

A Guide to Understanding Revelation

To whom was it written?

- The seven churches of Asia (1:4).
- Chapters 2-3 are letters written directly to each individual congregation discussing their conditions and needs.

Why was it written?

- To *sign-ify* the things which would shortly take place (1:1-2).
- To remind God's people that they were to keep on in their obedience to the will of God (1:3; 22:7, 14).
- To reassure God's people that the persecution they were currently experiencing would not last forever (1:4-6; 17:14).

Chapter 1

- This serves as an introduction to the theme and contents of the book.
- We are immediately introduced to the concept of signs (1:1), numbers (1:4), and colors (1:13-15).
- It names the seven churches to which the book was addressed (1:11).
- Chapter 1 also begins to define some significant terms (1:20).

Chapters 2-3

- Ephesus (2:1-7) – the church that lost her first love.
- Smyrna (2:8-11) – nothing negative said about this faithful church.
- Pergamos (2:12-17) – the church that did not deny the faith in the midst of persecution, but that compromised on doctrine.
- Thyatira (2:18-29) – the church that tolerated sin even though they were involved in many good works.
- Sardis (3:1-6) – the church of the living dead.
- Philadelphia (3:7-13) – the church that kept God's commands.
- Laodicea (3:14-22) – the church that could not make up its mind.

Chapters 4-5

- These chapters contain a scene into the throne room of God.
- A description of God's throne (4:2-5).
- A description of the events around God's throne (4:6-11).
- A sealed scroll in the hand of God which only the Lamb can open (5:1-7).
- The praise of the Lamb who is worthy to unseal the scroll (5:8-14).

Chapter 6

- Seal #1 (6:1-2) - White (purity) horse (strength - Job 39:19-25) gains a victory crown.
- Seal #2 (6:3-4) - Red (war, bloodshed) horse, whose rider was given authority. Many believe this is a reference to Roman leaders (Nero, Domitian) who persecuted the church.

- Seal #3 (6:5-6) - Black (grief, mourning) horse with scales, weighing out the necessities of life. Probably a view of Christians being persecuted for their faith.
- Seal #4 (6:7-8) - Pale (sickness, death) horse given authority to kill. ¼ (25%) is not to be taken literally. Could be a reference to persecution of Christians because of what is revealed in the fifth seal.
- Seal #5 (6:9-11) - A vision of Christian martyrs who are wondering how long the persecution would continue before God acted. The persecution was not complete at that time (v. 11b).
- Seal #6 (6:12-17) - A vision of the future destruction of the Roman Empire. The language of verses 12-13 is common OT prophetic language of the destruction of a nation and its impact on the world scene (Isa. 13 and Babylon).

Chapter 7

- This chapter is an interlude between the 6th and 7th seals.
- 7:1-8 - A vision of the “sealed servants” of God. 144,000 were sealed. 12,000 from each of the 12 tribes of Israel. If this were to be taken literally, we would have to believe that ONLY or AS MANY AS 12,000 were saved from each tribe. What tribe are you from? This is representative of God’s people under the old law.
- 7:9-17 - A vision of a great multitude who had remained faithful during the great persecution against the church (v. 14-15). Remember that John is seeing a panoramic view of church history.

Chapters 8-9

- Seal #7 (8:1-6) - The opening of this seal introduces us to 7 angels, each with a trumpet. Trumpets would be familiar to God’s people (Num. 10:1-10). These seven angels are getting ready to announce something from God.
- Trumpet #1 (8:7) - God’s hot judgment.
- Trumpet #2 (8:8-9) - A great mountain (Rome) thrown down.
- Trumpet #3 (8:10-11) - The leadership of Rome being thrown down and made to taste the bitter judgment from God (Isa. 14:12-15).
- Trumpet #4 (8:12-13) - The aftermath of the fall of Rome.
- Trumpet #5 (9:1-12) - Persecution and oppression will occur against man in general.
- Trumpet #6 (9:13-21) - A picture of God’s judgment on mankind.

Chapter 10

John is instructed to eat a little book which represents the message John was to present to those of his day. It was going to be bittersweet.

Chapter 11

- John is told to measure the temple, but he is on Patmos. We must not get lost in the symbolism!
- God has two witnesses who would prophesy and then be killed (v. 7-10). This is symbolic of the persecution against Christianity that was going on at that time and would continue to go on for some time.

- The witnesses are resurrected (v. 11-14) as a symbol of the fact that God's cause would not be defeated.
- Trumpet #7 (11:15-19) - The victory of the Kingdom of God.

Chapter 12

- A woman (God's faithful) is persecuted by the great, red dragon (Satan). Verses 1-6 are a picture of Satan's effort to stop God's plan that was to be fulfilled in Christ.
- A great battle between God's cause and Satan's cause (v. 7-12).
- 12:7-13 is a picture of Satan's constant efforts to stop God's efforts.

Chapter 13

- This chapter is a picture of two types of persecution:
- Persecution against God's people from the 7 heads and 10 horns (13:1-10). There have been many efforts to specifically identify who each of these things represent. The larger picture is that this is the Roman Empire persecuting the early church.
- Persecution from false religion (13:11-18). From the Roman Empire sprang Catholicism (2 Thes. 2:1-12).

