

The Book of Revelation—Part 1

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Outline of the Book—The outline is given in 1:19—*the things which you have seen* [chapter 1] *and the things which are* [chapters 3-4] *and the things which shall take place after these things* [the rest of the book].

- I. Chapter 1—*the things which you have seen*
- II. Chapters 2–3—*the things which are*
- III. Chapters 4–22—*the things which shall take place after these things*
 - A. Chapters 4–18 are the Tribulation
 - i. Seven Seal Judgments
 - ii. Seven Trumpet Judgments
 - iii. Seven Bowl Judgments
 - iv. Three parentheses
 1. chapter 7
 2. 10:1–11:14
 3. chapters 12–14
 - B. Chapter 19 is the Second Coming of Christ
 - C. Chapter 20 is the Millennial Kingdom and Great White Throne Judgment
 - D. Chapters 21-22 are the New Jerusalem

The Title—The Revelation of Jesus Christ in verse 1. “Revelation” means to “uncover” or “disclose,” commonly used in the New Testament (Romans 16:25; Galatians 1:12; Ephesians 1:17; 3:3). Revelation refers to something or someone once hidden which is now visible. The primary task of the book is the revealing of Jesus Christ in His glory and the truth about Him and His final victory over sin.

The Author—Four times the author identifies himself as John (1:1; 1; 4, 9; 22:8). Early church history confirms the Apostle John as the author, who also wrote the Gospel of John and 1, 2, and 3 John. There are many clear parallels between Revelation and John’s other writings. Only John’s Gospel and Revelation refer to Jesus as *the logos*, “the Word.” Revelation 1:7 and John 19:37 quote Zechariah 12:10, and they translate it different than the Septuagint, but it’s translated the same in Revelation as it is in the Gospel of John. Only the Gospel of John and Revelation refer to Jesus as the Lamb (Revelation 5:6, 8 and John 1:29). Both the Gospel of John and Revelation describe Jesus as a witness (John 5:31, 32 and Revelation 1:5).

The Date—Revelation was written in the last decade of the 1st century, probably sometimes between 94 and 96, near the end of the reign of Domitian (81-96). Some have dated it in Nero’s reign (54-68), but there are good arguments against that. Nero’s reign conflicts with the early church father’s testimony, and the spiritual decline of the churches in chapters 2–3 calls for a later date. Those churches appear strong and healthy in the mid-60s when Paul was working in Asia Minor. The longer time gap explains the rise of groups like the Nicolaitians, which are not mentioned in Paul’s letters. Dating Revelation during Nero’s reign does not allow enough time for John’s ministry in Asia to reach the point where the authorities would feel the need to exile him.

So Revelation begins with John, the last living Apostle. He is about 90 years old. He has been exiled on the small island of Patmos, a barren rock sticking out of the sea, southwest of Ephesus. The Roman authorities had banished him there because of his preaching of the Gospel. It is on the island of Patmos that John received the Revelation.

Revelation describes Jesus with 20 different figures: Son of God, the faithful witness, the firstborn from the dead, the Alpha and Omega, etc.

There are four different approaches to interpreting the book.

1. The first century approach—The events of Revelation are things which happened in the first century of the church. The problem is it conflicts with the book’s claim to be prophecy. And it’s impossible to

see all the events of Revelation as already fulfilled. For example, the Second Coming of Christ obviously did not take place in the first century.

2. The historical approach—This is the common amillennial approach of the Roman Catholic church (Augustine, Calvin) and the Orthodox church (Lutherans, Presbyterian, Reformed also). This view sees Revelation as a panorama of church history from the time of the apostles to the present time. They see the symbolism described as the barbarianism of Rome, the rise of the Catholic church, etc. The problems with the view is that it robs Revelation of any meaning to those it was written to and it ignores the time movement the book reveals for the unfolding of events. Very often in the book 3 1/2 years are depicted as the time for things to happen, which is impossible in the historical view. Also, the historical view has produced many different, and often conflicting, interpretations. This approach also has to abandon the author's intended meaning of the book. The most basic rule of interpretation is the author's intended meaning. Prophecy is always fulfilled literally, i.e., according to the author's intended meaning. It's given in many different ways such as parables, metaphors, etc., but it is always fulfilled literally, according to the author's intended meaning.
3. The idealist approach—This view interprets Revelation as a timeless description of the struggle between good and evil. In this view the book has neither historical nor future prophecy but just depicts a struggle. It ignores Revelation's prophetic character, and it actually separates the book from any actual historical events, whether present or future. So with this view Revelation is just a collection of stories designed to teach spiritual truth.
4. The futurist approach—(the approach which I believe)—Chapters 6 to the end are future. They depict actual and symbolic people and events that will actually take place in the world in the future, according to the outline stated above.

Chapter 1

Verse 1—This is the revelation **of** Jesus Christ **to** Jesus Christ to show to His bondservants. It was communicated by His angel, who John was tempted to worship (19:10; 22:8).

Verse 2—John is witness to the *logos* of God. John gives primarily observations and very few interpretations. When John says he saw a beast, he saw a beast, etc. John leaves it to us to interpret what he saw. Sometimes he gives interpretations (i.e., the dragon is Satan), but mostly he gives observations.

Verse 3—This is the only book of the Bible that promises a blessing for reading and heeding the things written in it. This verse destroys the historical approach because verse 3 says this is prophecy. Most people treat the word “apocalypse” as a description of the “end.” That is, in fact, what John is telling us. “Soon” or “next” is also used in 22:6, 7, 10, and 12, and this is after the Millennial Kingdom. These events had to be at least 1007 years away from 1:3, but John still uses the word “soon” or “next” or “near.” So this word seems to mean imminent (happen at any minute) rather than immediate (soon, without delay). John says we are now facing the last events on earth. Matthew 24:43-44 and 2 Peter 3:4 tell us that the coming of Christ might be delayed long enough so that people will think He is not coming. But John is telling us about the next events in prophecy. There are no other events that need to take place. God has no other revelation about another era or age before the prophecy of this book, that's why he says not to add to the prophecy of this book (22:18-19). So this is what is coming next.

