

# BIBLE COMPANION COMMENTARY: REVELATION

## REVELATION

### PREFACE

This commentary is based around the New European Version of the Bible, which is generally printed with brief commentary on each chapter. This commentary is the hard copy of the more detailed commentary found on the *Bible Companion* app.

Are there errors of thought and intellectual process in these volumes? Surely there are. Let me know about them. But don't fail to see the wood for the trees. Never let the wonder of the simple, basic Gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ and His Kingdom become obscured by all the angst over correctly interpreting this or that Bible verse. Believe it, respond to it, be baptized into Him, and let the word become flesh in you as it was so supremely in Him.

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## REVELATION CHAPTER 1

Revelation is full of visual images, borrowed from the Old Testament. But it presents them as a kaleidoscope of images, overlaying each other, relying upon other images for the final picture presented. As such, it simply cannot be read as a chronological prediction of historical events. The images presented of the new Jerusalem and God's ways are intended to deconstruct the images of Babylon and her ways. In earlier application, Christians living within the 'Babylon' of the Roman empire were subject to her images, worldviews etc., and Revelation enabled them to re-imagine life from God's perspective, thinking according to His images of the world, seeing Babylon and the beast for who they are, and seeing ourselves and God's people for who they are. This is of supreme practical value today, as it has been in every age. But it will be of ultimate value for those living under the domination of the beast entity in the land / earth under the beast's domination in the brief period of tribulation before Christ's return. A major theme of Revelation is of martyrdom and witness. It is not God's pleasure to destroy the beast, and He expects His people to make His final appeal and witness to the beast, even at the cost of their lives, physically, economically and socially. The radical nature of that call comes to each of His people over history, but it will be at its most intense and acute in the last days. Another theme of Revelation is the Lordship of Jesus; exalted titles are given to Him, and things stated about God are stated about Him. This is not to say that He

is God; rather the intention and necessity of this message is that as strongly as the beast insists that *he* is Lord, so we are to insist and proclaim that *Jesus* is our Lord. The image of the slain lamb, the crucified Jesus, hangs as a watermark image over the book of Revelation; and again, that makes sense. For the community of the last days, under intense physical and / or psychological oppression from the beast, will have the image ever before them of Him in His time of suffering and dying.

#### A Futurist Approach

I submit that in the last days, all God's prophetic word will come true. All previous historical fulfilments of it were true and valid, but they will be seen as but incipient fulfilments of the final and ultimate fulfilling of God's word in the events of the last hour, and the final triumph of the Lord Jesus Christ in His return to earth to judge the enemies of His people. Rev. 1:1 opens Revelation by saying that the things revealed or apocalypsed are to "shortly" come to pass, and the book ends with the same statement (Rev. 22:6). The Greek can just as well mean that these things will happen quickly, suddenly- rather than requiring that the entire book had a fulfilment shortly after the time it was first given. For clearly the events described in the book did not all happen 'shortly' after John's time in the first century. That is a fact, and I would argue that it leaves us little leeway in interpreting *tachos* as therefore meaning that they will happen quickly, suddenly. The ultimate thrust of their fulfilment, therefore, is not over an extended period of time from John's time over the two millennia to the time of Christ's coming. The same phrase is used by the Lord to the believers in Rev. 2:5,16 where He warns them that He will come unto them "quickly"- the idea is that His coming in judgment will be sudden *unless* they repent. The quickness or suddenness of His coming is related to His wrath in judgment; if they repent, then the coming will not be 'sudden' or 'short'. He surely doesn't mean 'If you don't repent, then I will come back soon. If you do repent, then I won't come back soon'. He uses the same concept of suddenness and unexpectedness, although without using *tachos*, in Rev. 3:3: "If you shall not watch, I will come as a thief, and you shall not know what time I will come upon you".

Attention must be paid to Revelation especially in the last days because "the time is at hand" (Rev. 1:3); but *eggos* means literally 'squeezed' or 'throttled'- creating the idea that things are going to happen very quickly at the end. The fulfilment of God's word in this sense will be 'hastened' (Is. 60:22; Jer. 1:12). And the world situation we are in enables this to be the case as no other generation. The student of Revelation, therefore, will not be caught by surprise by the speed of events in the last days- that seems to be the idea.

