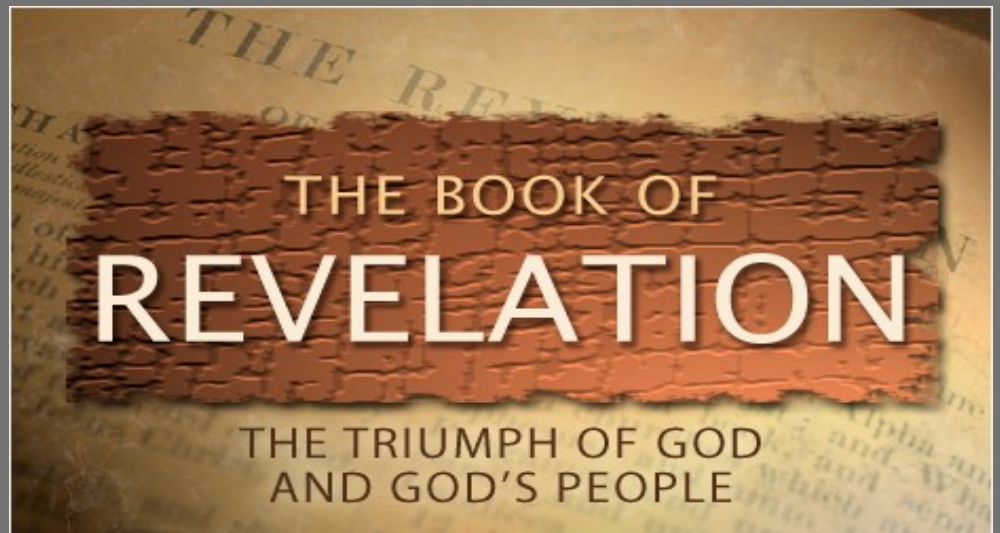




The Book of Revelation

Jesus Wins!



The Book of Revelation. Part 1

I must admit from the outset that this study was given to me many years ago, but I can't remember who originally put it together and wrote it. I found it very helpful and in many ways the simplicity of the way the Book is approached made it so easy to understand. I've adapted it slightly, but the main thrust of the study is the same as when I received it.

The Book of Revelation was most likely written about A.D. 95-96 during the reign of the Roman Caesar Domitian, the Revelation was recorded by John, **Revelation 1:1**, while in exile, **Revelation 1:9**, to prepare the saints in Asia for the enormous persecutions they would soon have to face. It was written at a time when the faith of Christians was put to the ultimate test, as they were forced to deny their faith in the Lord and worship Caesar, or face torture and death. It informed them that although some would die physically, the cause for which they died would ultimately emerge victorious, and the kingdom of God would indeed endure.

When it comes to the **Book of Revelation**, there's no doubt that it's probably one of the most spoken about, and in many people's minds, one of the most intriguing books of the Bible and yet at the same time it's one of the most misused and most abused books in the Scriptures.

Over the years many people have come to the **Book of Revelation** with ideas that God never intended for **Revelation** to convey and as a result of this the book has become a launching pad for these types of ideas. Many people have used **Revelation** to 'prove' such things as past wars or future events, some say they have even found such things in **Revelation** as submarines and aircraft! But that isn't what God intended the **Book of Revelation** to be about.

There's also no doubt that **the Book of Revelation** has been abused over the years, in the sense that it has become rich ground for many false prophecies. Sometimes those prophecies are things that people look back on in human history and say, '**See, the Book of Revelation prophesied that!**'

And of course, we get the other extreme where some claim that those prophecies are events that supposedly will occur in the future. For example, one advertisement suggested, '**if you would like to find out about Armageddon, as well as Nostradamus and his prophecies concerning the years 2009-2012, look in the Book of Revelation.**'

These types of things have nothing to do with the purpose for which the **Book of Revelation** was written in the first century, and they surely aren't an application for us today either, but there are lessons to be learned. We must keep in mind that God gave the **Book of Revelation** to first century Christians who were suffering greatly. He intended it to be an encouragement to them, so that they would '**keep on keeping on**' and never give up. He wanted them to know that if they would do that, then in the end they would be victorious.

Placing the **Book of Revelation** in its proper category within the **New Testament** helps us understand its purpose. For example, the books of **Matthew** through **John** were written to tell us about the life of Christ, Who He is, how He lived, and how He died for each one of us.

The Book of Acts tells us how to become a Christian. Once we learn about Jesus, **Acts** then tells us how to become a member of the body of Christ, a follower of Christ. **Romans** through **Jude** tell us how, on a daily basis, to live for Jesus, as well as what God expects of us once we have become Christians, members of the body of Christ.

Revelation, the grand ending to the New Testament, tells us how to die faithfully as children of God. Within it we learn about Jesus, we learn how to become a Christian. We learn how to live, and we learn how to die faithfully as a member of the Lord's body.

Now please know it's not my intention to go through the **Book of Revelation** verse by verse, but we will obviously go through some of the main texts and later we will go through chapter by chapter.

What I think would be useful is to:

1. Offer some main points that will help us go to the book and understand what some of the main images and ideas are.
2. Show you that the book is a very practical book, it doesn't have to be a mystery.

Let's begin with some basic aids by discussing some main points that appear in the **Book of Revelation**. For example, the **Book of Revelation** tells us that it can and must be understood.

'Blessed is the one who reads aloud the words of this prophecy and blessed are those who hear it and take to heart what is written in it, because the time is near.' Revelation 1:3

Contrary to what some people claim today, we can understand this book, in the very first chapter, from the very beginning we are told that God says that we not only can understand the book, but we must understand this book. The idea of being **'blessed'** has to do with divine happiness, in other words there are divine benefits promised to the person who reads, understands, and obeys the things written in the **Book of Revelation**. **Why?** For first century Christians, the time of their death wasn't very far off.

The same principle, by application, applies to us today, if we want to receive God's divine blessings, and if we want to know how to deal with, face, and overcome tribulation in our lives, then we need to read and understand the **Book of Revelation**.

We must remember that God isn't trying to confuse us, He didn't give us the **Book of Revelation** to merely get our interest or give us a launching pad for things that He never intended to be included in the book. It's a book that, when kept in context can be read and understood and it promises a divine blessing to us when we do that. Throughout Scripture, blessings are promised to those who read it.

'Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be satisfied.' Matthew 5:6

The psalmist shows us the benefit of following God's Word as we deal with sin.

'How can a young person maintain a pure life? By guarding it according to your instructions!' Psalm 119:9

'In my heart I store up your words, so I might not sin against you.' Psalm 119:11

We must understand that if we read God's Word, we can keep ourselves from sin and if we hunger and thirst after righteousness, we will be filled. The Bible truly is a blessing for each of us as it lights the direction our lives should go.

'Your word is a lamp to walk by, and a light to illumine my path.' Psalm 119:105

Just as these passages teach, we will find a divine blessing in the **Book of Revelation** when we come to the book with the mindset that we can read and understand what the book is saying. In order to understand the **Book of Revelation**, we need to understand some of the main thoughts, and especially some of the main verses.

In **Revelation 11** for example we find a great summary statement regarding what the **Book of Revelation** is all about.

'Then the seventh angel blew his trumpet, and there were loud voices in heaven saying: 'The kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of our Lord and of his Christ, and he will reign for ever and ever.' Revelation 11:15

How does that sum up the message of the Book of Revelation? Christians were living during the time of the Roman Empire, it was a wicked and ungodly empire that wasn't favourable to Christianity. In fact, the Romans were trying to stamp out Christianity.

Throughout the **Book of Revelation**, God tells Christians, **'If you will hang on, refuse to give up, and remain faithful unto death', Revelation 2:10, you can be assured that Christ and His kingdom, the church, Matthew 16:19, are going to be victorious over all world governments.'**

If we remain faithful to Christ, no matter what happens, even if we lose our lives, we will still be victorious. That's the main idea in the **Book of Revelation**. We mustn't let any ideology change us, rather, we must remain true to God and His kingdom, no matter what, if we do, we will be the winner in the end. We must understand that God still rules in the kingdoms of men.

‘You will be driven away from people and will live with the wild animals; you will eat grass like the ox and be drenched with the dew of heaven. Seven times will pass by for you until you acknowledge that the Most High is sovereign over all kingdoms on earth and gives them to anyone he wishes. The command to leave the stump of the tree with its roots means that your kingdom will be restored to you when you acknowledge that Heaven rules.’

Daniel 4:25-26

Victorious Or Overcome

One of the main words in the **Book of Revelation** is the word ‘victorious,’ or as other translations have it, ‘overcome.’ This word is used about eleven times in the **Book of Revelation**. For example, in **Revelation 3**, to the seven churches of Asia, Jesus said, ‘To the one who is victorious, I will give the right to sit with me on my throne, just as I was victorious and sat down with my Father on his throne.’ **Revelation 3:21**

In essence, when Jesus uses the word ‘victorious,’ He’s saying that if we overcome, if we refuse to give up, if we persevere, and if we endure, then we can come over and live with Him. This is one of the biggest encouragements that the **Book of Revelation** has for each child of God.

Here’s how this is practical, yes, the book was written to first century Christians to tell them not to give up, but Christians still suffer today. In fact, the Bible promises us that, ‘everyone who wants to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted.’ **2 Timothy 3:12**

We may well suffer, but the **Book of Revelation** tells us that if we overcome, if we are victorious, if we never give up, if we never bow down, and if we never allow our tribulations and troubles to overcome us, but instead we overcome them, then we can come over and live with Jesus in the heavenly realm.

The Question

There’s an important question in the **Book of Revelation**, which occurs in **Revelation 6**. Christians are suffering, and it appears as if the Roman Empire will be the reigning world power. As you can imagine, Christians are wondering and asking, ‘God, we have held true to you; we have not given up; how long will we have to endure this?’ The key question from those who were being sacrificed at Rome’s altar was simply this.

‘How long, Sovereign Lord, holy and true, until you judge the inhabitants of the earth and avenge our blood?’
Revelation 6:10

Christians wanted to know, **how long will this continue to go on? God aren’t you going to avenge us? And what is God’s answer?**

‘Then each of them was given a white robe, and they were told to wait a little longer, until the full number of their fellow servants, their brothers and sisters, were killed just as they had been.’ **Revelation 6:11**

The Christians are desperate to know when all this suffering will end, but God gives them white robes and tells them to wait a little while longer and promises them that He will exercise vengeance on the ungodly when the time is right.

The lesson here is so powerful, Christians are enrobed in white, as a symbol of purity before God, and God tells them not to give up because He will repay those who are wicked, God is the One Who will take care of the ungodly. This, then, is an encouragement to be faithful and not to give up.

Part of understanding the **Book of Revelation** is understanding the main thoughts. The Book is like a drama or a vision unfolding on the scene. If we’re going to understand it, we must understand some of the main characters and some of the main thoughts. If we’re unfamiliar with those things, then we may end up approaching the **Book of Revelation** in a rather dismissive manner.

What are some of the main points?

I would like us to look at **seven main points**, which I believe will help us approach the **Book of Revelation** and be ready to understand it.

1. The **first point** is that **Revelation** is **written in symbols**.

It's a book that tells us it is **symbolic and figurative**. It's not to be taken in a literal, word for word fashion. For example, notice what John wrote in **Revelation 1**.

'The revelation from Jesus Christ, which God gave him to show his servants what must soon take place. He made it known by sending his angel to his servant John.' Revelation 1:1

The words **'made it known'** is the word, **'signified'** this tells us that this is a book that's symbolic. God is going to put in place for Christians certain images.

A Dragon

For instance, in the **Book of Revelation** we see a dragon, think about that image. A dragon is one of the most mythical beasts in all of human history and literature. It can never be tamed, it wreaks havoc on the countryside, it's powerful, and it's something to be feared. That is the image of the dragon. **But is God speaking of a literal dragon?** No. That's not what God is trying to get across.

A Sea Beast

We also see a sea beast, people who live near oceans have heard rumours about a **'great beast'** that lives in the ocean. It can sink any ship, and no sailor could ever pierce it with a harpoon, that was a fearful image.

Riders On Horses And A Temple

We also see riders on horses, and a picture of a temple. All of these are images that aren't to be taken literally. Instead, they're presented to make an impression upon the mind that will last and that has a singular idea, like the dragon, which is a powerful beast that's to be feared, yet that also can be overcome with God's help.

'The revelation from Jesus Christ, which God gave him to show his servants what must soon take place. He made it known by sending his angel to his servant John.' Revelation 1:1

We know that **Revelation** is a symbolic book because in **Revelation 1:1** God said that these things were to be **'signified,'** and the word signified means **'to be shown by signs.'** God said to John, **'I am going to give you this revelation, which I will present to you in signs.'**

Here's why a lot of people don't understand **the Book of Revelation**. When people come to **Matthew** through **Jude**, they read those books literally and rightly so because the text demands that in most places. They then come to the **Book of Revelation** with the **Matthew** through **Jude** mindset that wants to look at the book literally and that sees a literal dragon and a literal beast with seven heads and ten horns, and they get confused.

'The revelation from Jesus Christ, which God gave him to show his servants what must soon take place. He made it known by sending his angel to his servant John.' Revelation 1:1

The Book of Revelation is a different type of literature that's filled with apocalyptic language which is a language in which God, through signs and symbols showed His power and gave His message to Christians. In fact, **Revelation** itself is from the word **'apocalypsis'**, the word means **'an unveiling.'** God unveils for Christians on a grand stage in figurative language, certain images that they, not people in the world, would understand so that they could know His message.

This type of writing, apocalyptic language, was designed specifically to reveal God's message to some, while veiling it to others. Christians would understand about the temple, they would understand about the city foursquare, and the twelve tribes or the 144,000. They had a clear understanding about those things.

But when a Roman government leader read it, he would think it was simply something fantastical or interesting but not a direct threat to the Roman Empire. So, the book revealed the message to those who were familiar with its symbols and language, while hiding it from those who weren't.

Many of the images were simply reminders to those who were descendants from the Israelites in the Old Testament. Much of the imagery in the **Book of Revelation** takes us back to a time in the Old Testament, a time in history with which first century Christians would have been familiar. Not all of the book, but much of it, takes us back to Old Testament history which Christians would have understood.

Numbers

Part of understanding this first point has to do with the fact that some of the symbols are given as numbers. Numbers play a very important part in the **Book of Revelation**, and if we fail to understand the significance of the numbers, then we will miss out on much of what the book is saying.

The Number 3

For example, the **number 3** is an important number in the **Book of Revelation**, where it's used several times. Throughout Bible history, the number 3 always has represented God. Think about it, you have **1.** the Father **2.** the Son; and **3.** the Holy Spirit, the Godhead. Three is a '**divine number**' that represents the **Godhead** itself.

The Number 4

Then we see the **number 4**, which represents the **Earth** or things that are **physical**, as opposed to being spiritual. There are four directions, north, south, east, and west. There are four elements, earth, fire, wind, and water. The number 4 often represents things that are earthly.

The Number 7

Then we come to the **number 7**. When you combine the things represented by the **numbers 3 and 4**, you get the number 7 which always represents **perfection**. There are 7 days in a week, there are 7 churches discussed in the **Book of Revelation**. These are things that are complete or that represent a totality.

The Number 6

Then there is the **number 6**, which is one less than 7. If 7 is perfection, then 6 falls short of perfection, which will help us when we come to the **number 666**. If 7 is perfection, and if 6 is one less than 7 or imperfection, **then what would 666 be?** It would be **complete and utter imperfection**, that is all the number 666 is trying to get across to us.

The Number 12

The **number 12** often was a number that **represented humanity**. There were 12 tribes, there were 12 apostles, representing humanity or people.

The Number 1,000

The **number 1,000** represented an **indefinite time period**. We see 1,000 years, 1,000 years of tribulation, or 1,000 years during which Satan was going to reign. Those aren't literal thousand years but should be viewed as indefinite time periods that one day will come to an end and will not last forever.

Thus, part of understanding the symbols in **Revelation** has to do with understanding what some of the numbers mean. The **first point** is that **Revelation** is a book that is **written in symbols**, and that it mustn't be approached as a word for word, literal discussion because the text is symbolic.

2. The **second point** is that **Revelation** was written about things that would '**soon take place.**'

If we can understand this, it will help us get a good grasp of the **Book of Revelation**.

'The revelation from Jesus Christ, which God gave him to show his servants what must soon take place. He made it known by sending his angel to his servant John.' Revelation 1:1

When God gave this revelation to first century Christians, it was about things that were going to happen during their lifetimes. This is where so many people get off track regarding the **Book of Revelation**. The book isn't about the year **2025**, it's not about what happened during the medieval times. **Revelation** isn't about what is going to happen 10,000 years down the road.

We must look at the book and understand that it was written for first century Christians about things that would '**soon take place.**'

'Blessed is the one who reads aloud the words of this prophecy and blessed are those who hear it and take to heart what is written in it, because the time is near.' Revelation 1:3

Did you know that the book closes on this same tone?

‘The angel said to me, ‘These words are trustworthy and true. The Lord, the God who inspires the prophets, sent his angel to show his servants the things that must soon take place.’ Revelation 22:6

The dragon, the sea beast, the land beast, the riders on horses, all of those images were not of future events for us but were things that were going to happen during the lives of the Christians who read about them. Too many people approach the **Book of Revelation** with an eye toward the present.

In reality, we need to read the book with first century glasses. **W. B. West** wrote a commentary entitled ‘**Revelation through First Century Glasses**’. We will be a step ahead in studying the **Book of Revelation** if we approach the book with the understanding that the things that are discussed within it were about to happen shortly to first century Christians.

Revelation isn’t dealing with Hitler, Social Security numbers, Saddam Hussein, or world wars. **Revelation**, by application, tells us that God will take care of us just like He took care of those Christians who were enduring tribulation during the first century. During tribulation, His kingdom will always out rule and out reign all others.

The Book was written for first century Christians to help them overcome the persecution they were facing they would be ‘**victorious**’. The symbols were things they understood and represented things that happened during their lifetimes.

Not only is **Revelation** ‘**symbolic**’, and not only was it written about things that would ‘**soon take place**’, but

3. The **third point** shows us that the Book was written for the purpose of **comforting persecuted Christians**.

‘**Blessed is the one who reads aloud the words of this prophecy and blessed are those who hear it and take to heart what is written in it, because the time is near.**’ Revelation 1:3

The idea of ‘**blessed**’ carries with it the concept of being comforted, helped, or benefited. That blessing was offered to the Christians who read the **Book of Revelation**, who understood it, and who obeyed it. Christians during the time of the Roman Empire, i.e., during the writing of the **Book of Revelation** were suffering greatly at the hand of the Romans.

History records that some of the Roman rulers like Domitian was so evil and so ungodly that if they found you openly worshiping Christ and claiming to be a Christian, they would take you from your home in front of your family, kill you, soak your body in flammable liquid, place you on a cross in the Emperor’s garden, and light you on fire to be used as a human candle. Some were even taken from their homes and, as a type of sport, were thrown to lions in the arena for people to watch. That is the kind of suffering that was occurring.

If you were a Christian, you weren’t a ‘**half-way Christian**’ because you knew that you might die for Christ. The **Book of Revelation** is written to encourage and comfort Christians who were suffering beyond anything we might be able to imagine today. The point is that God knows our sufferings, and He cares and if we will endure to the end, then we will win the battle.

Look at this encouraging passage of Scripture.