Chapter 14

- 14:1-5 – The 144,000 singing with the Lamb.
- 14:6-13 – Three angels announcing (1) the gospel to the world (v. 6-7), (2) the fall of Babylon (v. 8 - Rome), and the judgment of the righteous and wicked (v. 9-13).
- 14:14-20 – A picture of the Son of Man coming in judgment against the world.

Chapters 15-16

- Chapter 15 is a "prelude" to 7 bowls of judgment revealed in 16.
- 7 angels, 7 last plagues, 7 golden bowls filled with God's wrath.
- The first 4 bowls (16:1-9) are a picture of God's judgment on the world for persecuting His saints.
- The fifth bowl (16:10-11) is poured out on the throne of the beast (Satan and his helpers) because of the refusal to repent.
- The sixth bowl (16:12-16) is poured out on the Euphrates River and symbolizes God's judgment in the battle of Armageddon. Megiddo was a site for many battles for the Israelites against heathen nations (Jud. 5:19-21; 2 Kg. 23:29-30). It is in Northern Israel between the Jordan River and Mediterranean Sea. This is symbolic of the battle between good and evil.
- The seventh bowl (16:17-21) is a picture of the fall of Babylon (Rome).

Chapter 17

- A picture of a woman riding on a scarlet beast (Rome and her persecution of the church – v. 6).
- Verses 7-18 give further explanation through 7 heads and 10 horns (kings and leaders in future Roman history).
- 17:14 is the key verse in understanding the book of Revelation.

Chapter 18

- 18:1-8 – The announcement of Rome’s fall and a warning to God’s people not to get caught up with her.
- 18:9-20 – The impact of Rome’s fall on the rest of the world.
- 18:21-24 – The completeness of Rome’s fall.

Chapter 19

- 19:1-10 – Rejoicing among the redeemed over the fall of Rome.
- 19:11-16 – A picture of the victorious Christ on a white horse.
- 19:17-21 – The victory of the Christ over the beast.

Chapter 20

- 20:1-3 – Satan bound for 1,000 years.
- 20:4-6 – The saints reigning with Christ for 1,000 years.
- 20:7-10 – Gog and Magog (enemies of God’s people – Gen. 10:2; Eze. 38-39). Some tell us that this is China and Russia!
- 20:11-15 – Christ on His holy throne judging the world.

Chapter 21

- 21:1-8 – A picture of the victorious bride (church) having overcome the persecution.
- 21:9-21 – A picture of New Jerusalem (Lamb’s wife – v. 9), the church.
- 21:22-27 – The glory and purity of the victorious church.

Chapter 22

- 22:1-5 – God’s people having access to the tree of life.
- 22:6-11 – John is instructed not to seal the book he has written because “the time is at hand.”
- 22:12-21 – Christ is coming, keep the commandments, and do not add to or take away from the words of this book!

A Study Outline of Revelation

Written by – John, the apostle – 1:1, 4, 9; 21:2; 22:8.

Written to – the seven churches of Asia – 1:4; 2-3.

Purpose – to encourage severely persecuted Christians to remain faithful to the Lord (2:10), to assure them that their cause will succeed (17:14), and to give them a picture of what it will be like after they endure (19-22).

Four major approaches to this book:

- **The Futurist View** – Many believe that Revelation is full of unfulfilled prophecies and believe that chapters 19-22 are speaking of the 1,000 year reign of Christ on earth.
- **The Preterist View** – Some believe that the events recorded in Revelation occurred in the first century, before AD 70, and therefore has no real significance for today.

- **The Historical View** – Some approach Revelation as if it were a detailed blueprint of the events of world history. They see the apostasy into Catholicism, the rise of Muhammad, the dark ages, etc., etc.
- **The Contextual View** – How would the original recipients have understood the book? Did the numbers, colors, and beasts bring anything to their minds from the Scriptures? This is the only correct view to take of any book of the Bible.

How can we understand Revelation?

- Remember who wrote, why he wrote it, and to whom he wrote it.
- Remember that John extensively used symbolic language, which was not unfamiliar to Christians of his day (Ezekiel, Daniel, Zechariah).
- Remember that there are over 400 references and allusions to the Old Testament.
- Don't press the details of the symbolism and understand them in the light of the entire Bible.

1:1-3 are important in understanding Revelation:

- 1 – Things which must shortly come to pass (NKJ – Things which must shortly take place).
- 1 – Signified – *sign* – ified.
- 3 – Read, hear, keep.
- 3 – The time is at hand (NKJ – The time is near).

Chapter 1

1:1-3 – John's Introduction

- *Revelation* is from apokalupsis meaning, “an uncovering, a revealing.”
- “Shortly come to pass” is found four times in this book – 1:1, 3; 22:6, 10.
- 1:3 is the first of seven beatitudes in Revelation. 14:13; 16:15; 19:9; 20:6; 22:7, 14.

1:4-8 – The Audience and Godhead

- It is important to remember who the original recipients were (v. 4).
- God – “Him who is, and was, and is to come.” God's eternal nature.
- The Holy Spirit – “the seven Spirits.” Seven is a number of completion or fullness and this represents His divine nature.
- Jesus Christ – He is described in verses 5-8.

1:9-11 – John's Call to Write

- John was in the kingdom of Jesus Christ. This is a reference to the church (Col. 1:13; Heb. 12:28).
- Verses 10-11 are a claim of verbal inspiration.

1:12-20 – John's Vision of Christ

- Seven golden candlesticks (NKJ – lampstands). The seven churches (v.20).