This is not to say that the prophecies did not have relevance to the historical experience of God's people. The continual theme of persecution and comfort of ultimate victory against the world was, of course, a powerful and relevant message to God's persecuted people throughout history. But those fulfilments were but shadow fulfilments of the final triumph and events which the book describes. These are to happen quickly, suddenly, in a short time space. This explains why each of the various visions, of seals, trumpets, bowls etc. all end with the final victory of Christ's coming and the establishment of God's Kingdom on earth. They can all be read as having specific reference to the last days- whatever historical fulfilment they may have had. To argue otherwise requires that these events had their main fulfilment at some time in the last 2000 years, and then there is a gap until their fulfilment in the coming of Christ. But the nature of the language and arguments used hardly allows for that. At best it could be that after each of those historical incidents there was the possibility of Christ's return, but that didn't happen because other preconditions weren't met. Therefore the prophecies were rescheduled and reapplied for their main fulfilment in the events of the last days. This would explain why some of the historical fulfilments suggested by expositors of the continuous historical school appear to 'fit' better than others. But at best, these were only incipient fulfilments- the final reality for each of God's prophetic words must come in the last

days, just as the image of Daniel 2 had some continuous historical application, but the image must stand erect and complete in the last days- and that is the main fulfilment of the prophecy, whatever application it may have had in history.

1:1- see on Dan. 10:21.

*The Revelation of Jesus Christ-* The Lord's second coming is called His "revelation" (s.w. 1 Pet. 1:7,13; 4:13 etc.), and so there is a play on ideas here. The things revealed by the Lord in this book ultimately concern His second coming, whatever other relevance they have had throughout history.

*Which God gave him to show to his servants the things which must shortly come to pass-* A great theme of Revelation is that "the time is near"- these things were about to happen. This is a major theme (1:1,3; 2:16; 3:10,11; 22:6,7,10,12,20). The relationship between the letters to the churches and the rest of Revelation cannot be overlooked; what was to happen to them in judgment was bound up with what was to come upon the land of Palestine in AD70. Mt. 21:40 parallels the coming of the Lord with the destruction of Jerusalem in AD70. This is exactly the sequence of events we expect in the last days, according to Zech. 14. There are many links between the trumpets, seals and the Olivet prophecy; and also many links with Josephus' descriptions of what came upon Palestine in AD66-70- e.g. 9:5 "inwardly tormented" Gk. *ebasanizonto* is used in Josephus (Wars 5.1.5).

| Revelation | The Olivet Prophecy |
|------------|---------------------|
| 6:1,2      | Mt. 24:14           |
| 6:14       | Mt. 24:35           |
| 6:3,4      | Mt. 24:6,7          |
| 6:16       | Lk. 23:30           |
| 6:5,6      | Mt. 24:7            |
| 6:17       | Lk. 21:36           |
| 6:7,8      | Mt. 24:7            |
| 7:1        | Mt. 24:31           |
| 6:9        | Mt. 24:12           |
| 7:3        | Lk. 21:18,28        |
| 6:11       | Mt. 24:14           |
| 7:14       | Mt. 24:19,21        |
| 6:12       | Mt. 24:7            |
| 8:3        | Lk. 21:36           |
| 6:13       | Mt. 24:32           |
| 8:5        | Mt. 24:27           |

It is clear enough that the Olivet Prophecy has application both to the "last days" of AD70 and also to our last days. Revelation is the Lord's expansion upon His words on Olivet- and therefore we should use this as a framework for interpreting the book. It applies to both AD70 and also our last days. The following notes trace some leading features of the AD70 interpretation. The most powerful proof is in private reading of Josephus' *Wars of The Jews*- it reads like a running commentary on the seal and trumpet judgments upon Israel.

*Which he sent and put into sign by his Angel to his servant John-* This message was passed from the Father to the Son to the Son's "angel" or messenger and thence to His servant John. The "angel" may be a human messenger, but the Divine "Angel" with whom John

interrelates throughout the book is surely the "Angel" referenced here. In this case, the Lord has a personal Angel who represents Him, perhaps Gabriel.