Verses 4-5—It is specifically written to the seven churches of Asia (Turkey, today). The eternal One is God the Father. Then the greeting is from the seven spirits (this could be a reference to the Holy Spirit, but John doesn't identify who the seven spirits are, and other than this, the Holy Spirit is not mentioned in the book) and from God the Son.

Verse 6—He made us to be kingdom priests to His God the Father. Making us a kingdom and making us priests is the same thing. Peter discusses this in 1 Peter 2:7-9. The priesthood is of the believer, not the clergy.

Verse 7—This is a description of the Second Coming of Christ, not the Rapture, because every eye will see Him, even the unbelievers, which is not the case with the Rapture (1 Thessalonians 4:13-17). The Rapture is never mentioned in the book of Revelation.

Verse 8—Jesus said He is the alpha and omega (first and last letters of the Greek alphabet). This book is the end.

Verse 9—John introduces himself. John is the only apostle still alive who had been with Jesus, and probably has been the only one for 25 or 30 years. If there was anyone with a title in the church, it would be John, but John introduces himself as *your brother and fellow partaker in the tribulation and kingdom and perseverance*. The church is a fellowship of believers not a hierarchy of officials. John was on the island of Patmos because of persecution from his teaching.

Verse 10—What is *the Lord's day*? We don't know what day it is. Most likely, if he is referring to a Christian day, it was the Sabbath. It could be Sunday. This is also the word used for the emperor's birthday. The first day of the month was the emperor's day, and that is the word that is used here. So we really don't know which of those days were meant by John. John heard a voice like a trumpet behind him.

Verse 11—The voice commanded John to write what he sees in a book. Then he was to send it to the seven churches: Ephesus, Smyrna, Pergamum, Thyatira, Sardis, Philadelphia, and Laodicea. In each case the church was the believers in the whole city. Some had been there quite a while. Ephesus was started by Paul, Priscilla, and Aquilla in Acts 18, on Paul's 2nd missionary journey in the mid 60s. It's now in the 90s, so the church was there at least 30 years. Paul was there at least 3 years. So there were groups throughout the city, but John refers to all the believers in the whole city, not to individual groups.

Verse 12—John turned to see the voice, and he saw 7 golden lampstands.

Verse 13—In the middle of the lampstands was Jesus in His glorified state.

Voice	like	trumpet	Verse 10
One	like	Son of Man	Verse 13
Hair	like	wool/snow	Verse 14
Eyes	like	fire	Verse 14
Feet	like	bronze	Verse 15
Voice	like	waters	Verse 15
Face	like	sun	Verse 16

Verse 17—John fell at His feet in worship. And Jesus accepted the worship, compared to the angel who would not allow John to worship him (19:10 and 22:8).

Verses 18-19—Jesus told John—(1) John, do not be afraid (some will need to be afraid) and (2) write the things which John has seen, things which are, and things which shall take place after these things.

Applications

1. *We need to teach and proclaim Jesus, not just as He was on earth, which was a Servant example, but also as He is today, a magnificent glorified Judge.*
2. *This future endtime revelation which John was to write about, we are to proclaim to our churches, who are the believers in our cities.*

Chapter 2

There are three basic possibilities suggested as to who the *angel* is:

1. The pastor or bishop of the church—This is unlikely. “Pastor” is reading our culture back into the text. Neither Jesus nor the apostles ever suggested having a pastor over a congregation. For example, where is the pastor in Philippians in 1:1 where Paul addresses the leadership of the church and never mentions a pastor. John condemns Diotrephes for loving to be first among them in 3 John 11. In Luke 9:52 and James 2:25, where the word is used as a human messenger, they were not men who lived in those places, but were transient, carrying a message, and moving on.

2. A messenger (person) who delivers the letter to the church. The word is used this way in Luke 9:52 and James 2:25. But the messenger is a person who moves on, not one who lives in that particular locale.
3. A messenger to carry the letter to the church—A superhuman being, i.e., an angel. The word occurs 66 times in the book, and in all of these it refers to a superhuman being. In 3:5 it is a superhuman being, in the midst of the message to the church. My conclusion is that this is probably a guardian angel over each church. John is writing this to those angels, and the angel has to get the message from what John writes.

The message is for the church and addressed to those who “overcome.” The letters all have the same form. The problem is stated corporately, that is, with the believers in the whole city. But the response called for is always individual. *He who has an ear to hear ... To him who overcome ...* etc. The point is to be an overcomer.

Message to the Believers of Ephesus (2:1-7)

The Ephesian church began on Paul’s second missionary journey (Acts 18:18f). Paul stayed there 3 years (Acts 19:10). It was a political and commercial center. The major religion was the Temple of Artemis or Diana. It ranked with Antioch and Alexandria as a major trade center. Timothy was there for a time to appoint leadership in the church (1 Timothy 1:3). It was the city where John lived the last years of his life, from which he was exiled to Patmos.

Jesus’ description—*The One who holds the seven stars in His right hand, the One who walks among the seven golden lampstands.*

Jesus’ evaluation of their deeds—*I know your deeds.* Jesus knows the details of what is going on with believers. Three words for work—deeds, toil, and perseverance. Jesus compliments them because they are judgmental. They do not tolerate evil men, especially those who lyingly call themselves apostles.

