 18:2) and shows emphasis to an individual or what he says.

**Lion's roar** in OT is associated with God's voice. It demands greater attention and deeper awe

(*Hos 11:10; Amos 1:2; Jer 25:30; Joel 3:16*).

**Thunder:** The seven peals of thunder reminds of Ps 29:3-9 as well as John 12. Note that thunder is different from the angel's voice, the above references indicate it is God's voice. Further, they are intelligible sounds since John was about to write them although the text does not reveal the content. However, similar instances in 8:5; 11:19; and 16:18 indicates the added terror (*Psalm 29:3-9; Jh 12:28-29*).

**10:4. And when the seven thunders spoke, I was about to write; and I heard a voice from heaven saying, "Seal the things which the seven thunders spoke, and do not write them."**

**Voice from heaven:** John was commissioned by Christ to write (1:11,19) and hence this voice most likely from Christ. Similar instances of voice from heaven is there in 14:13 and 18:4. The voice from heaven ask to seal the vision, meaning do not write them.

**Do not write:** The prohibition to write gives an indirect indication of John's prophetic authority (1:1; 22:7). It indicates the inspiration of restraint. This restrain subjectively prepares him for his remaining prophecies. (*Jn 21:25; 2Co 12:1-4*).

**10:5. And the angel whom I saw standing on the sea and on the land lifted his right hand to heaven**

**Lifted right hand:** This is a free allusion to Daniel 12:7 where God's eternity is addressed, but here it is His works of creating all things. Observe that here the angle is lifting only one hand since the other holds the little scroll (*Dan 12:7*).

**10:6. and swore by the one who lives fore ever and ever, who created the heaven and the things which are in it and the earth and the things which are in it and the sea and the things which are in it, that there will no longer be delay,**

**Swear** mean affirm by an oath and it marks this as a moment of increased solemnity because o the nearness of the time f fulfillment.

**The One** who lives for ever refers to the eternal existence of God (1:18; 4:9, 10; 15:7), and hence He is called a living God.

**Created:** He is the creator of all (Gen 1:1; Ex 20:11; Ps 33:6; 102:25; 146:6; Isa 37:16; 42:5; Jer 32:17; Act 14:15; Col 1:15; Heb 11:3; Rev 4:11; 14:7). The eternal one and the creator will fulfill the purpose of His creation. He has the prerogative of destroying it and replacing it with a new creation, if He so chooses.

**Heaven, earth, and sea** indicates that He crated all things.

**Delay chronos:** The most solemn proclamation of the angel is that there is no time delay to the prayer of the saints in 6:10. The rest of God's plan is ready to accomplish. This is very similar to the answer given by the angel in *Dan 12:7*.

**10:7.** but in the days of the sound of the seventh angel, when he will sound, then the mystery of God will be completed, as he preached the good news to His own slaves the prophets.

**The days:** There is no delay does not imply fulfillment in no time, but refers to a period of time which covers the period of the seventh trumpet, which is also the the seven bowls (16:1) culminating in the destruction of the Babylon and consummation of all things. The sounding marks the completion or fulfillment of the mystery of God. They will have been fulfilled in a prophetic sense.

**Mystery mysterion** of God is what reaches its fulfillment in those days. Mystery is secret revealed by God. Examples include

- (a) redemptive plan (*Rom 16:25-26*).
- (b) the church (*Mt 13:10-35*).
- (c) Antichrist (*2The 2:6-8; Rom 11:25*).
- (d) all shall not die or **rapture** (*1Co 15:51*).
- (e) Gentiles will be part of God's program (*Eph 3:1-10*).
- (f) Trinity (*Col 2:2*). and
- (g) Deity of Christ (*1Tim 3:16*).

Here, the **mystery** of God refers to the fulfillment of His kingdom which was hidden from the beginning of the world. This is evident from the thanks giving when the trumpet was sounded in 11:15. The subsequent chapter will tell the institution of God's kingdom on earth and eventually in the new heavens and new earth.

**Good news** which the prophets were waiting was about the kingdom that the kingdoms of this world becomes the kingdom of our Lord in spite of the hardships faced by God's people. His

**own slaves** the prophets refers primarily to the OT prophets in this context (*Jer 7:25; Jer 25:4; Amos 3:7*). Further, John also depends heavily on OT prophets in Revelation indicates them as referring to OT prophets.

## **B The recommissioning of John (10:8-11)**

**10:8.** And the voice which I heard from heaven again spoke with me and said, "Go, take the scroll which is opened in the hand of the angel who stands on the sea and on the land."

**Voice:** John heard the same voice as in 10:4 which is of Christ.

**Take:** Though not allowed to write the utterance, John is to receive the scroll from the angel.

**Stands:** The posture is mentioned third time (2, 5) showing the complete authority of the angel over the whole earth.

**10:9. And I went away to the angel, requesting him to give me the little scroll. And he says to me, "Take and eat it, and it will make your stomach bitter, but in your mouth it will be sweet as honey."**

**I went away:** John left his former place as a spectator and now assumes a role in the drama that is unfolding. The angel gave the scroll and tell John to take and eat.

**Eat katapahge** is a Hebrew idiom for receiving knowledge (similar to English word *digest* used for meditating on the things learned). It indicate a through assimilation of the scroll's content. The angel also warned of its effect, bitterness to the stomach. For John the bitterness is delivering the message and consequence of it seen in the judgment. The parallel situation in OT, bitterness was the rejection of the message of the prophets (*Ezek 3:1-3; Jer 15:6, 17*).

**Bitter . . . sweet:** When the angel tells John to eat the scroll, he's telling him what will happen. It will taste sweet, but it will feel bitter in his stomach. The word for bitter is **pikros** in Greek, and it can describe anything that is sharp to the senses, like taste or sound. It's the opposite of **glykys**, which means sweet. The prophets Ezekiel and Jeremiah also had to deliver difficult messages, but the Bible doesn't mention them feeling this bitterness directly. However, it's implied because the people they spoke to were rebellious, and God was going to judge them. The angel mentions the bitterness first because it's the surprising part of the prophecy. Before the good things happen, John has to deliver some harsh and difficult predictions about the future. His stomach, or **koilia** in Greek, is where he'll feel this bitterness. This means that when he takes the prophecy into himself, he will feel the painful and difficult truth it contains. The sweet taste of the scroll, which is like honey, likely represents the initial satisfaction John feels from understanding God's plan for the future. The sweetness is only in his mouth, which suggests it is a temporary feeling. However, when he fully understands and digests the message, it becomes bitter. This bitterness comes from the sad news of future persecutions, betrayals, and judgments. So, the scroll isn't sweet in some parts and bitter in others. Instead, the feeling changes from an initial, satisfying sweetness to a later, difficult bitterness as John fully grasps the entire prophecy.

**10:10. And I took the little scroll from the hand of the angel and ate it, and it was in my mouth as sweet as honey; and when I ate it, my stomach was made bitter.**

**I took:** John complied with the angel's instruction and ate it.

**Ate it:** Probably, this may need to understand literally. The effects were same as angels told in the previous verse, except in the reverse order.



**10:11.** And it was said to me, "It is necessary for you to prophecy again concerning many peoples and nations and tongues and kings."

**It was said to me:** Here John receives a direct guideline regarding his future ministry. The source of the commission is is possibly an indefinite source (like 12:6; 13:16; 16:15). The phrase shows that this is an instruction from God.

**It is necessary:** it shows the logical necessity to accomplish the will of God. The word used for *necessary* in Greek, **dei**, emphasizes that this is a compulsory and divine order. John must obey and continue his prophetic work because it is God's will. (*Ezek 4:7; Jer 1:10*).

**Again:** indicates that it is not new, but a renewal of the old one. The renewal is necessary because the rest of the prophecies are more burdensome than the previous.

**Concerning:** the subject of his prophecy concerns the humanity.

**Many:** The group includes Peoples **laois**, Nations **ethnesin**, Languages **glōssais**, and Kings **basileusin**.

**Kings:** While kings are part of the other groups, their separate mention highlights that God's message applies to even the most powerful human leaders. Their applicability would go far beyond John's immediate time and geographical circumstances.

## 16.2 Measurement of the Temple and Worshipers (11:1–14)

**11:1.** And a reed like rod was given to me, saying, "Rise and measure the temple of God and the altar and those who worship in it."

**Reed:** a plant with hollow stalk that was often used for measuring because of its light weight (*Eze 42:16-19*).

**Was given:** Not specified from whom it was received, most likely the strong angel who spoke in 10:9-11.

**Measure:** Similar symbolic acts exists in OT denoting judgment, destruction, and/or restoration (*Isa 20:2-4; Ezk 12:3-6; Zech 2:1-5; Ez 40:5; 2Sam 8:2; 2Ki 21:13; Is 28:17; Lam 2:8* Noting: (a) the measurement does not results in any dimensions of the temple (b) the immediate context is recommissioning of John in (10) and (c) the use of this word in *Mt 7:2*) all indicate it is an evaluation and forming of an opinion. God's evaluation results in favour toward the sanctuary, the altar, and their worshippers and disapproval of the Gentiles for profaning the holy city. The same favour is on the two witness (not the protection) and disapproval on the Gentile enemies of God.

**Temple:** Many try to see the temple as the church. This interpretation required non-literal interpretation and it fails to identify altar, worshippers, courts, etc. On the contrary, they point strongly to the Jewish ground. The non-literal interpretation is inconsistent and self-contradictory. So, this is literal temple that will exist in actuality during the future period just before Christ returns. *Mat 24:15* and *2Th 2:4* require a literal temple in the future.

**Altar** must be the one where people could gather, located in the court outside the sanctuary.

**Worshippers** are the godly remnant in Israel who will worship God in the rebuilt temple (*Ezk 14:22; Rom 11:4-5*). They might have come to faith through the two-witnesses.

**11:2. And cast out the court which is outside the temple and do not measure it, because it has been given to the Gentiles, and they will trample on the holy city forty-two months.**

**Outer court:** There are two courts: outer one between the door and the street and an inner one surrounded by building. Gentiles could enter the outer court, but not the inner.

**Cast out:** reject or the removal of the favour (*Jh 6:37*). It is opposite of measure.

**Gentiles:** This will be the group in rebellion against God who will oppress the Jewish remnant and wreak havoc in Jerusalem in the period just before His return (*Rev 11:18; 14:18; 19:15; 20:3*).

**Holy city:** Literal city of Jerusalem on earth (*Neh 11:1; Isa 52:1; Dan 9:24; Mt 27:53*). If the temple is on earth, then the city must be Jerusalem. The heavenly city has no temple (*21:22*).

**42 months:** Some see this is symbolic and make futile attempt to identify it as Messiah or David. Literal understanding leads to three and half years or 1260 days (*11:3; 12:6; 12:14; 13:5*). It also connects with *Dan 9*. However, some try to identify these with the first half. It is unlikely for several reasons, particularly, it is unlikely that during this time temple worship and Gentile oppression would happen simultaneously. Hence, it is better to understand this period is the second half, because: [a] covenant breaking happens in the middle of the week (*Dan 9:27*). [b] connect easily with 1260 days of *11:3*.

**Trample:** not an utter destruction. Invalid attempts were made by many to identify it with the Jerusalem destruction in AD 70 by combining symbolic understanding of temple as church but trample as historically happened. An assignment of the period to

a future defilement and domination of Jerusalem and the rebuilt temple is aligns with consistent literal hermeneutics and allows for the well known expectation of Israel's future (Mt 24:15; Rom 9-11).

**11:3. And I will give [authority] to My two witnesses, and they will prophesy a thousand two hundred and sixty days clothed in sackcloth.**

**And:** this verse is connected to the earlier and hence it implies that John's measuring and two witnesses are connected. It shows that God will convey His message in spite of Gentile oppression.

**I...My:** God speaks at this point and the witnesses belong to God and not to angels.

**Two witnesses:** We will evaluate several possibilities put forward to their identity.

- (a) *church*: it assumes symbolic interpretation. However, descriptions such a making war, wearing sackcloth, their death, watching by people etc make it unlikely.
- (b) *Enoch and Elijah*: they have not tasted death (Gen 5:24; 2Ki 2:11), but have to die (Heb 9:27). However, descriptions do not match Enoch, and many at the coming of Christ will not die (1Th 4:17).
- (c) *Moses and Elijah*:
  - i. Elijah shuts rain (1Ki 17:1) and fire came (2Ki 1:10);
  - ii. Moses turned water to blood and struck many plagues (Ex 7);
  - iii. Moses will come again (Deut 18:15, 18);
  - iv. Elijah will come again (Mal 4:5);
  - v. Both met Jesus on the mount (Mt 17:3);
  - vi. Mystery surrounds Moses' death (Deut 34:5-6; Jude 9),
  - vii. Translation of Elijah (2Ki 2:11),
  - viii. Duration of drought matches their period of witness.
  - ix. However, some objections present: John the Baptist fulfilled the prophecy of Malachi, Moses did die and two death are not possible. But Lazarus had two death.
- (d) *Two like them*: Two men like Moses and Elijah.
- (e) *Conclusion*: The overwhelming evidence is from Moses and Elijah.

**Prophecy:** They preach repentance (sack cloth) and foretelling of the future. They also witness simultaneous trampling of the holy city and gentile oppression.

**11:4. These are the two olive branches and the two lamp stands which are standing before the Lord of the earth.**

**Two olive:** Mission of the two witnesses resembles that of Zerubabel and Joshua who sought to restore Israel (Zech 3, 4).

**Lamp stands:** Role of Holy Spirit is alluded here (1:4). In Zechariah's vision olive oil from the trees provided fuel for the lamp stand as an emblem of the light brought through Joshua and Zerubbabel. (Zech 4:6).

**Stand:** The source of their strength is from God (Zech 4:14).

**11:5. And if anyone desires to hurt them, fire goes forth from their mouths and devours their enemies; and if anyone desires to hurt them, it is necessary thus for him to be killed.**

**Fire:** The power given to them to accomplish their mission is tremendous. The fire could be literal just like Elijah did. Ironical to note that John desired such power (2Ki 1:10-14; Lk 9:54-55).

**Kill:** The physical life will be taken from anyone who desires to hurt them. This immediate judgment of God protects them for prolonged ministries.

**11:6. These have the authority to shut heaven, lest it give forth rain during the days of their prophecy, and they have authority over the waters to turn them into blood and to smite the earth with every plague as often as they desire.**

**They have:** indicates they are well equipped for their ministry and have power over forces of nature.

**Shut heaven:** it reminds of what Elijah did (1Ki 17:1,7; (Lk 4:25; Jas 5:17).

**Blood:** Their power to turn water into blood and smite earth with plagues alludes to what Moses did. Their power exceeded Moses for they can call upon it whenever they desire unlike Moses had to await a divine command or Elijah who had to pray (Ex 7:20; Ex 9:14).

**11:7. And when they will finish their witness, the beast who ascends from abyss will make war with them and will conquer them and kill them.**

**Finish:** indicates they will complete the divinely appointed task.

**Beast therion:** The word indicate a carnivore like lion with a connotation to cunning, cruel, unreasonable violence. First appearance of the word out of 36 times in the book. Note that there is an overlap of the beast and the ministry of the Two. More about beast will come in Ch 13 and 17. Beast is not Satan, since dragon is the representation of Satan (12:3, 9). In OT beasts are earthly empires that opposes the saints (Dan 7:18, 27). But in Revelation, beast must be earthly ruler since [a] healing of wound (13:3, 12), [b] masculine pronoun (13:8), and [c] an object of worship (13:8).

**Ascends from abyss:** Abyss is the home of demons and beast coming from there indicated the demonic orientation. The ascension happens in 13:1.

**War ... conquer:** Alludes to Dan 7:21. He likewise will make war with the rest of the woman's seed (12:17; 13:7). This will result in the death of the two witnesses. *Dan 7:21*.

**11:8. And their corpses [will be] in the street of the great city, which spiritually called Sodom and Egypt, where also their Lord was crucified.**

**Corpses:** Their bodies will be left unburied to add insult (*Ps 79:2-3*).

**Spiritual:** This point to the allegorical or non-literal interpretation since the text makes it clear. One thing that is common between these two cities is their enmity with God and His people.

**Sodom and Egypt:** Some interpret it as figurative of all cities opposing God, since 11:10 points to the whole world scope. However, the language is very clear that it is Jerusalem, since the Lord was crucified there. Moses and Elijah has strong connection with Jerusalem. Jerusalem can be connected to Egypt (*Ezk 23:3, 4, 8, 19*).

**11:9. And [those] from peoples and tribes and tongues and nations see their corpses three and half days, and they do not permit their corpses to be placed into a tomb.**

**Peoples ...:** People from all walks of life as seen in 5:9 and 7:9, but here they are on the side of the beast.

**for 3.5 days:** The duration is an indication of great shame inflicted upon them.

**11:10. And those who dwell upon the earth rejoice over them and make merry, and they send gifts to one another, because these two prophets tormented those who dwell upon the earth.**

**Earth dwellers:** refers the unbelieving world now celebrates over the death of the two witnesses. It is not necessary that every single person will see the dead body, but the representatives from all groups will be there to witness it personally.

**Make merry:** it shows the state of their mind, immature, but possessing intense hatred to God and all His people. Contrast the celebration of Jews over the death of Haman (*Est 9:19, 22*).

**Because:** The reason for their rejoicing is the end of the torment inflicted by the two. The worst form of infliction may be the pricking of their conscience. In spite of an opportunity to hear the word of God, the world always shows such hostility to God and His messengers.

**11:11. And after the three and half days the breath of life from God entered them, and they stood on their feet, and a gray fear fell on those beholding them.**

**Breath of life** is a an allusion to *Ezek 37:5,10*, where God sends the breath of life into dead bones and the life came to them and stood on their feet (*2Ki 13:21*).

The international celebration is abruptly halted.

**Great fear** struck on them and even the greatest weapon available to humanity (killing) cannot silence the two.

**11:12. And they heard a great voice, from heaven saying to them, 'Come up here'; and they went up into heaven, in the cloud, and their enemies beheld them.**

**The great voice** from heaven might that of Christ.

**Come up here:** and they went heaven reminds of Elijah's ascension *2 Ki 2:11; Deut 34:5-6*.

**Cloud:** reminds of the ascension of Jesus and the rapture of the church (*Act 1:9; 1The 4:17*).

**11:13. And a great earthquake occurred in the hour, and the tenth [part] of the city fell, and seven thousand persons were killed in the earthquake, and the rest became afraid and gave glory to the God of heaven."**

**Great earthquake:** must be literal movement of the surface of the earth.

**Tenth:** the fall of the city is partial and casualty is limited.

**Gave glory:** Some think they gave glory under compulsion and not under repentance. This need not be true given the circumstances and contrasting 9:20-21. This come near the end of bowl judgment and could be the future repentance of Israel (*Rom 11:26*).

**God of heaven:** An OT title God who is distinguished from the goads of the earth (*Ezra 1:2; Dan 2:19; Jon 1:9*).

**11:14. The second woe has gone away; behold the third woe comes soon.**

**Second woe:** it follows 8:13, 9:12, and the second woe in 9:13-21. The portion 10:1-11:13 is an interlude or parenthetical and is not the second woe. Now the third woe is coming.