1:2 *Who testified of the word of God and of the testimony of Jesus Christ, even of all things that he saw*- The aorist suggests the testimony was made once in the past; and John uses this idea of his testimony about the Lord in explaining that his Gospel record is his testimony about Him. In addition to that, he is testifying of the Lord's testimony, which consists in all things he saw in the visions he is now going to describe. This is in line with how the testimony of the Comforter, the spirit of Christ, was the testimony of the believers who had received that Spirit (Jn. 15:26,27). Here as a parade example of that, John testifies of the Lord's testimony.

The apostles bore witness to the Lord Jesus (e.g. Acts 26:22; 1 Cor. 15:15 s.w.), and He in turn bore witness to the [preaching of] the word of his grace (Acts 15:8). In their witness lay His witness. Revelation begins with John witnessing / testifying to the Word [made flesh, i.e. Jesus], and concludes with Jesus testifying (1:2 cp. 22:20 s.w.).

Beholding the cross and the water and blood that flowed from it, John struggled with the inadequacy of human language: "He that saw it bare record, and his record is true: and he knoweth that he saith true" (Jn. 19:35). Years later he described himself, in allusion to this, as he "who bare record [in the past tense] of the word of God, and of the testimony of Jesus Christ" (Rev. 1:2). He had earlier commented that the Spirit, water and blood of the cross bore witness (1 Jn. 5:8). John seems to be saying that the Lord's final death which he had witnessed was the word of God, the testimony of Jesus Christ. And as he had been a faithful witness to this, so now he would be of that further revelation he had now seen in the Apocalypse. Because he had beheld the Lord's witness on the cross, he witnessed. For he was in Christ, part of Him, of His life and death. And so are each of us. Paul puts our thesis in so many words, by saying that his preaching to the Galatians had been a placarding forth of Christ crucified before their eyes (Gal. 3:1 Gk.). His witness to them had been a living out of the Lord in His time of dying.

1:3- see on Lk. 11:28.

*Blessed is he that reads, and they that hear the words of the prophecy, and keep the things that are written therein*- This has been misread as meaning that blessing is related to 'correctly understanding' the Revelation. The Greek word translated "reads" doesn't have to mean 'correctly understands'. The obvious sense is to link it with those who *hear* the words... the message is being sent by a messenger, who was to read it out loud- as we know Paul's letters were thus read to a largely illiterate brotherhood- and it was then *heard* by the ecclesias. Both reader and hearer were blessed if they kept what the prophecy implied- which was and is an awareness of God's claims upon His people, their separation from this world, and an earnest readiness for Christ's return. The 'blessing' is elsewhere applied not to those who intellectually understand something but to those who are doing and living and saying the right things at the return of Jesus. The same Greek word for 'Blessed' is used of those who are ready at the Lord's return and doing the right things (Mt. 24:46; Lk. 12:37,38,43). Rev. 22:7 links back to 1:3, the epilogue interpreting the prologue: "Blessed is he who keeps the *logos* of the prophecy of this book" - the essence / *logos* / underlying idea of it all, which is that God's persecuted people will remain faithful to His word in Christ, will testify it to an unbelieving world, and will live lives always prepared for their Lord's return. The blessing is in the preparedness, not in the detailed understanding. If blessing depends upon holding the continuous historic view of Revelation, then the majority of God's servants aren't blessed- seeing that it couldn't possibly have been understood throughout most of the time from the first century until now.

*For the time is near-* The disciples expected the second coming within a generation of the Lord's death (Mt. 26:18; Lk. 21:32; Phil. 4:5; 2 Tim. 4:6; 1 Pet. 4:7; Rev. 1:3); and note the use of words indicating imminence: 'shortly', 'immediately', 'a little while'. Could it not be that if Israel had accepted Jesus as Son of God, the Kingdom could have come then? Even after His death, had they believed the witness of the apostles and repented for what they had done, the Kingdom could have come then. Of course God foreknew this would not happen; but the disciples looked forward to it as a distinct reality and possibility. Revelation itself seems to read as if when "Babylon" was judged and destroyed by the day of the Lord, then the Kingdom would be established on earth. It seems that it was possible that the Roman empire be destroyed by the Lord's return; but instead the prophecy was delayed, and now "Babylon" must apply to some latter day system, which had an earlier incarnation in the Roman empire which *could* have been its final fulfilment but wasn't. In any case, we are to live *as if* the second coming is imminent.