—But Jesus has this against them. They left their first love of Christ. Even though they are making the right judgments about the false prophets, they were not doing it for the love of Christ but for their own sake. It was good judgment but they were in danger of Christ not using them anymore to build His church (*remove your lampstand out of its place*) because they were doing it for personal reasons instead of trying to please the One they loved.

Verse 5—Remember and repent.

Verse 6—They hate the Nicolaitans, and Jesus also hates them. In the Bible hatred is only focused on sin (and notice there is no separation of the sin from the sinner). We don’t know much about the Nicolaitans. They were some sort of worldly group that pulled the church away from their love of Christ. The word means “to rule over,” so some suggest that this is a group trying to form a hierarchy, but we don’t know for sure.

Verse 7—The point of the letter is to the individual. *To him who overcomes.* They are to overcome the group that is teaching false things—overcome the influence of the Nicolaitans. Then there is some sort of heavenly reward.

Message to the Believers of Smyrna (2:8-11)

Jesus’ description—*The first and the last, who was dead, and has come to life.*

Jesus’ evaluation of their deeds—Jesus says only good things about Smyrna. Jesus knows their deeds of tribulation and poverty. They are being persecuted by Jews, referred to as a synagogue of Satan.

Verse 10—Jesus tells them to not fear, though they are going to be thrown into prison for 10 days and then be killed. They are not to fear because they will get the crown of life.

Verse 11—The one who overcomes is overcoming the synagogue of Satan and being in prison and killed. They need to overcome religious persecution from non-religious sources.

Message to the Believers of Pergamum (2:12-17)

Jesus’ description—*The One who has the sharp two-edged sword.*

Jesus’ commendation—They held fast Jesus’ name and did not deny their faith in God.

Jesus' condemnation—Pergamum is where Satan's throne is, a large area of polytheistic temples. Antipas was martyred there. Some hold to the teachings of Balaam and the Nicolaitans. Jesus did not deal with the society in general.

Verse 16—He tells them to repent.

Verse 17—To the individual who overcomes, there is reward. Overcomes what? Overcomes pagan idolatry in the community and overcomes false teaching in the church.

Message to the Believers of Thyatira (2:18-29)

Jesus knows their deeds, their love, faith, service, perseverance, and that their deeds of late are greater than at first.

But they tolerate the woman Jezebel, a woman who teaches and leads people into immorality. Jesus gave her time to repent, but she would not do it. Repentance is the key to restoration. Therefore Jesus will throw her upon a bed of sickness. Her children (possibly her followers) will have pestilence.

Jesus says, *I am He who searches the minds and hearts*. Only God can judge motives. In Genesis 6:5 God said every intent of their heart was only evil continually. But He gives according to deeds. All judgment is based on works and salvation is based on faith. Works have nothing to do with salvation, and faith has nothing to do with judgment, except as it results in works.

Some have not held to the false teaching, and God knows.

He who overcomes what? Overcomes the community of professing believers, the false teaching in the church, the temptation to immorality.

Let him who has an ear let him hear.

Applications

1. *Remember—Jesus knows, evaluates, and judges all our activities, including what groups we support and condemn (verses 9, 14, 15, 20).*
2. *One of Jesus' answers to our prayers about suffering is for us to be faithful until death (verse 10).*
3. *When you see that you are not keeping Christ's standard, repent and change your mind and your lifestyle (verses 5, 16).*

Chapter 3

Message to the Believers of Sardis (3:1-6)

Jesus' description—*He who has the seven Spirits of God, and the seven stars.*

Jesus' evaluation of their works—Some have not soiled their garments. They will receive white robes because they are worthy.

Jesus' warning—*Wake up, Remember ... and repent.*

To the one who overcomes.

Message to the Believers of Philadelphia (3:7-13)

Jesus' description—*He who is holy, who is true, who has the key of David, who opens and no one will shut, and who shuts and no one opens.*

Jesus' evaluation of their works—They have kept God's Word and have not denied His name. Therefore, He will keep them from the hour of testing which is about to come upon the whole world. This probably refers to the persecution of the 100s and 200s under the Roman Caesars, but the hour of testing is ultimately the

Tribulation (it assumes the Rapture because the phrase “whole world” sounds global). The church is not mentioned in Revelation after chapter 3.

He who overcomes—overcomes what? The persecution of the synagogue of Satan or anyone who would cause them to lose their crown. Jesus will make him a pillar in the Temple of God, a description of Christians being rewarded in the New Jerusalem.

Message to the Believers of Laodicea (3:14-22)

Jesus’ description—*The Amen, the faithful and true Witness, the Beginning of the creation of God.*

Jesus’ evaluation of their works—This is the only church with only bad things. Their problem is that they are lukewarm. The reason is because they are wealthy—living in luxury. They say they are rich and have need of nothing. Instead they should get eternal treasures.

Repent. Jesus stands at the door and knocks. Anyone who will open the door, He will come in and dine with Him. The idea is okay to use for evangelism, but the context is not for evangelism.

He who overcomes. Overcomes what? The community of believers who are living in wealth and luxury and because of that have become lukewarm.