- Jesus is “in the midst” of them.
- Clothed with a garment down to the feet and a golden girdle – royal clothing.
- Head, hair white like wool and snow – purity and holiness (Heb. 7:26).
- Eyes like fire – penetrating vision, all-seeing.
- Feet like brass – symbolic of power.
- Voice like many waters – attention getting authority.
- Notice John’s reaction to being in the presence of Deity (v. 17).
- “Fear not” is extremely important when considering the historical setting. He is reassuring John, and the churches of Asia, that He is in control, not Rome.
- The Keys of hell (*hades – the place not seen*) and death (*thanatos – separation from God*).
- Seven stars = seven *angelos* (angels, messengers). Seven candlesticks (lampstands) represent the light that each congregation possessed in their area.

Chapter 2

2:1-7 – Letter to Ephesus

Diagnosis – The Loveless Church

Positives – verses 2-3, 6

Negatives – verses 4-5

Promise – verse 7

2:8-11 – Letter to Smyrna

Nothing negative

Positives – verse 9

Warning – verse 10

Promise – verse 11

2:12-17 – Letter to Pergamos

Diagnosis – Doctrinal Compromise

Positives – verse 13

Negatives – verses 14-15

Warning – verse 16

Promise – verse 17

2:18-29 – Letter to Thyatira

Diagnosis – Moral Compromise

Positives – verses 19, 24-25

Negatives – verses 20-23

Promise – verses 26-29

Chapter 3

3:1-6 – Letter to Sardis

Diagnosis – The Church of the Living Dead

Positives – Verse 4
Negatives – Verse 2
Warning – Verse 3
Promise – Verse 5

3:7-13 – Letter to Philadelphia
Diagnosis - The Persevering Church
A church with opportunities – Verse 8
An exalted church – Verses 9-10
Promise – Verses 11-12

3:14-22 – Letter to Laodicea
Diagnosis – The Useless Church
Nothing positive is said of this church
Their condition – Verse 15
God’s reaction – Verse 16
Their self-deception – Verse 17
God’s solution – Verses 18-19
Promise – Verses 20-21

Chapter 4

John is given a vision of the throne room of God.

It is important to notice the word “like” (NKJ) or “as it were” (KJV).

What does John see on and around the throne of God?

- One on the throne (v. 3) was “like” a jasper (a valuable stone of various colors) and a sardine (a reddish precious stone).
- A rainbow around the throne (Gen. 9:11-17). A symbol of God’s promise or covenant. Revelation shows what God’s promises are to those who remain faithful throughout a spiritual battle. The rainbow was like an emerald (a precious green stone).
- 24 thrones around God’s on which sat 24 elders clothed in white (holiness) with a golden crown (a wreath given to a victor in the public games). In the context of the Bible, how should we understand 24? It seems to be symbolic of God’s chosen people from different periods of time (12 tribes of Israel and 12 apostles – Matt. 19:28; Gal. 6:16).
- Verse 5a is indicative of God’s power. Verse 5b is a reference to the third member of the Godhead, the Holy Spirit, who knows the “deep things of God” (1 Cor. 2:10-13).
- There is a sea around the throne that is likened unto crystal (clear, ice). Something happens to the “sea” (21:1).
- Four living creatures, full of eyes, described in verses 6-8. First like a lion (strength), second like a calf (service), third like a man (intelligence), fourth like an eagle (swiftness). It seems that these are symbolic of the fact that God’s purpose can and

will be accomplished. They each had six wings. Very similar to what Ezekiel saw in a vision (Eze. 1:5-14). They are worshiping God who is perfectly holy, full of strength, and eternal (v. 8).

- Along with the 4 beast (creatures) the 24 elders fall down and worship before the throne of God.
- What would be the point of this vision for the seven churches of Asia?

Chapter 5

The Lamb of God enters the picture.

- God is holding a scroll full of writing and completely (7) sealed that no one in creation was able to open. John saw that God had a revelation yet to be revealed.
- John was very upset because it appeared that the revelation could not be known.
- The Lion of the tribe of Judah – Genesis 49:9-10. A prophetic reference to Christ who would come from the tribe of Judah (Heb. 7:14).
- The Root of David – Isaiah 11 is an extensive prophecy along these lines. Jesus was of the lineage of David (Rom. 1:3-4).
- Jesus “prevailed” and is therefore worthy to open the scroll.
- John does not see a lion, but a Lamb that had been slain (v. 6-7). He is the only one who is worthy to approach the throne of God and take the scroll.
- Horns are a symbol of power or rule, and He has 7! Jesus is the final authority (Jn. 5:22; 12:48).

Verses 8-14 record the reaction to Jesus taking the scroll from God.

- The four beasts and the 24 elders praise the Lamb because of His worthiness.
- Jesus “has made us” kings and priests and we shall reign on the earth. 1 Peter 2:5-9 and Colossians 1:13 shows that this is a present reality. He has a kingdom now and we are in it.
- John hears many angels: $10,000 \times 10,000 = 100,000,000$. And there were also thousands upon thousands of angels praising the Lamb of God (v. 11-12).
- All of the creation recognized the power and sovereignty of the Christ (v. 13)!
- “Him that sitteth upon the throne” is a participle, which means it is a verbal adjective. Literally, “the sitting one on the throne.” This verse also shows that the reign of Christ on the throne of David was a current reality in the first century.