1:4 *John to the seven churches that are in Asia. Grace to you and peace, from Him who is, and who was, and who is to come, and from the seven Spirits that are before His throne-* There were more than seven churches in Asia, so this number is chosen to represent the complete churches. Their experiences were to echo down the centuries in the various churches and groups who experienced persecution. The sources and forms may have changed, but the spiritual essence remained the same as they experienced.

Is, was and is to come recalls the essence of the Yahweh Name. The God who had ultimately preserved His Son and His disciples from their persecutions ["was"] would preserve the seven Asian churches in their current traumas ["is"]; and would ultimately preserve believers of all ages "to come". The essential characteristics of the Yahweh Name would be manifested consistently in whatever time and context. And in this consistency is the power of history, as Biblically recorded. For as He acted in history, so He shall act today and for all ages to come.

The essential will of the Father and Son is grace and peace toward the believers, despite all the twists and turns of history and current experience. That will was operationalized through the seven spirits before the throne in the court of Heaven. The seven spirits match the seven churches; the entire Spirit of God ["seven"] will work in the lives of all those in His community, represented by the seven churches.

1:5- see on Jn. 7:38.

*And from Jesus Christ, the faithful witness, the firstborn from the dead and the ruler of the kings of the earth. To him that loves us and freed us from our sins by his blood-* The Lord's faithful witness unto death is to be the pattern for all the Lord's people. Although the kings of the earth persecute the Lord's people, He is their ruler. Events have not get radically out of control; all is under His rulership. This again was of powerful relevance to the Jewish believers of the first century, who were tempted to secretly believe but not to witness, for fear of persecution by both Roman and Jewish systems. We are freed from our sins because of His unflinching witness.

It will be observed that Revelation frequently hints that it is a message specifically addressed to those under persecution. Phrases like "Jesus Christ the faithful witness" (:5) should be read in the context of encouraging the readers to continue *their* witness, even on pain of death, just as Jesus did (see too 13:8). For this reason, an understanding of the book of Revelation is vital for those who will experience the latter day tribulation, in whatever form we feel it will take.

"The kings of the earth" is a phrase and idea which we will encounter later. If we enquire what they refer to, it depends upon what scale we wish to investigate at. The "earth" often

refers to the land promised to Abraham, and the futurist interpretation of the later chapters in Revelation must bear that in view.