Applications

1. *Wake, remember, and repent. Be sensitive to your deeds. Remember God’s standard and repent of the difference between God’s standards and your deeds.*
2. *Those who persevere through the tribulations of this age will be kept from the future Tribulation.*
3. *Living in luxury is deceptive. It makes us think we are also spiritually okay. And that makes us lukewarm Christians. Invest your wealth in eternity.*
4. *Be an overcomer. Overcome the world, the influence of the parts of the church that are worldly, and the persecutions of this age. It’s the overcomers who receive the rewards. The ultimate overcomer is Jesus (5:5).*

Chapter 4

John saw a door open in heaven. And the voice, like a sound of a trumpet, said for John to come up to heaven. Chapters 4 to 18 all come from around the throne of God described here. The throne is a whole area, not just a chair. In the area of this throne is a temple. Around the throne is a rainbow. A sea of glass, clear like crystal is in front of it. There are 24 thrones on which are 24 elders. There are four living creatures around the throne. They have faces like a lion, an eagle, a man, and a bull or calf (similar to Ezekiel 1). They sing “Holy, Holy, Holy is the Lord God, the Almighty, who was and who is and who is to come.” In front of the throne is a golden altar with horns on it for incense. There is a larger brazen altar, like the altar of burnt offering in the Old Testament. Later on the believers who had been killed appear by the altar. Some things change around the throne, but the 24 elders are always there. They fall down before the throne. They cast their actual crowns of gold before the throne. (This is not believers giving their rewards back to Christ. Only the 24 elders are involved in this act of worship.) They say God is worthy to receive glory, honor, and power because He is the Creator. Sometimes there are angels as far as you can see. John is brought into this area. Sometimes the elders explain things to John. All the rest of the Tribulation judgments come from this area.

Applications

1. *Give glory and honor to God because He is holy and eternal.*
2. *Proclaim that God is worthy of worship because He is the Creator of everything. Evolution is a blatant attempt to take glory away from God. Evolution says survival of the fittest—which says you are fittest, that is, you deserve glory. It’s a Satanic idea.*

Chapter 5

Verse 1—There is a scroll sealed up with seven seals. Usually you would unroll some of the scroll, break a seal, then unroll some more scroll, then break a seal, etc.

Verse 2—A strong angel asks who is worthy to open the book and break its seal.

Verse 3—No one was found worthy to open the book, i.e., to judge the earth—either on earth or in heaven.

Verse 4—John began to weep greatly because no one worthy was found to open the book. John and the other believers wanted judgment to take place because of their persecutions.

Verse 5—John must have been standing near one of the thrones because one of the elders told John that Jesus is an overcomer who could open the book.

Verse 6—John saw the Lamb standing as if slain.

Verse 7—Jesus came and took the book out of the hand of God the Father who sat on the throne (fulfilling John 5:22—all judgment has been given to the Son).

Verse 8—The elders and living creatures now bow down before the Lamb. The elders now have a harp and golden bowls full of incense, which are the prayers of the saints living in the Tribulation who want the judgment of God to come upon the earth.

Verses 9-10—They sing a new song—a song not to God the Father but to God the Son. He is worthy to take the book and break the seal because He purchased with His blood people whom He made to be a kingdom of priests (chapter 20).

Verses 11—Now, as far as John can see, there are angels. The angels and the four living creatures and the elders all sing “Worthy is the Lamb to receive glory ...”

Verse 13—Now there is glory to the One who sits on the throne and to the Lamb.

Verse 14—The four living creatures say “Amen” and the elders fell down and worshipped.

Applications

1. *Don't judge people in the sense of vengeance or payback or giving them what they deserve. No one in heaven or on earth is worthy to do that except Christ (verses 1-5).*
2. *Teach and preach Jesus as the Judge (John 5:22) because He alone is worthy of it. He is worthy of it because He purchased believers with His blood.*
3. *Christ's death on the cross made believers a kingdom of priests (verse 10).*
4. *Focus your worship on the Father and the Son (verse 13). There is no focus on worship of the Holy Spirit in Revelation. John, who says more about the Holy Spirit than any of the other Gospel writers, says nothing that clearly identifies the Holy Spirit in Revelation. The Holy Spirit's job is to point worship to Christ (John 16:14).*

Chapter 6

The First Seal—Antichrist

Verses 1-2—The Lamb broke the first seal. The first four seals are known as the “four horsemen of the apocalypse.” A crown is given to the horseman on the white horse for him to offer a peace that is short lived. The horseman is the antichrist. The horse is white, indicating peace. He has a bow, but he doesn't shoot it at anyone. It seems like he conquers, but without war. This is similar to Daniel 9:27 where the antichrist makes a firm covenant with the many for one period of seven (the time of the Tribulation). The peace doesn't last for seven years.

The Second Seal—War

Verses 3-4—It was granted to the horseman on the red horse to take peace. The crown is given to the one on the white horse, and “it was granted,” and the sword “was given,” meaning all are under the authority of God.

The Third Seal—Famine

Verses 5-6—The black horse brings famine to the earth.

The Fourth Seal—Death

Verses 7-8—The ashen horse where one fourth of the earth was killed with sword, famine, pestilence, and by wild beasts of the earth.

The Fifth Seal—Martyrdom

Verses 9-11—The souls of the martyrs of the Tribulation cry out to God for revenge on those who had killed them. But they are told to wait until the number of those believers who were to be killed should be completed. The plan of God included the persecution and martyrdom of His saints so they could be overcomers and receive their eternal rewards.

The Sixth Seal—Natural Disasters

Verses 12-17—Natural disasters, the stars disappear from view, a great wind, and a great earthquake. Everyone from kings to slaves are trying to hide themselves from this great disaster. They say, “Hide us from the wrath of God. For the great day of wrath has come, and who is able to stand?”

The first six seals are called the wrath of God. Paul tells us that the church (believers) is not going to go through God’s wrath (1 Thessalonians 1:10). In 1 Thessalonians 5:9 we are told that believers are not appointed to wrath. This is quite different from what is said to the believers in the fifth seal, that they are going to go through the wrath. Therefore, the believers on the earth at the fifth seal are not part of the church. In fact, the church has been Raptured.