**Come soon:** a phrase usually reserved for the imminence of Christ's return. These events are imminent because the progression of seals and trumpets has now reached the point that return of Christ as Warrior-King (19:11-16). However, the content of the seventh trumpet or third woe will not come until 16:1 because the seventh trumpet requires more introductory explanation due to broader scope.

# Chapter 17

## The Seventh Trumpet and Background of the Seven Bowls Begun (11:15-11:19)

### 17.1 Seventh Trumpet: The Seven Bowls Awaited (11:15–19)

The sounding of the seventh trumpet resulted in heavenly celebration anticipating the institution of the God's kingdom on the earth (11:15-19). However, some background information is provided before the actual beginning of the seventh trumpet in 16:1.

#### 17.1.1 The Seventh Trumpet: The Seven Bowls Awaited (11:15-19)

##### Telescoping of judgements

1. Seal 1
2. Seal 2
3. Seal 3
4. Seal 4
5. Seal 5
6. Seal 6
7. Seal 7 = 7 Trumpets
  - (a) Trumpet 1
  - (b) Trumpet 2
  - (c) Trumpet 3
  - (d) Trumpet 4

- (e) Trumpet 5
- (f) Trumpet 6
- (g) Trumpet 7 = 7 Bowls
  - i. Bowl 1
  - ii. Bowl 2
  - iii. Bowl 3
  - iv. Bowl 4
  - v. Bowl 5
  - vi. Bowl 6
  - vii. Bowl 7

**11:15.** And the seventh angel sounded; and there came great voices in heaven, saying, "The kingdom of the world has become [that] of our Lord and of His Christ, and He will reign forever and ever."

**Seventh angel:** The seventh angel is about to act after the conclusion of the second woe (or the sixth trumpet). Just like the seventh seal, there is no immediate earthly action, instead worship begins at heaven (11:16-18). The text then gives insights to various heavenly activities that leads to the culmination of human history (11:19-14:20).

**Sounded:** Sounding of the seventh trumpet is different from the **last trumpet** of 1 Cor 15 for several reasons including:

- (a) absence of any immediate earthly activity,
- (b) just like the seventh seal expands to seven trumpets, the seventh trumpet is expanded to the seven bowls occupying a period of time.
- (c) the last trumpet of 1 Cor-15 results in rapture which happens at an instant. (*1 Cor 15:51-52*).

**Great voices in heaven:** This is in contrast to the great silence at the opening of the seventh seal (8:1). John is now transported to heaven which actually controls the events unfolding on the earth.

**Kingdom of the world:** This is not the church since church is kingdom of heaven. It is the world-empire once ruled by the anti-Christ. The celebrations in Rev 12:10 and 19:6 confirms this. The whole theme of Revelation is purging the evil from the world and restored to Jesus. The word **has become** shows the prophetic certainty of the event. This is a theme from Psalm 2 appear frequently in Revelation (2:27; 12:5, 10; 14:1; 16:14; 19:15, 19).

**Reign forever:** Father and Son with perfect unity will rule the kingdom forever and shows the eternal nature and fulfillment of the prophecy by Daniel. Note that this has two phases: the first the millennium (20:1-10) and the new creation (Rev 21, 22), supported by Paul also (*Dan 2:44; Dan 7:14; 1 Cor 15:24-28*).



**11:16. And the twenty-four elders who were before God sitting upon their thrones fell on their faces and worshipped God,**

**Elders:** the 24 elders re-enter the scene after 7:13-14 and the whole group worship God as done earlier (4:10; 5:8, 14). They fell on their faces and worshipped just like often it happens on the earth.

**11:17. saying, "We give thanks to you, Lord God Almighty, who is and who was, because you have taken your great power and begun to reign;**

**Thanks to you:** Elders express the gratitude for God's answer to prayer for justice.

**God Almighty:** The God is an all powerful God. He is sovereign and will be manifested clearly in the institution of His kingdom. No one can resist His power.

**Who is and who was:** Contrasting 1:4, 8; 4:8, He has already come (16:5). The answer to prayer is now answered. (*Mt 6:10*).

**Taken:** God seized direct and permanent control of the world by an overwhelming display of power over His enemies. God allowed His enemies to have control on the earth till then. Some wrongly (allegorically) interpret this by telling the reign as the church age and taking control is the destruction of temple in AD 70.

**11:18. and the nations were enraged, and your wrath came and the time for the dead to be judged and to give the reward to your slaves the prophets and to the saints, even to those who fear your name, the small and the great, and to destroy the destroyers of the earth."**

1. They also sang about the response of the nations and the implementation of God's wrath and of judgment.

**Enraged:** The hostility of the nations of the world against God. Note that the wrath of man is wicked (6:17) and the wrath of God is holy. The rage is shown by fighting against God (16:14, 16; 20:8-9). This is applied Psalm 2 to the crucifixion of Jesus, but here the scope is much wider. (*Acts 4:25-28*).

**Time . . . came:** The right time for the judgment as well as giving reward has arrived. Although here judgment of the wicked and giving reward the righteous are mentioned together, the actual implementation is at different time. All the wicked people is judged at the Great White Throne (20:11-15) where as the faithful is rewarded in 21:9-22:5.

**Reward Mishon:** Giving reward is an act of God's grace and varies in proportion to the works (*1 Cor 3:8*).

**Slaves the prophets:** They refer to OT prophets and NT apostles who are prophets (Eph 2:20; Rev 18:20) who were the recipients of God's revelation. (2Ki 21:10; Dan 9:6).

**Saints ...small and the great:** Both Jewish and gentile believers will received reward. Further, lowliest slave who comes to faith will get same consideration as that of great.

**Destroyers of the earth:** The context of the book suggests that these include the Babylon, the beast, the false prophet, and Satan (19:17-21; 20:10).

**11:19. And the temple of God which is in heaven, was opened, and the ark of His covenant in His temple appeared and there came [bolts of] lightning and voices, and [peals of] thunder and an earthquake and great hail.**

**And:** This verse could be seen as response to the hymn of 17-18 where the ark corresponds to rewards to the faithful and the storm indicate the judgment to the wicked which proceeds from the temple (14:15, 17; 15:5-8; 16:7).

**Was opened:** The events in 15-18 and here are in the past in the prophetic or heavenly sense only. The opening of heaven indicate unhindered fellowship with God (21:3). The temple in heaven (distinct from the sanctuary on the earth) received prayers (8:3-4), vengeance proceeded (8:5; 15:5-8). Appearance of ark anticipate the restoration of God's people and fulfillment of OT promises.

**Ark of His covenant:** ark has rich biblical history. On one hand it shows God's favour when used rightly (Lev 16:2 ff.; Heb. 9:3 ff.; 10:20), but on the other hand, when used wrongly results in plagues (1 Sam 4:8) and fall (Josh 6:1-20). The original of the earthly temple is in the heaven. The appearance of it is a great hope to God's covenant people.

**Lightning ...:** The storm theophany closes the response to the seventh trumpet's sounding. It manifest divine presence (4:5; 16:18), wrathful judgment of God (8:5; 10:3; 16:18).

## 17.2 The Woman, the Male-Child, and the Dragon (12:1-18)

### Overview:

**C. The pouring out of the seven bowls (12:1-18:24).** The seventh trumpet paved the way for the seven bowl judgments. For better understanding of this revelation some background information of the hidden forces is necessary.

**1. The background of the bowls (12:1-14:20).** First, the initial rebellion of Satan and its impact on human history which eventually culminated in the personal return of Jesus.

a. **The Woman, the Male Child, and the Dragon (12:1-18)**: It has three parts (i) woman clad in the sun who gives birth to the Messiah and the threat by the huge red dragon.

### 17.2.1 The dragon's enmity against the Messiah (12:1-6)

**12:1. And a great sign appeared in heaven, a woman clothed with the sun, and the moon [was] under her feet, and upon her head [was] a crown of twelve stars,**

**Woman** is wrongly identified as: (i) the mother of Apollo in Greek mythology, (ii) wife of emperor Domitian, (iii) Virgin Mary (it cannot be Mary, since, it is symbolic and 12:17 excludes it referring to an individual), (iv) God Himself (it also does not fit the rest of the descriptions), (v) people of God of both OT and NT (Israel and church together: this cannot be the case, since, church is the bride and not the mother of Jesus). True identity is the nation of Israel since the picture is an allusion to the dream Joseph saw in Gen 37. Joseph and Jacob understood the dream. John saw in the woman an ongoing fulfillment of the Abrahamic covenant. Note that the woman is a sign and not an individual. Figure of Israel as woman in labour is abundant in OT (*Gen 37:9*). *Isa 26:7*; *Jer 4:31*; *Mic 5:3*).

**Sun . . . moon . . . stars** is an allusion to Jacob who stood in the lineage to inherit the blessing of the Abrahamic covenant, Rachael, and the 12 tribes of Israel.

**12:2. and she was with child and cried being in travail, even being tormented to give birth.**

**Birth pangs**: just as a woman feels the pain of child birth, so did the nation of Israel undergone pain to bring Christ to this world. The cause of this pain is the persecution of the nation inspired by Satan to prevent the birth of Christ and destroy the people of God. By the time John wrote this, Jesus was already born and hence, this is a heavenly enactment of that past historical event just as other events yet to happen is enacted in this book.

**12:3. And another sign appeared in heaven, and behold, a great red dragon, having seven heads and ten horns and upon his heads [were] seven diadems,**

**Behold**: calls for special attention to the description of the new sign.

**Great red dragon**: is a name given for monster beings in mythologies and John used the same word to denote Satan (12:4, 7, 9, 13, 6, 17; 13:2, 4, 11; 16:13; 20:2). Great (**megas**) indicates largeness and blood-red (**pyrros**) indicates its intention to kill the offspring of the woman.

**Seven heads . . . ten horns . . . seven diadems**: similar description occurs in 13:1; 17:9-10; and Dan 7. The heads are consecutive world empires and ten horns belongs to

the last empire in the seven year period. The diadems (a head band kind of crown wore by kings) indicates the power and its position (on the head) indicates the universal earthly dominion. (*Dan 7:7, 20, 24*).

**12:4. and his tail dragged the third [part] of the stars of heaven and cast them into the earth. And the dragon stood before the woman who was about to give birth, the when she give birth to her child, he might devour [Him].**

**Stars ... cast:** refer to the angels (9:1; 12:8-9) who fell with Satan in history past before the birth of the child. Satan led this war and was cast out of heaven. A second war in 12:7-9 is his final attempt.

**Stood before the woman:** Dragon shows his hatred primarily to the child. OT records several instances of this hatred:

- i Cain's murder of Abel (Gen 4:8);
- ii corrupting the line of Seth (Gen 6:1-12);
- iii attempted rapes of Sarah and Rebekah (Gen 12:10-20; 26:1-18);
- iv murder of male children in Egypt (Ex 1:15-22);
- v attempted murder of David (2 Chr 22:10);
- vi Haman's attempt to slaughter Jews (Est 3-9);
- vi Herod trying to kill Jesus (Mat 2:16); and
- vii many other instances to kill Jesus culminating in the Crucifixion.

**12:5. And she gave birth to a son, a male, who is about to destroy all nations with a rod of iron; and her child was caught away to God and to His throne.**

**She gave birth:** Israel gave Messiah to the world, it was the work of the nation by preserving the genealogy and not Mary alone.

**Son, a male:** refers to Jesus, and not Jesus and the church or even the church alone. It is evident that the child is Jesus alone because the child is going to rule the nations (Psalm 2:9).

**Caught away:** the child is inaccessible to the dragon as Christ was ascended to heaven after resurrection Note that the main purpose of His ascension was not to escape from Satan, but it was a byproduct. Once Jesus is in heaven, Satan had no further access to Him, so he had to redirect his hatred to the woman. (*Act 5:31*).

**12:6. And the woman fled into the wilderness, where she has there a place prepared by God, that there they might nourish her a thousand two hundred and sixty days.**

**Fled:** This flight chronologically happens after the war of 12:7-12 and is described in detail in 12:13-17. This flight is prophesied by Jesus (*Mt 24:15-28*).

**1260 days:** The heavenly defeat of the dragon and his angels by Michael and his angels happen at the mid point of Daniel's seventieth week and 1260 days of the woman's protection must correspond to the last half of that week, while the two witnesses are serving in Jerusalem (11:2, 3; 12:14; 13:5). This period of protective care for the woman will also be the future period of the false Christ's raging (13:5) and it is not the time between ascension and Parousia of Christ. In spite of his fiercest efforts, the dragon will be unable to reach the woman.

**A place:** The place is prepared by God although the location is not specified. It is the work of God and unspecified people will meet the need of the woman.

### 17.2.2 Expulsion of the dragon from heaven (12:7-12)

**12:7. And a war occurred in heaven, Michael and his angels had to make war with the dragon. And the dragon and his angels made war,**

**And:** Returning to a point before the flight of the woman, the vision now furnishes an additional reason for the rage of the dragon against woman. That is v. 7 return to the end of v. 5 and the futile response of the dragon. Verse 6 is a summary of 13-17 and this section includes an account of the battle in heaven (7-9) and a heavenly hymn of victory (10-12).

**A war ...make war ...made war:** Many wrongly conclude that this war occurred at (i) the fall of Satan before the creation, (ii) the cross, (iii) John's time, or (iv) an unknown past. However, the context strongly suggests the war is an end-time event occurring midway through Daniel's seventieth week. During this period Satan will oppose God's people, especially the Israel, with great severity, but for a short time. This explains the unusual severity of persecution during the second half. It also agrees with the little time left for Satan and the involvement of Michael in the last days. It is an effort of the dragon to unseat Christ and reestablish himself in heaven (*Dan 12:1; Isa 14:13*).

**In heaven** indicates the scene of this battle.

**Michael** is the leader of the heavenly army. Michael is the arch angel and previously had war with Satan (*Jude 9*).

**12:8. and yet he did not prevail, neither was a place for them found any longer in heaven.**

**Did not prevail:** the dragon was not victorious in this battle.

**Place ...in heaven:** the dragon will no longer be entertained in heaven, for his duty was accusing the brethren which will be stopped (*Rev 12:10; 1 Ki 22:20-22; Job 1:9-11; Zech 3:1*).

**12:9. And the great dragon, the serpent of old, who is called the Devil and Satan, who deceives the whole earth, was cast down- was cast down into the earth, and his angels were cast down with him.**

**Cast down ...cast down ...cast down:** Three fold use indicates forceful and mass expulsion of dragon and his angels from heaven. Cast down is normally used in connection with judgment. Jesus saw the fall of Satan and the cross is the basis of that. Note the chronology of the events: (i) Satan is cast out from the heaven, (ii) then he will be chained in the abyss for 1000 year period (*20:1-3*), and (iii) then the lake of fire as his eternal home (*Mat. 13:42; Luk 10:18; Joh 12:31*).

**And the:** Five fold description of the person is given to avoid any kind of confusion that may arise about the identity of Satan:

- (a) **The great dragon:** indicating the hatred and cruelty of this being (*Rev. 12:3*).
- (b) **The serpent of old:** which reaches back to Genesis. He is noted for his cunning nature for he first lured man into sin and then started accusing them. (*Gen 3:1; 2Cor 11:3*).
- (c) **Devil:** the word come from **diaballo** which means slander or accuse falsely or act as an adversary.
- (d) **Satan:** is a Hebrew word and appears several time in OT and refers to the superhuman adversary. Some of his actions include inspiring David for census, accused Job, accused Joshua the high priest.
- (e) **Who deceives the whole earth:** he is known for it and it includes Judas to betray Jesus and Peter to deny Jesus (*John 13:2; Luke 22:31; 2 Cor. 2:11; 2 John 7*).

**Whole earth:** is susceptible to his diabolical ways.

**12:10. And I heard a great voice in heaven saying, "Now have come the salvation and power and the kingdom of our God and the authority of His Christ, because the accuser of our brethren has been cast down, who accuses them before our God day and night.**

**Great voice:** Sudden outburst of praise in heaven (like *4:8, 11; 5:9-10, 12, 13; 7:10, 12; 11:15, 17-18; 15:3-4; 19:1-2, 4, 6-8*). It has three stanzas:

- (a) arrival of God's kingdom and Christ's authority (10),
- (b) the earthly victory of the saints who identify with Christ (11), and

- (c) the celebration over the expulsion of the dragon and warning to earth because of the Devil's expulsion from heaven (12).

**Salvation and power and the kingdom:** salvation denotes victory over dragon; power denotes the power of God that accomplished this victory, and the kingdom (like in 11:15) refers to both the future temporal phase (20:1-10) and the eternal phase (21:1-22:5) of the kingdom (*Rev. 11:15; Rev. 20:4-6; Rev. 21:1*).

**Authority of Christ:** Christ exercise the authority given to Him by the Father and will rule in the future kingdom. Note that the song prophetically look forward to the rule of Christ. (*Psa 2:2; Mat. 28:18; John 17:2*).

**Accuser:** Satan accuses us, but Christ is our advocate (*Rom. 8:34; 1 John 2:1; Heb. 7:25; Heb. 9:24*).

**Accuses day and night:** Just like the angels constantly worship God (4:8), Satan constantly accuses God's people. But his mouth will be shut-up soon.

**12:11. And they themselves overcame him because of the blood of the Lamb and because of the word of their testimony, and they did not love their life unto death.**

**Overcame him:** earthly victory of the saints who identify with Christ in His witness and death despite the accusations of Satan is significant.

**Blood of the Lamb:** the primary and objective basis of the victory is death of Christ. Here, the victory is already achieved (prophetically).

**Word of their testimony:** the secondary and subjective basis of victory is their personal labor and self-sacrifice. Because the Lamb's blood was shed, they had an answer to the accuser. Then, it motivates them to testify the word of God (*John 8:31-32; 15:3*).

**Did not love their life:** They did not loved their earthly life. Instead, they gave importance to the faithfulness to Christ.

**12:12. Because of this, make merry, heavens and those who dwell in them; woe to the earth and the sea, because the devil has descended to you having great anger, knowing that he has little time."**

**Merry:** The angels have reason to rejoice. Satan and his angels were removed from heaven.

**Woe:** this woe is due to Satan and directed to God's people on the earth (contrasting the three woes which is from God and directed to enemies of God on the earth). It refers to the intense persecution during the second half of the seven year period.

**Anger . . . little time:** the reason for the intense persecution is anger of Satan due to his defeat and expulsion from heaven and the knowledge of the limited time available.

## Applications

1. Satan is a deceiver - be aware of his tactics.
2. Christ is our advocate - no sin will he not defend us [not a license to sin; but not to be afraid of Satan].
3. Witness for Christ is more precious than life on this earth.

### 17.2.3 Dragon's pursuit of the woman (12:13-18)

**Overview:** The text gives additional reasons for the dragon's pursuit of the woman: his expulsion from heaven, resulting limited time available to pour out his vengeance to the Israel, flight and protection of the woman.

**12:13.** And when the dragon saw that he had been cast into the earth, he pursued the woman who had given birth to the male.

**And when:** the explicit reason for the woman's flight (v 6) is the dragon's anger for giving birth to the child. Dragon could not hurt the child and hence indirectly tries to hurt the child by hurting the mother.