The vision of 4-5 serve as reassurance for the persecuted churches of the first century. Some of the things revealed from the scroll with seven seals are going to be disturbing to them. They needed to know that God and Christ are on the throne and are aware of what was going on.

Chapter 6

The opening of the first six seals on God’s scroll by the Lamb of God.

6:1-2 – The First Seal

White horse – a holy warrior (Isa. 1:18; Rev. 7:14; Job 39:19-25).

Bow – an instrument of battle (Ps. 45:4-5).

Crown – a reward for victory (crowns are mentioned 11 times in Revelation).

Point – Christ and His cause will be victorious in battle.

6:3-4 – The Second Seal

Fiery, red horse – war, bloodshed.

Sword – (*machaira*) the sword of sacrifice, execution (Acts 12:2).

Point – symbolic language of the battle of Rome against the Christians.

6:5-6 – The Third Seal

Black horse – grief, mourning.

Wheat and barley were staples of their diet.

Wine and oil were more luxurious items that not everyone could afford.

A penny (KJV) or denarius (NKJ) was about a day's wage (Matt. 20:2, 8-9).

Following the bloodshed there would be a scarcity of the essentials of life.

6:7-8 – The Fourth Seal

Pale horse – (*chloros*) light green (Mk. 6:39).

Death rode the horse and *hades* (*the unseen*) followed after him.

Along with persecution (2nd seal) and economic prejudice (3rd seal), there would be famine and pestilence that would cause people to suffer in general (Eze. 14:21).

25% just shows that this suffering is not going on for everyone in the world.

6:9-11 – The Fifth Seal

The altar – a place of sacrifice.

The souls – they had died for (*dia* – because of) their faith.

It appears that they feel that they had died for nothing. When will you do something?!

They were rewarded with a white robe (purity, holiness) and rest.

God would act in His time (Rom. 12:17-19).

6:12-17 – The Sixth Seal

Earthquake, black sun, blood moon, stars fell, sky rolled up, mountains, islands moved.

John saw great cosmic disturbances!

These images are used in various places in the Bible describing some political/governmental catastrophes.

Isaiah 13:1, 9-10, 13 - Babylon

Joel 2:10-11 - Israel

Luke 21:25-28 – Jerusalem

Rome is going to fall, and when it does, it is going to impact the world!

Chapter 7

The 144,000 are sealed

7:1-8 – John “saw” a new vision after the opening of the 6th seal (6:12-17) and before the opening of the 7th seal (8:1-6).

- From the language, this is clearly symbolic literature.
- 4 angels, 4 corners of the earth, holding the wind.
- Before the events of the seals were to take effect, God seals His people.
- 12,000 from each tribe are sealed. Notice that Dan and Ephraim are not mentioned and we are not told why. Levi is mentioned, but they received no land inheritance and sometimes that name is not listed in the OT. Judges 18 records that Dan went off into idolatry and, possibly, that is why they are not mentioned.
- If this were literal, the only ones to be saved from the “great tribulation” would be male virgins (14:1-4).

7:9-17 – A great multitude before the throne.

- The 144,000 are on earth, this group is with the Lamb in heaven (v. 9-11).
- The faithful in heaven proclaim that God is the source of salvation and the He is worthy of praise.
- The multitude in heaven is identified as those who “came out of great tribulation” (v. 14). They remained faithful during the great tribulation. The Greek reads that they are “the having come out ones.”
- What happens when you endure to the end? Verses 15-17 is the answer.

Different views on the great tribulation:

1. It takes place between the rapture and the return of Christ to earth. No foundation in Scripture.
2. Some believe it refers to Christians who survived the destruction of Jerusalem, but that happened 30 years prior to this writing.
3. Contextually, the view that makes the most sense is that this covers the persecution that the church had been facing since the days of Nero (AD 54-68) and would continue to face until the Edict of Toleration by Constantine (AD 313). This would cover about 200 years or so, and fits in with John’s words “things which must shortly come to pass.”

Chapter 8

The 7th seal from the God’s scroll (5:1) is opened and introduces us to 7 angels who each makes an announcement with a trumpet.

In contrast to the singing, praising, and shouting in heaven, there is now a period of silence (suspense). 30 minutes is a relatively short period of time, but seems long when waiting for something.

8:1-6 – The prayers of the saints and God’s response.

- The altar and incense mentioned here was foreshadowed by the altar that was before the veil in the temple where the priest would offer incense before God (Ex.30:1-6).
- The first 4 verses let the Christian’s know that God was hearing their prayers.

- Verses 5-6 let them know that God is going to respond to those prayers.
- Luke 18:1-8 – Jesus taught about the necessity of constant prayer.

8:7 – The first trumpet announces hail, fire, and blood. Similar to the plague that struck Egypt (Ex. 9:13-26). God’s anger and judgment is hot (Heb. 12:29)!

8:8-9 – The second trumpet announces a great mountain being thrown into the sea. Mountains were often used by OT writers to represent governments (Jer. 51:25, 42).

8:10-11 – The third trumpet announces that a great star, called Wormwood, was cast out of the sky. Again, this language is very similar to OT language describing the fall of a nation (Isa. 14:12-15, 22-23). “Wormwood” is used 9 times in the Bible (7 in OT, 2 in NT) and always represents some type of bitter judgment or consequence.