The wrath “has come” is an accomplished act (Greek). The Tribulation is called the wrath of God right from the beginning. If you put the Rapture in the middle of the Tribulation, you still have the problem of the church going through some of the wrath, which Paul says we will not do.

Applications

1. *The future of the earth is judgment, not prosperity. The judgment will come quickly by God, not as a process of human effort. But until then, the prosperity of the ungodly may continue and so will their immorality. From 1800 until today, the prosperity of the world has increased. At the same time, the morality of society has decreased.*
2. *Even at the beginning of the Tribulation we see the wrath of God, and Paul said we are not appointed for wrath (compare 1 Thessalonians 5:9 with Revelation 6:17).*

Chapter 7

Verses 1-3—Here is the first parenthesis of the book. John saw four angels at the four corners of the earth holding back the four winds. The point is, they are holding back the judgment. Another angel somehow coming from the sun, crying out to the four angels (who was granted to harm the earth) to not harm the earth until they have sealed the bondservants of God on their forehead.

Verses 4-8—144,000 are sealed (12,000 from each of the 12 tribes of Israel). All 12 tribes are mentioned except for the tribe of Dan. (Levi is mentioned, but it had not received territory in the Land.) The two tribes of Joseph (Ephraim and Manasseh) are mentioned. It does not tell us why Dan is not mentioned, so we can only guess. Dan was the tribe of Israel who was the idolatrous tribe who left their assigned area and moved north and had golden calf worship. That may be why they are not mentioned. It means these tribes exist today and are identified as such in the Tribulation.

Verses 9-17—John saw a multitude that no one could count standing before the throne. These are believers martyred in the Tribulation. They are singing a song of praise to the Lamb. The angels, the elders, and the four living creatures join in the song. One of the elders asked John where the people came from. John said, “You know.” The elder said these are the ones from out of the Tribulation. They’ve washed their robes in the blood of the Lamb. Their positional sanctification on earth has become ultimate sanctification as they stand before the throne. Their task is now to serve God in the Temple before the throne. God will spread His presence over them. Then their condition is described as—

- No more hunger

- No more thirst
- No more sun beating down on them
- The Lamb will guide them to the water of life
- God will wipe away every tear from their eyes

This is not the New Jerusalem, but it is similar to the New Jerusalem.

Applications

1. *God has a future for all the tribes of Israel (except Dan). He is still honoring His promise to Abraham. God keeps His promises specifically.*
2. *There is only one way to stand before the throne, and that is to have your robe washed by the blood of the Lamb (verse 14).*
3. *Notice that heaven (throne of God) is not the New Jerusalem (which is the eternal state for believers) but they have in common the elements of no suffering and no sorrow (verses 16-17).*

Chapter 8

The Seventh Seal—Is the Seven Trumpets

Verses 1-6—When the Lamb broke the seventh seal, there was silence in heaven for about half an hour. Then John saw a ceremony where seven angels stand before the throne and seven trumpets are given to them to announce the next judgment. In other words, this seventh seal is going to be broken down into seven trumpets.

Another angel stands before the altar with a golden censer in his hand. It seems to be a long stick with a cup on the end. He is given more incense (which is probably more prayers) and adds them to the prayers that are already there. They are put on the golden altar before the throne. It's like the altar of incense in the Old Testament.

In Exodus 30:1, Jesus told Moses to make an altar as a place to burn incense. Apparently it was to represent both the golden altar and the altar of incense in heaven.

The smoke of the incense goes up before God (here John tells us that the smoke is the prayers of the saints). The prayers are most likely to ask God to judge the evil on the earth and to bring in His kingdom quickly.

Then the angel with the censer fills the cup with fire which he apparently takes from the larger brazen altar. Then he throws the whole thing (rod, cup, and all) to the earth. There are many sounds of lightning. God sends this to acknowledge the saints' prayers.

The seven angels stand ready to blow the seven trumpets.

First Trumpet—One Third of the Vegetation is Burned up

Verse 7—One third of the earth is burned up, i.e., a third of the trees and green grass.

Second Trumpet—One Third of the Sea

Verses 8-9—Something like a great mountain is thrown into the sea. One third of the sea became blood. One third of the sea creatures died and one third of the ships were destroyed.

Third Trumpet—One Third of the Fresh Water

Verses 10-11—One third of the rivers and the fresh water springs of water became bitter.

Fourth Trumpet—One Third of the Heavenly Bodies Are Darkened

Verses 12—A third of the sun and a third of the moon and a third of the stars were darkened and the day will not shine for one third of it, and the night in the same way.

Verse 13—An angel announces woe to the earth and to those who dwell on the earth because the last three woes are going to be extremely bad.

Applications

1. *The prayers of the saints reach the throne of God. It doesn't mean that God answers all those prayers, but all those prayers are precious to God.*
2. *The saints on earth are not exempt from the judgment of God on earth. Only the 144,000 are sealed not the saints in general. We see that even today. When God judges the earth (such as overthrowing a government) believers can be hurt. Believers are protected from hunger, crying, and pain in heaven, not on earth.*

Chapter 9

Fifth Trumpet—Increased Demonic Activity

Woe #1—9:1-12

Verses 1-11—The star fallen from heaven is probably a demon. The bottomless pit is full of demons who were not allowed to be on the earth before. But now the key opens the pit and lets the demons loose. Before the earth was created, Satan and some (one third—13:1) angels fell and became demons. Some were allowed to be on the earth and some were so bad they were confined to this pit. When the pit is opened, smoke comes out and creatures he describes as locusts. Power is given to them by God. But they are told they cannot hurt the grass and trees but only the men who do not have the seal of God on their forehead. They are not permitted to kill anyone but only to torment them for five months. So the woe of the fifth trumpet lasts five months. Their torment is like a scorpion when it stings a man. Men will seek death but will not be able to die. Their appearance is given in verses 7-10. John is not giving us a scientific description. He is just trying to describe them in comparison to things he knows. We don't know the size of the creatures. They have a leader called Abaddon or in the Greek called Apollyon—it means “destruction.” 1 Corinthians 10:10 translates this word as “destroyer.”