The love of the Lord Jesus is again interpreted as specifically His death on the cross, as often in the New Testament. His command to love as He loved us means that we too are to love unto the death of a cross (Jn. 13:32). That death means we are freed from our sins—despite being ruled over by the kings of the earth / land. It is freedom from sin which is the ultimate freedom rather than political freedom, which was always attractive to the Jewish readership of the first century. Just as the language of the Roman cult of empire is alluded to and subverted, so too is the language of Jewish nationalistic expectation. This was very strong in the lead up to AD70 and was the root cause of many of the Hebrew Christians returning to Judaism. The hope was that the Kingdom of God could be brought about by human effort now, without Jesus. The idea that 'we can do it, we can achieve a land fit for heroes' is very much the slogan of the world around us, too. And we are not to fall for it. The cry of militant Judaism was 'Freedom from Rome!'. But this is subverted into 'Freedom from sin!'. That is the ultimate freedom, to be free from the ties that bind us morally. And to thereby be free from fear of eternal death. Militant Judaism appealed to the image of 'martyrdom' at the time of the Maccabees. But the word for 'martyr' is used here of how the Lord Jesus was the faithful witness unto death; to turn a conversation around to Jesus and face social death or ostracism, that is the true witness or 'martyrdom'. Not being a suicide bomber against the Romans. Our witness is our witness (Rev. 6:9; 12:11). It is us personally witnessing in our way and context. But it is the witness of Jesus (Rev. 12:17; 19:10), who was the first and ultimate witness / martyr unto death (Rev. 1:5). We are His witnesses, continuing His witness unto death (Rev. 12:17; 17:6; 19:10). Our standing up for Him, our preaching, our witness to Him, is in the Spirit of His witness-unto-death. "The faithful witness" is an allusion to the Messianic seed of David in Ps. 89:35-37: "Once have I sworn by My holiness that I will not lie to David. His seed will endure forever, his throne like the sun before Me. It will be established forever like the moon, *the faithful witness* in the sky". Judaism was looking for some Messianic seed of David to arise and save them from Rome and 'free them'. But the take of Revelation is that the Lord Jesus is the seed of David [there are many references to Him as this] and He has freed us from sin. That is the real bondage and that is the true freedom. Bondage and freedom are thereby redefined. Likewise in our world, bondage is not so much to the minimum wage economy, but to sin. And freedom is not financial independence, it is freedom from sin through baptism into Jesus. This makes us free from sin ("And being made free from sin, you became slaves to righteousness", Rom. 6:18, "the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has made me free from the law of sin and death", Rom. 8:2); we are 'redeemed', bought out of slavery and set free into freedom ("For freedom did Christ set us free", Gal. 5:1), the glorious liberty of God's dear children. This is not something we are fighting for against this world. It has been attained. And we are to believe it and bask in it, and seek to share the victory. But it's always more attractive, and easier to mentally handle, to be in search for something—rather than rejoicing that we have found it. This is a feature of human nature we must beware of. To be ever learning and seeking, but unable to come to acknowledge the Truth when we find it.

The praise of the Lord Jesus here in :5,6 is alluding to the language of the emperor cult. Caesar was to be worshipped as supreme, because *he* had made Roman citizens the rulers ["kings"] of the known earth. All this is subverted here. The true Kingdom is God's Kingdom, in which we shall be the rulers. But that empire / Kingdom is not now, in its fullness. We await the day of the Lord's return. To believe the Gospel of the Kingdom of God was therefore to believe something radically subversive of contemporary society and values. And the call to be totally part of that is no less radical for us today, in essence. Worship is a

major theme of Revelation. Later we will read of a Lamb on the throne. Not Caesar. And this must be understood in the context of the cult of emperor worship.

1:6 *And who made us kings and priests to his God and Father; to him be the glory and the dominion for ever and ever. Amen-* Having spoken of the kings of the earth, who will be portrayed later as dominating God's people temporarily, we learn that in fact it is we who are freed from any domination by sin who are the king-priests. Immediately we are introduced to what shall be a major theme in the visions- that there are two spheres of things. On the earthly level, the kings of the earth dominate us. But on the spiritual, heavenly level, we are the kings, and are radically free from all domination because of the freedom won for us on the cross. This earthly-heavenly distinction is to be found throughout John's Gospel. Things as they are in secular life only appear like that. For things are radically different from God's perspective.

The Lord "has *made* us kings and priests" in prospect, although we will only exercise this power in the Kingdom. Frequently we read of the saints being 'made' things which we must still strive to attain (Rom. 5:19; 6:18,22; 8:2; 1 Cor. 12:13; Eph. 1:6; 2:13). God *made* the Lord a sin offering, that we might be *made* the righteousness of God (2 Cor. 5:21), although our Lord still had to exercise freewill effort to be that offering, as we must too. "God... saved us (in prospect)... that... we should be *made* heirs according to the hope of eternal life" (Tit.3:5-7).

Note too that the idea may well be of king-priests, after the order of Melchizedek, seeing we are "in Christ" and all that is true of Him comes true for us. So the idea is not that some will be kings and others priests.

1:7- see on Jn. 1:14; 19:37.