**Pursued:** many past incidents resembles the pursue of the dragon: [i] drowning the male child in the Nile, [ii] pursuit by Pharaoh, [iii] AD 64 flight due to Roman persecution. Similarly the deliverances in the past includes: [i] carrying on eagle's wings and [ii] nourishment by God. However, the present description does not match any of the earlier incidents. Hence, the flight must be a literal flight in the future as predicted by Jesus (*Du 32:11; Du 8:16; Mt 24:15-28; Mk 13:14-23*).

**12:14.** But two wings of a great eagle were given to the woman, that she might fly into the wilderness into her place, where she is nourished there a time and times and half a time from the presence of the serpent.

1. **But . . . were given:** This explains how God gave the woman a means of escape which surpasses all the efforts of the dragon to defeat the woman.
2. **Eagle's wing:** This denotes the characteristic strength and swiftness with which God delivers the woman as He did in the past. The terminology here is that of God's protection (*Ex 19:4; Du 32:11; Ps 91:1-4*).
3. **Fly into wilderness:** This is a literal flight as told by Jesus. The location is not specified except that it is place of refuge. (*Mt 24:16*).
4. **Nourishment:** God who provided manna to the Israelite will also provide here. Note that no one will be able to buy or sell during this period (13:17).



5. **Time, times and half a time:** refers to the second half of the tribulation period or the period of the great tribulation (*Mt 14:21; Re 11:2, 3; 12:6; 13:5; Dan 7:25; 12:7*)

**12:15. And the serpent cast from his mouth water as a river behind the woman, that he might make her [to be] swallowed up by the river.**

1. **Water as river:** Since the serpent could not pursue the woman, he attempted to impose harm by drowning her. The destruction could be due to literal water or the hot pursuit by an army (*Jer 46:7-8; Jer 47:2-3*).

**12:16. And the earth helped the woman, and the earth opened its mouth and drank the river which the dragon cast from his mouth.**

**Earth opened:** Another supernatural provision protects the woman. OT speaks similar incidents (*Ex 15:12; Nu 16:30; Nu 26:10; Du 11:6; Ps 106:17*);

**Earth opened the mouth:** this may be an earthquake which drains all the water (or the army) sent by the dragon to drown the woman.

**12:17. And the dragon was enraged at the woman, and went away to make war with the rest of her seed, who keep the commandments of God and have the testimony of Jesus;**

1. **Enraged:** the divine protection given to the woman all the more enraged the dragon, but all he could do was to direct it to the woman. The dragon was more angry because after the child was taken to heaven, dragon as cast out of heaven, and now the woman is protected.
2. **The rest of her seed:** these are the ones who did not go to the wilderness but may be scattered followers of Christ. This remnant will have war with the beast (13:7). Most likely this group is the 144000 witness of Rev 7. Observe the continuity of 12:1 to 14:5, and the mention of them in 12:18; 13:1, 11. (*Da 7:21*).
3. **Keep the commandments of God:** this group has Jewish lineage and has a special mission to be slaves of God (7:3) who obey His commandments and to bear testimony to Jesus by following the truths He taught. Their aggressive witness also makes them the target of the dragon.

**12:18. and he stood on the sands of the sea.**

1. **Stood:** unable to reach the woman, he prepares to call his wicked followers into a war.
2. **Sea:** connecting Dan 7:2-3 with Rev 11:7; 13:1, and 17:18, the sea could be the bottomless pit. *Dan 7:2-3*

# Chapter 18

## Background Concluded and Introductory Episodes for the Seven Bowls (13:1-14:20)

### 18.1 The Beast Out of the Sea (13:1-10)

#### A Characteristics of the beast (13:1-4)

**13:1.** And I saw a beast coming up out of the sea, having ten horns and seven heads, and upon his horns were ten diadems, and upon his heads names of blasphemy.

1. **And I saw:** with the dragon in position (12:18), the next scene tells how the dragon is preparing for the war with the seed of the woman. In this section, the seed of the woman refers to the saints (13:7).
2. **Sea:** although the text points to a literal sea, connecting 11:7 and 17:8, the sea refers to the abyss. Abyss is the source of demonic powers opposed to God. Many OT portions connect sea, abyss, and the sea monsters to the demonic forces, for e.g. Is 27:1.
3. **Beast:** as noted in 11:7, it denotes a ferocious creature which stands for chaos against order, evil against good, and death against life. The beast must be a malevolent personal figure as well as the head of an empire. Beast is not the ancient Roman empire, but related to the end time revived Roman empire as prophesied by Daniel (Da 2:40-45; Da 7:23-25). Beast is a person who is also the ruler of that end time empire and is identified as anti-Christ. Observe the parallelism with the person of Christ: [i] both are individuals (13:8; 17:8), [ii] name written on the followers of both

(13:16-17; 14:1), [iii] both have horns (5:6; 13:1), [iv] are slain (13:3, 8); and [v] both have power over the world (1:5; 7:9; 13:7; 17:12). So the beast is the end time revived Roman empire and also the end time false Christ.

4. **Ten horns ... seven heads:** horns are emblems of power. Final seventh head is the last empire and ten horns are the ten kings (kingdom) in that empire. Diadems (crowns) on the ten horns indicate that the power is now with the ten horns (12:3, 13:1). Now the focus is shifted to the seventh empire. Here the beast has supremacy over the ten kings (17:10-12, Da 7:7, 24). These empires are Egypt, Assyria, Babylon, Medo-Persia, Greece, Rome, and the end-time revived Roman empire. The last one has ten horns representing ten simultaneous kingdoms (Da 7:16-24). *Note* that horn is either a king (Da 7:24) or a dynasty of kings (8:3, 6). Diadem (crown) represent power, authority, and victory.
5. **Blasphemy:** beast assumes deity and details of his actions are given in 13:5-6. Many of the Romans emperor's consider themselves as god and can be considered as the shadow of this, but the culmination of the blasphemy is by the beast during the period of great tribulation.

**13:2. And the beast which I saw was like a leopard, and his feet [were] as [those] of a bear, and his mouth [was] as the mouth of a lion. And the dragon gave to him his power and his throne and great authority.**

1. **Leopard ... Bear ... Lion:** beast is likened to leopard, bear and lion which naturally connects with Da 7:3-7. The fourth one is a combination of the first three. The restored Roman empire will have the combined strength and brutality of three empires. Leopard is known for cat like vigilance and fierce cruelty. Bear is known for the feet that crushes its enemies. Lion has roaring that paralyzes enemies with fear. This is what saints will face during the great tribulation Ho 13:7-8.
2. **Power:** dragon gives power and authority to the beast. War belongs to Satan, but his proxy is the beast. Satan claims to have authority (Mt 4:9; Lk 4:6). Just as Jesus shares the throne with Father, the beast shares the throne with dragon.

**13:3. And [I saw] one of his heads as slain unto death, and the wound of his death was healed. And the whole earth marveled after the beast,**

1. **As slain unto death:** similar to 5:6 where the Lamb carried the scars of death. But, here it is *as slain* indicates it is the dragon's attempt to counterfeit the death and resurrection of Christ.
2. **Healed:** The dragon will do a counterfeit work on the the beast (the false Christ) with something similar to the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. It is possible that it could be a supernatural one which God may permit, or most likely it can be through deception.

3. **Marvelled:** The healing of the beast will bring world-wide admiration not only in Israel, but to the whole world.

**13:4. and worshipped the dragon-because he gave great authority to the beast-and worshipped the beast saying, "Who is like the best, and who can make war with him?"**

1. **Worship of dragon:** explicitly mentioned only here, but the worship of beast occurs several places (13:8, 12; 14:9, 11; 20:4) and worship of his image (13:15; 14:9, 11; 16:2; 19:20). Worship of dragon is same as the worship of beast and vice verse.
2. **Who is like the beast:** he is incomparable and is a mocking statement about God (Ex 15:11; Ps 113:5; Is 40:18). This is expected since Paul prophesied it explicitly (2Th 2:4).
3. **Who can make war:** his brute force derived from dragon makes him invincible. The implies answer to the question is no one. However, it will be answered and the Lamb is more than able to take the task of challenging the beast (14:1-5; 17:14; 19:11-21).

**B Activities of the beast (13:5-8)**

**13:5. And a mouth speaking great things, even blasphemies against God, was given to him and authority to continue forty-two months was given to him.**

1. **vv 5-8:** the two fold activities of the beast: [i] blasphemy toward God, and [ii] deception of people. Both resembles the activities of the little horn in Da 7:25. Here, the providence of God is shown to the saints by calling them to endure only for a while when God allows the beast to persecute, that too with limited degree of authority. This authority is not from the dragon: if it were so, then beast would not have limited the operation to 42 months.
2. **Was given (edothē):** it implies the authority was granted by God (see 6:4, 8; 7:2; 9:5). God allows the beast to blaspheme for a limited time, but still hold him accountable. One of the greatest lessons in Daniel from which John draws so heavily is the sovereignty of God over the world governments (Da 4:17).
3. **A mouth speaking great things:** the beast will appropriate the name and attributes of God to himself including blasphemies against God.
4. **Forty-two months:** frantic activity will mark the behaviour of the beast for this period. It will be allowed to continue for the last half of Daniel's seventieth week (11:2-3; 12:6, 13; Da 7:25-27; 12:7).

**13:6. And he opened his mouth for blasphemies against God, to blaspheme His name and His tabernacle, those who tabernacle in heaven.**

1. **He opened:** the tense indicate that blasphemy is a continuing characteristic of the beast. He utters the ultimate in unbelief and disrespect for God as he magnifies himself above all and claims to be the sovereign. In this he resembles the man in Da 11:36-45.
2. **Blasphemies against God:** it is to demean the name of God directly or appropriating it for oneself. Blaspheming *the tabernacle* of God is derogatory speech about His heavenly dwelling place (7:15; 12:12; 21:3).
3. **Those who tabernacle in heaven:** who are they? Unlikely options include the saints on the earth, saints in heaven, or all angels in heaven. The context of the special animosity of the beast against the inhabitant's of the heaven strongly suggest them to be members of the angelic army who joined their leader Michael in expelling the dragon from heaven (12:7-9, 12).

**13:7. And it was given to him to make war with saints to overcome them, and authority over every tribe and people and tongue and nation was given to him.**

1. **Make war ... to overcome:** the concept is same as that of Da 7:21 where the dismal prospect is counter balanced with the consolation of Da 7:22. Overcoming the saints in this case is a termination of their physical lives (13:15). Overcome is ironic here, because it is the martyrs who will be the victors at the end (12:11; 14:1-5; 17:14).
2. **Authority was given:** beast's God-permitted authority over every lineage, nation, language group, and radical group is explicitly worldwide in its scope. Note the use of *the whole earth* in Da 7:23. The lamb died to redeem people from the same four groups as this ruler will dominate politically (5:9). The all-inclusive scope of this statement prohibits an application of it to any past ruler or empire.

**13:8. And all those who dwell upon the earth will worship him, whose name are not written from the foundation of the world in the book of life from the Lamb slain.**

1. **All ... will worship him:** the beast will have almost universal success in attracting worshippers. The only limiting factor will be the refusal of the elect to comply (Mt 24:24). Universal worship of the beast will be the ultimate achievement of those seeking one world wide religion as they withhold from the true God His central place.
2. **Him:** this masculine pronoun confirms that the beast must be a person as well as a kingdom. That is, this agent of the dragon is a living king.
3. **Those who dwell upon the earth:** they are the enemies of God who will play a role in earth's last days (3:10; 6:10; 8:13; 11:10; 13:14; 17:8). Their hardness against God has been apparent already, but here their allegiance to and worship of the beast is evident.

4. **Are not written:** a characteristics of the earth-dweller is the absence of their names in the Lamb's Book of Life. It is a permanent state of affairs: their names does not remain written. This is the permanent incapacity for life in those who have chosen to lay up treasure on earth and worship the beast. The removal of names from the Book of Life at 3:5 opts the meaning: their names have been removed because of disbelief and consequent disobedience. Name of all were originally in the book. Those how believe on Jesus, their names will remain. Those who do not believe, their names will be removed at the time of death. (See Ex 32:32-33; Ps 69:28; Ph 4:3; Rev 3:5; 17:8; 20:12, 15; 21:27).
5. **Lamb's:** the earth-dwellers have chosen to worship the beast instead of the Lamb. That is why their names have been permanently removed from the book. Note the characteristics of the Lamb:
  - (a) only one qualified to open the seals (5:6-12),
  - (b) slain to redeem men to God (5:9),
  - (c) people hide themselves from His wrath (6:16),
  - (d) blood has cleansing power (7:14),
  - (e) receives worship as God (7:10),
  - (f) marriage supper will be celebrated (19:7, 9), and
  - (g) the city of God is illuminated by Him (21:14, 23).
6. **From the foundation of the world:** it occurs in Mt 13:35; Mt 25:34; Lk 11:50; He 4:3; He 9:26; and Re 17:8. Similar expression of *before* the foundation of the world also occur in Jh 17:24; Ep 1:4; and 1Pe 1:20. All refer to the founding of the whole visible order. Here, the grammar suggests, it is the writing of the Book of Life is in view and not the slain of the Lamb. In conclusion, the elect are predestined to refrain from beast-worship and therefore suffer persecution.

## C Submission to the beast's persecution and divine providence (13:9-10)

### 13:9. If anyone has an ear, let him hear:

1. **Hear:** this call is an instruction on how are the persecuted saints to respond to their persecution. This call to hear differs slightly from the earlier ones (2:7, 11, 17, 29; 3:6, 13, 22) where it was explicitly mentioned to the churches. The omission of the church here is due to the promise of 3:10 that church will not go through the tribulation. The call here is to a different group of the faithful telling them what their response should be to the awful treatment at the hand of the beast. The call is to endure in their faith and not given in to the oppressor.

**13:10.** If anyone is for captivity, into captivity he departs; If anyone is to be killed by the sword, [it is necessary for] him to be killed by the sword, Here is the endurance and the faithfulness of the saints.

1. **If anyone:** it is a warning to the saints of the impending persecution by the beast and urging them to submit to the divine providence. Persecution and death for the faithful is inevitable. Faithful should understand that the action of the this false Christ have been decreed by God, as indicated in the four fold use of *edothē* (13:5, 7, 14, 15). This meaning also coincide with the emphasis on divine providence in OT (Je 15:2; Je 43:11).
2. **Endurance and faithfulness:** these are the personal qualities needed to sustain a believer in the face of the harsh treatment. It focuses on the attitude of submission to the inevitable. It implies the supremacy of God's will which always promotes the ultimate good and blessing of the redeemed though it may include times of temporary hardship.
3. **Endurance (hypomone):** this characterizes John and his contemporaries in their persecution and receives commendation from the Lord (1:9; 2:2, 3, 19; 3:10).
4. **Faithfulness (pisti):** the word mostly translated as faith, and if the context demands then translated as faithfulness. Remembrance that God is sovereign over all that happens and that the dragon and the beast have only a short time, will provide fuel to sustain these two spiritual qualities.

## 18.2 The Beast Out of the Earth (or Land) (13:11–18)

**13:11.** And I saw another beast coming up out of the earth, and he had two horns like a lamb's, and he spoke like a dragon,

1. **Beast coming out of earth:** beast indicate that he is same kind as that of the earlier one. He is as ferocious as the earlier one. However, coming out of earth indicates a supporting or inferior role as the false prophet revealed later (16:13; 19:20; 20:10). *Identity of the beast:* note that this beast is an individual person as evident from 19:20 and 20:10. Still, many wrongly identify the beast as papal Rome, priests of Caesar (who opposed Christians), world-wide anti-God system, false prophets of Mt 24:24, etc. Correct identity is that this beast is the main religious assistant of the anti-Christ. The great tribulation period is characterized by counterfeits including the person and works of this beast. Examples include: [i] true prophets (two witnesses) of 11 and the false prophet of 13 (the beast out of the earth); [ii] performs signs (11:4; 13:12); [iii] has special power over fire (11:5; 13:13); [iv] connection with resurrection (11:11; 13:14-15); and [v] directs people to worship their master (11:13; 13:15).

2. **Two horns like lamb's:** the first beast has ten horns, but this beast has only two indicating less power. The beast is likened to a lamb showing the counterfeits work of the beast.
3. **Spoke like a dragon:** the beast's mannerism appears so gentle, but his words are satanic. What he lacks in power, he compensates for in cunning and corrupting influence.

**13:12. and he exercises all the authority of the first beast before him. And he causes the earth and those who dwell in it that they should worship the first beast, whose wound of death was healed.**

1. **He exercises:** this beast is the effective agent of the first beast. He exercise authority, forces worship, produces great signs, brings fire down from heaven, and causes people to receive the mark of the first beast. Note that the words exercise (12a), cause (12b, 16) and perform (13a) all have the same Greek word (*poieo*) and indicates the habitual practice of the beast in doing these things. This is a satanic imitation of the ministry of the Holy Spirit in pointing people to Christ.
2. **Before him:** all the activities of the second beast is fully with the approval of the first beast. This is similar to the association of Moses and Aaron (Ex 4:16; 7:9) and between the Lord and Elijah (1Ki 17:1).
3. **Causes the earth. . . :** all the inhabitants of the earth, including the faithful, will be pressurized to worship the beast (12:17; 13:7, 17).
4. **Wound of death was healed:** the miraculous healing of the first beast is the cause of worshipping it. This counterfeits the reason Christians have for worshipping the Lamb, His resurrection (Ac 17:30-31).

**13:13. And he does great signs, that he even makes fire come down out of heaven into the earth before men.**

1. **Great signs:** Jesus performs several signs in His public ministry, but also warned about the counterfeit signs of the false Christs (Mt 24:24-25, Mk 13:22, 2Th 2:9). The purpose of these signs is to obscure truth, to confuse people, and to win the wrong orientation for their inner allegiance. They will be pseudo-miracles or miracles with some supernatural elements and will almost deceive elect, but the faithful will recognize them for what they are performed and the doctrine that they seek to prove.
2. **Fire from heaven:** this reminds of how Elijah brought fire from heaven (1Ki 18:38; 2Ki 1:10-12) and John requested Jesus to bring fire from heaven (Lk 9:54).
3. :



**13:14. And he deceives those who dwell upon the earth because of the signs which it is granted him to do before the beast, saying to those who dwell upon the earth to make an image for the beast who has the wound of the sword and came to life.**

1. **He deceives:** is a frequent theme in the bible (Rev 2:20; 12:9; 18:23; 19:20; 20:3; 20:8; 20:10; 1Jh 2:26; 3:7; Mt 24:11; 24:24). Signs performed by the beast will cause many to worship the false god. The victims are the unregenerated humnity. His works are approved by the beast. He is constant and willing servant of the first beast.
2. **Saying ... to make:** commanding the people to make the image of the first best. Image appears tem time in the book (13:15; 14:9; 14:11; 15:2; 16:2; 19:20; 20:4). This must be a statue to which people must bow down (Da 3:4-6).
3. **Came to life:** the first beast came to life from the mortal wound. It is similar to the resurrection of Jesus (2:8). The resurrection here is an explanation of the healing of 13:3 and 13:12.