Sixth Trumpet—One Third of Mankind Is Killed

Woe #2—9:13-21

Verses 13-21—The sixth angel blows a trumpet, and there is a voice from the small golden altar which says to the angel, release the angels who are bound at the River Euphrates. They have been prepared by God to kill a third of mankind. The number of the armies is 200 million. I think this army is a human army, coming from the East, and attacking west over the Euphrates River. 200 million is the number the Chinese have claimed to be in their army. Not that this is a Chinese army, but it's just that there exists today an army that huge. Here is a description of modern warfare or even warfare future to us.

And the rest who were not killed did not repent. They continued to (1) worship demons and (2) idols of gold and silver, (3) murder, (4) sorcery, (5) immorality, and (6) theft.

Applications

1. *God is in control of demons. He dictates what they can and cannot do. So even demon possession today is under the sovereign control of God. Even though it may be caused by demons and brought about by the sin of the individual, it's still within the sovereign plan of God. The world is not a struggle between God and Satan. What we see in the world is God demonstrating His own glory. And He uses Satan and demons to demonstrate His own glory. Satan and demons are unwitting servants of God.*
2. *Clear evidence of the work of God (such as the judgments of Revelation 9) will not bring about repentance among those who have chosen to not believe.*

Chapter 10

The Great Parenthesis—Chapters 10-14

The Little Book

Verse 1-11—John saw a strong good angel coming down out of heaven. He is a magnificent angel with a rainbow upon his head, etc. In his hand he has a little book. This is not Christ and this is not the book of chapter 5. But this is a powerful angel with a new little book. He stands with one foot on the sea and one on the land. I think this means that the last plagues will affect both the land and the sea.

His voice is like the roar of a lion. Something like seven peals of thunder give a revelation from God. A voice from heaven tells John to not write what the thunder said. It was something John heard and understood

and wanted to write down, but the voice did not want the church to know about it, so it told John not to write it down. Deuteronomy 29:29 tells us the secret things belong to God, but the things revealed are for us and our children forever. So my goal is to know what the Bible knows but to not know more than the Bible knows.

Then the magnificent angel raises his right hand and swears by God's eternity and God as Creator that there will no longer be any delay. When the seventh angel sounds his trumpet in 11:15, the bowl judgments will be poured out on the earth, which occurs in chapter 16:1-21, and the Tribulation will come to an end. And Christ will return, and the martyrs who wanted vengeance for their martyrdom will be fulfilled.

In the days of the bowls, the mystery (previously unknown revelation/prophecy) of God is finished, the mystery/prophecy God gave to the prophets all through history about God's judgments will be finished with the seventh trumpet (seven bowls).

Then the voice from heaven told John to take the book which is in the hand of the magnificent angel and eat the book. John is told it will be sweet to his taste but bitter to his stomach. So John does that. I suspect the little book represents the Bible. It could be that it represents this particular book of the apocalypse. It is generally viewed as sweet until you understand it, then you realize it contains bitter judgments. The bitterness has to do with verse 11 and prophesying about bitter judgments.

Applications

1. *There are and will always be certain things we are not supposed to know (Deuteronomy 29:29). God reveals via His written Word what we are to know. What has not been written is what we are not supposed to know. So beware of modern false prophets with a word from God.*
2. *Today we are experiencing a delay (verse 6) in God's fulfillment of His promises given throughout His Old and New Testament prophets, but this Tribulation period is the end of that prophecy.*
3. *The Word of God is both sweet and bitter. It's sweet in that it tells us of the character of God, His holiness and justice. It's bitter in that it shows how His holiness demands judgment on a sinful world.*

Chapter 11

The Third Temple

Verses 1-2—This is the Temple on earth. The Tribulation Temple. Why measure it? It seems to indicate the reality of it. Ezekiel was told to measure the Millennial Temple as well, probably for the same reason. To show its reality. This is the third Temple. Ezekiel's Temple is the fourth. The first is Solomon's Temple built in 900 B.C. and destroyed by the Babylonians in about 600 B.C. The second Temple was built by Zerubbabel and Ezra and Nehemiah in the 400s B.C. The second Temple was often called Herod's Temple because he reinforced it and made it bigger and more beautiful. The Wailing Wall today is part of the wall of the reinforcement that Herod made around the Temple area. The third Temple will be built by the Jews either before or during the Tribulation. It will be taken over by the Antichrist during the Tribulation. The third Temple will be destroyed by an earthquake at the Second Coming of Christ. Then Ezekiel's Temple will be built as the Millennial Temple.

The angel tells John to not measure the courtyard because it is to be given to the nations who will tread it under foot for 42 months (3 1/2 years—the last half of the Tribulation).

The Two Witnesses

Verses 3-13—They will prophesy for God for 1260 days. They will be clothed in sackcloth, indicating sorrow and poverty. I suspect the 1260 days represent the first half of the Tribulation. These two witnesses bring about judgment on the earth. Their judgments seem to be in addition to all the other judgments. Everyone hates these two men because of their power to cause drought, to turn the water to blood, to cause plagues, etc. If anyone tries to destroy these men, fire comes out of their mouths and will destroy them.

The beast (Antichrist) finally kills the two witnesses. Their bodies lie in the street of Jerusalem, where the Lord was crucified. It is mystically called Sodom and Egypt. We only depart from the plain ordinary meaning when the author does that. The reason we take Sodom and Egypt here mystically is because John does.