8:12 – The fourth trumpet announces an impact on the sun, moon, and stars and a warning of the next three trumpets. Throughout the OT this language identified some type of political/governmental calamity (Isa. 13:10; Jer. 4:23; Joel 3:15; Amos 8:9).

8:13 – An angel (KJV, NKJ) eagle (ASV) announces three woes. Another OT reference in terms of judgment to come (Hos. 8:1; Hab. 1:8).

Chapter 9

9:1-12 – A “star” falls from heaven.

- Important – falls from heaven to the earth. This “star” (Satan) is going to have a terrible impact on the earth.
- Luke 10:18 – Jesus makes a similar statement about Satan.
- Satan was given a key and that implies that his power is limited by God (Job 1:12; 2:6).
- The 144,000 were not harmed by what happened here (v. 4). The sealed on earth (144,000) would not be affected by the deceptions that non-believers often are.
- The implication in these signs is that Satan had blinded the eyes (smoke out of the pit) of non-believers and they (Rome) had fallen for his lies. These trumpets were given to the 7 angels by God (8:1-2).
- Scorpions and locusts are used in the imagery. These are used in the OT as symbols of suffering because of sin (Eze. 2:6; Ex. 10:12-16).
- Many believe that this section is describing the internal corruption and decline of Rome, while verses 13-19 describe an external force defeating them.
- Notice how the crown is described in verse 7 and the breastplates in verse 9.
- Rome was destroyed from within (v.11).
- The “key” and “five months” indicate a limitation to Satan’s power (Job 1-2).

9:13-21 – An enemy from the east.

- Again, verse 13 indicates that this punishment/judgment comes from God Himself. He determines the times of these judgments (v. 15).
- Euphrates river was part of the Eastern border of Rome. The number of the army was 200,000,000 (v. 16).
- Great suffering was going to take place on “men” (mankind – v. 18). We must remember that God’s people had been “sealed” (9:4).
- These events seem to be a picture of suffering by those who were living in sin (v.20-21).
- Nations fall because of internal decline (v. 1-12) and external enemies (v. 13-21).
- Witnessing all of these “judgments” should cause people to turn to God (v. 20).

Chapter 10

John’s visions and prophecies up to this point have revealed that God is on the throne (4-5), that God is going to judge the evil world (6), that God’s people are known and “marked” (7), that God hears and answers the prayers of His people (8), and that the Christian’s persecutor, Rome, is going to fall (9). Chapter 10 serves as a launching pad into further visions of the great battle between the Lamb and the Dragon.

10:1-4 – A message for all mankind.

- Some speculate that this angel is Christ, but it is not. He is never referred to as an angel.
- His foot on the land and sea simply means that the coming message is for everyone on earth.
- John is told to “seal up” the things that he heard. Daniel was told the same thing about a message (Dan. 12:4, 9).
- Whatever was written and sealed, we do not know what it was.

10:5-7 – A message revealed.

- A message that had been spoken of by the prophets would be “finished” when the 7th angel sounded.
- The 7th angel sounds in chapter 11:15-19.
- What was it that the prophets of old spoke of that is referred to as a mystery?
- Ephesians 3:1-6 – God’s scheme of redemption for all mankind.
- Rome had set out to destroy Christianity/the church, but God’s plan was not going to be defeated.

10:8-11 – John received a bitter message.

- Again, this is not unfamiliar language to Bible students.
- Ezekiel 2:8-10
- The rest of Revelation is sweet in that it reveals that, ultimately, God’s cause would be victorious. It is bitter in that the battle will be very tough on the faithful.

Chapter 11

11:1-6 – The two witnesses.

- There are many ideas as to who these witnesses were. Some believe it was Elijah and Enoch, Moses and Elijah, the church and faithful preachers, the Old and New Testaments, the Holy Spirit and the apostles, two anonymous Christians on earth now that God is preparing to serve in the earthly kingdom of Christ.
- John is told to measure the temple (*church – Eph. 2:19-22*), the altar (*place of offering sacrifice, worship*), and the worshipers. This is similar to God marking His 144,000 in Revelation 7. Also note Zechariah 2:1-5.
- Those in the court are those who are outside of God’s place of safety, the church. Herod’s temple had an “outer court” for the Gentiles because only Jews were allowed in the court of the temple.
- The “holy city” (v. 2) probably refers to the church and not Jerusalem. Jerusalem had been destroyed by Rome nearly 30 years prior to the writing of Revelation.
- The olive trees and candlesticks (lampstands – NKJ) were sources of light for the temple. Similar to Zechariah’s vision while rebuilding the temple (Zech. 4:1-6).
- God’s people and cause are seemingly going to be defeated for a brief period of time (42 months, 1,260 days). 42 months – 13:5. Same period of time as the 1,260 days, signifying a broken or uncertain amount of time.

11:7-14 – Two witnesses killed and resurrected.

- A picture of the battle between the beast (v. 7) and God’s faithful.
- The “great city” refers to Rome in Revelation (14:8; 16:19; 17:5, 18; 18:2, 10, 16, 18-19, 21). The people of the “great city” will be happy when they thought God’s word was dead, but it was not (v. 11-14).

11:15-19 – God’s kingdom is supreme.

- The 7th angel from 8:1.
- How long will our Lord reign? Verse 15
- 24 elders (4:4) praise God because He had vindicated the cause of His people on earth.
- God’s temple (church) is open and visible to all. Jesus opened the new and living way when He died on the cross (Heb. 10:20).