‘**Then I heard a voice from heaven say, ‘Write this: Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord from now on.’ ‘Yes,’ says the Spirit, ‘they will rest from their labour, for their deeds will follow them.’** Revelation 14:13

God said that those who die in the Lord are blessed. God knows and cares and even if a person dies, comfort is available because in God’s sight there’s a great blessing waiting for that person.

‘**I consider that our present sufferings are not worth comparing with the glory that will be revealed in us.**’ Romans 8:18

There is a passage in **1 Corinthians 10** that’s a commentary on **the Book of Revelation**.

‘**No temptation has overtaken you except what is common to mankind. And God is faithful; he will not let you be tempted beyond what you can bear. But when you are tempted, he will also provide a way out so that you can endure it.**’ 1 Corinthians 10:13

This is the idea behind the **Book of Revelation**, God isn't going to allow us to be tempted beyond what we can endure. We need to remember that God is faithful, and He will make a way of escape so that we can endure. Christians needed to know that their escape may have been only through death, but they got out of their persecution, and God took care of them in the midst of that.

These **first three points** begin to give us an understanding of what **Revelation** is all about. This book is one of the most powerful pieces of inspired writing that we as Christians possess. We will help ourselves immensely if we open the **Book of Revelation** with the idea that God wants to help us. The message is clear, God loves His children so much that He will help them and will offer them aid, He knows and cares when we are suffering.

If anything, this initial lesson ought to impress upon our minds how we need to be faithful children of God so that we can receive God's comfort and blessing. There's nothing more important in all the world, especially in the times during which we are living when there is so much ungodliness, sin, and persecution for Christians to live faithfully before the Lord today.

The **Book of Revelation** tells us how we desperately need to be children of God.

Summary Questions

1. According to **Revelation 1:1**, when were the events discussed in the book supposed to take place?
2. According to **Revelation 1:3**, were the things being discussed in the book said to have been 'near' or 'far away'?
3. According to **Revelation 1:3**, did God intend for the things written in the book to be understood and obeyed?
4. Which of the following is the **Book of Revelation** intended to be: a. a mysterious book; or b. a practical book?
5. What is there about the passage found in **Revelation 11:15** which suggests that it is a good summary statement of the content of the **Book of Revelation**?
6. According to **Revelation 2:10**, what were Christians of the first century to do?
7. Does the statement in **Revelation 2:10** apply to Christians today?
8. According to this part of our study, what is the key word in the **Book of Revelation**?
9. According to **Revelation 3:21**, what promise did Christ make to those first-century Christians who remained faithful to Him?
10. Under what empire were Christians in the first century living when the **Book of Revelation** was written?
11. According to **Revelation 6:9-10**, what was happening to Christians during the first century?
12. What does **2 Timothy 3:12** say that all faithful Christians will have to endure?
13. This study part of our study discussed three "main points" to understanding the **Book of Revelation**. What is the first of those main points?
14. What is the second main point to understanding the **Book of Revelation**?
15. What is the third main point to understanding the **Book of Revelation**?
16. In the **Book of Revelation**, what does the number '3' symbolise?
17. In the **Book of Revelation**, what does the number '7' symbolise?
18. In the **Book of Revelation**, what does the number '6' symbolise?

19. What important message is found in **Revelation 14:13**? Does that message apply only to Christians of the first century, or does it apply to Christians today too?

The Book Of Revelation. Part 2

‘Blessed is the one who reads aloud the words of this prophecy and blessed are those who hear it and take to heart what is written in it, because the time is near.’ Revelation 1:3

We have just discussed the **first three main points**.

1. **Revelation** is a **symbolic book**.
2. It was written about things that were “**soon to take place**.”
3. **Revelation** was **written to encourage or comfort Christians in the first century**.

In this part of our lesson we will be identifying some of the main characters in the book, the time frame, and where those events would be occurring.

4. **Point number four** is that **Revelation** identifies **the dragon and the two beasts**.

Like in any vision, in order to fully understand it, we must understand who the main characters are. Some of the characters in this book are ‘**the dragon**’ and the ‘**two beasts**’. **Who are these characters, and who or what do they represent?**

The Dragon

Let us remember again that this is a figurative or symbolic book. God showed or signified to John and the saints many things that were figurative, and that weren’t meant to be taken literally because they were symbols. **So, who or what is the dragon, and what does the dragon represent?**

I want to direct your attention to **Revelation 12** so that you can notice where the dragon is clearly identified as none other than **Satan**, the devil himself.

‘**The great dragon was hurled down—that ancient serpent called the devil, or Satan, who leads the whole world astray. He was hurled to the earth, and his angels with him.**’ Revelation 12:9

The dragon is here identified very clearly, he is the devil, Satan who ‘**leads the whole world astray**.’ In **John 8:44** Jesus identified the devil as a liar and a murderer from the beginning. **Revelation 12:9** clearly identifies the dragon as Satan, which is a big help to our understanding the **Book of Revelation**.

Toward the end of the book, the dragon also is identified. Look at **Revelation 20**.

‘**He seized the dragon, that ancient serpent, who is the devil, or Satan, and bound him for a thousand years.**’ Revelation 20:2

Here we see God binding Satan, the dragon for a thousand years.

When we come to the **Book of Revelation**, let’s understand that the dragon, a mythical creature that throughout human history in literature has wreaked havoc represents the devil, which is the most fearful adversary mankind has. I am reminded of **1 Peter 5** where we are told that the devil is ‘**like a roaring lion, seeking those whom he may devour.**’ **1 Peter 5:8**.

The Sea And Land Beast

In **point number four** we learn not only who the dragon is, but also who ‘**the sea beast**’ and the ‘**land beast**’ are. These powerful figures represent someone or something during the time of the first century. Let’s take a moment to identify from the Scriptures some characteristics that accompany the sea beast so that we can understand who or what this is.

The Sea Beast represents Rome And Her Rulers

In **Revelation 13:1-10** we see some of the characteristics of the sea beast.

‘The beast I saw resembled a leopard but had feet like those of a bear and a mouth like that of a lion. The dragon gave the beast his power and his throne and great authority.’ Revelation 13:2

‘People worshiped the dragon because he had given authority to the beast, and they also worshiped the beast and asked, ‘Who is like the beast? Who can wage war against it?’ Revelation 13:4

These texts tell us that the sea beast has been given its power by the dragon. So, the sea beast is a tool, or a pawn in the hand of Satan. It’s under Satan’s control, and as such is a wicked and ungodly figure. Whoever or whatever this beast is, it’s being ruled by ‘the god of this world’, 2 Corinthians 4:4, Satan himself.

‘People worshiped the dragon because he had given authority to the beast, and they also worshiped the beast and asked, ‘Who is like the beast? Who can wage war against it?’ Revelation 13:4

Notice that people worship the beast. Whatever this beast was, during the first century people were worshipping it. History tells us that the rulers, or Caesars of Rome often were viewed as gods. That’s how they viewed themselves. And the annals of history clearly show that the people worshipped Roman emperors as gods. Thus, we see that the sea beast receives its power from Satan, and that people worshiped the beast.

‘All inhabitants of the earth will worship the beast—all whose names have not been written in the Lamb’s book of life, the Lamb who was slain from the creation of the world.’ Revelation 13:8

This verse tells us something interesting about those who don’t worship the beast. Only those whose names were written in the **Lamb’s Book of Life** didn’t worship the beast. So, who is it, who isn’t worshipping the beast? It’s the Christians because those whose names were written in the **Lamb’s Book of Life** were the ones who weren’t worshipping the beast.

‘This calls for a mind with wisdom. The seven heads are seven hills on which the woman sits. They are also seven kings. Five have fallen, one is, the other has not yet come; but when he does come, he must remain for only a little while. The beast who once was, and now is not, is an eighth king. He belongs to the seven and is going to his destruction. ‘The ten horns you saw are ten kings who have not yet received a kingdom, but who for one hour will receive authority as kings along with the beast.’ Revelation 17:9-12

In **Revelation 17:9-12** we see the seven heads of the beast as representative of seven hills and seven kings. What would people in the first century naturally have thought when they read something like that? Rome always has been known as ‘the city set on seven hills.’ It also had seven major kings or Caesars. What is the sea beast? It’s none other than Rome and her rulers.

The sea beast wasn’t a figure that would show up 2,000 years down the road. It wasn’t something about which God was prophesying that had to do with us today. Christians would have understood this, the sea beast was under the control of Satan, and was none other than Rome and her rulers.

‘It was given power to wage war against God’s holy people and to conquer them. And it was given authority over every tribe, people, language and nation.’ Revelation 13:7

Here we see another characteristic of the sea beast, its identified as a persecutor of the saints and as a dominate world power. Who persecuted Christians? Rome did. Who was the dominant world power during the first century? Rome and her rulers, the Caesars were.

Revelation 13 gives us adequate information to know that the sea beast is representative of Rome. When we see the sea beast under the control of the dragon, we can know that it’s speaking of Rome and her rulers, all of which would have been easily recognised by first century Christians.

The Land Beast Represents The People Under The Power Of The Roman Government

But what about the second beast, the land beast? Revelation 13:11-18 identifies the land beast.

‘It exercised all the authority of the first beast on its behalf and made the earth and its inhabitants worship the first beast, whose fatal wound had been healed.’ Revelation 13:12

This text says that the land beast exercises the authority of the first beast. It's as if the land beast works under the sea beast, which has given the land beast its authority. We also see that the land beast causes the people to make an image of, and to worship, the sea beast. The land beast has authority and goes around enforcing worship of the sea beast.

‘And it performed great signs, even causing fire to come down from heaven to the earth in full view of the people. Because of the signs it was given power to perform on behalf of the first beast, it deceived the inhabitants of the earth. It ordered them to set up an image in honour of the beast who was wounded by the sword and yet lived.’

Revelation 13:13-14

Here we see that the land beast, through trickery and other things that were not real, makes people think that the sea beast is a god. Remember that people viewed Roman emperors as gods. It was the land beast's job to make sure that people looked up to the emperors as gods. In **Revelation 13:14** we learn that the land beast causes people to make images of the sea beast.

Archaeology has shown us that the Romans made busts or images of their gods which then were placed on pedestals so that people could worship them on a regular basis. It was the land beast's job to see to it that people made such images and worshiped the sea beast.

‘The second beast was given power to give breath to the image of the first beast, so that the image could speak and cause all who refused to worship the image to be killed.’ Revelation 13:15

This tells us that the land beast would even put people to death if they did not worship the sea beast. Thus, the land beast is representative of some type of militia, a group of people who went around forcing people to worship the sea beast and punishing them if they refused to do so.

‘It also forced all people, great and small, rich and poor, free and slave, to receive a mark on their right hands or on their foreheads, so that they could not buy or sell unless they had the mark, which is the name of the beast or the number of its name.’ Revelation 13:16-17

This identifies some people who worshiped the sea beast, and who were known by marks on their hands and foreheads. This mark signified that a person's allegiance was to the sea beast. It was the land beast's job to be sure that the mark was clearly seen and known. The land beast is identified as a false prophet.

Who is this land beast? The sea beast is Rome and her rulers, and if it's the job of the second beast to go around and force people to worship the sea beast and to set up images of the sea beast, then the second beast is representative of a type of militia, government officials, or army that went around and caused people to worship the sea beast.

The dragon is Satan and in the hand of the dragon is the sea beast, Rome and her rulers that's causing Christians to suffer. The **land beast represents people under the power of the Roman government** who were going around and trying to force Christians to give their allegiance to Satan by worshiping the sea beast. Understanding this helps us understand much of what the **Book of Revelation** is about.

5. Point number five identifies the **harlot in Babylon**.

The Harlot Represents Rome

If we're going to understand who the dragon is, we also must understand who the harlot and Babylon are. These two figures are mentioned in **Revelation 17 and 18**. The harlot is none other than the city of Rome itself.

Let me list some facts for you that will help you see that the harlot is Rome.

‘The woman you saw is the great city that rules over the kings of the earth.’ Revelation 17:18

The text says that the harlot is a great city. During the time of the **Book of Revelation**, there was no city greater than the city of Rome. Millions of people lived there, and it was a powerful world force.

‘With her the kings of the earth committed adultery, and the inhabitants of the earth were intoxicated with the wine of her adulteries.’ Revelation 17:2

The text says that the harlot had committed adultery with the kings of the Earth. **Who was making foreign alliances and bringing foreign nations under her power?** It was Rome.

‘Then the angel carried me away in the Spirit into a wilderness. There I saw a woman sitting on a scarlet beast that was covered with blasphemous names and had seven heads and ten horns.’ Revelation 17:3

We also are told that the harlot rode on the back of the beast. Because Rome and her rulers were the beast, she is the one who is riding on the back of the beast.

‘The woman was dressed in purple and scarlet, and was glittering with gold, precious stones and pearls. She held a golden cup in her hand, filled with abominable things and the filth of her adulteries.’ Revelation 17:4

This says that she lives a luxurious life. Rome, its senate, and its elite inhabitants lived one of the most luxurious lives you could ever imagine.

‘I saw that the woman was drunk with the blood of God’s holy people, the blood of those who bore testimony to Jesus. When I saw her, I was greatly astonished.’ Revelation 17:6

This says that the harlot was drunk with the blood of Christians. During the time of the first century, Rome was the main persecutor of Christians, the Romans were putting Christians to death. Some were being thrown to the lions. Anyone caught worshipping as a child of God was put to death. **Who is this harlot? Revelation 17** identifies as a city that fits the description of none other than Rome itself.

Babylon Represents Rome And Her Government

But what about Babylon? Who or what is Babylon? Revelation 18 tells us about Babylon, taking our minds back to the image of Babylon in the Old Testament, which depicted Babylon as a great world power that conquered God’s people. Although Babylon of the Old Testament wasn’t a righteous force, God used it for His purposes.

But who is the Babylon mentioned in Revelation 18?

‘Woe! Woe to you, great city, dressed in fine linen, purple and scarlet, and glittering with gold, precious stones and pearls!’ Revelation 18:16

‘Then a mighty angel picked up a boulder the size of a large millstone and threw it into the sea and said: ‘With such violence the great city of Babylon will be thrown down, never to be found again.’ Revelation 18:21

Here we see Babylon mentioned as a great city.

‘For all the nations have drunk the maddening wine of her adulteries. The kings of the earth committed adultery with her, and the merchants of the earth grew rich from her excessive luxuries.’ Revelation 18:3

‘When the kings of the earth who committed adultery with her and shared her luxury see the smoke of her burning, they will weep and mourn over her.’ Revelation 18:9

These texts say that Babylon commits fornication with those of the world. This is much like the harlot who was committing fornication and living in ungodliness.

‘Woe! Woe to you, great city, dressed in fine linen, purple and scarlet, and glittering with gold, precious stones and pearls!’ Revelation 18:16

This says that Babylon dresses and lives luxuriously, which is quite similar to what is said of the harlot.

Babylon also is seen as having killed Christians.

‘In her was found the blood of prophets and of God’s holy people, of all who have been slaughtered on the earth.’ Revelation 18:24

Babylon is a synonym for Rome.

‘BABYLON THE GREAT THE MOTHER OF PROSTITUTES AND OF THE ABOMINATIONS OF THE EARTH.’ Revelation 17:5

If the harlot is Rome and if Babylon the Great is the mother of harlots, then that is a picture of Rome and her government. The harlot is Rome, Babylon the Great is Rome, which is the evil world force that is causing so much harm to Christians.

6. The **sixth point** identifies the **period of 1,260 days**. 42 months, or time, times, and half a time, three and a half years.

This is important because this is the period of time for which the **Book of Revelation** was written.

‘But exclude the outer court; do not measure it, because it has been given to the Gentiles. They will trample on the holy city for 42 months.’ Revelation 11:2

Forty-two months is 1,260 days or three and a half years. **Revelation 11-13** is a climatic scene of persecution and the beginning of victory. The two witnesses or prophets who represent the church, are killed. In **Revelation 12** we see a great battle where we see Christ and Christians as victorious. **But what is the time period of that?** It is 1,260 days or 42 months.

‘And I will appoint my two witnesses, and they will prophesy for 1,260 days, clothed in sackcloth.’ Revelation 11:3

Now when they finish their testimony, something else will happen.

‘Now when they have finished their testimony, the beast that comes up from the Abyss will attack them and overpower and kill them.’ Revelation 11:7

**‘They have power to shut up the heavens so that it will not rain during the time they are prophesying; and they have power to turn the waters into blood and to strike the earth with every kind of plague as often as they want.’
Revelation 12:6**

**‘The woman was given the two wings of a great eagle, so that she might fly to the place prepared for her in the wilderness, where she would be taken care of for a time, times and half a time, out of the serpent’s reach.’
Revelation 12:14**

We have three and a half years, 42 months, or 1,260 days.

‘The beast was given a mouth to utter proud words and blasphemies and to exercise its authority for forty-two months. It opened its mouth to blaspheme God, and to slander his name and his dwelling place and those who live in heaven. It was given power to wage war against God’s holy people and to conquer them. And it was given authority over every tribe, people, language and nation.’ Revelation 13:5-7

Notice how all of this comes together.

‘The beast (the sea beast) was given a mouth to utter proud words and blasphemies and to exercise its authority for forty-two months. (Remember that we have identified the sea beast as Rome and her rulers, and that time frame is 42 months.) It opened its mouth to blaspheme God, and to slander his name and his dwelling place and those who live in heaven. It was given power to wage war against God’s holy people and to conquer them. And it was given authority over every tribe, people, language and nation.’ Revelation 13:5-7

The beast is Rome and her rulers, and the time period is 42 months. This is essential to an understanding of the **Book of Revelation** because the writing of the book was taking place in an intense period of persecution of Christians by the Roman government and her militia.

This persecution was relatively short lived in duration. And it was for this exact period of intense persecution that the **Book of Revelation** was written. If we can understand when this was occurring, and we can, and if we can understand that it was a time of persecution by Rome and her government, then we can have a better understanding of when the **Book of Revelation** was written and for whom it was written.

7. The **seventh** point is that the **Book of Revelation** discusses a **spiritual, not a physical, kingdom**.

‘And has made us to be a kingdom and priests to serve his God and Father—to him be glory and power for ever and ever! Amen.’ Revelation 1:6

The kingdom is present, and we are a kingdom of priests, it’s not a future event.

‘Truly I tell you, some who are standing here will not taste death before they see that the kingdom of God has come with power.’ Mark 9:1

In **Revelation 1** we learn that John and other Christians were currently in the kingdom.

‘I, John, your brother and companion in the suffering and kingdom and patient endurance that are ours in Jesus, was on the island of Patmos because of the word of God and the testimony of Jesus.’ Revelation 1:9

To understand the **Book of Revelation** and how God’s kingdom will reign and rule over all other kingdoms, we must understand that this isn’t a physical kingdom being discussed. We aren’t talking about people in a militia conquering other nations. That isn’t how God’s kingdom is going to reign.

Remember what Jesus said to Pilate?

‘My kingdom is not of this world. If it were, my servants would fight to prevent my arrest by the Jewish leaders. But now my kingdom is from another place.’ John 18:36

The **Book of Revelation** is about God, Christ, and His kingdom being victorious over all other kingdoms and especially, so far as first century Christians were concerned, the Roman Empire.

Bringing It All Together

Now, let’s tie these things together to see how all of this, fits together. We have identified the main adversaries in the **Book of Revelation**. The dragon is Satan, the sea beast is Rome and her rulers, and the land beast is those in Rome who enforce worship of the sea beast. Those are the main adversaries in this book.

We also understand where these activities are taking place. They are occurring where Babylon the Great and the harlot are located, and we know that these two represent Rome. We also understand the time frame, which is three and a half years, since three is the perfect number, and since there is a half after it, then we know that this isn’t something that will last forever. These events were happening during the reign of the beast, Rome.