The whole world views the bodies for 3 1/2 days as they lie in Jerusalem. They will not permit the bodies to be put in a tomb. The people on the earth are rejoicing because of the dead bodies in Jerusalem. These two witnesses are terrorists, destroying the world, and finally killed by the government. Notice God is causing sickness, disease, destruction, and death. Later on we'll see Satan causing healing and seemingly resurrection from the dead.

After 3 1/2 days, breath comes from God into the witnesses. All the rejoicing of the people is changed all of a sudden to great fear. Then there is a voice from heaven (we don't know if the whole world hears or just the 2 witnesses hear it) which says "Come up here." So the witnesses went up into heaven in the cloud and their enemies watched them.

Then there is a great earthquake and 1/10 of Jerusalem is destroyed and 7,000 people are killed in the earthquake. The rest were terrified and gave glory to the God of heaven. But soon they are cursing God again. When worldly unbelievers see a catastrophic event which does not destroy them, they tend to turn to God (as many people did on the September 11, 2001, terrorist attack on the World Trade Center in New York City). But when they personally suffer the curse of God, then they blame God for it (16:11).

Verses 15-19—The Seventh Trumpet is the beginning of the reign of Christ (verse 17). In this church age, God is not ruling over the earth. His sovereign plan is in place. There are no accidents. But not His sovereign will. God's will begins with His reign, and that begins with the seventh trumpet, which is the end of the Tribulation, which is followed immediately by the Second Coming, the judgments, and the Millennial Kingdom.

The nations are enraged because of the wrath of God. There is coming a time of judgment and rewards for the bondservants of God. The Temple of heaven is opened and the ark of His covenant appears in His Temple and there are flashes of lightning and sounds and peals of thunder come from the ark and on earth there is a great earthquake and a great hailstorm.

Applications

1. *Witnesses for God should communicate humility and an urgency for repentance.*
2. *To be a witness for God means to stand before the Lord of the earth so that we represent the Lord to the earth.*
3. *To be a witness for the Lord is to be hated by those of the earth. So our message is a "narrow gate" not a popular message.*
4. *We must keep in mind that we live in a world over which God **will rule** over not one He **does rule** over now. God's sovereign plan is in place, of course, but not His will. Today things are not out of the control of God, but they are outside of the direct rule of God. Therefore, for example, we should not expect justice from governments or people. We should not think if things are going well we're being blessed by God or if they are going bad we are being cursed by God. Also, Satan will appear to be winning because he is currently ruling.*

Chapter 12

Verses 1-3—A great sign appeared in heaven. A woman clothed with the sun (Israel), and the moon under her feet (probably referring to the dream Joseph had in Genesis 37:9-11) and on her head a crown of twelve stars (the 12 tribes). [The Roman Catholics say the woman is Mary. They say Mary was immaculately conceived, so she had no pain in childbirth because pain in childbirth is part of the curse for sin. This woman has a lot of pain in childbirth, so it couldn't be Mary.] The woman is pregnant, in great pain, and about to give birth to a child (Jesus).

There is another sign in heaven, a great red dragon, who has seven heads and ten horns. The seven heads are seven world governments that preceded the Antichrist's world government (17:9-14). The ten horns are ten nations that the Antichrist rules over and rules from when he takes over his empire.

The woman flees into the wilderness where God protects her for 3 1/2 years. [There's no example of that happening with Mary.]

Verses 4-6—The tail of the dragon sweeps away a third of the stars of heaven, which probably means that one third of the angels followed Satan in his rebellion from God. Demons who follow Satan are angels (verse 7). The dragon tried to devour the Child (perhaps referring to Herod killing the babies in Bethlehem, which would mean Herod was led by Satan). The male Child is to rule the nations with a rod of iron. But the Child is caught up to God and His throne (the resurrection and ascension of Christ). The woman flees into the wilderness (which begins with the dispersion of the Jews in 70 A.D.), but the author, like all prophecies about Israel, completely skips all teaching about Christ's first coming and life and ministry and the church age and goes directly to the Tribulation where Israel is nourished for 3 1/2 years.

Verses 7-10—This war is going on in the Tribulation. It's a war between Satan and his angels and Michael and his angels of heaven. Michael and his angels overpower Satan and his angels. So Satan and his angels are thrown down out of heaven to the earth. During our age, Satan and the demons have access to heaven, except for the ones cast in the bottomless pit. For example, Satan came before God in heaven in the first chapter of Job. Jesus said to Peter that Satan has demanded permission to sift you like wheat (Luke 22:31). Until the Tribulation Satan is called the accuser of the brethren. But now he is thrown down. Satan deceives the world and accuses the brethren. Now he can no longer accuse the brethren before God in heaven.

Verse 11—The brethren are overcomers because (1) of the blood of the Lamb, (2) the word of their testimony, and (3) they did not love their life even when faced with death.

Verse 13—When the dragon saw he was thrown down from heaven, he persecutes Israel.

Verse 14—The woman (Israel) is given ability to flee from the dragon for 3 1/2 years.

Verses 15-16—Satan tries to destroy Israel with water, but the earth is opened up by God to soak up the water, so Israel is not destroyed by the water.

Verse 17—So the dragon was enraged with Israel, which would be at least the 144,000, and Satan goes to make war with the rest of the converts to Jesus Christ. These converts are described as (1) those who keep the commandments of God and (2) hold to the testimony of Jesus.