**13:15. And it was given to him to give birth to the image of the beast, that the image of the beast might both speak and cause that as many as do not worship the image of the beast be killed.**

1. **It was given:** the second beast has remarkable power on behalf of the first beast. God alone can give life. Here too God alone permitted this act, which could be real or psuedo sign (Ac 13:6-12; Ac 16:16; Ac 19:13-20).
2. **Do not worship:** like the situation faced by Daniel's friends (Da 3:1-11), the faithful also will face life thretenig situation for not worhipping the image. Worship of the beast and his image is associated with receiving his mark as v16. Receiving the mark is impossible without the act of worship (14:9, 11; 16:2; 19:20; 20:4).
3. **Be killed:** this is not complete wipe of the faithful. The womans espace and protection from the dragon (12:13-16) show that the Messianic community in the wilderness will survive unharmed. The rest of the woman's seed will bear the brunt of this massacre. They are destined from greater glory (14:1-5). They are the exception to the *whole earth* becaue they remain I

**13:16. And he causes all, the small and the great, and the rich and the poor, and the free and the slaves, that they give to them a mark upon their right hand or upon their forehead,**

1. **Cause all:** the second beast adds the obligation of receiving a visionbe mark of the first beast to that of worshipping his image. The whole population will be pressurised to receive this symbol.

2. **Mark (charagma)**: just as the elect receives a seal to protect them from the coming of the wrath of God (7:?), so the followers of the beast receive the mark to escape his against the followers of the Lamb. The mark must be some sort of branding similar to that given to soldiers, slaves, and temple devotees in John's day. The term *charagma* was related to the images or names of emperors on Roman coins. Similarly, it could be the emblem of the beast on people. The mark indicates loyalty, ownership, and protection just as the seal given to the slave of God.

3. :

**13:17. and that no one may buy or sell except the one who has the mark, the name of the beast or the number of his name.**

1. :

2. :

3. :

**13:18. Here is wisdom: let the one who has understanding count the number of the beast, for it is the number of man; and his number is six hundred and sixty-six.**

1. :

2. :

3. :

## 18.3 The Victorious Followers of the Lamb (14:1–5)

Chapter 14 consists of three scenes: [i] Lamb on the Mount Zion (1-5), [ii] Four announcements about the coming period (6-13), [iii] Harvest and the vintage (14-20).

**14:1. And I looked, and behold, the Lamb standing on Mount Zion, and with Him one hundred forty-four thousand having His name and the name of His Father written on their foreheads.**

1. **And I looked**: it calls for special attention to the events to follow (16:17-22:5). It also contrasts the victory of the Lamb and His followers after the initial setback. It further serves as an encouragement to those who refuse the beast's mark and a prediction of the destruction of those who receive it.

2. **The Lamb** receives the centre of attention. Lamb is symbolic of meekness, sacrificial death, resurrection, and ultimate victory of Jesus. Note the contrasts: [i] ferocity of the beast to the gentleness of the Lamb, and [ii] beast arising from the unstable sea/sand to the firm standing of the Lamb on the Rock. the
3. **Mount Zion** refers to the physical location of the mountain and not figurative for the heaven or new heavenly city. Reasons include: [i] temple of 11:1 was on the mountain, [ii] close connection to Ps 2:6, [iii] the group connected to literal Jews, [iv] Zion appears 162 times in the Bible and almost every time refers to literal Zion, and [v] prophetic expectation points a literal Zion (Ps 48:1-2; Is 11:9-12; Is 24:23; Joel 2:32). It is possible that Mt. Zion can be used figuratively elsewhere in the Bible (Gal 4:26; Heb 12:22).
4. **The 144000**: They are same as the group in 7:1-8 who were selected from the 12 tribes of Israel. Note: [i] they are sealed implies that they will not face the wrath of God; and [ii] they serve the Lamb by their witness and refusing to embrace the lies of the beast, [iii] they might even receive martyrdom for their refusal to bear the mark of the beast (13:15).

**14:2. And I heard a voice from heaven like a voice of many waters and like a sound of great thunder, and the voice which I heard was like harpers playing on their harps.**

1. **Heard a voice**: this voice is not the voice of the saints since [i] they are the learners of the song and not the singers, and [ii] they are on the earth while the song is from heaven. The singers are probably a loud angelic chorus similar to 5:11.
2. **Many waters . . . harpers**: The voice is from heaven and might be from God or angels (Ezk 1:24; 43:2; Dan 10:6; Rev 1:15; 19:6). The voice was loud and at the same time melodious too.

**14:3. And they sing [something] [like] a new song before the throne and before the four living beings and the elders; and no one was able to learn the song except the one hundred forty-four thousand, who were redeemed from the earth.**

1. **They sing like**: The song has lyrics and intelligible to the group. Song indicate joy in heaven over redemption of the saints. The singers are the angelic community, though they don't experience redemption; but they are deeply interested in the subject (Lk 15:7; Ep 3:10; 1Pe 1:12).
2. **New song**: It resembles the victory song of the Israelite delivered from Egypt (Ex 15:1-18). The new song in Revelation is in celebration of the new age about to be inaugurated, a victory based on the sacrificial work of the Lamb
3. **Learn the song**: Only this group is able to learn the song because they are spiritually mature.

4. **Who were redeemed:** Their redemption is due to the blood of the Lamb. They now enjoy the liberation from the beast and earth dwellers.

**14:4. And these are those who have not been defiled with women, for they are virgins. These are the ones who follow the Lamb wherever He goes. These were redeemed from men, a contribution to God and to the Lamb,**

1. **These are those:** The group exhibited high spiritual standards in the midst of all religious chaos. The grammar indicates the permanent nature of their character.
2. **Been defiled:** Literal meaning is preferred here although relating with woman causes defilement. Note that defilement is not same as sinful in OT. Complete dedication during the tribulation time is necessary (1Co 7:26). They all are men as they have to face prison and even death. If Paul could forbid a woman to teach in the local church assembly (1Ti 2:12). John could just as well judge that resistance to the beast require a male witnesses.
3. **Virgins:** Figurative meaning indicating moral purity is possible like in 2Co 11:2. But John here speaks of standards higher than moral purity. He says that sexual intercourse of any type defiles in the sense that it detracts from the purity of the sacrifice necessary in these times of special stress. So they are celibates as demanded by the peculiar situation. Note that Jesus spoke approvingly of eunuchs (Mt 19:12). and Paul wished all men to have the gift of continence or self-control (1Co 7:1, 32). This is a special holiness of the 144,000 that dictates an entire abstinence because of the nature of the last times. This in no way degrades the institution of marriage, but is in special recognition of the critical times through which this group must pass.
4. **Who follow:** Their past habit was the persistence in following the Lamb. Our Lord wants His faithful to follow Him (Jh 12:26). Their obedience has now given them a special privilege of being with Him in the inauguration of the millennium.
5. **Redeemed. . . a contribution:** They are the first set of people redeemed during the seven year period. They are hence the first set of Israelite turning to their Messiah. However, the word *aparche* translated as first fruits indicates a contribution to the Lord which is of high spiritual quality. This enabled them to accomplish their special mission.

**14:5. and in their mouth a lie was not found; they are blameless.**

1. **Lie:** They are characterized by honesty contrasting the lies spread by the beast and believed by the earth dwellers. They have resisted in believing the lies and deception of the beast and exhibited superior truthfulness.
2. **Blameless:** refers to the blamelessness of Christ as in 1Pe 1:19 and He 9:14 and to the blamelessness of Christians in Ph 2:15 and Jude 24. Behind all these usages lies

the OT Levitical term for sacrifices without flaw and therefore fit to be offered. These were sacrificially perfect. They lacked any insincerity or duplicity that would make their self-consecration unacceptable to God.

**MAC Notes Introduction:** [i] Victory of the Lamb and His faithful is the theme here; [ii] Best Christians were produced in the worst time (each of these 144000 are like Daniel or Paul); [iii] Lord honours His faithful by participating in His eternal purposes. This becomes a motivation for Christian living. **1. Power** (v1): They are protected and preserved by the power of God and God owns them. **2. Praise** (v2,3): is the hall mark of victorious Christian living. Joy is the proper response of a heart that trust in God's sovereign power (1Pet 4:13). **3. Purity** (v4a): maintaining sexual purity is very important secret of victorious Christian living (1The 4:3; 2Tim 2:22; 1Cor 6:18). **4. Partnership** (v4b): They followed the Lord everywhere and in all circumstances. **5. Purpose** (v4c): They know why they have been redeemed. They are clear about the goal of their life which is to be the witnesses of Christ. **6. Precision** (v5a): They accurately proclaim the word of God and spoke the truth in Love. **7. Perfection** (v5b): They are blameless and above reproach (does not imply sinlessness, but in a practical sense no one could find fault in them).

## 18.4 Four Climactic Announcements (14:6–13)

The next scene consists of [i] the everlasting gospel (6-7), [ii] the fall of Babylon (8), [iii] the eternal torment (9-12), and [iv] the blessing of the martyrs. All these four announcements serve as incentives to give glory to God by remaining faithful to the Lamb and resisting the tactics of the beast.

### 18.4.1 The Everlasting Gospel (14:6–7)

**14:6. And I saw another angel flying in midheaven, having an eternal gospel to preach to those who sit upon the earth, even to every nation and tribe and tongue and people,**

- 1. Another angel:** The angel is the first of six to participate in the announcements and enactments of this chapter (8, 9, 15, 17, 18). The identity of this angel is linked to the Michael and his angels of 12:7. This angel is another one beside Michael.
- 2. Flying in midheaven:** The angel was in the sight of all and his announcement was audible to all
- 3. Sit upon the earth:** It refers to all the people of the earth which includes both the faithful and followers of the beast.

**14:7. saying with a loud voice, "Fear God and give Him glory, because the hour of His judgment has come, and worship the one who made the heaven and the earth and sea and fountains of waters."**

1. **Loud voice:** The announcement is intentionally made loud so that all will be able hear the content of the gospel. The word also refers to the urgency and concern.
2. **Fear God:** Here, there is no command to believe, but only to fear God who brings judgment. Its appeal is specially to pagans who are incapable of understanding anything else about God except their accountability to Him (Rom 1:32). To fear God requires self-humiliation and self-surrender to Him. Same idea is found in OT (Ecc 12:13) and in NT (Luk 12:5). This fear is the inner state of those who are faithful to Christ.
3. **Give God the glory:** It is an idiom for repentance, acknowledging His attributes, recognize Him as God, refusing the claims of the dragon and the beast, etc. The context suggests, giving glory to God is to reverse the state in the previous chapter.
4. **Because the hour of His judgment has come:** The reason to fear God is the proximity of His judgment. The construct in Greek, indicates that this judgment is definitely going to happen soon and it points to a specific time rather than a season. This is the very last chance for the humanity to accept God.
5. **Heaven and the earth and . . . :** This call is the entire humanity and no one is excluded for He is the creator and He has the right to judge.

## 18.4.2 The Fall of Babylon (14:8)

**14:8. And another angel, a second one, followed saying, "Babylon the great has fallen, has fallen, who made all nations drink of the wine of the anger of her fornication.**

1. **Second angel:** The committing of each new announcement to a new angel increases the dramatic animation of the scene (Alford, Lee). The announcement of each angel builds upon the message of his predecessor, implying a consequence of that message. In this instance, the declaration of the fall of Babylon intimates a rejection of the everlasting gospel just preached.
2. **Followed:** It alludes to Isa 21:9 and it carries an idea of tragic end. The tense indicates the imminence and certainty of the fall. The tense also views a future event as so certain that it is as though it were already accomplished. E.g. include 10:7; 11:18; 18:2.
3. **Babylon the great:** It is an anticipatory announcement about the fate of Babylon. This city is the object of the last bowl judgment (16:17-18:24). The announcement assumes readers have a prior knowledge of the city. The use of Babylon here can be identified as: [i] a code name for Jerusalem, [ii] a symbolic of those who worship the beast, [iii] a code name for Rome (1Pet 5:13) - the basis for this is that the Babylon was the enemy of Israel just as Rome was to the church, and [iv] papacy. Each of them has some merit, but John uses literal cities in chapter 2 and 3 and when figure

of speech is used it is explicitly mentioned as in 11:8. Hence, the best solution is to assign Babylon its literal significance of the city on the Euphrates by that name. A reference to the literal city does not exclude further implications regarding political and religious systems connected with the city. What the literal city stands for will become more conspicuous in John's further discussion of it in chapters 17-18. Nebuchadnezzar refers this city as a great city (Dan 4:30) and John follows this (16:19; 17:5; 18:2, 10, 21).

4. **Who made ... nations to drink:** Corrupting the nations is the reason for this fall. She *made all nations drink* is another way of saying she exercised coercive power over earth's inhabitants in causing them to choose a path that they in no way would have chosen without her influence.
5. **The wine of the anger of her fornication:** Two concepts are conveyed: (1) the wine that the prostitute gives to intoxicate in seducing someone to fornication (17:2, 4) and (2) the cup of God's wrath that He gives to those whom He will severely punish (14:10). Acceptance of Babylon's wine of fornication entails the drinking of God's wine of wrath. They are inseparable. The imagery here corresponds to that of Jer 51:6-7. These ideas will be developed in later chapters. The wine of Babylon is a symbol for not only sexual licentiousness, but every kind of excess that expresses unfaithfulness to God. It eventually turns into the wine of God's wrath (Psa 60:3; 75:8; Isa 51:17, 22).

### 18.4.3 The Torment of the Beast Worshipers (14:9–12)

**14:9. And another angel, a third one, followed them saying with a loud voice, "If anyone worships the beast and his image, and receives the mark upon his forehead or upon his hand,**

1. **Another angel, a third one:** The verses 9-12 is a counter proclamation warning those who are tempted by the threats of the beast to receive the mark (13:11-17). The goal is the persuade the potential beast worshippers to the Lamb and to encourage the faithful to remain faithful.
2. **Followed:** The progression of the first three announcements is from the compulsory fear and worship of God to the fall of Babylon that prompts that fear and worship to the eternal punishment decreed for those who reject the truth
3. **Loud voice:** Just like the first angel, the third also speaks in loud voice indicating the urgency or importance of this message.
4. **Worship the beast ... receive the marks:** The warning of this angel is toward the beast worshippers. Receiving the mark also amounts to worshipping the beast. Note that our actions has a close association with what we believe.

**14:10. to even he himself will drink of the wine of the anger of God which is mixed unmixed in the cup of His wrath, and he shall be tormented in fire and brimstone before the holy angels and before the Lamb.**

1. **Even he himself:** Every person who follow the beast are individually responsible of his act.
2. **Drink the anger of God:** In spite of the adverse situation, receiving the mark of the beast is disastrous. These words indicate the fury and the intensity of God's anger.
3. **Mixed unmixed:** It is like wine mixed with strong spices and undiluted by water which has strong concentration. Its intoxicating effect is much greater (Psa 75:8; Jer 25:15). Note also that while the faith of God receives open recognition, the unfaithful will receive public punishment.

**14:11. And the smoke of their torment ascends forever and ever, and they do not have rest day and night, who worship the beast and his image, and if anyone receives the mark of his name.**

1. **Smoke of the torment:** Smoke is sign of God's punishment (Gen 19:28; Rev 19:3). They will be tormented by unknown agents.
2. **Forever and ever:** It expresses the eternal existence of God (4:9, 10; 7:12; 10:6; 15:7) and of Christ (1:18), God's eternal reign (11:15), the eternal glory of the Lamb (5:13), the eternal reign of believers (22:5), the eternal doom of the devil (20:10), and the eternal torment of the lost (here and 19:3). This torment will never end. This doctrine is unacceptable to human sensitivity. Nevertheless, it stands, not just on the word of one NT writer, but of Jesus and other writers (Mat 25:46; Rom 2:3-9; 2The 1:6-9). This truth is not appealing, but it communicates sober reality. No kind of semantic manipulation or recourse to symbolic language can erase the fact of eternal punishment conveyed in this announcement. This is the most horrible picture of eternal punishment in the entirety of Revelation.
3. **They do not have rest day and night:** is similar to 4:8 to describe the ceaseless worship by the living beings. That is voluntary, but this is involuntary. The unfaithful must pay a different kind of tribute to the one whose power he once ignored.

**14:12. Here is the endurance of the saints, who keep the commandments of God and the faith of Jesus.**

1. **Endurance:** This one is an admonition to steadfastness and comes as a warning to the weak who may contemplate defecting to beast-worship and as an encouragement to the faithful to persevere. It is better to be killed by the beast than to suffer eternal torment with him.



2. **Keep the commandments and faith:** The connection of the commandments with *the faith* shows that obedience is not a requirement for sonship, but the result of it. The people of God must have a living faith in Jesus to keep them obedient and sustain them under the severe pressures of persecution.

## 18.4.4 The Blessedness of Those Dying in the Lord (14:13)

**14:13.** And I heard a voice from heaven saying, "Write: Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord from now." "Yes," says the Spirit, "that they shall rest from their labors; for their works follow with them."

1. **Write:** John is already writing as per earlier command (1:11, 19), but here it shows the Lord's concern for the faithful.
2. **Blessed:** Loyalty to Christ under the beast's reign will mean inevitable death for many (13:15), so John moves immediately from his exhortation to loyalty to speak of the blessedness of those who experience a martyr's death. He is to write the second of seven beatitudes (*macarisms*) in Revelation (1:3; 16:15; 19:9; 20:6; 22:7, 14). Blessedness is an assurance of a future reward for present obedience to God. A special and unique blessing to the martyrs. This adds a further motive for endurance to that of the judgment of the wicked.
3. **Says the Spirit:** The Spirit adds His affirmation in response to the blessing just pronounced. This is the only direct utterance of the Spirit in the Apocalypse except for 22:17. As with the invitation in the seven messages (2:7, 11, 17, 29; 3:6, 13, 22), the Spirit identifies with the speaker of the preceding words, whether God or Christ.
4. **Rest from the labour:** Dying in the Lord consists of resting from one's labors. Hence, it is blessed to die. Here is the direct opposite of the beast worshipers who will have no rest day or night. Things are comfortable for the beast worshippers till the grace, but the state changes after the grave. The saints will rest from their troubles and harsh treatment, but at death, the troubles of their antagonists will begin and never end. The labour include not just deeds, but spiritual attitude, steadfastness of faith, obedience to the commands of God, and firm resistance to the pressures of the false Christ. No one can separate a person from what he has done, even after death. Their works will not be in vain, because the Lord will remember and reward them (1 Tim. 5:24-25; Heb. 6:10)

## 18.5 The Harvest and the Vintage (14:14–20)

**14:14.** And I looked, and behold, a white cloud, and upon the cloud one sitting like the Son of Man, having upon his head a golden crown and in his hand a sharp sickle.

1. **And I looked and behold:** The scene has the picture of future judgment alluding to Joel 3:13.
2. **White cloud ...like the Son of Man:** Cloud accompanies Christ in His second advent (Dan 7:13-14; Mat 24:30). *Son of Man* is a title for Christ used often in the gospels in connection with Jesus' suffering, the glory of His Second Advent, and His right to judge the world (Mat 24:30; 26:64; Joh 5:27). Note that angel is not commanding but merely notifying the fulfillment of time.
3. **Crown:** It is a symbol of victory in the impending war over His enemies.
4. **Sharp sickle:** Sickle indicates the role Jesus is going to play when He come. It is symbol of harvest and vintage. The sickle is sharp and points to the swift and complete nature of the judgment.