Look at what we have learned as we have examined these points. We’ve learned who was doing the persecution, we’ve learned where the persecution was taking place and we’ve learned the time period. All of this will help us in our attempts to understand the **Book of Revelation**.

Do not forget that the **Book of Revelation** is a very practical book. I haven’t presented these main points just, so we can gain more knowledge about the **Book of Revelation** in general. Rather, I want to show that this book is a very practical book. Look at some of the lessons we have seen as we have examined the main points.

Lessons Learned

1. We can know that **God knows, and cares deeply about, our suffering**.

In **Revelation 6** we see Christians crying out to God.

‘How long, Sovereign Lord, holy and true, until you judge the inhabitants of the earth and avenge our blood?’ Revelation 6:10

Those Christians were told to wait a while because God would punish those who were harming them.

‘Then each of them was given a white robe, and they were told to wait a little longer, until the full number of their fellow servants, their brothers and sisters, were killed just as they had been.’ Revelation 6:11

So, from this book we learn that God knows, and cares about, our suffering.

How that can help us on a daily level to know that we're not alone, that God loves us, and that He cares deeply for us!

'For we do not have a high priest who is unable to empathize with our weaknesses, but we have one who has been tempted in every way, just as we are—yet he did not sin.' Hebrews 4:15

'Cast all your anxiety on him because he cares for you.' 1 Peter 5:7

God even cares for us enough that He provides us with the things of this life.

'But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well.' Matthew 6:33

We are told that if we seek first the kingdom of God and it's righteous, things such as food, shelter, and clothing will be provided for us.

'I was young and now I am old, yet I have never seen the righteous forsaken or their children begging bread.'
Psalm 37:25

God will take care of righteous people. We need to understand that the **Book of Revelation** contains some very practical lessons. When we struggle, have trials, face tribulation, or have things come into our lives that bring us great trouble, there is a God in Heaven Who knows about our suffering, cares for us, and wants to help.

2. We also learn that Satan, **our adversary, is to be feared.**

He isn't someone with whom we should flirt or play, Satan is a fearful adversary, but we can win over Satan.

'Since the children have flesh and blood, he too shared in their humanity so that by his death he might break the power of him who holds the power of death—that is, the devil.' Hebrews 2:14

This tells us that Jesus, through death, overcame him who had the power of death, the devil. Yes, Satan is to be feared, He is 'the serpent of old', Genesis 3 and the 'roaring lion', 1 Peter 5:8. He even can present himself as 'an angel of light', 2 Corinthians 11:14. He definitely is to be feared.

And yes, Satan can work in human history through human governments to cause Christians to undergo persecution in order to try to cause them to be lost. But if Christians remain faithful, they will always be victorious over the devil.

'They triumphed over him by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony; they did not love their lives so much as to shrink from death.' Revelation 12:11

3. Another wonderful lesson that we can learn from the **Book of Revelation** is that **persecution can have great spiritual value.**

'Do not be afraid of what you are about to suffer. I tell you, the devil will put some of you in prison to test you, and you will suffer persecution for ten days. Be faithful, even to the point of death, and I will give you life as your victor's crown.' Revelation 2:10

Jesus said of certain Christians in **Revelation 2:10** that they would have to endure persecution for a period of time, but if they would be faithful 'even unto death,' then He would give them 'the crown of life.' Through their persecution, these people learned great spiritual lessons and were forced to think about what was really important. That same lesson is true for us today as well. When we face trials or tribulations, or when things happen to us that are difficult, we can gain spiritual wisdom and insight as we allow such things to be of benefit to us.

True, we don't often think about it like that. But that is what Scripture teaches.

'Consider it pure joy, my brothers and sisters, whenever you face trials of many kinds, because you know that the testing of your faith produces perseverance. Let perseverance finish its work so that you may be mature and complete, not lacking anything.' James 1:2-4

Our trials can help us, and can have real spiritual value, it's as though we are being tested in the fire. Impurities that we do not need in our lives will be seen, and we can be refined by those tests. Paul said in **Acts 14:22** that **'We must go through many hardships to enter the kingdom of God.'** Trials and tribulations help us see what really matters. In **2 Timothy 3:12** we are told that **'and all who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will suffer persecution.'**

I hope that these main points will give you a better insight to the **Book of Revelation** by helping us understand to whom it was written, why it was written, and that its main application is that we must never give up regardless of what happens to us in this life. We must be faithful to God, and in the end, we will have the hope of eternal life.

Summary Questions

1. According to **Revelation 1:3**, when would the things discussed in the **Book of Revelation** be taking place?
2. This part of our study explained that there are three creatures discussed in the **Book of Revelation** whose identity it is important to understand. What are those three creatures?
3. **Revelation 12:9** names one of the creatures mentioned in **question 2 above** and tells who the creature represents. What is the creature, and who does it represent?
4. **Revelation 13:11-18** discusses another one of the creatures mentioned in **question 2 above**. What is the creature, and who does it represent?
5. **Revelation 13:1-10** discusses another one of the creatures mentioned in **question 2 above**. What is the creature, and who does it represent?
6. In **Revelation 17:9-12** we see the seven heads of a creature as representative of seven hills and seven kings. To what did the seven hills and seven kings refer?
7. **Revelation 13:7** depicts one of the creatures as doing two things to Christians. What are those two things?
8. According to **Revelation 13:15**, what happened to people who refused to bow down and worship the creature discussed in **Revelation 13:11-18**?
9. According to **Revelation 13:12**, what was one of the assignments of the creature mentioned in this passage?
10. According to **Revelation 13:16-17**, how were the people identified who worshiped the creature discussed in **Revelation 13:11-18**?
11. **Revelation 17:1** mentions a **'great harlot.'** Who, according to **Revelation 17:18**, was that harlot?
12. How does **Revelation 17:6** describe the harlot who is first mentioned in **Revelation 17:1**?
13. Who or what is depicted by the phrase in **Revelation 17:5**, **'Babylon the Great, the mother of harlots'?**
14. **Revelation 11:3** depicts a battle occurring that will last for 1,260 days or 42 months. What is this rather unusual time period intended to represent?
15. What important statement did Christ make in **John 18:36** that relates to the information being related in the **Book of Revelation**?
16. In **Revelation 1:9**, John said that when he wrote the **Book of Revelation** he was in tribulation. But he also said he was in something else. What was that **'something else'?**

The Book Of Revelation. Part 3

'Be faithful until death, and I will give you the crown of life.' **Revelation 2:10**

We've just looked at **seven main points** that can help us understand this great book. Now we're going to go **chapter by chapter** and hit the main thoughts in order to weave everything together to see God's overall message to Christians

in the first century and His message of encouragement for us in the twenty-first century today. Let me encourage you to carefully read through each chapter first before you read the comments on each chapter.

Revelation 1

In **Revelation 1** Christians are immediately impressed with the image of Christ, the One Who is in control.

Remember that this was during times of great persecution. Rome was persecuting Christians, some were being dragged off. People like Domitian were in control. Thus, Christians are reminded by the image of Jesus in **Revelation 1** that Jesus is still **'KING OF KINGS AND LORD OF LORDS'**, **Revelation 19:16**. During times of persecution, we must look to Christ for help.

'Among the lampstands was someone like a son of man, dressed in a robe reaching down to his feet and with a golden sash around his chest. The hair on his head was white like wool, as white as snow, and his eyes were like blazing fire. His feet were like bronze glowing in a furnace, and his voice was like the sound of rushing waters. In his right hand he held seven stars, and coming out of his mouth was a sharp, double-edged sword. His face was like the sun shining in all its brilliance.' Revelation 1:13-16

Here we see this image of Jesus that presents His holiness, power, radiance, and the Word of God that came out of His mouth. The impression we receive from this image is that Jesus is alive, well, and in control, which means that during persecution we must look to Christ.

There's a practical lesson here for Christians then as well as for us today. When we face difficulties, when we struggle, and when things don't always go the way they ought to in life, we need to go to Jesus first for help. Too many times we look to self-help books, doctors, psychiatrists, and so on. There's nothing necessarily wrong with that, but the first place we ought to be looking for help is Jesus Christ.

'Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses, let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles. And let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us, fixing our eyes on Jesus, the pioneer and perfecter of faith. For the joy set before him he endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.' Hebrews 12:1-2

If we want real help in times of trouble, we must look to the Lord. He is able to help those who are in need of help.

'For this reason, he had to be made like them, fully human in every way, in order that he might become a merciful and faithful high priest in service to God, and that he might make atonement for the sins of the people. Because he himself suffered when he was tempted, he is able to help those who are being tempted.' Hebrews 2:17-18

Revelation begins on a positive note, Jesus is alive and well, and can help us. Thus, we must look to Him in time of trouble.

Revelation 2-3

Revelation 2-3 probably are the chapters that have been studied the most by people who have examined the **Book of Revelation**. Paul had spent three years in Ephesus and during that time **'all who lived in Asia heard the word of the Lord, both Jews and Greeks.'** **Acts 19:10**. All seven churches may have had their start during this time frame. They're now facing a severe crisis, there was wide spread persecution of Christians. Persecution came in the form Judaisers, pagans and from the Roman government. At the close of each letter a special blessing is pronounced on those who overcome the persecutions.

We aren't going to spend a whole lot of time talking about the letters to the seven congregations. Let's simply notice that Jesus says this to these congregations. He knows what's going on in His church, and we need to let Him be the Head of the church.

Jesus rebukes five of the congregations, Ephesus, **Revelation 2:1-7**, Pergamum, **Revelation 2:12-17**, Thyatira, **Revelation 2:18-29**, Sardis, **Revelation 3:1-6**, Laodicea, **Revelation 3:14-22** and only two are not rebuked. The church in Smyrna, **Revelation 2:8-11**, isn't condemned and the church in Philadelphia isn't rebuked, **Revelation 3:7-13**.

Five out of the seven are rebuked for things they are not doing or for things that they should not be doing. Either they were doing something wrong, or they were lacking in some area. During times of persecution, we mustn't forget that Jesus is still the Head of the church, and that we're responsible as a member of that church for how we live our lives.

'To the one who is victorious, I will give the right to sit with me on my throne, just as I was victorious and sat down with my Father on his throne.' Revelation 3:21

This verse reveals the encouragement that Jesus offers saints who live faithfully.

'Examine yourselves to see whether you are in the faith; test yourselves. Do you not realize that Christ Jesus is in you—unless, of course, you fail the test?' 2 Corinthians 13:5

Summary Of The Seven Churches

In a general sense the problems that existed in the seven churches of Asia are the same kind of problems experienced by congregations today. We would do well to carefully study these seven churches and learn from their mistakes. These churches were in a state of crisis, some were strong, and some were about to be overcome, they needed encouragement.

Revelation is a symbolic presentation of the church in conflict with Jewish, pagan and Roman persecuting powers. It promises victory if they will overcome, it's up to them to diligently fight the battle. If they will put forth the effort to overcome Satan and his angels, then Christ will help them in their battles.

During times of persecution, we must not forget that Jesus is still the Head of the church, and that we are responsible as a member of that church for how we live our lives. We must look to ourselves and examine ourselves to see if we are living in the faith, especially in times of persecution. But at all times we must make sure that we're right with God and that we're living as we ought to live, realising that if we live faithfully, then we can come over and live with God.

Revelation 4

Revelation 4 presents for us a great throne room scene and offers one main idea. God is on the throne and is in control. Every time it looked like Domitian was ruling the known world while putting Christians to death amidst great persecution, Christians needed to remember that God is on His throne. He is in control, and we need to trust Him and let Him have His way with us in this life.

From the very beginning Revelation is filled with imagery, many are very puzzling and difficult to decipher. Yet, with all their difficulties we can still get the overall meaning. Beginning with chapter four we now launch out into a great sea of symbols, we're now about to get a glimpse of the Omnipotent throne of God Almighty. This throne-room scene surely would have been an encouragement to Christians in the first century so that they would know that the God of Heaven was still in control.

'He was driven away from people and given the mind of an animal; he lived with the wild donkeys and ate grass like the ox; and his body was drenched with the dew of heaven, until he acknowledged that the Most High God is sovereign over all kingdoms on earth and sets over them anyone he wishes.' Daniel 5:21

God was talking to Nebuchadnezzar, who was going through some hard things but had learned an important lesson. We're told that Nebuchadnezzar went through those difficult times **'until he acknowledged that the Most High God is sovereign over all kingdoms on earth.'** That's the message of **Revelation 4**.

Domitian isn't in control, the Roman government isn't in control, God still rules in the kingdoms of men and sets over them whom He wishes. We need to be encouraged by knowing that God is in Heaven and that He is in control, His will ultimately will be accomplished, so we must be faithful to Him and to no one else.

Revelation 5

Revelation 5 introduces us to the Lamb, **'Who was slain before the foundation of the world'**. **Revelation 13:8**. John has a scroll that no one can seem to open, but the Lamb then comes and opens the scroll in order to unleash the wrath of God. Christians, as a result, cry out, **'Worthy is the Lamb!'** **Revelation 5:12** **Who is this Lamb?**

John the Baptist sees Jesus approaching and says, **'Behold, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world.'** **John 1:29**

Christians were being persecuted, they wanted to know, **if God is in control, who will help us overcome the great world power that is Rome?** The Lamb takes the scroll and unleashes the vengeance of God. **Who is the Lamb?** It's Jesus Christ, Who is able to offer help during times of persecution.

'In a loud voice they were saying: 'Worthy is the Lamb, who was slain, to receive power and wealth and wisdom and strength and honour and glory and praise!' Revelation 5:12

The Lamb is pictured as the One Who is worthy to receive our honour. We aren't to pay honour to Domitian. The Lamb is going to unleash God's vengeance, and He's the One Who is worthy of our honour or glory. Our lives must be about giving Jesus, the Son of God, the glory and honour He deserves. In fact, that's what our lives are all about.

'Everyone who is called by my name, whom I created for my glory, whom I formed and made'. Isaiah 43:7

'So, whether you eat or drink or whatever you do, do it all for the glory of God.' 1 Corinthians 10:31

Revelation 5 tells us that the Lamb is worthy, He's able to unleash God's vengeance, and we must give Him the glory and honour that He deserves. It's through Jesus that the devil, the beast, and Rome itself will be defeated because of Jesus' actions.

Jesus, through death, overcame that **'he might break the power of him who holds the power of death—that is, the devil.'** Hebrews 2:14

Revelation 6

In **Revelation 6** we find six seals that are going to be broken, seals that are directly related to the scroll. The seals represent God's vengeance, God's wrath will be unleashed against Rome and her ungodly government. God is in control, and He will deal with those who are punishing His saints.

'How long, Sovereign Lord, holy and true, until you judge the inhabitants of the earth and avenge our blood? Then each of them was given a white robe, and they were told to wait a little longer, until the full number of their fellow servants, their brothers and sisters, were killed just as they had been.' Revelation 6:10-11

The saints asked God how much longer He would allow this to go on and He told them to be faithful a little while long because it was all going to work out.

'For the great day of their wrath has come, and who can withstand it?' Revelation 6:17

This is picturing Rome and the coming destruction that was going to take place. People cried out, **'God's wrath is coming; how can we stand it?'** Even Rome realised that God was in control. These seals, representing acts of vengeance on God's part, showed Rome that she wasn't in control, God was! And they desperately needed to submit to His will and obey the teaching of Christ.

In **Revelation 6** we find six seals that are going to be broken, seals that are directly related to the scroll. The seals represent God's vengeance. God's wrath will be unleashed against Rome and her ungodly government. God is in control, and He will deal with those who are punishing His saints.

We see the hand of Christ opening the sealed book held in God's right hand. Only Christ is qualified to open the seals. As the first seal is broken there is the noise of thunder signifying an ominous announcement. One of the four beasts say, **'come and see.'** Thus, John is about to see the mystery contained within the scroll. He will see what is going to happen to the churches in their great struggle with the persecuting powers.

The Seals

First Seal. A White Horse. Jesus The Conqueror

'I watched as the Lamb opened the first of the seven seals. Then I heard one of the four living creatures say in a voice like thunder, 'Come!' I looked, and there before me was a white horse! Its rider held a bow, and he was given a crown, and he rode out as a conqueror bent on conquest.' Revelation 6:1-2

Before Solomon's time no horses were permitted in the armies of Israel. The horse was looked upon as a noble animal and a very valuable animal to man. This first horse is a white horse.

A white horse was ridden by a conqueror returning from battle, his troops would march behind him followed by those who had been captured to serve as slaves. **Who was the rider?** Since Revelation is about victory in Jesus it would seem it could easily apply to Christ. We can be assured the church would be victorious over the persecutors.

Revelation 19:11 / Romans 8:37.

Second Seal. A Red Horse Represents War

‘When the Lamb opened the second seal, I heard the second living creature say, ‘Come!’ Then another horse came out, a fiery red one. Its rider was given power to take peace from the earth and to make people kill each other. To him was given a large sword.’ Revelation 6:3-4

Red would seem to stand for bloodshed, the rider of this horse would wage war, shedding blood, against the enemies of Christ and His church. He has power to overcome Satan and the nations he controls, all enemies of the church. He also carried a great sword with him. This is probably the idea of conquest, it can also signify destruction. The blood thirsty enemies of the church cannot overcome the church as they may think.

Third Seal. A Black Horse Represents Famine And Economic Hardship

‘When the Lamb opened the third seal, I heard the third living creature say, ‘Come!’ I looked, and there before me was a black horse! Its rider was holding a pair of scales in his hand. Then I heard what sounded like a voice among the four living creatures, saying, ‘Two pounds of wheat for a day’s wages, and six pounds of barley for a day’s wages, and do not damage the oil and the wine!’ Revelation 6:5-6

This is a colour of distress and calamity, it’s a picture of the grim, dread calamity of famine. The balances were scales to measure out food indicating the scarcity of food in the land. The rider is told not to hurt the oil and wine, everything else would be scarce except these two commodities. **Why?** This is difficult, oil and wine weren’t necessities of life, they would be looked upon as luxuries.

Could the meaning be that while the necessities of life were scarce luxuries would be abundant? Oil and wine were also used as medicine. **Could this mean the binding up of the hurts of the suffering Christians?** We can only guess at best about this symbol.

Fourth Seal. A Pale Horse Represents Death

‘When the Lamb opened the fourth seal, I heard the voice of the fourth living creature say, ‘Come!’ I looked, and there before me was a pale horse! Its rider was named Death, and Hades was following close behind him. They were given power over a fourth of the earth to kill by sword, famine and plague, and by the wild beasts of the earth.’ Revelation 6:7-8

This would indicate death since the name of the rider was death. Hunger follows a famine and this in turn leads to mass starvation. Under such circumstance’s pestilence, ravishing diseases, usually follow. They can destroy more than a war. Thus, this horse and rider represent pestilence. Hades followed the rider, Hades is the region of the dead. Thus, we have a picture of the grim reapers of death and Hades claiming those struck down with diseases. **Ezekiel 14:12-23.**

Fifth Seal. The Martyred Saints

‘When he opened the fifth seal, I saw under the altar the souls of those who had been slain because of the word of God and the testimony they had maintained. They called out in a loud voice, ‘How long, Sovereign Lord, holy and true, until you judge the inhabitants of the earth and avenge our blood?’ Then each of them was given a white robe, and they were told to wait a little longer, until the full number of their fellow servants, their brothers and sisters, were killed just as they had been.’ Revelation 6:9-11

The symbolism now changes, up to this point we have observed the means of judgment, now we will begin to see the reason for the judgment. The slain under the altar are the martyred saints, these are the ones who have suffered in the tribulation losing their lives. **Revelation 1:2 / Revelation 12:17 / Revelation 14:12 / Revelation 19:10.** They cry out, ‘How long, O Lord, holy and true, until You judge and avenge our blood on those who dwell on the earth?’