*Behold, he comes with the clouds, and every eye shall see him, and they that pierced him, and all the tribes of the earth shall mourn over him. So shall it be! Amen-* This passage from Zechariah appears to be a prophecy of how Israel shall see the Lord at His second coming, and that is the interpretation given here. Those who crucified the Lord had this prophecy come true as they looked upon and gloated over the pierced Lord Jesus on the cross (see on Jn. 19:37). But it shall come true again, when they are resurrected to judgment at the last day, see His enthronement in glory ["he comes with the clouds" is the language of Dan. 7 about this], realize from marks in His body that this is the one whom they crucified, exclaim "Blessed is he that comes in the name of the Lord!" (Mt. 23:39), but find they are not able to be in His Kingdom. That bitter disappointment at the future they have missed, that they now so want, with all the resulting self-anger, is described as weeping and gnashing of teeth. That will be psychological punishment enough for the rejected. "The tribes of the earth", every eye of them, shall see the Lord in that moment. "The earth" refers to the land, of Israel; all those who looked upon Him upon the cross, "every eye", shall then be resurrected to see Him and mourn bitterly over what they did. The "every eye" is I suggest unpacked and defined by "they that pierced him" and "all the tribes of the land". The "and..." does not have to mean 'in addition to'; it can be a device for defining the term which has gone before it. As if to say 'Yes, even...!'

1:8 *I am the Alpha and the Omega, says the Lord God-* It has been observed by Trinitarians that the Lord Jesus says He is "the first and the last" (:17; 22:13), clearly alluding to Alpha and Omega, the beginning and end of the Greek alphabet. The Son of God shares the titles of God- although significantly here, that is expressed slightly differently ["Alpha and Omega" becomes "first and the last"]. This however is not to say that Jesus equals God. That is too primitive, and is to misunderstand the idea of sharing the same Name and title. Jesus is not God, but throughout Revelation [and in our own lives] He functions as God. But function is not the same as being one and the same. Trinitarians need to recognize this.

*Who is and who was and who is to come, the Almighty-* The way God is outside of time as we know it, existing in past, present and future simultaneously, is mentioned in connection with the judgment upon those who pierced the Lord and who at the resurrection to condemnation will remember what they did. They will then realize that for God, what they did is actual and real as if they were doing it right then. The passage of time does not blunt His awareness of sin nor the implication of past actions. It does to us, with our fading memories and ability to re-imagine and re-create the past according to our own warped perceptions. This is why repentance at the time of sin is so important; otherwise the passing of time results in our memories often reshaping and rewriting the sin, writing down its significance.

"Was, is and is to come" clearly alludes to the Yahweh Name, which is taken by the resurrected Lord Jesus. The "is to come" can be seen as not just the general future tense, but also specifically referring to God's manifestation in the second coming of the Lord Jesus, who says seven times in Revelation "I am coming". But one theme of Revelation is the way that it continually alludes to and deconstructs the surrounding Greek and Roman ideas. Not only of the cult of Roman empire and emperor, but also the Greek ideas of the gods. Many of their gods, especially the god of Philosophy, were claimed to exist in these same three tenses, past, present and future (D. E. Aune, *Prophecy in Early Christianity and the Ancient Mediterranean World* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1983), pp.280,281). But the entire social, political and religious system of the first century world was being deconstructed in Revelation. The one true God and His Son subsume and replace all these things. Just as they do all the values and structures of our worlds.

1:9 *I John, your brother and partaker with you in tribulation and the kingdom and patience of Jesus, was in the isle that is called Patmos, because of the word of God and the testimony of Jesus-* This language speaks of another King and another Kingdom existing right then. This language and implications of this sort had been enough to provide the technical reason why the Lord was crucified; for Caesar and his kingdom were the only king and kingdoms which could be spoken of within the Roman empire. John was commanded to "write" these things, which as noted on :19 was going to be a criminal act. John seems aware of this because he goes right on to mention that he was, or had been, in exile on Patmos because of his testimony about the Lord and "the word of God". This may be a reference to his being arrested and punished for writing and distributing what we know as the Gospel of John. See on :2.

John saw himself as their partner rather than the one above them, partaking with them of the same sufferings; repeatedly he describes himself and all believers as fellow-slaves (Rev. 1:1; 2:20; 6:11; 7:4; 19:2,5; 22:3,6- quite some emphasis). See on 3 Jn. 14,15.