Chapter 12

12:1-6 – The woman, the Child, and the Dragon.

- Once we identify the child, we know who the woman is.
 - A male child (v. 5).
 - Rule all nations with a rod of iron (v. 5).
 - Caught up with God to His throne (v. 5).
- There is no doubt that this refers to the Christ (Isa. 9:6; Ps. 2:7-9; Acts 13:32-39).
- The woman cannot be the church because the church did not give birth to Christ.

- The woman cannot be Mary because of verse 6.
- The woman represents what is called the faithful remnant of God's people which ultimately led to the birth of Christ (Mic. 5:2-3).
- The Dragon is obviously a reference to Satan.
 - Red (v. 3).
 - 7 heads, 10 horns – some try to apply this to literal rulers in earthly kingdoms who persecuted Christians.
 - 7 heads = intelligence; 10 horns = power, authority; 7 crowns (diadems). These crowns are not the victory (*stephanos*) crowns, but royalty (*diadeimata*) crowns. Satan never has the victory crown in Revelation.

12:7-12 – The battle in heaven.

- John is seeing the spiritual battle between God's faithful and the forces of evil, not a literal war in heaven between Michael and Satan.
- Verses 7-9 and 12 remind us that Satan's realm of influence is this world (Eph. 6:12).
- Verses 10-11 remind us that, even though they may be persecuted, God's people will be victorious.

12:13-17 – The Dragon persecutes the Woman.

- Again, the Woman represents God's faithful (v. 17).
- She (we) went to a place of safety (Eph. 2:6; Col. 3:3).
- The water that comes out Satan's mouth is his river of lies and false religion that is swallowed up by those in the world (v. 16).

Chapter 13

Since the red dragon could not prevent the "woman" from giving birth to the male child (12:5), he began persecuting the woman and spewed out a river of deception after her (12:13-17). Chapter 13 describes two of the allies that the dragon would use in an attempt to defeat God's cause.

13:1-10 – The beast from the sea.

- It is interesting to note how "sea" is used in the OT. Isa. 17:12; 57:20; Jer. 51:42, 55.
- 7 heads, 10 heads, 10 crowns – a representation of fullness of power and rule.
- The description of verse 2 is the beast of Daniel 7:15-28 and it is a description of Rome.
- Notice also that power was given to the beast (Rome) by the dragon (Satan).
- The "heads" represent the leadership of Rome and many believe that the wounded head represents Nero. He committed suicide in 68 AD due to several revolts in the empire and a financial crisis. The time following that was called the "Year of the Four Emperors."
- Verse 6 gives further insight into the fact that this vision was describing the Roman Empire of John's day that would continue for some time (v. 5-6).

- Verse 10 is a word of encouragement to the faithful – Rome will fall!
- Satan’s first ally against the Lamb is the evil government of Rome.

13:11-18 – The beast from the earth.

- A lamb, Biblically speaking, always represents the idea of sacrifice or worship.
- The authority this beast had was derived from the first beast that had been wounded (v. 3). After the death of Nero, Rome was somewhat disorganized and the effort to persecute Christianity halted until Domitian came into power (wound healed – v. 12).
- Verses 13-16 – The deception of false religion (emperor worship) led many people astray, except for Christians.
- 2 Thessalonians 2:9-12.
- There was discrimination against those who would not follow the religion of Rome (v. 17).
- “The number of ‘a’ man” – 666. 7 is the “divine number” and 666 is short of that all the way around!

Chapter 14

Chapter 13 reveals that Satan has his allies. 13:1-10 – evil government. 13:11-18 – false religion.

Chapter 14 shows the allies of Christ – the 144,000.

14:1-5 – The 144,000 are before the throne of God because they have been redeemed.

- If the 144,000 is literal, they must also be male virgins Jews (v. 4; 7:5-8).
- The key is in verse 4 – “they follow the Lamb wherever He goes.”
- Verse 2 is used by some to argue for instrumental music. What and where are those instruments?

14:6-13 – Three angels.

- First angel (6-7) warns that since judgment is coming, all should “fear God and give glory to Him.”
- Second angel (8) – announces that Babylon (Rome) is going to fall. This is one of the main points of the book.
- Third angel (9-11) warns everyone against worshiping the “beast” and says that, if they do, they will receive the full measure of God’s wrath.
- The NT is full of admonitions to endure (Heb. 10:36; Jas. 1:3).

14:14-20 – Two reaping angels.

- 14-16 – God judges those who persecute His people. Some try to apply this to the final judgment, but the context of the book demands that this would be a picture of God’s judgment on Rome (v. 8).
- 17-20 – God is going to “tread out” His enemies! The extent of His judgment is pictured in verse 20 – up to the horse’s bridle and about 200 miles long!

Chapter 15

John sees the preparation for the seven last plagues and the complete wrath of God.

15:1-4 – The victorious saints rejoicing.

- Fiery glass – perhaps a reference to their victory over fiery persecution (1 Pet. 1:6-7).
- Moses and the Lamb – God’s two great law givers. This song links the redeemed of all ages. The usage of 144,000 is also seen here in the sense of all the redeemed from the Old Covenant and the New Covenant.

15:5-8 – God is ready to pour out His wrath on the enemy of His people.