**14:15. And another angel came out of the temple, crying with a loud voice to the one sitting upon the cloud, "Send your sickle and reap, because the hour to reap has come, because the harvest of the earth has become ripe."**

1. **Fourth angel:** This is the fourth angel. The first three announced the coming of the judgment and this one convey the command to execute it.
2. **Temple:** It is the abode of God and angels arrive from here. The initiative to cleanse the earth originate from here.
3. **Send:** The object of sending is to harvest the wicked to punish them. The sharp sickle speaks of the severity of the judgment. Note that the next angel also have the same object. Both angels action highlights the terror. This picture is similar to Joel 3:13.

**14:16. And the one sitting upon the cloud cast his sickle upon the earth, and the earth was reaped.**

1. **Cast His sickle:** Responding to angelic signal, the Son of Man cast His sickle into the earth and reaped it.
2. **Earth ... earth:** The object of this harvest is those who dwell on the earth.

**14:17. And another angel came out from the temple which is in heaven, himself having also a sharp sickle.**

1. **Fifth angel:** This is the fifth angel and he portrays the future judgment as vintage. He also comes from heaven. Christ did the harvest and this angel collect the crop. The climax of the scene is the fathering of the grapes (v19) and then treading of the wine press (v20).

**14:18.** And another angel [came out] from the altar, [who] had authority- ty over the fire, and he called with a loud voice to the one who had the sharp sickle, saying, "Send your sharp sickle and gather in the clusters of the vineyard of the earth, because her bunches of grapes are ripe."

1. **Sixth angel:** This angel announced the arrival of the appointed time to gather grapes.
2. **Came from alter:** the judgment of God proceeded from the alter elsewhere also (6:9; 8:3; 16:17).
3. **Authority over fire:** This angel is minister of wrath responding to the prayer of the saints. It is probable that this angle is the one we saw in 8:3.
4. **Send ...gather:** These words indicate that it is time for the vintage (crop) to begin.
5. **Clusters of ...:** Just as God's people are His vineyard to produce the fruit of righteousness, the earth's people are another vineyard that produces evil fruit.
6. **Grapes are ripe:** The fruit of evil has now reached the point of ripeness. The time for the harvest has come. It is time to extract the effects of the growth in wickedness.

**14:19.** And the angel cast his sickle into the earth, and gathered the vineyard of the earth and cast [it] into the great wine press of the anger of God.

1. **Vineyard:** Vineyard normally points to Israel (Isa 5:1-7), but in this context, it refers to the enemies of God. Since the vineyard has produced wrong kind of fruits, they must be treaded (Isa 63:3, Lam 1:15; Joel 3:13). The redness of the juice, and the pressure applied to get it make this a very suitable picture of the diving judgment.

**14:20.** And the wine press was trodden down outside the city, and blood came out from the wine press up to the bridles of the horses from [a distance of] a thousand six hundred stadia.

1. **Trodden outside the city:** The vineyard account continue to give the gruesome outcome of the judgment process. The context strongly suggest that this city is Jerusalem. The OT predicts that the final battle will happen near there, in the valley of Jehoshaphat which is traditionally located in the area of the Kidron Valley (Joel 3:12-14; Zech 14:4).
2. **Blood came out:** It indicates again the gruesome nature of the judgment of God.
3. **Up to the bridle ...:** The depth of the blood and the land area covered are both indicative of a massive slaughter and loss of human life.
4. **1600 stadia:** This distance is the length of Palestine, approximately 184 miles. Also, the valley of Megiddo where the war will occur (16:16) is in the northern part of

Palestine and drains into the Jordan system. This allows the necessary distance for the prophecy to have a literal fulfillment. So the extended section preliminary to the seven bowls comes to its end on the somber note of judgment. This sets a sad but necessary tone for the entrance of the seven bowls of God's anger.

# Chapter 19

## The Seven Bowls or the Seven Last Plagues (15:1-16:21)

### 19.1 Rejoicing Over the Seven Last Plagues (15:1–4)

John starts his encounter with seven new angels whose responsibility is to dispense the seven bowl judgments (or the seven last plagues). Chapter 15 is an interlude to introduce pouring out of the seven bowls. There is a correspondence between chapter 24 and chapter 15-16. That is 15:2-4=14:1-5 and 15:1, 5, 16:1-21=14:6-11, 14-20. The chapter has two visions: [i] victors from the tribulation and [ii] seven angels holding seven bowls.

**15:1.** And I saw another sign in heaven, a great and marvelous one, seven angels having seven plagues, the last ones, because in them the anger of God was completed.

1. **Then:** It serves as an introduction to what is going to happen, especially in chapter 16.
2. **Another sign:** It is a song after the one in 12:1 and 12:3 referring to the woman (Israel) and the dragon (Satan). The sign of the woman was great; here it is great and marvellous. The combination is used in revelation only here and also in 15:3. This normally refers to God and His works. It is a divine awe. The completion of the wrath of God is a great and awesome thing. The plagues are great and should create fear considering its impact on nature, mankind, and the unholy triad.
3. **Seven plagues:** These angels have the duty of inflicting these plagues. Plagues are used in eschatological sense in this book and outside this book it refers to wounds. Angels normally are the agents of God in accomplishing His purposes

(Ps 103:20-21). Note that some of the plagues resembles the ones in Exodus 7-10. Further, crossing of the sea (16:12), the song of Moses (15:3), smoke of Sinai (15:8), and the erection of the tabernacle (15:5) also resembles OT events in Exodus. These similarities points to the similar purpose; that is to punish the world and deliver the faithful to promised land. These plagues are final. Note also that the seals and trumpets were also plagues (9:20). However, they serve as warning about the final judgments.

4. **Anger is completed:** This is a better translation and indicated the prophetic certainty of the future task from human perspective, but to God it is completed. Wrath is the anger of God shown towards sin.

**15:2. And I saw [something] like a sea of glass mixed with fire, and [I saw] those who overcame from the beast and from his image and from the number of his name, standing upon the sea of glass, having harps of God,**

1. **Ans I saw:** Contrasting the fate of the beast worshippers, the blessedness of the faithful is showing here. It is a scene of victory, peace, tranquility. The response of the faithful is reverent worship unlike the blasphemy of the worldly people (16:9, 11). Similar jubilant worship is seen earlier also in 11:15-18 and 14:1-5.
2. **Sea of Glass:** This is an emblem of the splendor and majesty of God. God is holy and is on the throne, and He is separated from all His creation (4:6).
3. **Mingled with fire:** Unlike the calmness of 4:6 (like crystal), fire points to the punishment of God which is about to come.
4. **Those who have victory:** Earlier the beast had victory over the faithful 13:7, and the saints remained faithful in spite of all the efforts of the beast. Now, they are victorious.
5. **Over beast ... image ... number:** All these words refers to the secret efforts of the false prophet to drive the faithful to the beast worship. But the saints prevailed in the midst of this sever persecution.
6. **Standing on the sea:** This is a picture of their standing before the throne of God.
7. **Harps:** Harps are found earlier with the heavenly being is now found with victors (5:8; 14:2). The only instruments found in the book of Revelation are the harps and trumpets. The refers to the dedication to the service of God (IChr 16:42).

**15:3. and they sang the song of Moses the slave of God and the song of the Lamb, saying, "Great and marvelous are Your works, Lord God Almighty; righteous and true are Your ways, King of the nations.**

1. **Song of Moses:** Moses wrote and sang a song in Deut 32 and this song has many similarities with it. However, the song of Moses in Exo 15 is more close to the current situation. Here the faithful are victorious (Rev 15:4; Exo 15:11).

2. **Song of the Lamb:** The article *the* distinguishes the song of the Lamb from the song of Moses. John expect the reader to recall the song of Moses. The song of Moses points to the historic deliverance of Israel from the Pharaoh. The song of the Lamb refers to the historical and ultimate spiritual victory the Lamb had on the dragon.
3. **Great and marvellous works:** Just like the Egyptians were punished, the current actions of the Lamb who brings punishment on His enemies and victory to the saints is really a great an marvelous work.
4. **Lord God Almighty:** Similar to 4:8 and 11:17 this refers to the omnipotence of God. This is all the more true in this context where He not only brings to nothing the works of the dragon; but also brings great plagues on them.
5. **Righteous and True:** The judgment of God is [perfectly grounded on justice and completely in accordance with truth (16:6; 19:2; Deut 32:4). God is true in keeping His promise of judging the rebellious humanity.
6. **King of the nations:** It is an assertion of the Lordship of Jesus over the nations (Ps 22:28; 47:2; 82:8)

**15:4. Who will not fear [You], Lord, and glorify Your name? because [You] only [are] holy, because all the nations will come and worship before You, because Your righteous acts have been manifest."**

1. **Who shall not fear you?:** The implied answer is that no one. Those who survived the plagues will all fear God. Contrast this will 13:4. Now all the nations will fear Him and worship Him (Ps 86:8-10; Jer 10:7; Phil 2:9-11)
2. **Glorify Your name:** Name indicate a total revelation of God; who He is, what He did, and what He will do.
3. **For You alone are Holy:** The first reason for worshipping the Lord is His holiness. The word holy here and 16:5 indicate that He is sacred, and undefined with sin. He is holy because of His unapproachable majesty.
4. **For all nations:** The second reason to worship His is because all the nations to come before Him. It is consistent with OT prophecies (Ps 2:8-9; Isa 2:2-4; Dan 7:14). Note that this will happen only when Christ come and confirms our understanding of revelation that the event of 4-22 are futuristic.
5. **For Your judgments:** The third reason why all will worship Jesus is the manifestation of His judgments or righteous acts. He purged earth for the hand of the dragon. Note that the over-comer do not sing about their own victory over the beast, but about the sovereignty, justice and glory of God.

## 19.2 Preparation for the Seven Last Plagues (15:5–8)

This section shows the immediate preparation for the last seven plagues and the key actor, the seven angels are already introduced in 15:1.

**15:5. And after these things I looked, and the temple of the tabernacle of testimony was opened in heaven,**

1. **And after these things I looked:** This phase in the book of revelation is an indication of the start of a new vision and the subject of the vision is something important. Here, the bowl judgment is in view.
2. **Temple:** This temple is neither the church nor the physical temple at Jerusalem. This temple is in heaven. However, the pattern John witnessed in heaven was similar to the earthly tabernacle (Ex 25:16,21; Heb 8:5).
3. **Tabernacle of testimony:** It is an evidence of God's faithfulness in keeping His covenant. The testimony refers to the written law of God which testified against sin. God is about to enforce these laws on the rebellious humanity.

**15:6. And the seven angels having the seven plagues went out of the temple, clothed in clean bright linen and girded about the breasts with golden girdles.**

1. **Clothed... girded:** These words are the same as the those used in 1:13.
2. **Linen:** The linen dress worn by the angels represent righteousness in action as it does with the bride of Lamb.
3. **Clean and bright:** These describe the inner purity of the angels and the outer garment.
4. **Golden girdles:** This was also referred in connection with the revelation of Christ in 1:18 and symbolizes their mission to judge.

**15:7. And one of the four living beings gave to the seven angels seven golden bowls filled with the anger of God who lives forever and ever.**

1. **And:** After leaving the temple the angels are now ready to receive the seven bowls.
2. **One of the living being:** Recall the role played by the four living being in the first four seals (6:1-8). They also had golden bowls in 5:8, however, there it was full of incense connected with the prayers of the saints for vindication (8:3-5). Here, the bowls are full of the wrath of God. Unlike the ones in 8:4, they do not exhale the smoke of gratefulness to God, but are full of poisonous, hot, bitter wine, from which emanates the divine majesty whose intense holiness breaks forth in judgment against human sin. This may allude to the cups in Isa 51:17. The heavenly temple is the source of these bowls that the living being gives to the seven angels.



3. **Filled with:** The bowls are full to the brim with the hot anger of God. The coming divine judgment is devastating and going to be the final one.
4. **Liver for ever and ever:** This contrast God from the beast and all other lifeless idols. Only a God who lives for ever could inflict wrath to the rebellious creation also forever.

**15:8. And the temple was filled with smoke from the glory of God and from His power, and no one could enter the temple until the seven plagues of the seven angels were finished.**

1. **Temple was filled:** With the bowls in the hands of the angle a transformation happens to the heaven which renders it inaccessible to none but God.
2. **Smoke:** Smoke is a symbol of God's presence especially highlighting His role as the initiator of judgments to come (Ex 19:18; 40:34ff; 1Kin 8:10-11; 2Chr 5:11-14; 7:1-3; Ezk 11:23; 44:4).
3. **No one could enter:** The smoke from the glory and power of God is so intense that no could enter the temple. Here, God is unapproachable when He is physically near and executing His wrath. Note that He is unapproachable only until the completion of the seven plagues.

## 19.3 The Seven Bowls or The Seven Last Plagues (16:1-21)

### 19.3.1 The First Bowl: Incurable sores on the beast worshippers (16:1-2)

**16:1. And I heard a loud voice from the temple saying to the seven angels, "Depart and pour out the seven bowls of the anger of God into the earth."**

1. **And I heard:** This phrase introduces a chapter in which the seven angels with the seven bowls receive and implement their instructions to dispense the contents of their bowls. The bowls occur in rapid succession, pausing only briefly between the third and fourth for a dialogue between the angel of the waters and the altar.
2. **Loud voice:** It is the voice of God as in 15:8, Matt 3:17; 17:5; John 12:28; 2 Pet 1:17-18. Isa 66:6 also tells of a voice from the temple initiating vengeance to the Lord's enemies
3. **Loud (megas) or great:** This is a frequent word in this chapter (1, 9, 12, 14, 18, 19, 19, 21, 21) and later we see in chapter 18 also. The word indicated the awesomeness of all these events culminating to the great and terrible Day of the Lord.

4. **Depart:** It is a command to angels to go their way and accomplish their task. The word also indicates the urgency of the action. The plagues pile upon one another until the end.
5. **Pour out (ekcheo):** This word repeatedly occurs in this chapter, but not elsewhere in Revelation. It is a bit of irony that the same verb tells of the pouring out of God's Spirit on His servants from the Day of Pentecost and in the last days in conjunction with Christ's second advent (Joel 2:28-29, LXX; Acts 2:17, 18, 33; Titus 3:5-6). The contents of the seven bowls bear some resemblances to the earlier series of seals and trumpets, but scrutiny and comparison reflect numerous differences, particularly in the degree of finality of the Bowl series. The bowls are universal and far more intense, showing beyond reasonable doubt that this whole series deals with the time of the end.

**16:2. And the first went away and poured out his bowl into the earth, and a bad and malignant sore came upon men who had the mark of the beast and who worshiped his image.**

1. **Went away . . . and poured out:** After each angel discharges his duty, he vanishes rather than returning to his place in the procession.
2. **Into the earth:** The destination of the first bowl is the earth. It is better to arrange these plagues into groups of the first four and the last three. The first four affect individuals directly either through personal affliction through objects of nature, and the last three are on more of an international scale, leading the way to a final major confrontation.
3. **The earth:** The earth is the first of the four divisions of nature hit by the first four plagues. The other three are the sea, the rivers, and the sky. The four become media used to torture humanity.
4. **Sore:** inflicted by the first bowl is *ulcer* or wound (Deut 28:35; Ex 9:9-11; Lev 13:18-27; Job 2:7, all in the LXX). This bowl recalls the sixth Egyptian plague where the Egyptian Magicians were the victims (Ex. 9:9-11). Here, the followers of the beast receive the harm. Job responded positively and repented when similarly afflicted (Job 42:1-6), but not these worshipers of the false Christ (Rev 16:9, 11, 21). The last three bowls are literal, and the Egyptian plagues were also literal, and hence this 'sore' is also literal.
5. **Men who had the mark:** Since the beast worshippers were universal, the so also the plague would be. Followers of the Lamb would not be receiving the wrath.

### 19.3.2 The Second Bowl: Death to all sea life (16:3)

**16:3. And the second poured out his bowl into the sea, and it became blood like [that of] a dead person, and every living soul which lives in the sea died.**

1. **And the second:** This plague reminds of the first Egyptian plague, except that it affects sea rather than the fresh water (Ex 7:19-21). The text points to the universal nature of the plague. Further, the *literal* nature of the Egyptian plague which also leads to the *literal* meaning here. Note also the *literal* usage of the word sea in 14:7. plague
2. **Blood like that of a dead person:** The third trumpet brought bitterness to the water, causing the deaths of many, but here the change to coagulated blood or blood like substance similar to it. This material will be decayed and have a foul odor, that makes it loathsome
3. **Every living soul:** In the first Egyptian plague, all the fish in the Nile died (Ex 7:21). Here, death will come to *every living soul* in the sea. This bowl is a complete destruction of all marine life, not a partial one as under the second trumpet.

### 19.3.3 The Third Bowl: Transforming of all fresh water into blood (16:4-7)

**16:4. And the third poured out his bowl into the rivers and the fountains of waters; and they became blood.**

1. **And the third:** The contamination of the fresh waters follows that of the sea as was the sequence with the second and third trumpets (8:8-10). The first Egyptian plague affected the River Nile principally, but this third bowl will affect all the rivers, and to keep the earth dwellers from doing the same thing as the Egyptians did find drinking water (Ex 7:24; Ps. 78:43-44), it will turn the fountains or springs into blood too. It affects all sources of fresh water.
2. **The fountains of waters:** A literal meaning can be adopted after 14:7. Similarly, the blood is as literal as that of the blood of the saints. The havoc caused by the absence of drinking water is unimaginable and is the price the people have to pay for their allegiance to the beast.

**16:5. And I heard the angel of the waters, saying, "You are righteous, who is and who was, the holy one, because You have judged these things,**

1. **Angel of the water:** The singer here is the angel who controls the sea and the freshwater bodies. Note various roles of angels elsewhere (7:1; 9:11; 14:18; Heb 1:7; Ps 104:4).
2. **Righteous:** This angel's song is somewhat of an echo of the one sung by the overcomers in 15:3-4. The righteousness of God is evident in all these bowl judgments. Rather than to complain to God, this angel confirms the justice of God.

3. **Who is and who was:** Indicates God's eternal nature (1:4; 1:8; 4:8; 11:7; Ex 3:14). God used Moses to apply the principle of *lex talionis* in delivering His people from Egypt. The bowls are in the process of applying the same principle in a more far reaching and ultimate situation.
4. **Holy One:** The *sacred one* here maintains His sacredness by sending judgment on all those who trample on His sacred things.