It is significant that Revelation speaks more frequently than any other NT book of simply "Jesus". Without any title attached to Him. This is quite unusual especially when compared to the rest of the New Testament, where the risen Jesus is usually called "the Lord". We must remember that "Jesus" was one of the most common male names in first century Palestine. It's rather like talking about "Dave" or "Ronnie" without any title attached- when referring to the president of the nation. And yet as discussed on :8, we find here highly exalted language concerning the Lord Jesus. This kind of juxtaposition of His humanity and His exalted status is quite common. Hebrews 1 speaks of "God even your God" in relation to Jesus, adjacent to describing Him in very exalted language. This is simply because it was on account of His genuine humanity that He has been exalted to His high status. At times this is stated explicitly, but this literary device of placing His humanity next to His exaltation is another way of stating this.

1:10 *I was in the Spirit on the Lord's day, and I heard behind me a great voice, as of a*



*trumpet, saying-* The radical, heretical nature of the book of Revelation needs to be appreciated against this background; it's almost a polemic against the Caesars, and to speak in this way against them was punishable by death. And Revelation speaks of the capital of the beast system (Rome) as being in the wilderness, rather than as the (perceived) centre of a cosmopolitan metropolis. And of course, Rome is spoken of as a whore... the most abusive image possible! The whole vision was given "on the Lord's day" (Rev. 1:10)- and this appears to be an allusion to the way that there was "a day in the Roman calendar when all the Roman citizens had to go to the local temple and declare 'Caesar is Lord'". On that very day, when John was supposed to be worshipping Caesar as Lord, he was given a vision outlining how Caesar was not in fact 'Lord' at all. And yet the Lord's day is so often a reference to the second coming. All in Revelation is to be understood in that context, which creates a solid case for treating a futuristic interpretation as not only possible but required. Although most parts of the book have discernible application to the first century or other points in history, the essence of it all will come true fully only in the last days.

Yet the great voice he hears behind him is as of a trumpet; what he heard he was to write (:11) and distribute. It was not a quiet, personal voice; but a trumpet. His message was to be preached, and it was a radical polemic against the Roman empire, the Jewish system in Jerusalem; just as in its later applications, it was a radical polemic against every society in which the Lord's people have lived. And that message is to be preached, for the voice comes as a trumpet. The principles revealed in this book are not to be quietly kept in our hearts; by their nature, they cannot be.

1:11- see on Acts 2:46.

*What you see, write in a book and send it to the seven churches. To Ephesus and to Smyrna and to Pergamum and to Thyatira and to Sardis and to Philadelphia and to Laodicea-* For the significance of placing all this in writing, see on :9 and :19. The churches chosen are surely representative of all congregations over time. Hence the number seven, suggesting completion. For there were other churches in that area. The order of the churches is perhaps simply because that is the order in which a messenger would have travelled in delivering the letters, in a kind of circuit.

1:12 *And I turned to see the voice that spoke to me. And having turned I saw seven golden candlesticks-* "To see the voice" rather than "to see the person that spoke" suggests that this personage is a word made flesh, a person totally identified with their voice. And that is of course how John has portrayed the Lord in Jn. 1:14. John turns to see the voice, clearly alluding to how at Sinai "all the people saw the voice" (Ex. 20:18 LXX). We note there is also the sound of a trumpet. We expect John to turn and see... the Lord Jesus. But instead he sees the lampstands, which are explained as representing the churches. This kind of dashed expectation is a common literary feature of Biblical literature. And it is to make a point- that the Lord Jesus is manifest in His church. The lampstand vision is clearly based upon the lampstand of Zech. 4:2,11, where it is filled with the Spirit and the seven lamps represent the seven spirits of God sent forth into all the earth. The idea of 'seven spirits' is of completion and totality. The idea is that the church is the manifestation of God's presence and activity in the earth today; however dysfunctional that lampstand may be. In this sense we are the light of the world, the lamp that has been lit to give light (Mt. 5:14-16). His light is to some extent obscured by the dysfunction of the lampstand. As the seven spirits went forth throughout the earth, so the idea is that the church goes throughout the earth with the witness of the Lord Jesus. Again we have the device of dashed expectation- for having been set up to see the Lord Jesus manifest in this lampstand, we will go on to read of how dysfunctional are the seven churches addressed, the individual lamps.