- Again, it is important to remember that John is on Patmos in exile and is seeing visions “in heaven” (the sky).
- These seven angels are dressed in purity and judgment (v.6).
- We were introduced to the four living creatures in chapters 4-5.
- These 7 vials are poured out in chapter 16.
- Verse 8 reminds us of God’s presence entering the temple as recorded in 2 Chronicles 7.

Chapter 16

Chapter 13 – Satan has his allies: government (1-10) and false religion (11-18). Chapter 14 – The Lamb and His 144,000 are reassured that Babylon (Rome) will fall. Chapter 15 – The victorious saints are singing the song of Moses and the Lamb.

- Verses 5-7 is key to understanding who was receiving the bowls of the wrath of God in chapter 16.
- Bowls 1-4 (v. 2-4, 8-9) are poured out on all areas of mankind (land, sea, rivers, sun). God is the source (v. 1). The people impacted by these bowls of wrath are those who have the mark of the beast and worship his image (v. 2). Rome has sown the wind and they are going to reap the whirlwind (Hos. 8:7-8). “Sea” (v. 3) – Rev. 8:8; 13:1. Indicative of social decay.
- Verses 5-7 emphasize the righteousness of God in His judgment on those who have shed the blood of the prophets.
- Verse 8 – in the heat of God’s judgment, men should have repented!
- Verse 9 shows that God, in His justice and mercy desires men to repent, but they would not.

Bowls 5-7 (v. 10-21) are poured out upon the throne of the beast and his kingdom.

- Bowl 5 (v. 10-11) shows that God’s judgment was to directly destroy the empire of Rome. We know this refers to Rome because of the overall historical context of the book. Again, instead of repenting, men blasphemed God.
- Bowl 6 (v. 12-16) is poured out on the Euphrates. The river was not literally dried up, but this is symbolic language showing that a barrier was taken out of the way so that a battle could be fought. This is a picture of the battle taking place between the armies of Satan and Christ. This is the battle of Armageddon. Chapter 19 discusses this battle. In preparation for the spiritual battle that takes place, the child of God is

to remember the beatitude of verse 15. Megiddo is an area where many battles were fought (Jud. 4-5; 1 Sam. 31; 2 Kgs. 9; 2 Chr. 35). It was a valley where God's people (Israel) frequently fought against her enemies. John employs this location describing the great spiritual battle taking place at the time. The army of Satan is gathered (v. 16).

- Bowl 7 (v. 17-21) is poured out into the air. John again employs cataclysmic language to say that Babylon will taste the wrath of God (v. 19). This is not a reference to God's final judgment on the world. A talent (v. 21) was a weight of anywhere from 60-100 pounds.

Chapter 17

The Lamb overcomes the great whore, Babylon.

17:1-6 – John's vision of a woman.

- This "woman" is the antithesis of the woman clothed with the sun in chapter 12.
- Verses 5-6 identify who the woman is – Babylon the Great – Rome.
- Satan had two allies mentioned earlier in chapter 13 – government and false religion. Another ally is here revealed – the world of lust and fornication.
- She sits on many waters – verse 15 defines that idea.
- Jeremiah used the same description for Babylon – 51:13.
- Verse 6 also helps us understand the historical context and identity of who "Babylon" is referring to.

17:7-18 – The angel explains the vision to John.

- Verses 7-8 – The nonbelievers were swept up in the glory of Rome. The "beast that was, and is not, and yet is" is probably a reference to the dragon who had been mortally wounded and then healed (13:3-4).
- Verses 9-11 – Rome was called the city of seven hills. The division on the meaning of the seven kings is wide! Some believe that it is a reference to the kingdoms which have historically been aligned against God's people. Others believe it is a reference to seven specific rulers in the Roman Empire. Others believe it is speaking symbolically of any and all governments that stand against God's people. Whatever the seven kings mean, the end of those who oppose God and His people is seen in verse 9.
- Verses 12-14 – The same division exists on the ten kings. Again, whatever this refers to, their end is seen in verse 14.
- Verses 15-18 – Definitions of the "water" (v. 1) and the woman.

Chapter 18

18:1-3 – Babylon the great is fallen.

18:4-8 – The angel warns the people of God not to get caught up in the sins of Rome.

- Note the extent of her sin (v. 5).

- “Double” – Isaiah 40:2. This would be a judgment that would balance the scales. She would receive the full measure of God’s wrath.

18:9-19 – The fall of Rome would have an impact on merchants and they will mourn her fall. However, God’s people would rejoice (v. 20).

- “One day” (v. 8) and “one hour” (v. 10, 17, 19) is not a description of the length of time involved, but a reference to the certainty of the fall.
- Verse 18 – the “great city” is Rome, not Jerusalem.

18:20-24 – The finality of Rome’s fall. Jeremiah 51:61-64 gives a very similar description of the fall of Babylon.

Chapter 19

Chapter 18 assured the suffering saints that Rome would fall. Chapter 19 is the record of the victory of Christ in the battle of Armageddon.

19:1-5 – Rejoicing in heaven over the fall of Rome.

19:6-10 – We are married to Christ because the church is His bride. This is a picture of the great feast that will be had in heaven. With verse 8 read Ephesians 5:25-27.

19:11-18 – The victorious Christ on a white horse. “The word of God” – John 1:1-5, 14. The sharp sword is the word that is used to strike the nations (Eph. 6:17). Christ’s kingdom/church will outlast and be superior to all earthly kingdoms (v. 18).