**16:6. because they have poured out the blood of saints and prophets, and You have given them blood to drink; they are worthy."**

1. **Because:** Here we see a cause and effect. God's judging these things is defined as God's giving the persecutors blood to drink in response to their pouring out the blood of the saints and prophets. The double appearance of *blood* as direct objects in the emphatic forward positions highlights the correspondence between the crime and its punishment (Isa 49:26). This illustrates the principle of *lex talionis* according to which God deals with the enemies of His people.
2. **Saints and prophets:** Saints are Christians in general, and prophets are a subset of saints. Babylon is guilty of their blood (17:6).
3. **Pours out:** God *pours out* the third bowl in response to their *pouring out* of the blood of His people. His action deprives them of drinking water and gives them instead to the very element they have been guilty of shedding (Gen 4:10-11; 9:6). Here is the correlation between sin and sin's punishment (18:7).
4. **They are worthy:** Those loyal to the beast deserve exactly what they receive. This is the principle that goes by other names besides *lex talionis*. It is the inexorable law of retribution, the law of retaliation, eye for eye, reaping what you sow, being paid in one's coin, falling in the ditch you dig for another, hanging on Haman's gallows and the punishment fitting the crime
5. **They are:** not the saints and the prophets but, those guilty of taking the lives of saints and prophets.

**16:7. And I heard the altar saying, "Yes, Lord God Almighty, Your judgments are true and righteous."**

1. **Alter saying:** Alter throughout Revelation related to judgment, and here it is personified and speaks agreeing to the song of the angel. Such personification can be seen in 9:13; Gen 4:10; Luk 19:40; Heb 12:24.
2. **Lord God Almighty:** The alter addresses God by His title and is similar to 15:3-4.
3. **True and Righteous:** They are never vengeful or erratic (capricious) like those of pagan deities. They agree with His just nature (Ps 119:137; Ps. 19:9).

### 19.3.4 The Fourth Bowl: Scorching of all through the sun's intensity (16:8-9)

**16:8.** And the fourth poured out his bowl upon the sun; and [power] was given to it to burn the men with fire.

1. **And the fourth:** The role of the fourth angel was to direct his bowl upon the sun. The fourth trumpet also had the sun as its object of judgment, but that former affliction was a darkening. This, by contrast, increases rather than decreases the sun's intensity.
2. **Was given:** It shows God's sovereign power to be behind the widespread scorching men received. He overruled the processes of nature to bring this torment upon them. They fully knew who was responsible as evidenced by their blasphemous response to the heat (9).
3. **The men:** 16:9 shows the likelihood that it refers to a previous mention of *the men*, the one in 16:2. The sufferers under this bowl are those who have received the mark of the beast and worshiped his image. The faithful are exempt from this type of affliction as the promise of an opposite future for them in 7:16 shows.

**16:9.** And the men were burned with great heat, and they blasphemed the name of God who had the authority over these plagues, and they did not repent to give Him glory.

1. **Burned with great heat:** Shows by various means the increased intensity of the heat.
2. **Blasphemed the name of God:** The human response is blasphemy against the God who is directly responsible for all this human misery. The Same response is seen in 16:11, 21. This is the only chapter in the visional portion of the book that speaks of widespread human blasphemy, the other references being to blasphemy from the beast (13:1, 5-6; 17:3). They blame God for the first four plagues, rather than blaming their sinfulness. God is sovereign and in control of everything that happens, but their unwillingness to honor Him as sovereign is the typical heathen spirit (Rom 1:28; Rom 2:24; 1 Tim. 6:1; James 2:7).
3. **They did not repent:** The *severity* (Rom 11:22) of God not less than His *kindness* (Rom 2:4) which calls people to repentance, but earth's inhabitants, like Pharaoh, harden their hearts in the face of God's judgments.
4. **Give Him glory:** tells what the result would have been had they repented. *Giving God glory* is a goal in 11:13; 14:7; 19:7 also.

### 19.3.5 The Fifth Bowl: Darkening of the beast's kingdom (16:10-11)

**16:10. And the fifth poured out his bowl upon the throne of the beast; and his kingdom became darkened, and they gnawed their tongues because of the pain,**

1. **And the fifth:** God not only punishes man by land, sea, water, and fire, but through bowl five He throws the entire human system into disarray. This bowl along with the sixth and seventh have more of a political orientation than any plague encountered heretofore.
2. **The throne:** The destination of this bowl is the throne of the beast, i.e., the one spot where his power and presence reside or the seat of his rule, authority, and dominion. So long untouched, that throne through which the dragon has perverted all of the human society into a demonic civilization is now the focal point of God's anger.<sup>3</sup> The beast will be just as helpless against this plague as Pharaoh was in the comparable ninth plague against Egypt (Ex 10:21-23).
3. **His Kingdom:** It obviously refers to a concrete kingdom with geographical extent, not to an abstract ruler ship of the beast. The plague puts the realm in a permanent condition of darkness. This is like the ninth Egyptian plague (Ex 10:21-22), but worse because it aggravates the continuing effects of the previous plagues.
4. **They gnawed:** This expresses a most agonizing and excruciating kind of pain.
5. **The pain:** The singular word implies that the particular distress is caused by the darkness. Perhaps the difficulty in explaining the source of pain relates to the fact that the world has never experienced such a widespread and extended darkness. Conceivably, this will create all sorts of physical havoc.

**16:11. and they blasphemed the God of heaven because of their pains and because of their sores and they did not repent of their works.**

1. **They blasphemed:** In token of their continuing allegiance to the beast, his subjects once again opt to blaspheme God (13:6). Their reaction once again refutes the notion that wicked men will repent when faced with catastrophic conditions. Instead of repenting, they plunge more deeply into blasphemy (9).
2. **The God of heaven:** This title for God recalls the pride of Nebuchadnezzar and the rulers after him (Dan 2:44; 11:13).
3. **Pains:** The plural word this time indicates, the blasphemy stems from the cumulative effect of the first four plagues. The plagues come so fast that each one finds its victims still suffering from all that has preceded. This differs from the seal and trumpet series, in which each plague concluded before the next one began.
4. **They did not repent:** Once again, earth's inhabitants refuse to repent of their works, as noted already at the conclusion of the fifth trumpet (9:20-21). They choose to cling to their idolatries and their immoralities.

### 19.3.6 The Sixth Bowl: Preparation for the doom of earth's kings (16:12-16)

**16:12.** And the sixth poured out his bowl upon the great river Euphrates; and its water was dried up, that the way of the kings who were from the rising of the sun might be prepared.

1. **The sixth:** Like the fifth seal, this has no immediate impact on humanity. It simply looks forward and prepares for a coming battle. The destination of this bowl's contents is the great river Euphrates.
2. **Great river Euphrates:** One of the great rivers of the world. It formed the eastern boundary of both the ancient Roman Empire and the land God promised to the seed of Abraham  
(Gen 15:18; Deut 1:7; Deut 11:24; Josh 1:4). The city of Babylon was also beside this river. The first mention up of this river in the Bible is in Gen 2:14. The last mention of this word is in this verse. Also, the river is connected with the sixth trumpet (9:14). The name Euphrates is not symbolic but literal, for several reasons: [1] if the battle in 19:18-21 is literal, then drying up of this river is also literal, [2] everything else in chapter 16 is literal, [3] OT prophesies about the drying up of the Euphrates (Isa 11:15-16), [4] precedence in OT which includes [a] drying of Jordan (Jos 3:13; Jos 4:23), [b] Elijah parting the waters of the Jordan (2Ki 2:8), [5] the miracle at the Red Sea is very similar to this sixth bowl (Exo 14:21-22), and [6] According to Herodotus, Cyrus walked across the drained bed of the Euphrates in his conquest of Babylon, a conquest in fulfillment of prophecy (Jer 50:38; Jer 51:36).
3. **Way of the kings:** This bowl looks to the future and the last conflict of the nations against Messiah  
(Joel 3:2; Zeph 3:8). Arrival of this program is anticipated in 17:12-14. These kings join the forces of the beast against Christ. The beast has his headquarters in Babylon on the Euphrates and can participate with other in this invasion.

**16:13.** And I saw [coming] from the mouth of the dragon and from the mouth of the beast and from the mouth of the false prophet three unclean spirits like frogs

1. **And I saw:** V 13-16 is a commentary of v12. It shows that the kings of the whole earth will join the kings from the east in the final great conflict. Verse 13 begins the explanation of the means used to muster such a large fighting force.

2. **From the mouth:** Triple use of this word is indicative of a propaganda campaign through which the unholy trinity will lead most to an unconditional commitment to evil in the last day. A primary tool used by them was their mouth (12:15; 13:6, 12-15) which God also used (1:16; 2:16; 11:5; 19:15, 21; Isa 11:4). The dragon has been behind the scenes empowering the beast all along (13:2). The beast is the instigator of the evil activities (11:7; 13:1).
3. **False prophet:** Used first time here and referred to the beast from the earth (13:11; 19:20; 20:10). It represents his deceptiveness as the lying prophet who is in league with Satan;s political front man (13:14). NT warns continually about avoiding false prophets  
(Mt 7:15; Mk 13:22; Ac 13:6; 2Pe 2:1; 1Jh 2:22; 1Jh 4:1,3; 2Jh 7).
4. **Three unclean spirits:** refers to fallen angels or demons (Matt 10:1; Mark 1:23-24; 3:11; 5:2, 13; Acts 5:16; 8:7). Note that the ministry of Jesus was freeing people from unclean spirits whereas the beast uses them to destroy the very people who are his followers by luring them to the battle against the Lamb.
5. **Frogs:** They are unclean animals  
(Lev 11:10-11). Frogs were also associated with the second plague in Egypt Ex 8:5).

**16:14. -for they are spirits of demons performing signs- which go out to the kings of the whole inhabited world, to gather them to the battle of the great day of God Almighty.**

1. **For... signs:** The power and mission of the unclean spirits are performing signs. As unclean spirits, they have the same miraculous powers that the second beast had in deceiving people into worshipping the beast (13:13-14; 2Th 2:9-10). Their deceptive work with the kings is reminiscent of the deceiving spirit that lured Ahab into battle in 1Ki 22:19-22. The immediate agents of persuasion are the three demons, but the ultimate disposition of the kings to give their authority to the beast comes from God (17:17)
2. **Go out to the kings:** The mission of the three unclean spirits is to contact the world's kings and assemble them for a major world war.
3. **The whole inhabited world:** The word appeared in 3:10 and 12:9 also. Combined with the kings from the east, this will be a worldwide fighting force allied with the beast for a great battle. It is not just the empire, but the whole planet. According to 17:12-14, ten kings will lend their resources to this battle.
4. **To gather:** Under this bowl, only gathering happens. Whether it will be a series of conflicts or one major confrontation, depends on how one views the events of the seventh bowl in 19:19-21 (14:16, 18-20; 17:14). For now, however, this is only the



preparation. This gathering of world forces is in line with OT teaching that Israel's enemies would gather against her in the last days

(Joel 2:11; Joel 3:2; Zec 14:2-3). This is the ultimate battle predicted in Ps 2:1-3.

5. **The battle of the great day of God Almighty:** It is not man's or the false Christ's day, but that of the Lamb's. The word *Almighty* shows that God's power is supreme. His omnipotence and sovereignty will fully demonstrate itself on this occasion. This is the day of the Lord's coming to do battle with the beast, the climax of human history when God assumes His great power and begins to reign (11:17). It is *the great and terrible day of the LORD*

(Joel 2:31), the time of Christ's return within the larger period including also the seventieth week of Daniel's prophecy before His return (6:17). This is God's final reckoning with them on the field of conflict.

### 16:15. ("Behold I come as a thief. Blessed is the one who watches and keeps his garments, that he not walk naked and they see his shame.")

1. **Behold:** This an abrupt interruption which is, by the way, a characteristic of this book (1:8; 8:13; 9:12; 11:14; 13:9 10, 18; 14:12-13; 16:5, 7; 18:20; 20:6). The saying closely resembles the earlier saying and hence it certain that it is the voice of Son of Man. The words are a reiteration of those by Christ to the church of Sardis in 3:3 and to the church of Laodicea in 3:18. The question of to whom this was addressed is important. The close similarity to 3:3, 18 and the parenthetical nature of the announcement indicates that it is for the church. Therefore this announcement is a repetition of excerpts from the two earlier messages to Sardis and Laodicea; it is a call to genuineness of faith.
2. **Blessed:** After re-announcing His coming as a thief, Jesus pronounces the third of seven beatitudes in the book (1:3; 14:13; 19:9; 20:6; 22:7, 14).
3. **One who watches... garments:** This is the essence of the warning to Laodicea in 3:18, to guard against spiritual nakedness when the moment of truth arrives. avoid walking naked and the consequent shame of having one's disgraceful sin exposed to the eyes of all  
(Is 47:3; Ez 16:37; Hos 2:10; Nah 3:5).
4. **Shame:** The use of this word in LXX most likely points to *private parts* (Ex 20:26; Le 18:6).

### 16:16. And they gathered them into the place which is called in Hebrew *Harmagedon*.

1. **And:** This verse connects with v 14 naturally and indicates that v 15 is parenthetical.
2. **They gathered:** The Greek construct shows they refer to the demons.

3. **In Hebrew:** For most of Revelation's immediate readers who were Gentiles in Asia Minor, a Hebrew word had to be translated or transliterated.
4. **Armageddon** or *The Mount of Megiddo*: A literal and geographical understanding of Harmagedon is certainly preferable if it does not face insuperable obstacles. The Hebrew word (*har*) can mean hill-country, so Har Megidon can refer to the hill-country of Megiddo. *Megiddon* is the name of a Canaanite fortress in the Plain of Jezreel that the Israelites under Deborah and Barak captured later (Josh 12:21; Judg 5:19). It was the scene of Josiah's defeat (2 Chron 35:22). Zechariah mentions the sadness connected with Megiddo in the same context as that cited by John in the theme verse of the Apocalypse

(Ze 12:10-11; Rev 1:7). From OT times this was a renowned battleground and is a fit location for Christ's final victory. Armies from the east would have to cross the Euphrates to get here, as 16:12 indicates. The main obstacle to this identification is that nowhere else is an explicit reference to such a place found. A *tell* or small mound covering earlier ruins are there, but no mountain. But the writer may have in mind *the mountains of Israel* that are so prominent in Ezekiel's prophecy alluded to in Rev 19:17-21 (Ezek 38:8, 21; 39:2, 4) and may have connected; them with the name *Megiddo* that is so famous in Israel's history. The plain of Megiddo is admittedly not large enough to contain armies from all over the world, so this must be the assembly area for a much larger deployment that covers a two hundred mile distance from north to south and the width of Palestine from east to west (14:20). Some decisive battles against this massive force will probably occur around Jerusalem

(Ze 14:1-3). The preparations of the sixth bowl look forward toward the battle of 19:11-21, and *Harmagedon* is the place where the kings and their armies will meet the returning Warrior-King and His armies.

## MAC Notes

Behold, I am coming like a thief. This is a word of comfort from the Lord Jesus Christ (3:3, 11; 22:7, 12, 20) . Similar warning given earlier by Jesus (Matt. 24:42-43), Paul (1 Thess. 5:2), and Peter (2 Pet. 3:10). Jesus' sudden, unexpected return will bring fear and dismay to His enemies, but hope and comfort to His people. Har-Magedon is a Hebrew word meaning *Mount Megiddo*. Since there is no specific mountain by that name, and Har can refer to hill country, it is probably a reference to the hill country surrounding the Plain of Megiddo, some sixty miles north of Jerusalem. More than two hundred battles have been fought in that region, including Barak's defeat of the Canaanites (Judg. 4:5; Judg. 5:19), Gideon's victory over the Midianites (Judg. 7; Judg. 6:33; the *valley of Jezreel* is another name for the Plain of Esdraelon), and Josiah's defeat at the hands of Pharaoh Neco (2 Chron. 35:22). The Plain of Megiddo and the nearby Plain of Esdraelon will be the focal point for the Battle

of Armageddon, which will rage the entire length of Israel as far south as the Edomite city of Bozrah (Isa. 63:1). Other battles will also occur in the vicinity of Jerusalem (Zech. 14:1-3).

### 19.3.7 The Seventh Bowl: The destruction of Babylon summarized (16:17-21)

**16:17.** And the seventh poured out his bowl upon the air; and a loud voice went forth out of the temple from the throne, saying, "It is done."

1. **And the seventh:** Events associated with this bowl is vast and is the last in the series of seven. Verses 17-21 is essentially a summary of this bowl, and the details start from 17:1 and goes all the way up to 18:24 or even upto 22:5. The seventh bowl sweeps away time and history; and has greater significance than the mere physical events.
2. **Air:** The recipient of this bowl is *air* and is the most pervasive of all the bowls. Earlier recipients are the earth (2), the sea (3), fresh water (4), and the sun (8). Air is what people breath and hence this plague has a wider impact.
3. **Loud voice:** Similar to v 1, God who sits on the *throne* is the source of this voice. He is the author of this bowl.
4. **It is done:** This refers to the divine decree that initiated the last plague. The grammar indicates what has been developing over a long period in the past has now occurred in the final outpouring. The culmination of it is declared in 21:6 which looks backs and decreed *they are done*.

**16:18.** And [flashes of] lightning and voices and [peals of] thunder came, and a great earthquake such as has not happened since man came upon the earth, so mighty an earthquake so great, came.

1. **Lightning and thunder:** This is theophany, the manifestation of God to mankind. Rev 4:5; 8:3-5; and 11:19 portrays earlier such occasions. The setting is the temple in heaven.
2. **Great earthquake:** It is punishment of God (Is 29:6). Its magnitude is greater than earlier ones (6:12; 11:13). These events signal that the end has arrived, not just the end of the bowl series, but also the end of the seal and trumpet series too.
3. **Mighty earthquake:** This will be a calamity unprecedented in human history. This will also be the final great shaking predicted (Hag 2:6; Heb 12:26).

**16:19. And the great city became three parts, and the cities of the Gentiles fell. And Babylon the great was remembered before God to give to her the cup of the wine of the anger of His wrath.**

1. **And:** The result of the earthquake was instantaneous
2. **The great city:** Several reasons to identify the city as Jerusalem includes: (i) Reference to 11:8, (ii) this verse separates from the cities of the nations (or gentiles), (iii) do justice to the context, (iv) Jerusalem experienced a less severe earthquake earlier (11:13), and (v) OT prophecies  
(Zec 14:4). The cities of the Gentiles will receive greater damage than Jerusalem, however. The earthquake will be worldwide and wreak devastation in all the major population centers. In particular, the headquarters city of the beast (14:8), Babylon the great, will come under siege. Further, chapters 17-18 will reflect the influence of this city on world affairs, even to the extent that it represents a vast political, religious, and commercial system controlling the lives of men and nations. The final bowl will not overlook this city and system.
3. **Was remembered:** God remembered the action of this city just like He remembered His people  
(Ac 10:31).
4. **Wine, anger, wrath:** Each word intensifies the other (14:8, 10) indicating the extreme punishment reserved for Babylon. Stages in Babylon's downfall come in 17:16 and 18:8, but her ultimate collapse is in 19:18-21.

**16:20. And every island fled, and the mountains were not found.**

1. **Fled ... not found:** Similar usage is found in 20:11. Islands often sink to the sea during earthquakes. Topographical changes signal the disappearance of the old creation. These descriptions foreshadows the recreations in 20:11 and 21:1-2. These words speak of literal topographical changes and not merely political turmoil.