The altar symbolises the sacrificial nature of their death, they were sacrificed upon the altar of the Cause of Christ. They cry out for retribution against the persecutors. The ‘earth’ would be the place where these persecutors existed. Each one is given a white robe, symbolical of victory and purity, **Revelation 3:4 / Revelation 19:8** and they are told to be patient for God’s retribution, **Isaiah 33:1 / Daniel 11:36+45.**

The Sixth Seal. The Wrath Of The Lamb

'I watched as he opened the sixth seal. There was a great earthquake. The sun turned black like sackcloth made of goat hair, the whole moon turned blood red, and the stars in the sky fell to earth, as figs drop from a fig tree when shaken by a strong wind. The heavens receded like a scroll being rolled up, and every mountain and island was removed from its place. Then the kings of the earth, the princes, the generals, the rich, the mighty, and everyone else, both slave and free, hid in caves and among the rocks of the mountains. They called to the mountains and the rocks, 'Fall on us and hide us from the face of him who sits on the throne and from the wrath of the Lamb! For the great day of their wrath has come, and who can withstand it?' Revelation 6:12-17

This seal depicts judgment in answer to the plea of the souls under the altar. The sun, the moon the stars are all judgment talk, [Isaiah 34:4-6](#) / [Jeremiah 4:23-25](#). This judgment will on the Roman persecuting power as indicated in [verse 14](#), 'Every mountain and island were moved out of their places.' This seems to encompass the known Roman world. The kings and great men of [verse 15](#) would fit the Roman authorities who spread out over the Roman Empire. They look for somewhere to hide, [Isaiah 2:10-11](#) / [Isaiah 2:19-22](#).

In [Revelation 6:10](#) the saints asked God how much longer He would allow this to go on. He told them to be faithful a little while long because it was all going to work out. Notice what is said in [Revelation 6:17](#) 'For the great day of His wrath has come, and who is able to stand?' This is picturing Rome and the coming destruction that was going to take place. People cried out, 'God's wrath is coming; how can we stand it?'

Even Rome realised that God was in control. These seals, representing acts of vengeance on God's part, showed Rome that she was not in control. God was! And they desperately needed to submit to His will and obey the teaching of Christ.

Revelation 7

In [Revelation 7](#), we're introduced to the 144,000, [but who are they?](#)

144,000

The [number twelve](#) represents God's people. In the Old Testament there were twelve patriarchs, and thus the twelve tribes of Israel constituted God's nation, and in the New Testament the twelve apostles were the ambassadors of Christ. The [number ten](#) came to mean completeness. When multiplied by itself three times, in other words, 10 times 10, times 10, the number becomes 1000 and signifies complete fullness.

144,000 is a multiple of the number representing fullness, and the number representing God's people, in other words, 12 times 12 equals 144. Multiply these together and 144,000 is reached, signifying the full number of God's people or the total number of God's faithful servants.

It never ceases to amaze me how some people are so inconsistent when it comes to interpreting the Scriptures. We've all met these sincere people who want nothing more to convince us that Christians can't go to heaven where God dwells because that space is for the elite, it's for the 144,000 but we can possess second best, heaven in Erath and remain here on Planet Earth after it has had its fiery cleansing process.

When it comes to the [Book of Revelation](#) we have to remember that it's highly figurative and highly symbolic and when we come to understanding what John wrote we need to be consistent with what is literal and what is figurative, otherwise we end up withal kinds of wonderful ideas.

'After this I saw four angels standing at the four corners of the earth, holding back the four winds of the earth to prevent any wind from blowing on the land or on the sea or on any tree. Then I saw another angel coming up from the east, having the seal of the living God. He called out in a loud voice to the four angels who had been given power to harm the land and the sea: 'Do not harm the land or the sea or the trees until we put a seal on the foreheads of the servants of our God.' Then I heard the number of those who were sealed: 144,000 from all the tribes of Israel. From the tribe of Judah 12,000 were sealed, from the tribe of Reuben 12,000, from the tribe of Gad 12,000, from the tribe of Asher 12,000, from the tribe of Naphtali 12,000, from the tribe of Manasseh 12,000, from the tribe of Simeon 12,000, from the tribe of Levi 12,000, from the tribe of Issachar 12,000, from the tribe of Zebulun 12,000, from the tribe of Joseph 12,000, from the tribe of Benjamin 12,000.' Revelation 7:1-8

Now if the number 144,000 is literal, then we must conclude that its composition must also be literal, which means the number is composed of 12,000 Jews from each tribe mentioned, and none from Dan, [Judges 18:14-31](#). If the

tribes of **Revelation 7** are to be literally taken, then that would mean that not one person from the tribe of Ephraim or Dan will enter heaven, because they're not included in this list.

And if we take this literally that would mean that the Old Testament heroes like Joshua, who was from the tribe of Ephraim, and Samson, who was from the tribe of Dan, won't be in heaven.

Notice also that even though, '**tribe of Joseph**', is mentioned, we know that Joseph wasn't a tribe in the literal sense, which again helps us see that the whole context is figurative. The number was sealed, indicating God's protection of all His people on earth, the great multitude had white robes, indicating victorious saints in the keeping of God, **Revelation 7:4 / Revelation 7:9**.

The Great Multitude

'After this I looked, and there before me was a great multitude that no one could count, from every nation, tribe, people and language, standing before the throne and before the Lamb. They were wearing white robes and were holding palm branches in their hands.' **Revelation 7:9**

John later will identify the great multitude as in heaven, not on earth.

'After this I heard what sounded like the roar of a great multitude in heaven shouting: 'Hallelujah! Salvation and glory and power belong to our God'. **Revelation 19:1**

If this is to be taken literally, then those who believe it's only the 144,000 will be in heaven, must exclude the '**great multitude, which no one could count**' from heaven. Those who argue for a literal translation have a get out clause for this, which is to create yet another group of people, they say this group represents the '**earthly class**.'

They tell us that only the 144,000 will be in heaven and everyone else will be on earth, but notice what the text actually says, this multitude was described as '**standing before the throne**', and where is the throne, it's in heaven, **Revelation 1:4 / Revelation 4:2-10**.

Again, these saints '**before the throne**' were serving God in '**His temple**'.

'They are before the throne of God and serve him day and night in his temple; and he who sits on the throne will shelter them with his presence.' **Revelation 7:15**

'Then God's temple in heaven was opened, and within his temple was seen the ark of his covenant. And there came flashes of lightning, rumblings, peals of thunder, an earthquake and a severe hailstorm.' **Revelation 11:19**

'Then I looked, and there before me was the Lamb, standing on Mount Zion, and with him 144,000 who had his name and his Father's name written on their foreheads. And I heard a sound from heaven like the roar of rushing waters and like a loud peal of thunder. The sound I heard was like that of harpists playing their harps. And they sang a new song before the throne and before the four living creatures and the elders. No one could learn the song except the 144,000 who had been redeemed from the earth. These are those who did not defile themselves with women, for they remained virgins. They follow the Lamb wherever he goes. They were purchased from among mankind and offered as firstfruits to God and the Lamb. No lie was found in their mouths; they are blameless.' **Revelation 14:1-5**

The 144,000 are mentioned again in **Revelation 14:1ff** and again, the number is grouped with several other prominent symbols.

Notice the following, there is the '**Lamb**,' which is a figure representing Christ.

'The next day John saw Jesus coming toward him and said, 'Look, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!' **John 1:29**

'Then I saw a Lamb, looking as if it had been slain, standing at the centre of the throne, encircled by the four living creatures and the elders. The Lamb had seven horns and seven eyes, which are the seven spirits of God sent out into all the earth.' **Revelation 5:6**

There is Mount Zion, a symbol of divine government.

‘In the last days the mountain of the LORD’s temple will be established as the highest of the mountains; it will be exalted above the hills, and all nations will stream to it. Many peoples will come and say, ‘Come, let us go up to the mountain of the LORD, to the temple of the God of Jacob. He will teach us his ways, so that we may walk in his paths.’ The law will go out from Zion, the word of the LORD from Jerusalem. He will judge between the nations and will settle disputes for many peoples. They will beat their swords into ploughshares and their spears into pruning hooks. Nation will not take up sword against nation, nor will they train for war anymore.’ Isaiah 2:2-4

There is the number 144,000, suggestive of the heavenly complement of God’s people, in other words, no one will be missing who is supposed to be there. And then we have the saints who are depicted as **‘virgins,’** which descriptive emphasises their purity.

‘I am jealous for you with a godly jealousy. I promised you to one husband, to Christ, so that I might present you as a pure virgin to him.’ 2 Corinthians 11:2

And so, once again, when we read these passages we must be consistent with our interpretation, if we’re going to say that the 144,000, is a literal number, then to be consistent, we should also argue that a literal Lamb was literally standing on literal Mount Zion with a group of literal men who had never been intimate with literal women, hence, were literal virgins!

If this whole thing was to be taken literally this is what we would end up with. Only men will be in heaven, hence, Deborah, Naomi, Mary, Dorcus, and women of like faith are without that hope. Only unmarried men who are virgins will gain heaven. This would exclude Abraham, Moses, Peter, and a host of other Bible characters. Surely, we can see how crazy this could get!

Who are the 144,000?

The 144,000 of **Revelation 7** and **Revelation 14** are to be identified with **‘the great multitude’**, they are the same group viewed from different standpoints and they all signify the entire body of the redeemed. This group represents a body of people who were **‘purchased’** from among men. The only purchase price ultimately available for human salvation is that of the blood of Jesus Christ.

Make no mistake about it, there’s not a person alive or who has ever lived will go on to live in planet Earth because when Christ returns the Earth will be totally and utterly destroyed.

‘Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will never pass away.’ Matthew 24:35

‘But the day of the Lord will come like a thief. The heavens will disappear with a roar; the elements will be destroyed by fire, and the earth and everything done in it will be laid bare.’ 2 Peter 3:10

‘Then I saw ‘a new heaven and a new earth,’ for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and there was no longer any sea.’ Revelation 21:1

Wherever we look at the 144,000 we must remember that John is using figurative language, and the Bible plainly teaches that there’s ultimately one hope, **Ephesians 4:4** and that hope is reserved in heaven for the faithful.

‘Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! In his great mercy he has given us new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, and into an inheritance that can never perish, spoil or fade. This inheritance is kept in heaven for you, who through faith are shielded by God’s power until the coming of the salvation that is ready to be revealed in the last time.’ 1 Peter 1:3-5

The Scriptures teach nothing about an earth class and a heaven class in eternity.

Also in **Revelation 7** we find a scene where God’s people are being sealed. God is unleashing His wrath upon the ungodly Roman government, but Christians are going to be sealed and safe. They will be taken care of because God knows those who are faithful to Him.

An important principle that we can learn from this has to do with the fact that during times of ungodliness, or at times when the world is immoral, as it is in our day today, we can be sure that God knows who are faithfully serving Him, we will be taken care of.

‘Then one of the elders asked me, ‘These in white robes—who are they, and where did they come from?’ I answered, ‘Sir, you know.’ And he said, ‘These are they who have come out of the great tribulation; they have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.’ Revelation 7:13-14

These are the ones who served God and who worshiped Him. Christians were suffering, and many would wonder, **why did God allow these things to happen?** One of the elders asks, **‘Who are these redeemed people?’** John says,

‘You know. They are the ones who came out of the tribulation and who had their robes washed in the blood of the Lamb.’

If we’re going to endure and be victorious, we must be faithful to God! We must make sure that we’re one of God’s children and that we’re living as we ought to live. We must be sure that our robes have been **‘washed in the blood of the Lamb.’** **How does that take place?** If our robes are going to be washed in the blood of the Lamb, that means we must obey God’s teaching regarding the plan of salvation.

We contact the blood of Christ when we are baptized in order to wash our sins away in the blood of the Lamb.

‘And now what are you waiting for? Get up, be baptized and wash your sins away, calling on his name.’ Acts 22:16

That is where we contact Jesus’ blood. These Christians in **Revelation** had endured, and they were the ones who would be victorious, not Rome!

Revelation 8

In **Revelation 8** we see four trumpets that are sounding out God’s vengeance upon Rome, and that will defeat her and bring her down. One trumpet makes a sound.

The Seventh Seal

‘When he opened the seventh seal, there was silence in heaven for about half an hour. And I saw the seven angels who stand before God, and seven trumpets were given to them.’ Revelation 8:1-2

The symbolism of this chapter is indeed very difficult for us to understand. The first six seals have been opened in succession. With the opening of the seventh seal there is suddenly dead silence in heaven for the space of about one-half hour before its ominous mystery is revealed. It seems to be a silence of suspense, the hosts of heaven are silent, waiting to see what will come next.

It seems to express a fearful expectation or the calm before the storm is unleashed. These 30 minutes could seem like an eternity, **Revelation 10:3 / 1 John 2:18**. Seven angels with seven trumpets now appear. We recall the seven angles of the seven churches, they appear before God, **Exodus 25:17-22**. **Are these the same angels?** They are given trumpets. Trumpets were used to summon or to announce something important. God is ready to speak, **Numbers 10**.

The Trumpets

The First Trumpet

‘The first angel sounded his trumpet, and there came hail and fire mixed with blood, and it was hurled down on the earth. A third of the earth was burned up, a third of the trees were burned up, and all the green grass was burned up.’ Revelation 8:7

This trumpet is for the purpose of getting their attention. Hail, fire, and blood are symbolic of devastation and woe which seem to affect the earth. **Exodus 7-11**. It also seems that a certain area of the earth is the place of the persecuting powers. This signifies vengeance, God’s warning is clear. If you harm my people you will answer to Me. Jesus once said that the prayers of saints can move mountains.

The Second Trumpet

‘The second angel sounded his trumpet, and something like a huge mountain, all ablaze, was thrown into the sea. A third of the sea turned into blood, a third of the living creatures in the sea died, and a third of the ships were destroyed.’ Revelation 8:8+9

A great mountain burning may signify a great power or nation. *Zechariah 4:7 / Amos 4:13*. This is the power of Rome. A third of the sea turned to blood, *Exodus 7:20+21*. Later, the Roman emperor is symbolised as ‘the beast of the sea’ and is presented as coming up ‘out of the sea’ thus, this trumpet signifies mighty Rome. In time, the mighty military power of the Roman Empire would be destroyed. Daniel lists Rome as the last of the great empires.

The Third Trumpet

‘The third angel sounded his trumpet, and a great star, blazing like a torch, fell from the sky on a third of the rivers and on the springs of water—the name of the star is Wormwood. A third of the waters turned bitter, and many people died from the waters that had become bitter.’ *Revelation 8:10-11*

The falling star as in *Matthew 24:29 / Revelation 6:13* represents divine punishment. Isaiah’s description of the fall of Babylonian rulers has the same imagery, *Isaiah 13:10-11*. Falling of the rivers and fountains of water signified the drying up of their powers. The waters become like wormwood and caused many to die. Wormwood is a bitter plant thus destruction would be bitter, *Jeremiah 23:15*.

The Fourth Trumpet

‘The fourth angel sounded his trumpet, and a third of the sun was struck, a third of the moon, and a third of the stars, so that a third of them turned dark. A third of the day was without light, and also a third of the night. As I watched, I heard an eagle that was flying in mid-air call out in a loud voice: ‘Woe! Woe! Woe to the inhabitants of the earth, because of the trumpet blasts about to be sounded by the other three angels!’ *Revelation 8:12-13*

Each of the four trumpets damage some part of the natural world. The object is to get sinners to repent. Here a third part of the sun, moon and stars are smitten thus leaving darkness. *Isaiah 34:4-5 / Joel 2:10*. Darkness, doom and distress, would come over the Roman empire. The angel crying ‘woe, woe, woe’ to the inhabitants of the earth signals that even worse things are yet to come. These first four trumpets have signalled great calamity, but the three remaining trumpets will signal even worse things.

Prayer

‘Another angel, who had a golden censer, came and stood at the altar. He was given much incense to offer, with the prayers of all God’s people, on the golden altar in front of the throne.’ *Revelation 8:3*

Here we see a throne-room scene again. In the midst of trumpets that are unleashing God’s wrath, the saints’ prayers go up before the throne of God as sweet-smelling incense. One powerful lesson we can learn from this is that during times of trouble and tribulation, God is no further away than the avenue of prayer. God is willing and able to help, but we must have the faith to pray and ask Him for that help. We learn here the importance of prayer in the Christian’s life at all times, but especially during times of trouble.

‘The prayer of a righteous person is powerful and effective.’ *James 5:16*

‘Pray without ceasing.’ *1 Thessalonians 5:17*

We must never stop praying, and we must realise the value and importance of prayer.

‘Then Jesus told his disciples a parable to show them that they should always pray and not give up.’ *Luke 18:1*

Christians’ prayers rise up to God as a sweet-smelling savour and during times of trouble, we must approach God.

‘Let us then approach God’s throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need.’ *Hebrews 4:16*

Revelation 9

Revelation 9 shows us that God will deal with Rome in several ways. Rome’s government will decay from the inside and there’s also going to be an external invasion. God promised that Rome would be punished, the government would begin decaying from the inside.

The Fifth Trumpet

‘The fifth angel sounded his trumpet, and I saw a star that had fallen from the sky to the earth. The star was given the key to the shaft of the Abyss. When he opened the Abyss, smoke rose from it like the smoke from a gigantic furnace.

The sun and sky were darkened by the smoke from the Abyss. And out of the smoke locusts came down on the earth and were given power like that of scorpions of the earth. They were told not to harm the grass of the earth or any plant or tree, but only those people who did not have the seal of God on their foreheads. They were not allowed to kill them but only to torture them for five months. And the agony they suffered was like that of the sting of a scorpion when it strikes. During those days people will seek death but will not find it; they will long to die, but death will elude them. The locusts looked like horses prepared for battle. On their heads, they wore something like crowns of gold, and their faces resembled human faces. Their hair was like women's hair, and their teeth were like lions' teeth. They had breastplates like breastplates of iron, and the sound of their wings was like the thundering of many horses and chariots rushing into battle. They had tails with stingers, like scorpions, and in their tails, they had power to torment people for five months. They had as king over them the angel of the Abyss, whose name in Hebrew is Abaddon and in Greek is Apollyon (that is, Destroyer). The first woe is past; two other woes are yet to come.'

Revelation 9:1-12

A star denotes a ruler and heaven his dominion the falling symbolises a dethroning. This is said of a Babylonian ruler in [Isaiah 14:2](#). This star being an agent of the Devil is given the 'key' to the abyss of Satan to unloose the woes already announced by the angel of [Revelation 8:13](#) / [2 Corinthians 4:4](#) / [Revelation 9:11](#) / [Ephesians 2:2](#).

When the bottomless pit is opened there was unleashed a great pollution of smoke so dense that the sun cannot shine through it as the air is smoggy, it was darkness. This would seem to symbolise complete corruption or pollution of the land. [Exodus 10:21-23](#). Out of this horrible smoke came locusts, locusts were a scourge to the land and were dreaded.