19:19-21 – They had gathered together in 16:12-16. Satan and his allies (beast and false prophets) are captured and defeated.

Chapter 20

This section must be understood in the context of Babylon falling (18) and the beast and his allies being defeated (19). This chapter is not about the physical resurrection at the end.

20:1-6 – The thousand years.

- Satan and his allies are defeated (19:19-21) and are now bound for 1,000 years.
 - Dragon = strong and ferocious; Serpent = cunning, crafty; Devil = the accuser; Satan = adversary of God’s people and cause.
- The faithful are reigning with Christ for 1,000 years (v. 4-6). This is where premillennialists get the idea of separate resurrections and the physical reign of Christ on earth. Those reigning with Christ here were those who had been persecuted and even killed, but their cause had been avenged (first resurrection). After Rome fell there was a period of relief from persecution and Christianity had become a “legal” religion with the Edict of Milan (313 AD). Christ’s cause had been vindicated. The “second death” is eternal separation from God (v. 14).
- Why Revelation 20:1-6 is not talking about a literal, physical 1,000 year reign on earth by Christ.
 - The return of Christ is not mentioned
 - A bodily resurrection is not in view here (v. 4b).
 - The throne of David is not here.
 - Jerusalem is not mentioned.

- A national conversion of the Jews is not mentioned.
- The church on earth is not mentioned.
- Jeremiah 22:24-30 along with Matthew 1:1, 11.

20:7-10 – The final defeat of Satan. He was bound for a period of time (1,000 years, not literal), but his strong influence would return. Various interpretations of this – Roman Catholicism, Protestant Denominationalism, Islam, etc.

Gog and Magog were enemies of Israel mentioned in Ezekiel 38-39. Some believe this to be a prophecy of the Cold War between USA and Russia! This is simply an employment of OT language to say that the enemies of God’s people are ready to fight. They are defeated and cast into the lake of fire.

20:11-15 – The final judgment of mankind.

God is on His throne! The “books” is probably a reference to the books you and I are writing each day. The “book” is a reference to God’s record of life. We will be judged by our own works. We know this is the final judgment because of the reference to the second death (v. 14).

Chapter 21

21:1-8 - The new heaven and new earth.

- This phrase is found 4 times in the Bible – Isaiah 65:17; 66:22; 2 Peter 3:13.
- Isaiah’s verses are referencing the church. Peter is speaking of the new dwelling place for God’s people after the current heaven and earth are destroyed.
- John’s reference is a picture of the glorified church (bride) after she has endured the persecution of the Roman Empire.
- “New” is from kainos and means, “new and distinctive as compared to other things; new in nature. This is a passage of reassurance and comfort to people who had been under extreme pressure for their faith.
- There are certain people who will not be allowed to inherit these wonderful blessings, even though they are made available to all.
 - Fearful = cowardly, timid; unbelieving = without faith; abominable = disgusting; murderers; fornicators; sorcerers = one who uses drugs; idolaters; liars.
 - They will suffer the second death – eternal separation from God.

21:9-21 – A view of the Lamb’s wife.

- Again, it is important to note that these are visions John had while he was on the island of Patmos (v. 10).
- How do you describe the beauty of heaven to humans?
- A place for the redeemed of God from all times (v. 12, 14).
- The exterior of the city is measured – 1,500 miles wide, long, high! This is not a reference to the Promised Land. You could fit 768 Palestines in the USA!

21:22-27 – The interior of the city is described.

- The church on earth is the temple where God dwells (Eph. 2:19-22). When the church is with God in glory it will be in His literal presence.
- Sun, moon, and stars will be destroyed when the Lord returns (2 Pet. 3:10-12).
- Salvation is for “the nations” (v. 24). Sounds like more than 144,000!
- Certain things/people will not be allowed to enter the city (v. 27).

Chapter 22

22:1-5 – A continued word picture of paradise.

- Jesus spoke of the water of life and it was a reference to His teaching (Jn. 4:10-15). Here, God’s throne is the source of all spiritual, eternal life. God’s throne is in heaven (1 Kg. 8:27; Acts 2:33).
- The tree of life from Genesis 2:9 and 3:22. Revelation 2:7 speaks of it. Again, God is the source of life and perfect life will be in heaven in the presence of God Himself.
- Man was cursed in the garden (Gen. 3) and the curse of sin has been in the world since that time. In heaven it will be no more!

22:6-11 – The time is at hand.

- This thought is mentioned throughout Revelation – 1:1, 3; 22:6-7, 10, 12, 20.
- Blessed is he... - 1:3; 14:13; 16:15; 19:9; 20:6; 22:7; 22:14.
- 22:8-9 – second time John has done this – 19:10.
- A “sealed” book is on that cannot be read and understood (5:1-4). The things John had been seeing and hearing will be fulfilled in the not too distant future.
- Verse 11 – there are two groups in the world – the saved and the lost. Those in each group cannot be forced into the other.

22:12-21 – An invitation and a warning.

- *Quickly* is not a reference to when He is coming, but to how He is coming.
- Man’s blessedness is dependent upon his obedience to the commands of God.
- Root and offspring of David – 2 Samuel 7; Isaiah 11; Romans 1:3.
- God’s word contains warnings at the beginning (Deut. 4:2), the middle (Pro. 30:6), and the end about altering His word in any way.