**16:21. And great hail about a talent's weight descended from heaven upon men. And men blasphemed God because of the plague of the hail because the distress was exceedingly great.**

1. **Great hail:** The final element in the preliminary overview of the seventh bowl is a storm of huge hail storms. Hails reminds of the Egyptian plague  
(Ex 9:23-24) and the first trumpet judgment (8:7).
2. **A talent weight:** This is about 50-70 kg and is heavy enough to kill anyone on whom it falls. Hailstones are indicative of divine judgments  
(Jos 10:11; Job 38:22; Ez 13:11 Ez 38:22).

3. **Blasphemed God:** Hailstone did not kill all of them since some of them were left to blaspheme against God. Greek construct shows that this defiance was already in progress at least since the fourth and fifth bowl (16:9, 11). They blasphemed God because of the plagues, and this indicates that they knew clearly, the source of the plagues is God. This hailstorm and its response obviously do not mark the end of the seventh bowl. Chronological sequence resumes in 19:11, after an insertion (17:1-19:10) expanding upon Babylon, her history, and what has made her what she is up to this point in history.

# Chapter 20

## Seventh Bowl: The History and Fall of Babylon (17:1-18:24)

### 20.1 The History and Fall of Babylon

The section 17:1-19 is a unit, with introductory and concluding formulas (17:1-3a; 19:9-10). Babylon's destruction was mentioned earlier in 14:8 and 16:17. The city's detailed religious and commercial influence and about what events have led up to her final spiritual and material devastation is mentioned in chapters 17-18.

#### 20.1.1 Religious Babylon Destroyed (17:1-18)

Chapter 17 focuses on the religious aspects of the Babylonian system. It falls into three parts: (i) the harlot and the beast (1-6a), (ii) the significance of the symbolism (6b-14), and (iii) the judgment of the great harlot (15-18).

##### A The harlot and the beast (1-6a)

**17:1.** And one of the seven angels who had the seven bowls came and spoke with me, saying, "Come, I will show you the judgment of the great harlot who sits beside many waters,

1. **And one of the seven angels** The angelic appointed to accompany John in this tour through Babylon is one of the seven angels who have administered the bowl judgments. Although not mentioned explicitly, it may have been the seventh since it is under his bowl that the announcement of Babylon's judgment comes.

2. **Come, I will show you** The angel initiates the conversation with John by this invitation to witness a judgment. The very words he uses in 21:9 when introducing *the bride, the wife of the Lamb* is one of the many contrast between the Babylon here and the New Jerusalem.
3. **Judgment** This refers to a judicial verdict and its implementation. The future tenses of 17:14-17 give the verdict as a prediction, but the implementation comes in 18:3, 8, 10, 20.
4. **Harlot (pornes)** This term applied to Babylon matches the practice of *fornication* (14:8, 11). It is indicative of her spiritual harlotry and representative of an ecclesiastical or religious facet that is a counterfeit of the real. In prophetic language, prostitution, fornication, or adultery is equivalent to idolatry or religious apostasy (Isa 23:17; Jer 2:20; Jer 13:27; Eze 16:17-19; Hos 2:5; Nah 3:4). The OT prophets charged Nineveh (Nah 3:4), Tyre (Isa 23:15-17), Babylon (Jer 23:17), and even Jerusalem (Isa 1:21; Jer 3:8-9) with this crime. Hence, this woman is the epitome of spiritual fornication or idolatry. She leads the world in the pursuit of false religion: both paganism and perversion. Babylonian system started with the tower of Babel (Gen. 10:9-10; 11: 1-9) (Gen 10:9-10; Gen 11:2-9). It extends into the future culminating under the beast. Since the angel never uses the term *adultery*, she need not be the apostate Israel or even the church, So this woman represents all false religion of all time, including those who apostatize from the revealed religion of Christianity (cults). Her religious corruption is mentioned seven time in this chapter (17:1, 2, 2, 4, 5, 15 and 16) using the same root word. The emphasis continues later also (18:3, 3, 9; 19:2).
5. **who sits beside many waters** In his vision, he saw the woman sitting beside the waters which can mean *on the shore of* as in Joh 21:1. The *many waters* represent peoples and multitudes and nations and tongues (17:15). These groups represent the world's population over whom she has control (17:3). There is also a geographical correspondence: Babylon is situated on the shores of Euphrates which is rich in canals, and other water bodies. Jeremiah confirms this also (Jer 51:13).

**17:2. with whom the kings of the earth have committed fornication, and those who dwell in the earth have become drunk from the wine of her fornication."**

1. **Have committed fornication:** The harlot has committed fornication with all levels of society, from the kings to the common man. This accusation reappears in 18:3, 9. The Babylonian system gains international influence and domination in both religious and commercial realms with the political help of the beast. Such religious compromise is contrary to the Christian faith and it amounts to spiritual prostitution.
2. **The kings of the earth:** These leaders join the Babylonian system compromising whatever spiritual principles are necessary. Assyria, Babylon, and others in the past did the same thing. Same was the case with Rome in John's day, and will be especially

true in the final days just before Christ returns. The apostate church also compromised and entered into an adulterous relation with the Babylonian system.

3. **Those who dwell in the earth:** These leaders then influence in all earth's inhabitants. Their *marriage* to the harlot is so binding that they marvel at the beast and have no place on the Book of Life (17:8; 13:14-18). Their allegiance to the false Christ is so strong that it intoxicates them and creates in them a lust to go after false gods.

**17:3. And he carried me away into the wilderness in the spirit. And I saw a woman sitting upon a scarlet beast, full of names of blasphemy, having seven heads and ten horns.**

1. **Carried away... in the spirit:** After this, the angelic took John to a different place and gave another perspective of the harlot. This is the third of four uses of *in the spirit* (1:10, 4:1, 17:3, 21:10). This time the angel takes him to a wilderness.
2. **Wilderness:** This wilderness is different from the wilderness the Israel is kept safe (12:14). This wilderness alludes to the fall of Babylon (14:8; 18:2; Isa 21:1; Jer 51:8).
3. **Woman sitting upon a scarlet beast:** Her position portrays the influence of the religious power over the secular leader. The scarlet beast is the same as in 13:1. Here, we read the details such as the scarlet colour, seven heads, ten horns, and names of blasphemy. Rev 14:8-11 implies a close association of this beast with Babylon. Here that relationship becomes explicit. The beast controls the system politically, but the woman represents the false religion that gives spiritual basis to the system.
4. **Scarlet** The beast's *scarlet* color matches part of the woman's clothing (17:4). Scarlet alludes to the atonement under the law (Lev 14:6 Num 19:6 Num 4:8). It may refer to the counterfeit sacrifices. The scarlet color symbolized luxury and splendor which are more relevant here and in 17:4 (2Sam 1:24; Jer 4:30). Note its use in the life of Jesus (Mat 27:28-29) They mockingly put a scarlet robe on Jesus just before His crucifixion. But scarlet is also the color of sin (Isa 1:18). It contrasts with the whiteness of righteousness and purity.
5. **Blasphemy:** The names of blasphemy were on the seven heads in 13:1, but here they cover the beast's whole body. Here is a secular power that blatantly and profusely profanes the name of the true God, but the ecclesiastical and religious authorities have no worry about forging a close alliance with such a ruler and kingdom and shows the depth to which apostasy can sink. This refers to the self-deification of the false Christ and his demands that his subjects worship him. As noted provisionally from 13:1, the seven heads of the beast are seven consecutive world empires throughout history, and the ten horns on the last of the heads are ten kingdoms contemporaneous with the final false Christ (17:12). The relationship between the harlot and the beast has existed throughout human history, but will reach its ultimate closeness in the days just before Christ returns.



**17:4. And the woman was clothed with purple and scarlet, and adorned with gold and precious stones and pearls, having a golden cup in her hand filled with abominations, even the unclean things of her fornication,**

1. **Woman clothed with purple and scarlet** The woman's clothing and adornment is elegant, but repulsive to the pious mind. The two colors are so close to each other, one gospel writer used scarlet and other two purple (Mat 27:28-29; Mar 15:17-20; Joh 19:2-5). Yet they were two distinct colors (Exo 26:1). The former color denoted royalty and the latter luxury and splendor as mentioned above in 17:3.
2. **Adorned (made gold) with gold:** She adorned with layers of gold. Precious stones and pearls enhanced her attire even more. Her appearance was like the greatest queen in order to impress her customers. This is the characteristics of prostitutes of all time (Jer 4:30). This description is in sharp contrast to the appearance of the bride of the Lamb whose apparel consists of *fine linen, bright and clean* (19:8).
3. **Golden cup:** This adds to her royal appearance but also the depths of her degeneration (Jer 51:7). From her perspective, the cup represents her own glory, but in reality they are her self-destruction as the consequences of her sins turn upon her.
4. **Abominations. . . fornication:** OT denotes abomination as ceremonial impurity arising out idolatry (Deu 18:9; 2Ki 16:3; 2Ki 23:24; Eze 16:2). These are blasphemous activities that God detests, and the harlot's cup is full of them!
5. **Unclean things of her fornication:** This further defines those abominations. The word unclean in NT has associations with idolatry (2Cor 6:17; Eph 5:5). So the harlot thrives on spreading her filthy vices and corruptions by allowing earth's inhabitants to drink from her beautiful, but contaminated cup.

**17:5. and upon her forehead [was] a name written, a mystery, "Babylon the great, the mother of harlots and of the abominations of the earth."**

1. **Upon her forehead a name:** John also saw a label on the woman's forehead which revealed her identity.
2. **Mystery:** Tertullian is the first church father to use *Babylon* as a name for Rome. The *seven hills* mentioned in 17:9 and the reference to the great world-city in 17:18 indicates that *Babylon* means Rome. However, *seven hills* can and probably does have a non-literal meaning (17:9). References to woman and [i] *many waters* (17:1), [ii] *seven hills* (17:2), and [iii] *wilderness* (17:3) indicated that the the woman is not Rome, but Babylon beside the Euphrates. *Mysterion* in the NT is usually a secret to be revealed. The mystery is the evil about Babylon is revealed. Subsequent revelation will show her to be a great city (17:18), but also a vast system of idolatry through the centuries that the great city represents. The woman's name is *Babylon the Great*, and not *Mystery Babylon the Great*. This gives the sense, *a name written*, which is a mystery.

3. **Babylon the great, the mother:** Babylon was a city where false religion began (Gen. 11:1-9) that has continually plagued Israel, the church, and the world. It will once again become the world's leading city religiously as well as commercially and politically as the end draws near. She is the originator of everything anti-Christian, including all false religions and idolatrous paganism. It is a city, but it is also a vast religious system that stands for everything God does not tolerate.

**17:6. And I saw the woman drunken from the blood of the saints and from the blood of the witnesses of Jesus. And I marveled with great amazement, seeing her.**

1. **Drunken from the blood of the saints:** The anti-Christian attitude of the woman is visible in her treatment of the faithful. Not only does she entice others to false religion, but oppose the the saints of Jesus (18:24).
2. **Saints and the witnesses of Jesus:** The rule of the beast will create an universal environment in which the harlot will martyr saints (13:7, 15). There are two names for the same persons. *Saints* indicates an internal purity while *witnesses* an external preaching of the gospel of Jesus. Christians should do both, and this is why the woman is against them

**B The significance of the symbolism (17:6b-14)**

1. **I marveled a marvel:** The reason for his great amazement is not stated. It may have been due to the sight of such unrestrained wickedness of the woman and God's permitting her to exist. Or, it may have been the contrast between the attire of the woman and beast on the one hand and a city in ruins.

**17:7. And the angel said to me, "Why do you marvel? I will tell you the mystery of the woman and of the beast which bears her, who has the seven heads and ten horns;**

1. **Why do you marvel?** Seeing John's reaction, the angel asks a rhetoric. He then proceeds to explain the meaning of the symbols.
2. **I will tell you the mystery:** He gives an extensive explanation of the beast (8-17) and a brief note of the woman (18). They are one mystery not two because of the close relations between them. The revelation concerning the beast has several parts: [i] the beast himself (8), [ii] his heads (9-11), [iii] his horns (12-14), [iv] the waters (15), and [v] the horns again (16-17).
3. **Which bears:** The verb shows the beast's relationship to the woman which indicates that he supplies her motive force and purpose.

**17:8. the beast which you saw was and is not, and is about to ascend out of the abyss, and he departs into perdition; and those who dwell upon the earth will**

marvel, whose names are not written upon the book of life from the foundation of the world, seeing the beast, that he was and is not and will be present

1. **The beast:** To explain the beat the angel uses several details from chapters 11 and 13 and adds new information. In this book, the beast is either an empire or the ruler of that empire. Each head of the beast is a partial incarnation of satanic power that rules for a given period. So the beast can exist on earth without interruption in the form of seven consecutive kingdoms. But he can also be nonexistent at a given moment.
2. **Was and is not, and is about to:** It refers to the beast with the death-wound who was healed in 13:3, 12, 14. The words *is not* refer to the beast's death. And his *ascent from the abyss* means he will come to life again. He is reappearing as an eighth king in 17:11.
3. **Departs into perdition:** This refers to his future assignment to the lake of fire (19:20). To understand the past-present-future here requires a point of reference. The present state must coincide with the *death* of the beast in 13:3, 12, 14. This is his career midpoint, i.e., a time at the very beginning of chapter 13 when he comes up out of the sea. This is most probably a point at the very middle of the seventieth week, between the beast's human and superhuman careers. This point is just before the beast from the sea begins his three and a half year reign. Rev 13:1 identified the beast's future ascension from the abyss. After his death he will come to life again. When he does, he will come back in a demonic rather than a purely human form to establish his world domination. This explains why the abyss, the abode of demons (Luke 8:31; Rev. 9:1, 2, 11), is his origin. Rev 19:20 details his future departure to perdition. His destiny will be the eternal separation from God rather than an everlasting fellowship with God.
4. **Will marvel:** The cause of the marvel is change from the beast's *is-not* state to his coming resurrection (13:3). The earth-bound, God-rejecting earth-dwellers will be struck with an amazement of his invulnerability, not realizing that he will shortly be on his way to perdition.
5. **He was and is not and will be present:** This makes the beast's description a parody on the name of God (1:4).

**17:9. Here is the mind which has wisdom. The seven heads are seven mountains, on which the woman sits.**

1. **Mind which has wisdom:** The angel continues with an invitation to John and others to listen carefully and think clearly. Similar to 13:18, these words also imply some difficulty in grasping the meaning.
2. **Seven heads are seven mountains:** The view that seven mountains refers to the city of Rome is popular, but untenable on various grounds. A preferable view is that they are seven successive empires, with the seven kings of 17:10 as heads and personifications

of those empires. This view agrees with a common meaning of *mountain* or *hill* in the Bible (Dan 2:35; Zec 4:7). This is sensible because the next phrase says the heads are also seven kings (17:10). Daniel also used similar double identification (Dan 7:17; Dan 7:23). Such double symbolism is rare in the Bible but not impossible as evident from Daniel. The call for special wisdom is a call to grasp this double meaning. However, Rome is one of the seven world empires is true, since the *one is* in 17:10 probably refers to the Roman empire.

3. **On which the woman sits:** This indicates once again that the woman is separate from the beast. Her position is more precise and places her on the beast's seven heads. She influences them, not by governing, but by imposing her false religious standards upon them (17:1,3,15).

**17:10. And they are seven kings; five have fallen, one is, the other has not yet come, and when it comes, it is necessary for it to remain a little [time].**

1. **They are seven kings:** They represent seven literal Gentile kingdoms that follow one another in succession. Dan 7:17, 23 shows that a king can represent the kingdom ruled by him. The seven kingdoms are: [i] Egypt (Gen 10:8-11), [ii] Assyria, [iii] Babylon, [iv] Persia, [v] Greece, [vi] Rome, and [vii] the future kingdom of the beast.
2. **Five have fallen, one is, the other has not yet:** Five forms of Gentile world power had already existed by the time John wrote this book (Egypt, Assyria, Babylon, Persia, and Greece). The *one which is* is the Roman empire which was in power at the time of writing. The *one which has not yet come* will be the future kingdom of the beast. The five kingdoms persecuted God's people: Egypt (Eze 29:2); Nineveh or Assyria (Nah 3:18); Babylon (Isa 21:9); Persia (Dan 11:2 Greece Dan 11:3-4). The persecutor of God's people during John's lifetime was Rome. So the seven heads spans essentially the entire history of Gentile world empires.
3. **Remain for a little [time]:** The future leader and his empire will have a short life according to the words. This factor alone would eliminate the possibility of the seven kings being first-century Roman emperors.

**17:11. And the beast which was and is not, even he himself is an eighth and is [one] of the seven, and he departs into perdition.**

1. **He himself is an eighth and is [one] of the seven:** In some mysterious way, the beast is one of the seven heads and is at the same time the eighth head. Note that king and kingdom are used interchangeably. Here it is king because a kingdom cannot have a death-wound and then be healed. So as one of the seven, the beast is a kingdom, but as an eighth, he is the king of that kingdom who sustains the wound and ascends from the abyss after his wound (17:8). When this occurs, he is king over an eighth kingdom because his reign following his ascent from the abyss will be far more dynamic and

dominant than before. This is the sense in which he is one of the seven, but also an eighth. It is clear that the eighth is an eighth king or world ruler, and not a distinctly different kingdom from the seventh head. He is distinct from his predecessors because he has received supernatural powers from Satan at his resuscitation. Yet he is also one of the seven and in that he takes the shape of an emperor in charge of an empire. The eighth is a fusion of the raised beast and the empire over which he rules.

2. **He departs into perdition:** This king does not *fall* like the kingdoms before him, but meets his destiny at the hands of the Lord Himself.

**17:12. And the ten horns which you saw are ten kings, who are such ones as have not yet received a kingdom, but they receive authority with the beast for one hour.**

1. **The ten horns:** The seven heads are kingdoms, but the ten horns are kings without kingdoms at the time John wrote. The best explanation is that these are ten kings who with their kingdoms will join in a confederacy under the leadership of the beast in the final Gentile world empire. They will rule simultaneously with one another and with the beast. These are rulers who will receive their dominions in the last days (Dan 7:7, 24).
2. **Not yet received a kingdom:** They have no kingdoms, but they will receive soon to give them to the beast (7:17) and to do battle with the Lamb at Armageddon.
3. **One hour** Indicates a very short time, much shorter than the beast himself (13:5). Some time after he begins his three and a half year superhuman reign, he will invest these kings with their power to rule, and will reign until their war with the Lamb at His return (17:14).

**17:13. These have one purpose, and they give their power and authority to the beast.**

1. **They have one mind/purpose:** The support of the ten kings to the beast is unanimous. Their unity of purpose here relates to warfare with the Lamb (17:14). The word *gnome* occurs in 1Cor 1:10 where Paul exhorts the Corinthian church to unity.
2. **Power and authority:** The present tense *they give* points to future when they will receive their kingdoms and therefore have power and authority to give.

**17:14. These will make war with the Lamb; and the Lamb will overcome them, because He is Lord of lords with Him [will overcome them]."**

1. **These will make war:** The enmity of the ten kings toward God is seen in the battle. The unity or the purpose of the ten is to fight against God. This is the same battle of 16:14 and 19:19-21.