They invade an area like an army, [Exodus 10:14-17](#). This is further amplification of the woe pronounced upon the earth by the angel. These locusts have the power of scorpions. Thus, the distress which was to come upon the land is personified as being poisonous and able to kill. In [Revelation 9:3](#) the locusts are commanded not to 'harm the grass of the earth, any green thing, nor any tree.' Thus, Christians would be spared. [Ezekiel 9](#) / [Exodus 8:22](#) / [Exodus 9:4+6+26](#) / [Exodus 10:23](#) / [Exodus 11:7](#). This tells that Rome was going to be taken over.

The victims of these woes were not to be killed immediately but tormented five months. This torment was to be as a scorpion's sting. These locusts were shaped like horses prepared for battle. On their heads were crowns like gold and their faces were like men, this would symbolise a great army. The locusts are further described as having hair like women and teeth like those of a lion. The breastplates of iron depict the invaders armour. They come in chariots also. This army has power to inflict great horror.

They have a king over them whose name in Hebrew was 'Abaddon' meaning destroyer and in Greek 'Apollyon' which means the same. This king was the angel of the bottomless, this is Satan himself. John now tells us that of the three woes announced by the flying angel, one is now past and two are yet to come. The apocalyptic descriptions in this and the preceding verses is the same kind of imagery Joel employs to describe the invasion of Jerusalem about 600 B.C. by Nebuchadnezzar.

The Sixth Trumpet

'The sixth angel sounded his trumpet, and I heard a voice coming from the four horns of the golden altar that is before God. It said to the sixth angel who had the trumpet, 'Release the four angels who are bound at the great river Euphrates.' And the four angels who had been kept ready for this very hour and day and month and year were released to kill a third of mankind. The number of the mounted troops was twice ten thousand times ten thousand. I heard their number. The horses and riders I saw in my vision looked like this: Their breastplates were fiery red, dark blue, and yellow as sulphur. The heads of the horses resembled the heads of lions, and out of their mouths came fire, smoke and sulphur. A third of mankind was killed by the three plagues of fire, smoke and sulphur that came out of their mouths. The power of the horses was in their mouths and in their tails; for their tails were like snakes, having heads with which they inflict injury. The rest of mankind who were not killed by these plagues still did not repent of the work of their hands; they did not stop worshiping demons, and idols of gold, silver, bronze, stone and wood—idols that cannot see or hear or walk. Nor did they repent of their murders, their magic arts, their sexual immorality or their thefts.'

Revelation 9:13-21

As this trumpet is sounded four angels, [Revelation 8:3-5](#) are loosed from the Euphrates river, which was symbolic of military might. [Isaiah 8:7+8](#). The symbolism of this section is also parallel to Joel's vision of horsemen and chariots going into battle. These four angels may be the same four mentioned in [chapter 7](#) as 'holding the four winds of the earth.'

With the sealing of the 144,000 the suspension period is now lifted. The Euphrates River had served as a boundary line for Old Testament Israel. These angels had been held at the boundary line but are now released, thus destruction of the land is now turned loose.

The preparation of an hour, day, month and year doesn't seem clear. It could denote the time of suspension while the Romans were preparing for invasion. We have a picture of an overwhelming military power poised to kill. The tormented locusts were to hurt men, while the armies of the Euphrates were to kill men, **Habakkuk 1:5-17**. One was probably famine and pestilence while the second was bloodshed.

The judgments in the seven trumpets seems to be divided into three woes, thus this would explain why each directive is applied to 'a three woes,' thus this would explain why each directive is applied to 'a third part.' In **Revelation 6:8** a 'fourth part of the earth' is involved. However, there were four judgments in this chapter. The division of parts in made proportionate with the pronouncements of judgments or woes.

John heard a number of such magnitude to make human resistance impossible. **Ezekiel 38-39**. An impressive description is given of the army. An awesome description is given of the doom that was to the Roman Empire. Similar descriptions of the 600 B.C. Babylonian invasion are given in **Joel 2:2-4** and **Jeremiah 25:9-11**. The 'rest of the men' were the survivors of the second woe. The answer may be found in the Judaizers and false teachers living in other parts of the world. They shall not escape God's final judgment.

History tells us that that happened. Also, Rome was invaded, and outside forces came and overtook Rome, eventually bringing punishment upon her. Although Rome looked like she would be victorious, God promised that she would decay from the inside that be invaded in order to be punished.

How does all of that apply? Look at **Revelation 9**, where we're taught that we must stay true to God and always be sure that our lives are right. To Rome God said,

'The rest of mankind who were not killed by these plagues still did not repent of the work of their hands; they did not stop worshiping demons, and idols of gold, silver, bronze, stone and wood—idols that cannot see or hear or walk. Nor did they repent of their murders, their magic arts, their sexual immorality or their thefts.' **Revelation 9:20-21**

These things were happening and should have been recognised as signs to bring the people of Rome back to God. Yet they didn't repent of their works.

God loves all people and 'wants all people to be saved and to come to a knowledge of the truth.' **1 Timothy 2:4**.

'The Lord is not slow in keeping his promise, as some understand slowness. Instead he is patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance.' **2 Peter 3:9**

The Bible makes it clear that God is patient toward us, and isn't willing that anyone should perish, but wants everyone to come to repentance.

Did God want the souls in Rome who were opposing Christianity to be lost and go to Hell? Absolutely not! The Romans should have seen their destruction as the power of God. They should have seen the internal decay and external invasions as God's power, and as signs that they needed to get their lives right.

They needed to make sure that they were worshiping the God of Heaven, not idols of silver and gold that couldn't see, talk, or hear. Yet, unfortunately, they didn't repent of their works. It's so important for us today to realise that we must, at all times, examine ourselves to make sure that we're right with God.

'I tell you, no! But unless you repent, you too will all perish.' **Luke 13:3**

How serious it is for us to take the time that we have here and now very seriously so that we will use it to honour God and make sure our lives are right before Him. The people of Rome were lost because they refused to change their ways. God doesn't want people to be lost but because He is a just judge, He will punish those who do ungodly things.

Revelation 10 shows us a scene in which John is given a book by an angel, who tells him to eat the book, which represents some of the things that will be happening to the Roman government, and some of the things that will be happening to Christians.

‘So, I went to the angel and asked him to give me the little scroll. He said to me, ‘Take it and eat it. It will turn your stomach sour, but ‘in your mouth it will be as sweet as honey.’ Revelation 10:9

In some ways the book was good news yet was bad news in other ways. It was sweet in John’s mouth but would be bitter in his stomach. The sweetness represented the good news, which was that God was going to take vengeance upon Rome as ungodly people were punished. But the bitterness was that Christians would have to continue to endure and be faithful to God because there would be more persecution yet to come. **Ezekiel 3:14**. The assurances of victory and reward were sweet, yet, the anticipation of the sufferings and trials they would be called upon to pass through was indeed bitter. **Psalms 19:10 / Psalm 119:103**.

In this life, we have never been promised by God that life would be full of roses without any thorns along the way. In fact, we have been promised that there will be trouble, and that we will experience trials.

‘In fact, everyone who wants to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted.’ 2 Timothy 3:12

Paul said that, ‘we must go through many hardships to enter the kingdom of God.’ Acts 14:22

In this life, as we face struggles, that is the bitterness, the hard part, but we must realise that there is sweetness, in the sense that if we endure and remain faithful to God, we can overcome, be faithful to God, and live with Jesus. Jesus said in **Revelation 2:10** that ‘if we will be faithful unto death, then God will give us a crown of life’.

How we must make sure today that in the midst of our troubles, we refuse to ‘throw in the towel.’ We mustn’t let our troubles drag us down, but instead we must realise that God is faithful, and that with temptation will help us through them so that we can endure such temptations in this life.

‘No temptation has overtaken you except what is common to mankind. And God is faithful; he will not let you be tempted beyond what you can bear. But when you are tempted, he will also provide a way out so that you can endure it.’ 1 Corinthians 10:13

Revelation 11

In **Revelation 11** we see God’s two witnesses who are prophets of God. They are sent out to proclaim His message, but they are killed. The people didn’t want to hear what the prophets had to say, so they put them to death. Their bodies lay in the street, and it looked like Christ and Christianity had been stamped out.

But notice what happens! In the midst of this scene, these two witnesses are resurrected and begin to preach again. God sent a message, but the people of Rome didn’t want to hear it. Rome therefore persecuted Christians, to the point where it appeared as if Christianity would be stamped out. It may have looked like Christ and Christianity were ‘lying in the street, dead,’ but God and His cause would rise up and be victorious.

The 1,260 Days Or 42 Months Represents A Period Of Time For Persecution But God’s Care

‘And I will appoint my two witnesses, and they will prophesy for 1,260 days, clothed in sackcloth.’ Revelation 11:3

Here are some of the passages which the phrase appears.

It’s the period the ‘little horn’ Domitian, persecutes the saints.

‘He will speak against the Most High and oppress his holy people and try to change the set times and the laws. The holy people will be delivered into his hands for a time, times and half a time.’ Daniel 7:25

It’s the period of the holy city being trodden underfoot.

‘But exclude the outer court; do not measure it, because it has been given to the Gentiles. They will trample on the holy city for 42 months.’ Revelation 11:2

It's the period during which the witnesses prophesy.

‘And I will appoint my two witnesses, and they will prophesy for 1,260 days, clothed in sackcloth.’ Revelation 11:3

It's the period the woman is nourished in the wilderness.

‘The woman fled into the wilderness to a place prepared for her by God, where she might be taken care of for 1,260 days.’ Revelation 12:6

‘The woman was given the two wings of a great eagle, so that she might fly to the place prepared for her in the wilderness, where she would be taken care of for a time, times and half a time, out of the serpent's reach.’
Revelation 12:14

It's the period of the beast's authority.

‘The beast was given a mouth to utter proud words and blasphemies and to exercise its authority for forty-two months.’ Revelation 13:5

The Two Witnesses

‘They are ‘the two olive trees’ and the two lampstands, and ‘they stand before the Lord of the earth.’ Revelation 11:4

‘Then I asked the angel, ‘What are these two olive trees on the right and the left of the lampstand?’ Again, I asked him, ‘What are these two olive branches beside the two gold pipes that pour out golden oil?’ Zechariah 4:11-13

The two witnesses in Zechariah are Zerubbabel of the royal line and the priest, Joshua son of Jozadak but here in **Revelation 11** we see God's two witnesses who are prophets of God, who represent the church. **But why two?**

‘Do not entertain an accusation against an elder unless it is brought by two or three witnesses.’ 1 Timothy 5:19

‘If I testify about myself, my testimony is not true.’ John 5:31

‘But if they will not listen, take one or two others along, so that ‘every matter may be established by the testimony of two or three witnesses.’ Matthew 18:16

God's two witnesses are sent out to proclaim His message, but they are killed.

‘Now when they have finished their testimony, the beast that comes up from the Abyss will attack them and overpower and kill them. Their bodies will lie in the public square of the great city—which is figuratively called Sodom and Egypt—where also their Lord was crucified.’ Revelation 11:7-8

The people didn't want to hear what the prophets had to say, so they put them to death. Their bodies lay in the street, and it looked like Christ and Christianity had been stamped out. But notice what happens.

‘But after the three and a half days the breath of life from God entered them, and they stood on their feet, and terror struck those who saw them.’ Revelation 11:11

In the midst of this scene, these two witnesses are resurrected and begin to preach again. God sent a message, but the people of Rome didn't want to hear it. Rome therefore persecuted Christians, to the point where it appeared as if Christianity would be stamped out. It may have looked like Christ and Christianity were ‘**lying in the street, dead,**’ but God and His cause would rise up and be victorious.

On the heels of that message we find which may well be the most important verse in the **Book of Revelation**.

‘The seventh angel sounded his trumpet, and there were loud voices in heaven, which said: ‘The kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of our Lord and of his Messiah, and he will reign for ever and ever.’ Revelation 11:15

After the witnesses were resurrected, Christianity was infused with new life. Rome had been defeated, God was victorious, and Christians were the winners in the end.

No matter how bad things may get or how immoral our world may become, we must realise that God is still in control and that it's the kingdom of Christ that will be victorious over all other kingdoms. Rome didn't win, Great Britain isn't going to win, no country in the world will be victorious over God. Christ and His kingdom will outlast and outlive all other kingdoms and will be victorious. **What is the message of these first eleven chapters?** It's simply this, Christ is in control.

We need to look to ourselves to see if we're living as we ought to be living. If there are changes that need to be made, either individual or congregational, then we need to make those changes so that God will be happy with us. We need to realise that Jesus is the only way for us to escape the ungodliness, immorality, and corruption around us, and ultimately the punishment that God is going to unleash on an ungodly world.

We must realise that God will punish those who don't live according to His will. There is a day coming when God will judge every person on Earth. Those who have done evil are going to be punished and those who have been righteous will be exalted.

After reading the **Book of Revelation**, and after seeing what happened to the Roman government, the message is simply this, **why would anyone ever want to be against God and His Cause?** Instead, we need to realise the importance of obeying God and of being a member of His kingdom.

Summary Questions

1. According to the material presented in this lesson, what is the main message of **Revelation 1:13-16**?
2. What important point is found in **Hebrews 2:18**?
3. In **Revelation 2-3** Jesus addressed seven different churches. Of those seven, how many did He rebuke?
4. What is the main point being made in **Revelation 3:21**?
5. In **2 Corinthians 13:5**, what did Paul urge Christians to do?
6. What important point is found in **Daniel 5:21**?
7. When John the Baptist said in **John 1:29**, 'Behold the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world,' of whom was he speaking?
8. Who, according to **Revelation 5:12**, is worthy to receive honour?
9. What important message is contained in **1 Corinthians 10:31**?
10. According to **Hebrews 2:14**, who did Jesus overcome?
11. **Revelation 6:10** records a question being asked by first-century Christians. What was that question?
12. **Revelation 6:11** records the answer to the question that was asked in **Revelation 6:10**. What was that answer?
13. When John wrote in **Revelation 6:17** that 'the great day of their wrath has come, and who can withstand it?' What was he predicting by the phrase, 'the great day of His wrath has come'?
14. **Revelation 7:13-14** speaks of some who were adorned in white robes. Who were these people?
15. **Revelation 8** depicts a throne-room scene. What is the message of **that chapter**?
16. What does **Revelation 9:20** say that the people of Rome had failed to do?
17. **Revelation 10:9** presents both good news and bad news. What is the good news, and what is the bad news?
18. What does **Revelation 2:10** have to do with the bad news revealed in **Revelation 10:9**?

19. When Revelation 11 speaks of the resurrection of the two dead witnesses who were lying in the street, what message is being stressed?

The Book Of Revelation. Part 4

‘They triumphed over him by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony; they did not love their lives so much as to shrink from death.’ Revelation 12:11

We’re now going to examine Revelation 12 through Revelation 22 of the book, and we will be looking at the main idea or theme of each chapter so that we see how these items tie into the overall message of God offering Christians help and encouragement during times of persecution by the Roman government.

Revelation 12

In chapter 12 we’re presented with images of the dragon, the woman, and the child. Before he can do harm to her child the dragon is caught up into heaven. The woman flees into the wilderness to a place prepared for her for 1,260 days. A war develops between Michael and his angels and the dragon and his angels, Satan is defeated and has lost his power to use government to persecute. The dragon now begins to pursue the woman. She is given two wings of an eagle, so she might escape. Now angered even more he turns against the church.

‘The great dragon was hurled down—that ancient serpent called the devil, or Satan, who leads the whole world astray. He was hurled to the earth, and his angels with him.’ Revelation 12:9

This tells us that the dragon is none other than the devil himself. **But who is the woman? And who is the child that the dragon is trying to consume?**

We learn in Revelation 12 that the child is one who will rule all nations with a rod of iron.

‘She gave birth to a son, a male child, who ‘will rule all the nations with an iron sceptre.’ Revelation 12:5

‘Coming out of his mouth is a sharp sword with which to strike down the nations. ‘He will rule them with an iron sceptre.’ He treads the winepress of the fury of the wrath of God Almighty.’ Revelation 19:15

This harks back to Psalm 2 where we find a prophecy about Jesus reigning as King of kings and Lord of lords.

‘You will break them with a rod of iron; you will dash them to pieces like pottery.’ Psalm 2:9

But who is the woman? It’s the woman who gives birth to the child, she represents the people of God. It’s not Mary as nowhere in the Scriptures does it refer to Christians as the children of Mary.

‘She gave birth to a son, a male child, who ‘will rule all the nations with an iron sceptre.’ Revelation 12:5

Most Bible scholars believe that this woman is representative of Old Testament Israel, that is, the faithful remnant of Israel from which the seed, Christ came, which would include Christians.

‘And I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and hers; he will crush your head, and you will strike his heel.’ Genesis 3:15

In Genesis 3:15 it was promised that the seed of woman would deal a death blow to Satan. In Revelation it’s the seed of woman who defeats the dragon. It was Israel’s faithful remnant that prepared the way for Jesus, the child, the Son of God, to come.

It was prophesied in 2 Samuel 7 that someone from the seed of David would rule and reign forever over God’s kingdom.

‘When your days are over, and you rest with your ancestors, I will raise up your offspring to succeed you, your own flesh and blood, and I will establish his kingdom. He is the one who will build a house for my Name, and I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever. I will be his father, and he will be my son. When he does wrong, I will punish him with a rod wielded by men, with floggings inflicted by human hands.’ 2 Samuel 7:12-14

We learn from Luke 1 that this was Jesus.

‘He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High. The Lord God will give him the throne of his father David, and he will reign over Jacob’s descendants forever; his kingdom will never end.’ Luke 1:32-33

Thus, it would be out of the faithful remnant of Old Testament Israel, those through whom God was working His purpose, that Jesus would come.

‘Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I have not come to abolish them but to fulfil them. For truly I tell you, until heaven and earth disappear, not the smallest letter, not the least stroke of a pen, will by any means disappear from the Law until everything is accomplished. Therefore, anyone who sets aside one of the least of these commands and teaches others accordingly will be called least in the kingdom of heaven, but whoever practices and teaches these commands will be called great in the kingdom of heaven. For I tell you that unless your righteousness surpasses that of the Pharisees and the teachers of the law, you will certainly not enter the kingdom of heaven.’ Matthew 5:17-20

Jesus said that He didn’t come to destroy the Law, but instead to fulfil it. He said that not a single jot or title would pass away until everything had been fulfilled. So, Jesus, having been viewed through prophecy in the Old Testament, had finally arrived and it was through Him that the devil would be defeated.

‘The reason the Son of God appeared was to destroy the devil’s work.’ 1 John 3:8

The lesson for us is that if we’re children of God, we can defeat the devil and be a part of God’s eternal scheme to save humankind. We can have access to the blood of Christ, which is able to cleanse us of our sins.

But how do we, through Jesus, overcome the devil? How can we defeat the devil in our lives today? One of the most practical verses in the **Book of Revelation** is found in **Revelation 12**, which presents a three-fold way for us to overcome Satan.

‘They (first-century Christians) triumphed over him (the devil) by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony; they did not love their lives so much as to shrink from death.’ Revelation 12:11

These Christians overcame the devil through Jesus’ sacrifice, Scripture, and their own self-sacrifice. They overcame Satan by the blood of the Lamb. **What was it that defeated the devil, the one who seemed to have the power of death?**

‘Since the children have flesh and blood, he too shared in their humanity so that by his death he might break the power of him who holds the power of death—that is, the devil.’ Hebrews 2:14

Jesus, through death, conquered him who had the power of death, who is the devil. Jesus’ sacrifice, ‘**the blood of the Lamb**’, was the sacrifice which provided the death blow that had been promised in **Genesis 3:15**. But these first-century Christians also overcame by the word of their testimony, which is what we have today recorded in Scripture.