Applications

- 1. Don't confuse God's program with Israel with His program for the Gentiles. The believers in general, from all the nations, are being killed and appear in heaven in white robes. But the Jews are sealed for their protection on earth. So there's different ways God deals with each group.*
- 2. Satan does two things: he deceives the earth and accuses the believers.*
- 3. The overcomers are those of verse 11—because of the blood of the Lamb, the word of their testimony, and they did not love their life even when faced with death.*

Chapter 13

Antichrist

The dragon is Satan and the beast is the Antichrist. The ten horns are the ten kings that help the Antichrist come to power. The seven heads are the seven world empires that have preceded the Antichrist. The beast looked like a leopard, bear, and a lion. And the dragon (Satan) gave the antichrist his power. These beasts parallel Daniel 2, 7, and 9.

Daniel 2:31-49—Nebuchadnezzar had a vision of an image of a great statue. The head is gold (Babylonian Empire), the breast and arms are silver (Medo-Persian Empire), the belly and thighs are bronze (the Greek Empire), the legs of iron (the Roman Empire), and the feet are a mixture of iron and clay (the Antichrist's empire). The stone is the 2nd Coming of Jesus which destroys the Antichrist's empire. The stone becomes a mountain on the earth, which is Christ's Millennial Kingdom.

Daniel 7:4-8, 9-14 (very much like Revelation chapters 4 and 5), 17—Daniel has a vision of four beasts. The lion is the Babylonian empire, the bear is the Medo-Persian empire, the leopard is the Greek empire, and

the fourth great and terrible beast which destroyed the others was the Roman empire. Then this beast becomes the Antichrist's Roman empire. The ten horns are the nations the Antichrist takes over. He takes over 3 horns, or nations. The Antichrist is the little horn. The church age is between verses 17 and 18, and verse 18 is the saints who receive the Kingdom.

Daniel 7:19-28—In verse 21 the Antichrist is waging war with the saints and overpowering them (Tribulation). In verse 22 is the Second Coming of Christ. In the last part of verse 22 the saints possess the Kingdom. In verse 23 Daniel says the fourth beast devours the whole earth. The ten horns are ten kings (or countries) which the Antichrist subdues. Verse 25 is the Antichrist again who wages war against the saints of God. Verse 26 is the Second Coming. Verse 27 is the Millennial Kingdom.

Daniel 9:24-27—Seventy weeks (periods of seven) have been declared for the Jews and Jerusalem. After 70 periods of 7s everything (all prophecy, the 7th trumpet) will be completed.

$70 \times 7 \text{ (years)} = 490 \text{ years}$

There will be 7 + 62 to finish the transgression. From the issuing of the decree to rebuild Jerusalem (444 B.C.) until the time the Messiah is cut off (the crucifixion of Jesus) will be $69 \times 7 \times 360$ days (Babylonians had 360 days to a year—as well as 360 degrees to the compass and 60 minutes to an hour—later the days were re-calculated). This = 173,880 days added to the decree to rebuild Jerusalem = the Triumphant Entry of Jesus into Jerusalem.

There is one period of 7 years still to be fulfilled. Daniel does not see the church age between the time the Messiah is cut off and the end. In the middle of that final 7, is the abomination of desolation of the antichrist, which begins the second half of the Tribulation. In Matthew 24:15 Jesus says in the midst of the Tribulation is the abomination of desolation that Daniel talks about.

Back to Revelation 13—

Verse 2—Satan gives the Antichrist his power.

Verse 3—The Antichrist had a fatal wound that is healed. Imagine living at this time and not being deceived. Your experience or your emotions will not keep you from being deceived. Only the Word of God can keep you from being deceived. The Antichrist is very convincing, even if he fakes his fatal wound. If you determine truth by experience, you'll likely think this is a miracle from God (as is the case in verses 12 and 14). Also, the beast fits the non-Christian Jewish view of the Messiah—one who solves their national political problems and their economic problems.

Verse 4—They worship the dragon (Satan) because the beast is healed.

Verse 5—He has authority for 42 months, that is, the last half of the Tribulation, which is after what Daniel calls the abomination of desolation.

Verse 6—He blasphemes against God and those who dwell in heaven.

Verse 7—He makes war with the saints.

Verse 8—All on the earth whose name is **not written** in the book of life of the Lamb from the foundation of the world (predestination) will worship the Antichrist.

Verse 9—Here is free will. If anyone has an ear, let him hear and respond.

False Prophet

Verse 11—Another beast comes up, this one from the earth. He has horns like a lamb and he speaks as a dragon.

1. *Verse 12*—He makes the earth worship the first beast.
2. *Verse 13*—He performs great signs and miracles. Makes fire come down out of heaven.
3. *Verse 14*—He deceives people with these signs into building an image of the first beast.

4. *Verse 15*—He gives breath to the image of the beast, seems to bring it to life. He tries to kill everyone who will not bow down to the beast.
5. *Verse 16*—He causes everyone to have the mark of the beast either on his right hand or on their forehead.
6. *Verse 17*—No one can buy or sell unless they have this mark. It's an economic base.

Verse 18—The mark of the beast is 666.

Applications

1. *The most important question to answer is—What is the basis of your authority? I'm determined to know nothing more than the Bible knows. But if your authority is in extra-biblical revelation, miraculous signs and wonders, healings, power and authority on earth, how could you possibly know the difference between Christ and the Antichrist?*
2. *The world will morally move towards verse 6, that is, the blasphemies of God and Christ which today is the most common form of expletives on television and films. People don't blaspheme in the name of Buddha, etc.*
3. *The world will progressively move toward hatred of the saints. In America today all world religions are okay except Christianity.*
4. *World religion will move in the direction of supporting world government. A one-world religion today has an umbrella concept of God. The attempt is not to make the religions the same. But rather to come up with a concept of God that all religions can agree with and then they tolerate each other and ignore the differences. The only thing that the Antichrist requires is that they worship the beast.*