2. **Lord of lords and King of kings:** Jesus is sovereign over all others who rule in the earth. This is attested several times in the Scripture (1Tim 6:15, Deu 10:17, Dan 2:47, Psa 136:3).
3. **Called, elect, and faithful:** He will win along with His faithful. Jesus said in Mat 22:14. Not all who are called are chosen, but all the chosen are first called (2Pet 1:10). Faithful indicates the fulfillment of the human response by this select group. The faithfulness of the saints is the climax of the calling and election by God.

## C The judgment of the great harlot (17:15-18)

Having completed the detailed discussion of the beast, the angel is now telling how the harlot will meet her end.

**17:15. And he says to me, "The waters which you saw, where the harlot sits, are peoples and multitudes and nations and tongues.**

1. **The waters:** Angel now explain the meaning of *the waters* of 17:1. Usually *water* in Revelation means literal water. This is an exceptional case and the angle explains the figurative meaning. In the OT, water is a common symbol for people (Isa 8:7). She controls the lifestyle of the mixed populations of the world through their voluntary submission to her. The beast also had similar authority over them (13:7).

**17:16. And the ten horns which you saw and the beast, these will hate the harlot, and will make her desolated and naked, and will devour her flesh, and will bum her up with fire.**

1. **These will hate the harlot:** Eventually the ten horns and the beast will turn against the false religious system. False religion used the beast to promote her cause, but suddenly the attraction turns to hatred. In the end, Satan's kingdom will divide against itself, signaling that its demise is near (Mark 3:26). Although the immediate cause of the hatred is not revealed, but it was prophesied in OT (Eze 16:37; Eze 23:22).
2. **Desolated . . . naked:** The first act of hatred against Babylon will be a plundering of her wealth. Then, they expose her moral corruption to publicly. She will lose her rich adornment (17:4) and former spiritual power over her lovers.
3. **Will devour her flesh** This is what wild beasts do to corpses, and indicates utter destruction of man on the earth (1Ki 21:23-24; 2Ki 9:36 Mic 3:3; Zep 3:3).
4. **Will bum her up with fire:** The wording of this destiny comes from a legal formula condemning those who had committed detestable fornication. (Lev 21:9; Jos 7:15). It speaks the utter destruction of a system of false religion that will have reached its peak in the days just before its destruction

**17:17. For God has put into their hearts to put into practice His purpose, and to put into practice one purpose and to give their kingdom to the beast, until the words of God will be fulfilled.**

1. **God has put** The immediate cause of the devastating friction among former allies is unknown, but the ultimate cause is known. The sovereign purpose of God is behind this internal strife within the kingdom of evil. God has put into the hearts and minds of the ten kings and their leader to turn against the religious structure which they feel no longer serves a useful purpose for them. God has put this thoughts into their minds (Neh 7:5; Jer 32:40 Heb 8:10). God uses the forces of evil for His purposes of judgment. He used Babylon to judge Israel (Jer 25:9-11). He also uses enemies to destroy themselves (1Sam 14:20). The ten kings and the beast are unconscious that they are carrying out God's design. They think they are fulfilling their own plans, but in reality they are blindly fulfilling the divine counsel
2. **One purpose** God made them to agree to give their kingdom to the beast. It is a sinful act from their part to party with beast to war against the Lamb. However, God is not the author of this sin. In the outworking of His plan for this creation God allowed the existence of evil, but He is not in any sense the author of evil (Jas 1:13-14)
3. **Until the words of God will be fulfilled** *The words of God* includes all the prophecies of last events until the defeat of the beast (10:7). God's word dictate all the end time events which includes the control of the world by the beast.

**17:18. And the woman whom you saw is the great city which has a kingdom over the kings of the earth."**

1. **Woman is the great city:** After telling the destruction of the harlot and unity of evil force behind this, the angel reveals the identity of the woman riding on the beast. It is better to see this woman as the anti-Christian religious system of the the end days that will seduce the world away from the true faith. Many OT allusions to Babylon in Revelation 17-18 indicate her tie to a certain geographical city, yet her primary function is not political, but religious. She stands for an ideology associated with the political institution of the beast. Examples includes:
  - (a) Jer 51:13; Rev 17:1;
  - (b) Jer 51:7; Rev 17:2,4;
  - (c) Jer 51:29; Rev 17:16; Rev 18:8;
  - (d) Isa 47:5,7; Rev 17:17; Rev 18:7,8;
  - (e) Jer 51:8; Isa 21:9; Isa 13:21; Rev 18:2;
  - (f) Jer 50:8; Jer 51:6,45; Rev 18:4;
  - (g) Jer 51:9; Rev 18:5;

(h) Jer 50:15; Jer 51:24,49; Rev 18:6;

(i) Jer 51:25; Rev 18:8;

(j) Jer 51:63,64; Rev 18:21

2. Although some try to identify this city as Jerusalem, Rome, or figurative of an ideal city etc are flawed with many reasons. Best explanation is Babylon on the Euphrates. The OT prophecies of Babylon's destruction in Isaiah 13 and Jeremiah 51 are yet unfulfilled and are awaiting the future Day of the Lord for that fulfillment (Isa 13:6). Further, its location fits in terms of politics, geography, accessibility, commercial facilities, and central to the world trade. In the end time, this city will gain prominence, politically, religiously, and commercially, for some time, and then will be destroyed.

## 20.2 Commercial Babylon Destroyed (18:1–24)

### 20.2.1 Commercial Babylon Destroyed (18:1-24)

The angel here shows the decline of the Babylon's economic prosperity (18:9-19). She will become desolate, demons will occupy (18:2) and all social life will end (18:21-23). Main divisions of this portion: [i] an announcement of the judgment (18:1-3), [ii] voice from heaven predicts the fall (18:4-20), and [iii] a second announcement of judgment (18:21-24). These events will be followed by heavenly praise to God over the fall of Babylon (19:1-8). The introduction (1-3) and conclusion (21-24) give two fundamental reasons for God's judgment of the city: political self-interest and materialism (18:3, 23). Throughout this chapter John varies his tenses from present to future to past.

#### A First angelic pronouncement of judgment (18: 1-3)

**18:1.** After these things I saw another angel coming down out of heaven, having great authority, and the earth was illuminated by his glory.

1. **After these things:** It denotes the introduction of something new, a new beginning and a new set of circumstances. Note that the city in both 17 and 18 are the same, because: [i] both have the name *Babylon the great* (17:5; 18:2), [ii] both are guilty of fornication (17:1, 2, 4, 5, 16; 18:3), [iii] both influenced kings and people (17:2; 18:3), [iv] both have same destiny to be burned with fire (17:16; 18:8, 9, 18), [v] both will be utterly desolate (17:16; 18:17, 19), [vi] both looks like a harlot (17:4; 18:16), and [vii] both are responsible for the martyrdom of the faithful (17:6; 18:20, 24). However, the major guilt in 17 is due to the city's *abominations* (17:4, 5), but in 18 it is her sensuality associated with luxury (18:3, 7, 9). Unique aspects of this chapter includes: [i] close interaction with the merchants (18:3, 11, 15, 17, 23), [ii] clear attitude of arrogance (18:7), [iii] deep lamentation over her destruction (18:9-11, 15-16, 19), and



[iv] economic prosperity (18:11-14, 19). Babylon in 17 it is a religious system, but in 18 it is an economic system; both operates independently of and in opposition to the true God. Collapse of the city leaves huge vacuum in both areas. These things will mark the deterioration and subsequent defeat of his political system at the coming of the Lamb (19:11-21).

2. **Another angel:** This angel is different from the angel in 17:1, 7, 15. This angel announces the doom of Babylon and he resembles those came for special missions (10:1; 20:1). Some identify this angel as Christ because of the descriptions like [i] *the earth was illuminated by his glory*, [ii] *great authority*, and [iii] *coming down out of heaven*. However, the designation *another angel* clearly proves this angel is not Christ.
3. **Earth was illuminated by his glory:** The angel's impact on the earth is significant. Radiance of light may be due to his coming from the heaven very similar to the face of Moses (Exo 34:30) or to the restored temple (Eze 43:2) or to the New Jerusalem (21:23; 22:5).

**18:2. And he cried out with a strong voice saying, "Babylon the great has fallen, has fallen, and has become the habitation of demons and a prison of every unclean spirit and a prison of every unclean bird and a prison of every unclean and hated beast,**

1. **Strong voice:** Recalls the similar voices in 14:8 and indicates that it is impossible for anyone to ignore him.
2. **Babylon the great has fallen:** This is similar to 14:8 and alludes to Isa 21:9 and Jer 51:8. The grammar indicates the certainty of the future fall. These words reminds of the fall in 539 B.C. (Isa 13:19-22; Isa 47:1-15; Jer 51: 1-60). But, the ultimate fulfillment will be at the end of world history.
3. **Babylon:** Some understand it as symbolic of the world city of the satanic system of evil that has corrupted the world's history. This cannot be since: [i] the destruction is prophesied for future, [ii] Babylon has never undergone the destruction prophesied for her in the OT (Isa 47:11; Isa 51:8a). Babylon will rise to its greatest heights, both in idolatry (17) and in luxury (18). Babylon of the future, therefore, will be the center for both false religion and world economic prosperity.
4. **Habitation of demons:** The city is utterly deserted. The demons or wild beasts will occupy there (Isa 31:21).
5. **Prison of every unclean spirit and birds** It refers to a place where the unclean spirits and birds, especially the scavenging birds, are kept safe but against their will (Isa 34:11; Jer 50:39). This completes the forecast of the city's utter desolation after its predicted fall.

**18:3. because of the wine of the anger of her fornication all the nations have drunk, and the kings of the earth have committed fornication with her, and the merchants of the earth have become rich because of the power of her wantonness."**

1. **Because:** The cause of the city's fall is due to her prostitution with the kings of the earth and luxurious immorality with the merchants of the earth.
2. **Wine of ... her fornication:** This indicates the source from which the kings have drunk. The passionate luxury and materialism of the great city have intoxicated all the nations. The three groups [i] all the nations, [ii] the kings of the earth, and [iii] the merchants of the earth comprises the whole of the world's population. Everyone has united in an ungodly union with the great city, so mankind is universally morally bankrupt and God has chosen this time to act. The merchants will suffer more than the kings with the fall of the city, because the kings will have their political power left. They have only lost a partner in fornication, but the merchants will have lost everything. Commerce and trade is the major subject of the remainder of the chapter. The fornication of all the nations and of the kings is that the city has promoted herself by instilling an unquestioning faith in her supposedly inexhaustible resources, thereby discouraging any sense of a deeper need for God.
3. **Merchant:** The word for merchants carry the meaning that one who is one on a journey to conduct business (18:11, 15, 23, Mat 13:45).
4. **Power dynameos:** This implies the luxury or quantity or wealth of Babylon is actual power that has worked to enrich the traders.
5. **Wantonness Strenos :** The noun appears in the NT only here, but the related verb appears in 18:7, 9. The idea of the this word is that of insolent luxury, self-indulgence with accompanying arrogance and vicious exercise of strength, exuberance of strength which is the flower of pride, or the impudence of wealth, wantonness, and unruliness arising from the fullness of bread (1Tim 5:11; Deu 32:15). The connection of fornication and luxury in this verse indicates that Babylon's fornication consists not only of idolatry, but also includes her pride in excessive wealth. Replace religion often has gone hand in hand with the accumulation and abusive use of luxury.

## **20.2.2 Prediction of a voice from heaven that Babylon will fall (18:4-20)**

This prediction has three parts: [i] a call for God's people to come out of Babylon (4-8), [ii] laments by the kings of the earth, the merchants, and the sea people (9-19), and [iii] a note of heavenly rejoicing (20).

**18:4. And I heard another voice out of heaven saying, "Come out of her, My people, that you not share with her sins, and that you might not receive of her plagues.**

1. **Another voice out of heaven:** John heard a call to God's people. This is not the voice of God or of Christ, but of an angel speaking in the name of God (11:3; 22:7-8) as evident from the use of third person (God) in (6). This call reminds the call to leave Babylon (Isa 48:20; Jer 51:6; Zec 2:6-7). Unlike the joyful exits in Isaiah, this is a warning to separate from the wicked (Gen 12:1; Gen 19:12; Num 16:26; Mat 24:16). This is a call not only to leave a literal city, but also to reject the false system the city represents: idolatry, self-sufficiency, reliance on luxury, and violence against human life.
2. **My people:** This refers to the faithful, primarily those who are alive at the peak of the beast's kingdom. This also implies that saints will be there on the earth even to the very end.
3. **Share with her sins:** Warning is against sharing with the sins of the city. Failure to separate will result in sharing with the plagues. Note that, John placed the plagues in the future after having spoken of the city's destruction as past (18:2) is to be understood as poetic intercalation (reverse insertion) in which chronological sequence is not a governing consideration. This is a call to separate from the evil system and receive protection from God's wrath.

#### 18:5. **Because her sins have joined unto heaven, and God has remembered her unrighteous acts.**

1. **Have reached/joined (ekollethesan):** Amplifying the reason for God's people to depart from Babylon, as suggested by this word, is her sins have now grown together into a big mass. Note that it not that Babylon's sins are joined to heaven, but that they have grown so much that it now reaches to heaven. This alludes several OT passages (Gen 11:3-4; Jer 51:9; Gen 18:20-21).
2. **Has remembered:** It is prophetic and God will not forget the iniquities or crimes of Babylon (16:19). These crimes or *unrighteous acts* are used in a legal sense (Act 18:14; Act 24:20). It is an expression of appeal to the justice of God and He must punish Babylon. Hence, His people must distance themselves from the city and the system as far as they can.

#### 18:6. **Give back to her as even she has given back, and double the double things according to her works; in the cup which she has mixed, mix for her double;**

1. **Render to her:** The call is to execute justice of God which is in line with *lex talionis* of the OT (Jer 51:24; Psa 28:4; Psa 137:8). NT also teaches similarly (Mat 7:2; Gal 6:7-8; Rom 12:19). This does not mean a disciple should repay evil. Instead we should be a blessing to the persecutors (Mat 5:43-45). We should never repay evil for evil (Rom 12:14,17; 1The 5:15; 2Tim 4:14; 1Pet 3:9). This is because God alone can judge the human motives correctly. God alone can implement the law of retaliation.

2. **She rendered:** This may refer to the persecution of saints by Babylon (18:24; 19:2) more than the corruption of the nations. This is not a prayer for personal vengeance by the persecuted saints. It is a divine response to the wicked persons who have passed the point of no return. This exhortation is apparently (ironically) to the beast and his allies who will destroy Babylon according to the counsel of God (17:16-17). This is confirmed by the similar result of the judgment: the burning of the city (17:16; 18:8, 9, 18). Note that even though vengeance is the prerogative of God alone (Deu 32:35; Rom 12:19; Heb 10:30). However, God also has the right to choose the agents of destruction. God used Moses (Exo 14:26). God used Joshua (Exo 17:13). God used Cyrus (Isa 45:1). Similarly God used Deborah and Barak (Jud 4-5), and Gideon (Jud 7). The beast and his supporters moved suddenly and unexpectedly to destroy the city and its commercial as well as its religious pre-eminence.
3. **Repay double:** It means to repay in full and is according to the law of God (Ex 22:4; Isa 40:2; Jer 17:18). This is true even in the case of restoration (Job 42:10; Isa 61:7 Zec 9:12).
4. **According to her works:** This is consistently the basis for God's future judgment of mankind (Psa 62:12; Pro 24:12; Isa 59:18; Jer 17:10; Rom 2:6; 1Pet 1:17; Rev. 2:23; 20:12, 13; 22:12).
5. **The cup:** The cup that Babylon used to seduce others has now become the instrument of her own punishment (14:8, 10; 17:4; 18:3). She receives back exact punishment for her wrongdoings (14:10).

**18:7. in as many things as she has glorified herself and become wanton, give so much torment and sorrow to her. Because in her heart she says, 'I sit a queen, and am not a widow, and I will in no way see sorrow';**

1. **Glorified herself (edoxasen):** The first sin of Babylon is self-glorification.
2. **Lived luxuriously (estreniasen):** The second sin is finding satisfaction in luxury. It denotes a luxurious lifestyle accompanied by discourtesy, arrogance, self-indulgence, ruthless exercise of strength, and unruliness. (Isa 3:16; Pro 29:23; Luk 1:51; Luk 14:11).
3. **Same measure:** The principle of matching the punishment to the crime is a constantly affirmed scriptural principle.
4. **Torment:** It is the usual word for mourning over the dead (Gen 27:41; Amo 8:10). Intense suffering will replace the luxurious lifestyle, and the gloom will replace laughter.
5. **Says in heart:** One who examines the motives has found a self-centeredness that is almost equal to self-deification. Meditations of the heart are like an open book to Him. The attitude of Babylon is essentially there is no other God than her. This is the peak of wickedness (Psa 10:4-13; Psa 14:1; Psa 53:1; Eze 28:2-9).

6. **I sit a queen:** Babylon, Tyre, and Nineveh were noted for such boasting in the OT (Isa 47:7-9; Eze 27:3; Eze 28:2; Zep 2:15). This, the third sin of Babylon is an arrogant self-confidence (Isa 47:5,7,8). It is a self-sufficiency that prompts one to think that he is beyond the reach of any punishment. Such an overweening presumption will draw the wrath of God.
7. **Not a widow...see no sorrow:** The fourth sin of Babylon is the avoidance of suffering. She rejects the possibility of widowhood and sorrow. The claim of self-sufficiency is a clear reminder of the attitude of the church in Laodicea (3:17).

**18:8. on account of this in one day her plagues will come, death and sorrow and famine, and she shall be burned up with fire; because the Lord God who judges her is strong**

1. **On account of this:** Shows the cause and effect. Babilon's arrogance seen in the previous verse resulted in the sudden and utter destruction.
2. **In one day:** More than the literal duration suddenness of the destruction is viewed here.
3. **Plagues will come:** She tried to avoid it by
4. :

## Chapter 21

# Rejoicing over Babylon's Fall and Conquest of the King of Kings (19:1-21)

21.1 Rejoicing over the Fall of Babylon (19:1–10)

21.2 The Coming of the King of Kings (19:11–16)

21.3 The Great Supper of God (19:17–21)

## Chapter 22

# The Millennium and the White-Throne Judgment (20:1-15)

22.1 Binding of Satan (20:1–3)

22.2 Thousand-Year Kingdom (20:4–10)

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## Chapter 23

# The New Creation (21:1-22:5)

23.1 New Heaven and the New Earth (21:1–8)

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## Chapter 24

# Epilogue: Final Words by an Angel, John, and Jesus (22:6–21)

24.1 Testimony of the Angel (22:6–7)

24.2 Testimony of John (22:8–11)

24.3 Testimony of Jesus and John's Response (22:12–20)

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# Appendix A

## The Chronological Interpretation of Revelation 2–3

# Appendix B

## Imprecatory Prayers of the Apocalypse

## Appendix C

# Structure of the Apocalypse: Recapitulation or Progression?

# Appendix D

## Kingdom of Christ in the Apocalypse

# Appendix E

## An Analysis of the Seventh Bowl of the Apocalypse