It’s God’s inspired Word and it’s in the Word of God today that we find the power of salvation.

‘For I am not ashamed of the gospel, because it is the power of God that brings salvation to everyone who believes: first to the Jew, then to the Gentile.’ Romans 1:16

The Word of God is living and powerful.

‘For the word of God is alive and active. Sharper than any double-edged sword, it penetrates even to dividing soul and spirit, joints and marrow it judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart.’ Hebrews 4:12

James said in **James 1:21** that we should ‘humbly accept the word planted in you, which can save you.’

Peter said that we are born again by the Word of God.

‘For you have been born again, not of perishable seed, but of imperishable, through the living and enduring word of God. For, ‘All people are like grass, and all their glory is like the flowers of the field; the grass withers and the flowers fall, but the word of the Lord endures forever.’ And this is the word that was preached to you.’

1 Peter 1:23-25

Thus, first-century Christians overcame the devil through the sacrifice of Jesus when He died on the cross in obedience to His Father's will. They overcame the devil through Scripture and they overcame the devil through self-sacrifice. Even if we recognise the importance of the sacrifice of Jesus, obey the Gospel, and become Christians, if we fail to make self-sacrifice a part of our lives, we will not be saved.

'Do you not know that your bodies are temples of the Holy Spirit, who is in you, whom you have received from God? You are not your own; you were bought at a price. Therefore, honour God with your bodies.' 1 Corinthians 6:19-20

Our lives as children of God must belong to Christ, and we must be willing to sacrifice ourselves for God.

'Therefore, I urge you, brothers and sisters, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God—this is your true and proper worship.' Romans 12:1

'Whoever wants to be my disciple must deny themselves and take up their cross daily and follow me.' Luke 9:23

Jesus said that if we desire to come after Him, then we must deny ourselves, take up our cross daily, and follow Him. We overcome the devil through the sacrifice of Jesus, by obedience to the Scriptures, and by living a life of self-sacrifice.

Revelation 13

In **Revelation 13** John introduces us to the sea beast, which we identified earlier as Rome and her rulers. He also introduces us to the land beast, which represents the militia who set up images of Rome's emperors and who enforced emperor worship.

Number 666

The Imperfection And Sinfulness Of Man

We now come to a number that has become so popular in our day and age that it deserves to be discussed here, 666.

'This calls for wisdom. Let the person who has insight calculate the number of the beast, for it is the number of a man. That number is 666.' Revelation 13:18

If the **number seven** represents that which is complete, perfect, and whole, the number six falls one short of seven. **Does 666 represent some type of 'hidden meaning' that requires us to use algebra and trigonometry to uncover some kind of 'magical calculation'?** No. That isn't what God is saying.

The number six is one less than seven. If seven is perfection, then since six is one less than seven it represents imperfection. And look at how it is multiplied in 666, imperfection, imperfection, imperfection! That's the idea. The Roman Empire was the embodiment of human imperfection and human sinfulness. The number 666 isn't some literal number on some literal human's head. Nor is it a Social Security number, as some have suggested in the past. It simply represents the imperfection and sinfulness of man, and especially those who were enforcing emperor worship.

Without God in our lives, we cannot have salvation and if we look to men for our salvation, our salvation will be imperfect. Thus, 666 is a sign of utter and complete imperfection of man and his sinfulness outside of Jesus, especially in light of the identity of the sea beast and the land beast, which was enforcing emperor worship.

'What Is The Mark Of The Beast?'

When it comes to the subject of the **'mark of the beast'** in **Revelation 13**, it never ceases to amaze me the many different theories there are on what this mark actually is. **Does it really speak about people being 'microchipped' in the future? Does it really speak about 'bar codes' being tattooed on people's heads and hands in the future?**

I don't have to remind you that the Book of Revelation is a highly figurative book, and we must also keep in mind, it was written to the seven churches of Asia Minor, **Revelation 2-3**, to prepare the saints in Asia for the enormous persecutions they would soon have to face, not thousands of years later, **Revelation 1:1 / Revelation 1:3 / Revelation 22:6 / Revelation 22:10**. It was written at a time when the faith of Christians was put to the ultimate test, as they were forced to deny their faith in the Lord and worship Caesar, or face torture and death.

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The Number 666

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The Mark Of The Beast

'The second beast was given power to give breath to the image of the first beast, so that the image could speak and cause all who refused to worship the image to be killed. It also forced all people, great and small, rich and poor, free and slave, to receive a mark on their right hands or on their foreheads, so that they could not buy or sell unless they had the mark, which is the name of the beast or the number of its name. This calls for wisdom. Let the person who has insight calculate the number of the beast, for it is the number of a man. That number is 666.'

Revelation 13:15-18

To understand what this 'mark' is we need to go back into the history of Rome. Rome had ordered that all citizens give both political and religious allegiance to Rome and her government. All citizens had to submit to the Roman laws along with the Roman religious laws, this was a demonstration of loyalty to Rome.

The 'mark' refers to those who would direct worship toward Rome, **Revelation 14:9 / Revelation 20:4**. The mark, or identification, was both psychological, that's what the mark is on their 'foreheads' refers to, and the mark was also physical, that what the mark on their 'hands' refers to.

Make no mistake about it, Domitian wanted total allegiance given to him and he wanted the very minds of people, the 'forehead mark', along with an outward recognition, the 'hand mark', that people were allegiant to him. Remember if people weren't willing to openly declare that Caesar is lord, then they would be put to death!

Those who gave in to Rome were given this identifying mark, either on their right hand, or on their forehead, because with this mark, came privileges.

Those who had the mark could buy and sell goods, in other words they could prosper. On the other hand, those who didn't give into Rome and her laws and religious laws, weren't able to buy or sell any goods, this is the reason why they would suffer. They could buy or sell clothes, they couldn't buy or sell food, everything they needed to live was going to be refused to them because they didn't have this mark.

When Domitian was ruler, anyone who worshipped the emperor needed to ask for a certificate, but it was only after receiving this certificate, were they allowed to buy and sell and take part in any Roman activity, this was a way of becoming a Roman citizen.

Is It A Literal Mark?

Many believe that the 'mark' is a literal, physical mark on the bodies of unbelievers, but when we contrast this 'mark' with the 'seal' which is on the forehead of believers, we soon discover it isn't literal.

'Do not harm the land or the sea or the trees until we put a seal on the foreheads of the servants of our God.'
Revelation 7:3

'They were told not to harm the grass of the earth or any plant or tree, but only those people who did not have the seal of God on their foreheads.' Revelation 9:4

'Then I looked, and there before me was the Lamb, standing on Mount Zion, and with him 144,000 who had his name and his Father's name written on their foreheads.' Revelation 14:1

'They will see his face, and his name will be on their foreheads.' Revelation 22:4

I don't know about you, but I've never seen a Christian with a literal, physical seal, with the names of Jesus and the Father tattooed on their foreheads. Remember this is figurative language and here John is describing those who have been born again and redeemed by Christ's blood. In other words, the seal is describing ownership, those who belong to Christ and the Father, those who are faithful to Him.

By way of contrast, the false prophet who causes everyone who isn't a Christian to have the 'mark of the beast' written on their forehead, this simply means that this 'mark' was as a sign that they belong to the beast and are loyal to him. The devil always tried to do what God does and so, this 'mark' on their foreheads or on their right hand is simply the devil's way of imitating the seal of God on God's people.

If you have the name of Jesus and God the Father written on your forehead, it simply means that they own you, that you belong to them, that you are loyal to the Lord God Almighty. But if you have 'the mark of the beast', Revelation 13:17, written on your forehead, it signifies that he owns you, that you belong to him, that you are loyal to the devil.

Since the seal or name on the believer is obviously invisible, symbolizing the indwelling presence of the Holy Spirit, it seems certain that the mark of the beast is likewise a symbolic way of describing the loyalty of his followers and his ownership of them.

Conclusion

We must always be careful when we're trying to understand any text of the Bible, especially those texts which are very figurative in nature. If we're not careful we can come to all kinds of conclusions and sadly, many people do.

When we remember that the things John wrote about in Revelation were 'soon to take place', Revelation 1:1 / Revelation 1:3 / Revelation 22:6 / Revelation 22:10, we can know for sure that John when he speaks of this 'mark', isn't speaking about 'microchip implants, tattoos or bar codes', something which going to happen in the future. He was writing to Christians about things which were going to happen to them.

The important point in all of this is simply to ask ourselves this, **do we have a 'mark' which identifies and signifies our loyalty to the devil? Or do we have a 'seal' which identifies our loyalty to Christ?**

'Therefore God exalted him to the highest place and gave him the name that is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue acknowledge that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.' Philippians 2:9-11

Revelation 14
Number 144,000

The Redeemed Of All The Ages Who Have Obeyed God And Who Are Living Faithful To Him

In Revelation 14 we find 144,000. While the number 666 probably is the most-popular number today in the Book of Revelation, then the number 144,000 probably is the second most popular number. **Have you ever had someone come to your door and ask you, 'are you sure you're part of the 144,000'?** as if the 144,000 is a literal number of which we must be a part because this is the number of people whom God will literally save. That's not what is being stated here.

Notice something interesting about the 144,000. If this is a literal number, then let's take other such things in Revelation literally, too.

'Then I heard the number of those who were sealed: 144,000 from all the tribes of Israel.' Revelation 7:4

The text says that these were Jews only.

'These are those who did not defile themselves with women, for they remained virgins.' Revelation 14:4

The text says that they **'had not been defiled by women'**, thus, they were male virgins. Therefore, those who are part of the 144,000 are: (a) Jews; (b) males; and (c) virgins.

How many people are going to buy into such a concept today? We must recognise that such passages aren't speaking literally, the 144,000 isn't literal. And when Revelation speaks of **'Jews who had not been defiled by women'**, it's speaking of purity. The number 144,000 isn't to be taken literally.

The number 12 represents humanity. If you take 12 and multiply it by 12, you get 144,000, meaning simply a large number of those members of humanity who had been redeemed. This number simply represents those members of humanity who had decided to obey God's will and become Christians. It's not saying that if you aren't a part of a literal 144,000 people, then you will miss out on Heaven. It's simply speaking of the redeemed of all the ages who have obeyed God and who are living faithful to Him.

Now I would like you to notice a very encouraging verse, which is found in **Revelation 14**, to Christians who were suffering, and to those who had seen family members die for the cause of Christ.

'Then I heard a voice from heaven say, 'Write this: Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord from now on.' 'Yes,' says the Spirit, 'they will rest from their labour, for their deeds will follow them.' Revelation 14:13

The redeemed needed to know that if they died for the cause of Christ, they still would be blessed. Death wasn't the worst thing that could happen. In fact, **did you know that you cannot get to Heaven without dying first?** Death is a marvellous thing for the child of God. If we're living faithfully as a Christian, death isn't a bad thing, death is a wonderful thing.

The Scriptures don't promote a black, cold, dreary view of death like some in this world do. Death is viewed as wonderful. This is how God views death.

'Precious in the sight of the LORD is the death of his faithful servants.' Psalm 116:15

When one of His children dies, and that person has lived faithfully, even though that person may have died at the hands of an evil Roman government, it is a blessing for that person.

'Then I heard a voice from heaven say, 'Write this: Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord from now on.' 'Yes,' says the Spirit, 'they will rest from their labour, for their deeds will follow them.' Revelation 14:13

'For to me, to live is Christ, and to die is gain.' Philippians 1:21

Death is a wonderful thing for the child of God who has lived faithfully because that person has had his sins washed away, and therefore has the promise that if he walked in the light, he will remain in fellowship with God. He also has the promise of eternal life.

'Then they will go away to eternal punishment, but the righteous to eternal life.' Matthew 25:46

'And this is what he promised us—eternal life.' 1 John 2:25

'Then I heard a voice from heaven say, 'Write this: Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord from now on.' 'Yes,' says the Spirit, 'they will rest from their labour, for their deeds will follow them.' Revelation 14:13

This passage in Revelation is encouraging and practical for us today, too but we must be faithful unto death, and then God will give us the crown of life.

Revelation 15

In **Revelation 15** we are introduced to the song of Moses and the Lamb. John sees seven angels, their actions are a recapitulation of the seven seals and seven trumpets. They are singing the song of Moses, a song of triumph and they also are singing the song of the Lamb. These songs contain thanks, victory and praise.

Following these songs, they come they come out of the heavenly temple with seven plagues. The description given of their clothing is very significant indicating unlimited power to execute judgment. The four beasts are the same as in **Revelation 5**. One of these gives the angels seven golden vials of God's wrath.

The Song Of Moses And The Lamb

'They sang the song of God's servant Moses and of the Lamb: 'Great and marvellous are your deeds, Lord God Almighty. Just and true are your ways, King of the nations. Who will not fear you, Lord, and bring glory to your name? For you alone are holy. All nations will come and worship before you, for your righteous acts have been revealed.' Revelation 15:3-4

Here we see an event serving as an introduction to the bowls of judgment which show that the wrath of God is being poured out on the ungodly. Prior to that, the saints are rejoicing, the song of Moses brings to our minds **Exodus 15**. The people had escaped from Egyptian bondage, they were under horribly tyranny under Pharaoh, who was a hard taskmaster.

God delivered them through ten plagues, and they walked across the Red Sea on dry land. The Egyptian army was crushed by the waters of the Red Sea, and the Israelites cried out victoriously because they had been delivered from great tribulation and trouble. God's people had been able to overcome and end up triumphant, so, they sang the song of Moses.

'Then Moses and the Israelites sang this song to the LORD: 'I will sing to the LORD, for he is highly exalted. Both horse and driver he has hurled into the sea. 'The LORD is my strength and my defence; he has become my salvation. He is my God, and I will praise him, my father's God, and I will exalt him. The LORD is a warrior; the LORD is his name. Pharaoh's chariots and his army he has hurled into the sea. The best of Pharaoh's officers are drowned in the Red Sea. The deep waters have covered them; they sank to the depths like a stone. Your right hand, LORD, was majestic in power. Your right hand, LORD, shattered the enemy. 'In the greatness of your majesty you threw down those who opposed you. You unleashed your burning anger; it consumed them like stubble. By the blast of your nostrils the waters piled up. The surging waters stood up like a wall; the deep waters congealed in the heart of the sea. The enemy boasted, 'I will pursue, I will overtake them. I will divide the spoils; I will gorge myself on them. I will draw my sword and my hand will destroy them.' But you blew with your breath, and the sea covered them. They sank like lead in the mighty waters. Who among the gods is like you, LORD? Who is like you—majestic in holiness, awesome in glory, working wonders? 'You stretch out your right hand, and the earth swallows your enemies. In your unfailing love you will lead the people you have redeemed. In your strength you will guide them to your holy dwelling. The nations will hear and tremble; anguish will grip the people of Philistia. The chiefs of Edom will be terrified, the leaders of Moab will be seized with trembling, the people of Canaan will melt away; terror and dread will fall on them. By the power of your arm they will be as still as a stone—until your people pass by, LORD, until the people you bought pass by. You will bring them in and plant them on the mountain of your inheritance—the place, LORD, you made for your dwelling, the sanctuary, Lord, your hands established. 'The LORD reigns for ever and ever.' Exodus 15:1-18

But in **Revelation**, the people aren't merely singing the song of Moses, instead they are singing the song of Moses and the Lamb. Just like Moses led God's people out of Egyptian bondage to the Promised Land, the Lamb is able to lead Christians out of trials and tribulations resulting from the Roman government so that those Christians could be victorious and be able to sing the song of Moses and the Lamb.

This, then, was another sign of how, if Christians would trust in God, He would lead them to victory. Here we find great comfort given to these first-century Christians.

Revelation 16

Revelation 16 presents the seven bowls of judgment where God is seen as pouring out His judgment upon the Roman Empire as punishment for its sin against Christians. This chapter records He's pouring out of the bowls which contained God's wrath. They are similar to the plagues that came upon Egypt. We have envisioned the same events here that are symbolised in the seven seals and the seven trumpets but with more intensity. As the bowls are poured out an angel acknowledges that God is just in his execution of judgment.

In short **Revelation 16** describes how God, through natural means, punished Rome for its sins.

The First Bowl of Wrath

'Then I heard a loud voice from the temple saying to the seven angels, 'Go, pour out the seven bowls of God's wrath on the earth.' The first angel went and poured out his bowl on the land, and ugly, festering sores broke out on the people who had the mark of the beast and worshiped its image.' Revelation 16:1-2

The first bowl of wrath was poured out upon the earth, in other words, it was poured out upon the Roman Empire, it affected only those who bore the mark of the beast and worshipped Domitian. This plague paralleled the boil plague of Egypt in the days of Moses and caused grievous sores to come upon those who bowed to worship the emperor.

The Second Bowl of Wrath

'The second angel poured out his bowl on the sea, and it turned into blood like that of a dead person, and every living thing in the sea died.' Revelation 16:3

Immediately following the first plague, the second bowl of wrath was emptied out upon the sea. The imagery paralleled the plague of Egypt where the Nile was turned to blood. This isn't to be taken literally, as God promised to protect the Christians who made their livelihood by the sea from His wrath.

What was intended here was to illustrate that God would use natural calamities of the sea to orchestrate, in part, the downfall of Rome. Keep in mind that a significant portion of Rome's power lay in its trade expansion through conquering territories. Major trade routes to the east were achieved by sea travel. Closing these would seriously cripple Rome's ability to pursue trade in this and other directions.

The Third Bowl of Wrath

'The third angel poured out his bowl on the rivers and springs of water, and they became blood. Then I heard the angel in charge of the waters say: 'You are just in these judgments, O Holy One, you who are and who were; for they have shed the blood of your holy people and your prophets, and you have given them blood to drink as they deserve.'
And I heard the altar respond: 'Yes, Lord God Almighty, true and just are your judgments.' Revelation 16:4-7

The third bowl of wrath was poured out on the fresh water. During this event, a voice was heard that proclaimed God's righteousness in this act. The Roman Empire slaughtered so many Christians that they literally made their blood flow like water. It could be said that they drank of the blood of the Christians.

This bowl of wrath surely gave comfort to the Christians who had seen their blood spilled mercilessly. God is assuring the Christians that the Roman Empire will drink of the blood they shed.

God's final words of judgment to Edom speak similarly of them suffering equally for what they had inflicted.

'The day of the LORD is near for all nations. As you have done, it will be done to you; your deeds will return upon your own head. Just as you drank on my holy hill, so all the nations will drink continually; they will drink and drink and be as if they had never been.' Obadiah 15-16

The Fourth Bowl of Wrath

'The fourth angel poured out his bowl on the sun, and the sun was allowed to scorch people with fire. They were seared by the intense heat and they cursed the name of God, who had control over these plagues, but they refused to repent and glorify him.' Revelation 16:8-9

The fourth bowl of wrath was emptied out upon the sun which then sent out scorching rays to burn the wicked. Those upon whom the rays fell were so hardened in their hearts that they refused to see this as an act of divine retribution and added blasphemy to their already sin cursed lives.

John gives credit to God as having power over the plagues that were coming. The Christians to who this was written were here told that God is in charge of what's going on. Of significance also is the wording, **'they refused to repent and glorify him'**. This reveals that the oppressors were given the chance to repent.

This should bring great comfort to those who believe they have gone too far and can never repent and come back to God. Even after all the horrible things done to the Christians, the people of the Roman Empire still were given an opportunity to avoid God's eternal wrath which is far more severe and lasting than His wrath executed on earth. We can see God's longsuffering and patience at work here in His efforts to reach those who worshipped under the beast and to present them with every opportunity to avoid His eternal wrath.

This calls to mind God's reluctance to destroy Nineveh when He sent Jonah to preach to them in hopes of converting them from their evil ways. But, they **'they refused to repent and glorify him'**. The subjects of the beast, Rome, had so taken in his spirit and absorbed his characteristics that instead of repenting and turning to God, they rebelled against God's efforts to turn them, hardened their hearts just like Pharaoh and rebelled against His efforts to soften them.

Even the scorching heat of God's wrath unleashed with the sun could not mellow their rebellious hearts, rather it hardened them. The fourth bowl completes the first section of plagues involving earth, sea, waters and the sun.

The Fifth Bowl of Wrath

'The fifth angel poured out his bowl on the throne of the beast, and its kingdom was plunged into darkness. People gnawed their tongues in agony and cursed the God of heaven because of their pains and their sores, but they refused to repent of what they had done.' Revelation 16:10-11

And now we see the fifth bowl of wrath being poured out on the throne of the beast, Domitian, and his entire kingdom is darkened. This imagery is reflective of **Psalms 69**.

'I am worn out calling for help; my throat is parched. My eyes fail, looking for my God. Those who hate me without reason outnumber the hairs of my head; many are my enemies without cause, those who seek to destroy me. I am forced to restore what I did not steal.' Psalm 69:23-24

Beginning at the throne, the kingdom is darkened so that the eyes of the leaders lose their ability to see how their kingdom needs to be managed. They are turning a blind eye to the priorities of managing a worldwide empire and turning them instead to the inner pleasures of wicked debauchery. They feel secure in their power, so they become blind to the needs of the empire. The Roman Empire is by no means the only power on earth that came to demise because of this.

The Romans who are faithful to the Empire and its emperor worship see it happening, they are in anguish over it, yet in their stubborn pride, they continue to refuse to accept that this internally evil system of government cannot possibly be worthy of their worship so **'they refused to repent of what they had done,'** rather choosing to blame and blaspheme the one to whom they should have turned.

'For although they knew God, they neither glorified him as God nor gave thanks to him, but their thinking became futile and their foolish hearts were darkened. Although they claimed to be wise, they became fools and exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images made to look like a mortal human being and birds and animals and reptiles. Therefore, God gave them over in the sinful desires of their hearts to sexual impurity for the degrading of their bodies with one another. They exchanged the truth about God for a lie and worshiped and served created things rather than the Creator—who is forever praised. Amen.' Romans 1:21-25

The Sixth Bowl of Wrath

'The sixth angel poured out his bowl on the great river Euphrates, and its water was dried up to prepare the way for the kings from the East.' Revelation 16:12

The sixth bowl of wrath was said to be poured out directly on the Euphrates River causing it to dry up. The Euphrates River formed the eastern boundary of the Imperial Roman Empire. Beyond the river was the Parthian nation which had been in rebellion to the empire throughout its existence. The ancient city of Babylon was finally destroyed in 539 B.C. when the Persians diverted the Euphrates River and entered the city underneath its protective walls, **Jeremiah 50:38 / Jeremiah 51:36**. That historical event formed the imagery that the Christians would identify the overthrow of God's enemies with.

Again, this imagery is used to conceal the real meaning from the Roman authorities. The drying up of the Euphrates signified to the oppressed Christians that the Roman Empire was now vulnerable to external invasion by the Parthian kings. The external invasion did indeed occur, after which, the mighty Roman Empire was reduced to a declining world power.

The Seventh Bowl of Wrath

‘The seventh angel poured out his bowl into the air, and out of the temple came a loud voice from the throne, saying, ‘It is done!’ Then there came flashes of lightning, rumblings, peals of thunder and a severe earthquake. No earthquake like it has ever occurred since mankind has been on earth, so tremendous was the quake. The great city split into three parts, and the cities of the nations collapsed. God remembered Babylon the Great and gave her the cup filled with the wine of the fury of his wrath. Every island fled away, and the mountains could not be found. From the sky huge hailstones, each weighing about a hundred pounds, fell on people. And they cursed God on account of the plague of hail, because the plague was so terrible.’ Revelation 16:17-21

The seventh bowl poured out upon the air symbolizes the complete retribution of God through the use of natural elements, earth water, fire, (the sun) and air. The previous natural disturbances were not as severe as the ones after the outpouring of the seventh bowl. There can be no doubt that there is a great deal of figurative language used here and so it would be in that God is describing the downfall of the Roman Empire and must protect the Christians from added persecutions by concealing the real message from the Roman authorities.

A clue to figurative significance of the outpouring of the final bowl of wrath on the air may be found in [Ephesians 2](#).

‘In which you used to live when you followed the ways of this world and of the ruler of the kingdom of the air, the spirit who is now at work in those who are disobedient.’ Ephesians 2:2

The prince of the powers of the air spoken of by Paul is undoubtedly Satan. In view of the gathering forces for the upcoming battle of Har-Magedon mentioned earlier, it’s reasonable to conclude that the final bowl of wrath will be poured out directly on the ‘[ruler of the kingdom of the air](#)’, or the powers of Satan.

The fifth bowl was poured out on the throne of the beast, the sixth bowl opened the way for invasion from hostile countries followed by a gathering of forces by the allies of Satan to his evil cause, followed then by the outpouring of God's wrath upon the entire sphere of Satan's operation. Air would be an appropriate symbol representing the prevailing influence surrounding the Roman Empire.

Thus, the course of the Empire which was evil to the core, characterized by lives of trespass and sin, ruled by the Satan, prince of the powers of the air, who controlled his subjects by a spirit of rebellion and disobedience to God, is now going to brought under divine judgment.

With the pouring of the seventh bowl, the Christians are again reminded that the forces of evil cannot win the battle. With the outpouring of this last bowl of wrath, we are told that thunder and lightning from heaven and an earthquake unlike any other shakes the earth, all of which are manifestations of divine retribution. The city of Rome is divided into three parts, the divine number, which symbolises God’s involvement in the overthrow of the city. When this final action is finished, God's wrath on the beast and the false prophet is complete.

The seven bowls of wrath represented three things which historian Edward Gibbons attributed to the ultimate fall of the Imperial Roman Empire: **1.** Natural calamity. **2.** Internal rottenness, and **3.** External invasion. All three of these were works of God which ultimately caused the doom of the Roman Empire.

It did no good for Rome to rally help from other nations, for God would destroy Rome regardless of any help Satan may recruit. The vision of the bowls of wrath were designed to set forth the assurance of ultimate triumph of righteousness over any and all evil that may be hurled at it. The message to the Christians of the day was that God is ruling and they must persevere and keep themselves in righteousness and in so doing they will achieve the ultimate victory. The message for us is the same, God cares for us and as long as we live in righteousness we too can triumph over any evil which can be hurled at us.

Armageddon

Also, in **Revelation 16** we see a great battle occurring, the battle of Armageddon. Today we hear so much about Armageddon and how it is some type of future battle in which God and His saints will war against the ungodly, eventually be victorious, and then reign for a thousand years in a utopian state here on Earth.

But at this point, let us remember some of the key points we discussed previously. **Revelation** is a symbolic book, a real battle isn't being depicted in this symbolic book. Remember, too, that the book speaks of things that will 'soon take place',

‘The revelation from Jesus Christ, which God gave him to show his servants what must soon take place.’
Revelation 1:1

These were things that were ‘near’.

‘Blessed is the one who reads aloud the words of this prophecy and blessed are those who hear it and take to heart what is written in it, because the time is near.’ Revelation 1:3

Whatever battle is going to occur would take place during the time period of the people who were reading the **Book of Revelation**.

‘Then they gathered the kings together to the place that in Hebrew is called Armageddon.’ Revelation 16:16

In any time of international unrest, uncertainty or conflict, there have been those who have raised the age-old spectre of ‘**Armageddon**’. Not so very long ago the word frequently appeared in the literature of the Watchtower magazine of the self-styled ‘**Jehovah’s Witnesses**’ as they attempted to arrest people’s attention and scare them into professing some sort of religious belief. Furthermore, the very word ‘**Armageddon**’ has become something of a byword; a synonym used to describe any cataclysmic event, whether real or imaginary.

But what do the scriptures really tell us about ‘**Armageddon**’?

Does the word, indeed, warn us of a mighty battle which will bring our world to an end? Does ‘**Armageddon**’ really relate to a conflict, either literal, and or figurative, in the **16th chapter of the Revelation** where the word occurs?

The explanations and theories which have been proposed in attempts to explain ‘**Armageddon**’ are like the demons in the demoniac of Gadara, their name is ‘**Legion**’. Some expositors have boldly claimed that it represents ‘**the last great conflict between East and West**’. Others explain it as ‘**the great universal conflict before the return of Christ**’. And others describe it as the conflict involving ‘**all the nations against the church**’. But, do the scriptures, really, speak of a mighty, literal battle in which huge armies will take to the field and fight, employing all the sophisticated weapons of modern warfare?

The ‘**Revelation**’. The Most Figurative Book In The Bible

I think we should bear in mind, whenever we read the ‘**Revelation**’ in which this ‘**conflict**’ is said to be described. It is the most figurative and symbolic Book in the Scriptures. Remember, also, that every single figure, symbol or illustration that we find in the Book, comes from elsewhere in the scriptures. In other words, and this is of crucial importance, not one symbol, or illustration, used in the ‘**Revelation**’ comes from outside of the Bible itself. This means the Bible is our only source of reliable information, and that to understand the term ‘**Armageddon**’ it is essential to begin in the Old Testament scriptures for guidance and enlightenment.

A Brief History

Before we do this, let us notice one more vital fact; namely, that the chapter already referred to, **Revelation 16**, contains the one and only reference to ‘**Armageddon**’ found in the entire Bible. In **Revelation 16:14** is described ‘**the war of the great day of God, the Almighty**’, and in **Revelation 16:16**, this day is given the name ‘**Armageddon**’. So, Armageddon is God’s Day! And this is hinted at again in **Revelation 19:19-21**, where it is described in terms which remind us of **Ezekiel 39:19**.

‘**AR**’, Or ‘**HAR**’ Mageddon?

Please look closely at the actual word. The first two letters, ‘**Ar**’, mean ‘**city**’, so that ‘**Armageddon**’ indicates the ‘**City**’ of Megiddo. When the word begins with ‘**Har**’, because ‘**har**’ means ‘**hill**’, ‘**Harmageddon**’ describes the ‘**Hill**’ on which the city of Megiddo was built.

And, when these two words are used symbolically, they remind us of the fact that, just as there are, in world-history, names of physical locations that tell dramatic stories; cities such as ‘Masada’, and places such as ‘The Alamo’, ‘Waterloo’, ‘Trafalgar’, etc., the name ‘Armageddon’, reminds us of a great or special event.

About 60 miles north of Jerusalem, there is a valley about 10 miles long, stretching from the River Jordan to the Coast and enclosed by mountains at one end. This valley has several names. It’s called the ‘Plain of Jezreel’, but Bible maps will also use the name ‘The Valley of Megiddo’, the valley which is famous in the Old Testament as the site of some of the bloodiest battles in Israel’s history. ‘Harmageddon’, the Hill of Megiddo, is still there. It’s the hill upon which are the ruins of ‘Armageddon’, the City of Megiddo, which is the ancient city that was formerly a Canaanite stronghold.

The Significant Of The ‘Armageddon’ Area

A brief examination of the Old Testament will reveal how significant this place was in those days. **Judges 5** tells us that it was here that Barak defeated the Canaanites.

‘Kings came, they fought, the kings of Canaan fought. At Taanach, by the waters of Megiddo, they took no plunder of silver.’ **Judges 5:19**

Judges 7 records that it was here that Gideon fought against the Midianites. **2 Samuel 1** tells us that Saul and Jonathan died in this area. **2 Kings 23:29**, reports that the good King Josiah also died here, when he intervened in a battle with which he really shouldn’t have become involved. Here, too, King Ahaziah was killed by Jehu. In a word, the Valley of Megiddo was renowned as the location of great battles and terrible conflicts, so that it came to symbolize conflict.

Look At The Events Described In Judges 4

Jabin, king of the Canaanites, had oppressed Israel for 20 years, and the reason for his apparent superiority and invincibility was the fact that his army commander, Sisera, had at his disposal 900 war-chariots which supported his army. **And what weapons did the Israelites have?** None! Not a sword, shield or spear! **Judges 5:8**. This is because the Canaanites had followed the example of the Moabites before them who, having conquered the Israelites had disarmed them. They had stripped them of their weapons, a course of action that was the usual practice in those days, designed to make rebellion impossible.

In **1 Samuel 13:19** we are told that there was ‘no smith in Israel’. At that time, the Philistines, who were oppressing the Israelites, didn’t allow them to work in metal, because they didn’t want them to be able to make weapons for themselves. Indeed, there was even a time when Israel’s farmers had actually to go to the Philistines and pay to have their tools sharpened, because the Philistines had obtained the secret of iron smelting.

This explains why **Judges 3:16** records that Ehud ‘made himself a sword’, an act which, under normal circumstances, would hardly have been regarded as a startling event! And **Judges 3:31**, tells us that Shamgar fought the Philistines armed only with ‘an ox-goad’, a stick with a point on the end! It is, therefore, not surprising that, when Sisera’s army attacked the Israelites, they turned and fled. So, **what followed?** Read **Judges 4**.

In the mountains, there lived a woman named Deborah, a prophetess, to whom the Israelites turned for advice. She stated plainly, ‘You are not able to deal with this enemy. But God is!’ **For this is the day when YAHVEH will deliver Sisera into your hands. Is not YAHVEH gone up before you?** The two armies faced each other; the mighty army of the Canaanites and the unarmed men of Israel. They met in the Valley of Megiddo, and the seemingly impossible happened! The Canaanites were defeated, not by Israel, but by God. In **Judges 5** we read Deborah’s song of victory, in which she makes it very clear that God Himself fought for His people.

‘From the heavens the stars fought, from their courses they fought against Sisera.’ **Judges 5:20**

The Day And The Victory Is God’s

Now, this is the first Bible reference to ‘Megiddo’, and It’s a story which reveals that, when the need of His people was greatest, and His time was right, God Himself defeated their enemy, without the His people lifting a finger to defend themselves. Consequently, whenever the ancient Israelites, and the Jews in later years heard the word ‘Armageddon’, far from striking fear into their hearts, it was a word of comfort and encouragement, just as in New Testament times, the word ‘Maranatha’ became a word of comfort for Christians.

‘Then they gathered the kings together to the place that in Hebrew is called Armageddon.’ **Revelation 16:16**

Therefore, when, in **Revelation 16:18**, where ‘**Harmageddon**’ appears again, God is telling the Christians that opposition raised against His people and His cause will meet with the same overwhelming defeat that was inflicted on Sisera. It will be God’s Day and His conflict once again! God Himself will inflict the final defeat on evil!

This means that the word ‘**Armageddon**’ found only in the **16th chapter of the Revelation**, has nothing to do with a mighty, literal, physical conflict, nor should Christians be afraid of the word. The reference should be seen properly as God’s assurance that the victory lies with His cause and His people, because His great purpose must be accomplished.

A Final Question

How can these references to Armageddon possibly relate to a literal, great, world-conflict? Remember that the Valley of Megiddo is a very small valley in a very small country. I suggest, therefore, that common-sense should tell us that the idea of a literal battle, involving modern armies with modern weapons, fighting in a real geographical location such as the Valley of Megiddo, is nothing short of ridiculous.

The scene is symbolic, and it declares that, although the church may experience difficult times as she faces persecution and false doctrine, her final victory is guaranteed. Not because she becomes numerically or politically or financially strong, or strong in any other conceivable way, but because this is God’s War and God’s Victory. If you know this, you will realize that, whatever the future holds in store for the world, the Church has nothing to fear, because her future is secure.

Revelation 17

We’re introduced to the woman described as a great prostitute, the great city Rome, **Revelation 17:1-3**. In the vision, the angel removes John from where he was and takes him into a wilderness where he sees ‘**a woman.**’ The question immediately arises, **is this the same woman previously mentioned?** A closer examination of her characteristics reveals that she is bedecked with those items signifying royalty, **Revelation 17:4**. The woman in view here is representative of none other than the Roman emperor himself.

The Beast

Notice the beast was ‘**was covered with blasphemous names**’, this would be a reference to the names the beast called himself. Domitian, during his reign issued his decrees as ‘**Lord God Domitianus**’ and such. Therefore, it would have been unmistakable in the minds of the first readers of John’s letter that he was referring to the emperor.

‘The dragon stood on the shore of the sea. And I saw a beast coming out of the sea. It had ten horns and seven heads, with ten crowns on its horns, and on each head a blasphemous name.’ Revelation 13:1

‘There I saw a woman sitting on a scarlet beast that was covered with blasphemous names and had seven heads and ten horns.’ Revelation 17:3

‘This calls for a mind with wisdom. The seven heads are seven hills on which the woman sits. They are also seven kings. Five have fallen, one is, the other has not yet come; but when he does come, he must remain for only a little while.’ Revelation 17:9-10

It obviously refers to the emperors of the Roman Empire.

The Ten Horns

‘The ten horns you saw are ten kings who have not yet received a kingdom, but who for one hour will receive authority as kings along with the beast. And it performed great signs, even causing fire to come down from heaven to the earth in full view of the people.’ Revelation 17:12

The kings of the provinces will ultimately turn against Rome. One of Rome’s greatest fears was insurrection and turmoil in the provinces. History records that is precisely what happened to the Roman Empire. She was defeated from within by her own subjects.

‘The beast and the ten horns you saw will hate the prostitute. They will bring her to ruin and leave her naked; they will eat her flesh and burn her with fire.’ Revelation 17:16

The Roman Empire as a republic was organised as a provincial government.

Each province was ruled by a governor appointed by the Emperor. There were many more than just ten provinces in the Roman Empire, and there weren't exactly seven emperors at the time of John's letter. A figurative view of the imagery would be that the beast had 7, perfect, heads and 10, complete, horns, authority. Domitian claimed in his early years as emperor to be Nero returned so it was a common superstition among the people of the time that Domitian was thought to be Nero either returned or reincarnated.

Daniel prophecies of a great beast in **Daniel 7**.

'He gave me this explanation: 'The fourth beast is a fourth kingdom that will appear on earth. It will be different from all the other kingdoms and will devour the whole earth, trampling it down and crushing it.' Daniel 7:23

The beast of Daniel is the same as the beast of Revelation. This is an unmistakable reference to the Roman Empire. No other empire fitting this description devoured the whole earth. Daniel goes on to say that out of this fourth kingdom will arise one who will **'speak against the Most High and oppress his holy people and try to change the set times and the laws. The holy people will be delivered into his hands for a time, times and half a time.'** Daniel 7:25

This can be no other person but an emperor of the fourth kingdom, the beast of Daniel, the beast of Revelation. No other imagery would come to mind in the imaginations of the first readers of Revelation.

The Seven Heads

'This calls for a mind with wisdom. The seven heads are seven hills on which the woman sits. They are also seven kings. Five have fallen, one is, the other has not yet come; but when he does come, he must remain for only a little while. The beast who once was, and now is not, is an eighth king. He belongs to the seven and is going to his destruction.' Revelation 17:9-11

The seven heads of the beast were seven heads of the Roman empire. Rome ruled her empire through a government system made up of several geographic territories called provinces. Each province fell under the control of a provincial governor. The governors of these provinces were completely at the whim of the Emperor and could serve from 1 to 5 years. There were about 28 imperial provinces at the height of the empire. All of these provinces were subject to Roman rule.

The Downfall of Rome

Such great significance has been attached to Rome as the centre of the persecuting power toward Christianity in the latter half of the first century, that three chapters of the Revelation are given to portray her downfall. **Revelation 17** appears to be intent on identifying Rome as the recipient of God's judgment and portraying just how evil an adversary she is to the saints.

In **Revelation 17** we also turn our attention to the King of kings and Lord of lords, Who will overcome.

'They will wage war against the Lamb, but the Lamb will triumph over them because he is Lord of lords and King of kings—and with him will be his called, chosen and faithful followers.' Revelation 17:14

The battle was over before it even started. God and His people would be victorious. Christ is the One Who is leading the army. He is the Captain of the Lord's army.

'Then he said, 'Here I am, I have come to do your will.' He sets aside the first to establish the second. And by that will, we have been made holy through the sacrifice of the body of Jesus Christ once for all.' Hebrews 10:9-10

We have the perfect spiritual armour.

'Finally, be strong in the Lord and in his mighty power. Put on the full armour of God, so that you can take your stand against the devil's schemes. For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms.' Ephesians 6:10-12

We have been promised that we will be victorious.

'Since the children have flesh and blood, he too shared in their humanity so that by his death he might break the power of him who holds the power of death—that is, the devil.' Hebrews 2:14

‘Listen, I tell you a mystery: We will not all sleep, but we will all be changed.’ 1 Corinthians 15:51

Christ always leads us in triumph, the Bible tells us and so, here it’s no surprise that the Lamb, Jesus, and those who follow Him will overcome Rome and her government and will arise out of persecution victorious.

What is the message for us today? When we face tribulation, and when evil opposes Christianity, whether it is an evil government, atheism, humanism, or post-modernism, Christ and the faithful will always win the battle. The battle has already been won. If we make sure that we are on God’s side, we will overcome. **Why?** It’s because Jesus is Lord of all lords and King of all kings. There is no one greater than the Lord Himself.

No one can match His majesty, His power, or His ability to lead us to Heaven. No one can even compare to Jesus, the Captain of the Lord’s army. Yes, we will be victorious, but we must be sure that we are among the faithful who are God’s chosen.

Revelation 18 The Fall Of Babylon. Rome

In **Revelation 18** we are introduced to the fall of Babylon. Earlier in our study we identified some characteristics of Babylon and the great harlot. Both, because of their characteristics, represented Rome. Christians no doubt were wondering, **what is God going to do to Rome?** God had already told them to wait a while because He would reap vengeance upon Rome. That vengeance was seen in the seven bowls discussed in the book. God had promised that His vengeance would come.

Now, God explains that Rome will fall, Christianity will live and rule forever, but Rome and its government will not.

‘Terrified at her torment, they will stand far off and cry: ‘Woe! Woe to you, great city, you mighty city of Babylon! In one hour, your doom has come!’ Revelation 18:10

This represents the power of God and the completion of His promises. People didn’t even want to get close to what they were seeing because things were so bad. They were saying that at last the great city had fallen. Look at the swiftness involved in God’s power as it destroyed Rome.

History records that Rome was destroyed, and that its evil ways came to an end. God’s kingdom, the church, however, is still reigning today. This is a powerful tribute to the Word of God, to the **Book of Revelation**, and to Jesus Christ.

Just as God promised, Rome was destroyed, but look at the Lord’s church today, it flourishes and grows. The Word of God, we learn from **Acts 12:25**, grew and multiplied but Rome has long been forgotten. Meanwhile, the Lord’s church is still ruling and reigning in the hearts and lives of men and women today.

The lesson, then, is that we must make sure that we’re a part of the most important kingdom of all, the kingdom of Christ. It’s not a kingdom that has a physical location or that is composed of physical things. Rather, it is a spiritual rule and reign in the hearts and lives of men and women.

In **Revelation 19-22**, the battle is over, and God explains what will happen to the enemies of Christianity and to the redeemed.

Revelation 19

In **Revelation 19** we learn that Satan will be defeated. We learn that Jesus is identified as King of kings and Lord of lords. He is victorious, and the dragon is defeated. Rome is thrown down and Christ is exalted. And Christians, we see, will live and reign forever. Look at this great tribute to the power of the Lord.

**‘On his robe and on his thigh, he has this name written: KING OF KINGS AND LORD OF LORDS.’
Revelation 19:16**

Jesus is the One Who is the Conqueror, He is victorious.

Revelation 20

In **Revelation 20** we see the scene of Satan's binding and eventual release, which shows us that God has control over Satan. Today, Satan still tempts people, but God has control over Satan. **Who bound Satan and released him?** God did that because He has power over Satan.

Jesus said in **Mark 3:20-30** that a powerful man had control over His own house. On that occasion Jesus was able to cast demons out of a man, which showed that because he could cast out demons that were under Satan's control, He was greater than Satan.

1000 Years

'And I saw an angel coming down out of heaven, having the key to the Abyss and holding in his hand a great chain. He seized the dragon, that ancient serpent, who is the devil, or Satan, and bound him for a thousand years. He threw him into the Abyss, and locked and sealed it over him, to keep him from deceiving the nations anymore until the thousand years were ended. After that, he must be set free for a short time. I saw thrones on which were seated those who had been given authority to judge. And I saw the souls of those who had been beheaded because of their testimony about Jesus and because of the word of God. They had not worshiped the beast or its image and had not received its mark on their foreheads or their hands. They came to life and reigned with Christ a thousand years. (The rest of the dead did not come to life until the thousand years were ended.) This is the first resurrection. Blessed and holy are those who share in the first resurrection. The second death has no power over them, but they will be priests of God and of Christ and will reign with him for a thousand years. When the thousand years are over, Satan will be released from his prison.' Revelation 20:1-7

The Number 1000 Represents Completeness or Fullness

These are the only verses in Scripture that mention a thousand-year reign but from them have come countless ideas to suggest a future thousand-year reign of Christ on the earth. The number 1000 was symbolic of completeness or fullness, and so in this passage signifies a complete or full period of time.

And notice what the text doesn't say, **Revelation 20** doesn't mention, **1.** The second coming of Christ. **2.** A bodily resurrection. **3.** A reign on earth. **4.** The literal throne of David. **5.** Jerusalem or Palestine. **6.** Us instead of they who lived and reigned. **7.** Christ on earth.

Does this passage, especially Revelation 20:4-6, teach the establishment of an earthly kingdom and a thousand-year reign of Christ with the saints? Notice first that the thousand years of this passage corresponds with the thousand years that Satan is bound in the bottomless pit of **Revelation 20:2-3**.

The number 1000 symbolises completeness or fullness and refers to the complete period of time Satan is bound. However long that is, Christ's reign is the same period of time. **But who reigns with Christ? Revelation 20:4.** These martyrs lived and reigned with Christ for a thousand years. Neither the return of Christ to the earth, the establishment of an earthly kingdom or His reign on earth with His disciples for a literal thousand years is in this verse.

Gog and Magog

'When the thousand years are over, Satan will be released from his prison and will go out to deceive the nations in the four corners of the earth—Gog and Magog—and to gather them for battle. In number they are like the sand on the seashore.' Revelation 20:7-8

Here again, we are carried back to the Old Testament, where the reference to these two names is found in **Ezekiel 38**.

'The word of the LORD came to me: 'Son of man, set your face against Gog, of the land of Magog, the chief prince of Meshek and Tubal; prophesy against him and say: 'This is what the Sovereign LORD says: I am against you, Gog, chief prince of Meshek and Tubal.' Ezekiel 38:2-3

'Gog' is said to be the ruler, and 'Magog' his kingdom and, as we might expect, there has been a great deal of speculation as to the meaning of these two names, as people have attempted to identify a particular individual and a particular nation. However, they aren't identified for us by the prophet Ezekiel himself, he merely predicted that a nation would come 'from afar' to fight against Israel.

But, the thing to notice is that the prophet said that God would destroy this enemy, without any fighting on Israel's part, and the outcome would be that the Nations would see His glory. Perhaps it helps us to understand this passage if we know that the word 'Gog' is an ancient Sumerian word 'Gug', which means 'darkness'. Therefore, 'Gog' is the

Prince of Darkness, and ‘Magog’ is his kingdom, the Kingdom of Darkness. [Is further identification really necessary?](#) Here, then, in **Revelation 20**, we see that, once again, a piece of Old Testament history involving God’s ancient people, is used to bring comfort to the church of the New Testament.

The important and very significant fact which should always be remembered, is that this persecution by ‘Gog and Magog’ predicted in the prophecy of **Ezekiel**, represents the last persecution of God’s ancient people in Old Testament times. When the names re-appear in the New Testament, in the ‘**Book of the Revelation**’, they are used to predict the end of the persecution of the church and the defeat of Satan, the prince of darkness, and those who serve him.

In **Revelation 20** we also see a great judgment scene, God’s judgment has been released upon Rome.

‘And I saw the dead, great and small, standing before the throne, and books were opened. Another book was opened, which is the book of life. The dead were judged according to what they had done as recorded in the books. The sea gave up the dead that were in it, and death and Hades gave up the dead that were in them, and each person was judged according to what they had done. Then death and Hades were thrown into the lake of fire. The lake of fire is the second death. Anyone whose name was not found written in the book of life was thrown into the lake of fire.’

Revelation 20:12-15

The message is that God was going to bring judgment upon Rome. Thus, Christians had to make sure that their lives were right with God. There was going to come a time when everyone, great or small would be judged by God, and would have to give an account before God for how they had lived their lives.

The practical application from this for us today is that during times of tribulation and trial, even if we lose our lives, we must be ready to stand before the judgment seat of God. We must be sure that our names are written in the **Book of Life** because we have lived as we ought to have lived and because our deeds in this life allow us to stand justified before God.

Revelation 21

In **Revelation 21** we find a glorious picture of the church and of Heaven.

‘Then I saw ‘a new heaven and a new earth,’ for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and there was no longer any sea.’ Revelation 21:1

New heavens and a new earth

There are many theories about the phrase, new heaven and earth but probably the most common one is that the phrase means that the present Earth is going to undergo some kind of renovation, some kind of cleaning process using fire, so that it becomes like it was in the beginning when God created it and so, it will become our new heaven. This theory doesn’t correspond with what the Scriptures actually teach.

Notice the following Scriptures.

This Present Earth Is To Pass Away

‘Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will never pass away.’ Matthew 24:35

‘In the beginning, Lord, you laid the foundations of the earth, and the heavens are the work of your hands. They will perish, but you remain they will all wear out like a garment. You will roll them up like a robe like a garment they will be changed. But you remain the same, and your years will never end.’ Hebrews 1:10-12

‘But the day of the Lord will come like a thief. The heavens will disappear with a roar; the elements will be destroyed by fire, and the earth and everything done in it will be laid bare. Since everything will be destroyed in this way, what kind of people ought you to be? You ought to live holy and godly lives as you look forward to the day of God and speed it’s coming. That day will bring about the destruction of the heavens by fire, and the elements will melt in the heat.’ 2 Peter 3:10-12

Our Eternal Dwelling Place Is Heaven

‘Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! In his great mercy he has given us new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, and into an inheritance that can never perish, spoil or fade. This inheritance is kept in heaven for you.’ 1 Peter 1:3-4

Context! Context! Context!

When it comes to understanding any Scripture, we must always keep the text in its context and so with this in mind, let’s go to the Scriptures where we first find the phrase, ‘new heavens and a new earth’.

‘See, I will create new heavens and a new earth. The former things will not be remembered, nor will they come to mind.’ Isaiah 65:17

The apostle Peter declared by inspiration that all the Old Testament prophecies pertaining to Christ are fulfilled in the present age, Acts 3:19-26, which is the last days, Acts 2:16-17, or last age, 1 Corinthians 10:11, that is the age when God speaks through His Son.

‘In the past God spoke to our ancestors through the prophets at many times and in various ways, but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son, whom he appointed heir of all things, and through whom also he made the universe.’ Hebrews 1:1-2

Now some people object to these truths by pointing to Isaiah’s prophecy of ‘new heavens and a new earth’ and argue that these prophecies haven’t been fulfilled. So, I guess we need to ask the question, what is this ‘new heavens and a new earth’? Has this prophecy of Isaiah been fulfilled or not?

I want you to notice that Isaiah twice foretold ‘new heavens and a new earth’. Isaiah 65:17 / Isaiah 66:22, the apostle Peter did so too, 2 Peter 3:13, and so did the apostle John, Revelation 21:1. But what do they mean when they use this phrase? Let’s take a moment to go through each one whilst keeping each one in their context.

‘See, I will create new heavens and a new earth. The former things will not be remembered, nor will they come to mind.’ Isaiah 65:17

The apostle Paul quotes Isaiah 65:1-2, the beginning of the context, and applies them to the present age, Romans 10:20-21. Notice how Isaiah’s prophecy ends.

‘They will neither harm nor destroy on all my holy mountain,’ says the LORD.’ Isaiah 65:25

The words, ‘my holy mountain’ is a clue that identifies the time and nature of the fulfilment. The prophecy of the Lord’s ‘holy mountain’ relates to the first coming of Christ, Isaiah 11:1-2 / Isaiah 11:9 / Isaiah 61:1-2 / Luke 4:16-21 and is a figurative term for the rule of Christ in His church, His kingdom, Isaiah 2:1-4 / Hebrews 12:22-23 / Hebrews 12:28. And the nature of this kingdom is spiritual rather than material, John 18:36 / Romans 14:17.

In other words, ‘the new heavens and new earth’ of Isaiah 65:17 is the present divine order under the rule of Christ and the spiritual dwelling place for the people of God, the church.

‘As the new heavens and the new earth that I make will endure before me,’ declares the LORD, ‘so will your name and descendants endure.’ Isaiah 66:22

In this chapter Isaiah refers to this same ‘new heavens and the new earth’. The context here is a prophecy of Christ coming into the world and establishing His church, Isaiah 66:7-9 / Micah 5:2-3 / Revelation 12:1-11. In other words, Isaiah 66:22 is a continuation of the promise of Isaiah 65:17 and likewise relates to the present rule of Christ over His kingdom, the church.

‘But in keeping with his promise we are looking forward to a new heaven and a new earth, where righteousness dwells.’ 2 Peter 3:13

Now this passage is in a totally different context, here Peter is warning against scoffers who deny that Christ will come again, 2 Peter 3:1-4. And so, he assures us that the promise of the Lord’s return will be fulfilled, 2 Peter 3:5-9, at which time ‘the heavens will pass away with a great noise, and the elements will melt with fervent heat; both the earth and the works that are in it will be burned up.’ 2 Peter 3:10.

But notice there is nothing in the passage or even the context for that matter which indicates Peter is speaking figuratively, therefore we should take the warning literally. This present universe is destined for sudden, fiery, divine destruction.

This shouldn't worry the Christians because Peter says, 'we, according to His promise, look for new heavens and a new earth in which righteousness dwells', 2 Peter 3:13. In other words, in harmony with the meaning of the phrase 'new heavens and a new earth,' we await a new order of things and a new dwelling place. This is a home in heaven, 1 Peter 1:3-5, in which we will have glorious, immortal, spiritual bodies like that of the Lord Jesus Christ, 1 Corinthians 15:35-58 / 1 John 3:2.

'Then I saw
a new heaven and a new earth,' for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and there was no longer any sea.' Revelation 21:1

John likewise saw in a vision this new order of things after the return of the Lord in which the death, sickness, pain, suffering, and sorrow of this present age shall have passed away and God once more dwells with His people and this for all eternity.

'I saw the Holy City, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride beautifully dressed for her husband. And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, 'Look! God's dwelling place is now among the people, and he will dwell with them. They will be his people, and God himself will be with them and be their God. 'He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death' or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away.' He who was seated on the throne said, 'I am making everything new!' Then he said, 'Write this down, for these words are trustworthy and true.' Revelation 21:2-5

Conclusion

Common sense tells us that if the Christian is promised 'heaven' which is our final dwelling place, and yet we're also promised a 'new heavens and a new earth,' common sense tells us that the new heavens and earth represents the same state as heaven.

All the Old Testament prophecies concerning Christ, most of which were both figurative and spiritual, are indeed fulfilled in the New Testament age. The 'new heavens and a new earth' of Isaiah are the rule of Christ over His spiritual kingdom, His church.

So, what does the phrase mean in the New Testament? It simply means, its symbolic of heaven itself, nothing more, nothing less. There are yet 'new heavens and a new earth' in store for Christians at the Lord's return, it will be a wonderful home in heaven where everlasting joy awaits.

No wonder John writes,

'Amen. Come, Lord Jesus.' Revelation 22:20

To suffering Christians John said, 'hang in there, because Heaven will be worth it all!' That's a message we need to hear today as well. No matter what it costs, and no matter what we may have to give up, even if we have to die for the cause of Christ, Heaven, where there will be no more sorrow, death, crying, tears, or pain, will truly be worth it all.

Revelation 22

Jesus closes the **Book of Revelation** by instructing us not to add to or take away from its message.

'I warn everyone who hears the words of the prophecy of this scroll: If anyone adds anything to them, God will add to that person the plagues described in this scroll. And if anyone takes words away from this scroll of prophecy, God will take away from that person any share in the tree of life and in the Holy City, which are described in this scroll.'
Revelation 22:18-19

God said, 'Do not add to or take away from anything you read it because it is correct just the way it is.' That's the overriding message about all of Scripture.

'Do not add to his words, or he will rebuke you and prove you a liar.' Proverbs 30:6

The message of the **Book of Revelation** is simply this, Jesus wins! To be true to God and His kingdom, which will rule and reign over all kingdoms. If we remain faithful unto death, the Lord will give us a crown of life. May God bless us as we strive amidst trouble and tribulation to be faithful to Jesus.

Summary Questions

1. In **Revelation 12** we are presented with images of a dragon, a woman, and a child. Who or what do each of these images represent?
2. What important prophetic message is found in **2 Samuel 7:12-14**?
3. When **Revelation 12:11** says, ‘And they overcame him by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony, and they did not love their lives to the death,’ who is the ‘him’ mentioned in that verse?
4. Explain the connection between the last part of **Revelation 12:11** ‘...and they did not love their lives to the death’ and the last part of **Revelation 2:10**.
5. According to this lesson, what does the number 666 mentioned in **Revelation 13** represent?
6. According to this lesson, what does the number 144,000 mentioned in **Revelation 14** represent?
7. What important message is found in **Revelation 14:13**?
8. What important message is found in **Psalm 116:15**?
9. What is the main thought behind **Revelation 15:3-4**, which mentions “the song of Moses and the Lamb”?
10. **Revelation 16:16** says, ‘And they gathered them together to the place called in Hebrew, Armageddon.’ According to the material contained in this lesson, what was John’s purpose in referring to Armageddon, ‘the hill of Megiddo’?
11. **Revelation 17:14** contains two descriptions of Christ. One is ‘the Lamb.’ What is the other?
12. According to **Revelation 17:14**, what two designations are given to those who accompany the Lamb?
13. In **Revelation 18:2** when the text says that ‘Babylon the great has fallen,’ to who or what does the phrase, ‘Babylon the great,’ refer?
14. What was John’s point in writing in **Revelation 18:10** of people ‘standing at a distance for fear of her torment, saying, ‘Alas, alas, that great city Babylon, that mighty city! For in one hour your judgment has come’?
15. From **Revelation 19** we learn that Satan will be defeated. Who, according to **Revelation 19:16**, will defeat him?
16. What important future scene was John depicting in **Revelation 20:12-15**, and what message is contained in that passage for Christians, even today?