Our covenant relationship with God isn't just between Him and us. It demands that we are in covenant with His people; we can't love Him that begat without loving those others begotten by Him, as John puts it (1 Jn. 4:9). When John later heard the voice of Jesus and turned to see Him, instead of seeing Jesus in person as he expected, he saw instead the seven candlesticks, symbolic of the ecclesias / body of Christ (Rev. 1:12). Perhaps this was the idea behind the way that "Jehoiada made a covenant between the Lord and the king and the people, that they should be the Lord's people: between the king also and the people" (2 Kings 11:17).

1:13 *And in the midst of the candlesticks- one like a Son of Man, dressed in a robe reaching down to his feet and with a golden sash around his chest-* The Lord being in midst of His churches [referring of course to the people within them] is a continuation of a major Johannine theme: that the Lord Jesus abides in the hearts of His people through the Spirit. The long robe and sash could possibly frame Him as a priest, working for us all in an ongoing sense, and identified with the churches. The same word for "robe" is used in the LXX of the High Priestly robe (Ex. 25:7; 28:4,31; 29:5; 35:9; Ez. 9:3; Zech. 3:4). The robe is described as coming down to the feet, which is exactly how Josephus describes the clothing of the High Priest in the first century [*Antiquities of the Jews* 3.153]. The "golden girdle" obviously recalls the sash or belt of the High Priest; although it is of gold and not blue, signalling to us that this High Priest is altogether superior to and different from the Mosaic High Priests. Typical of Revelation and the genre of apocalyptic, the Lord Jesus is not specifically stated to be the High Priest; just as He is referred to later as "the lamb" rather than specifically named. But that is the message from the visual symbolism here; and we must ever remember that this is a vision, being related to an illiterate audience who would have interpreted the symbols they had portrayed to them. The whole image of a human figure moving amongst candlesticks would evoke associations with the priest in the temple / tabernacle, tending the lamps- which the letters to the churches will show are in a bad state, smouldering and about to go out. It could be that the visual associations of a High Priest appearing and speaking would have led the initial Jewish audience to understand this as a picture of the High Priest announcing forgiveness on the Day of Atonement. "The Lord's day" (Rev. 1:10) would have been understood by them as a Jewish feast day. The blowing of a trumpet (:10) also suggests the Day of Atonement, when the release was proclaimed to all the land. The description of the Lord's feet likewise makes no reference to shoes. And the High Priest was barefoot on the Day of Atonement, strictly following the commandments about his clothing, which said nothing about footwear. But this High Priest appears always like this; as if we live continually in the spirit of relief that the High Priest has pronounced the word of pardon, and we are continually released. This is an amazing idea. And it continues throughout Revelation- we will read of censers, incense etc., all associated with the High Priest on the Day of Atonement (Lev. 16:12,13), although there are clearly other Jewish feasts also alluded to.

So through all the pronouncements of judgment to come, we must remember they are being made by the High Priest who also stands there offering the word of ultimate pardon. Salvation of repentant sinners and judgment of impenitent sinners are two sides of the same coin- both aspects are necessary to bring about the Kingdom of God on earth. On the Day of Atonement, the high priest brought a "censer full of burning coals of fire" (Lev. 16:12) from the altar into the Most Holy Place. He then put the incense onto the firepan, creating a billowing of fragrant smoke. According to Lev. 16:13, that cloud of incense covered the mercy seat, the lid on the ark of the covenant, to as it were shield him from the presence of God. This imagery is all reapplied later in Revelation. But the ideas are there- connecting the judgments upon earth with the work of the Day of Atonement. All those judgments are

progressing towards the ultimate pronouncing of forgiveness, which was the end product of the Day of Atonement rituals.

In fact, dress is a significant theme in Revelation. We are told what people or entities are clothed in. One of the difficulties in understanding Revelation is that we are reading a description of things which are primarily visual. And it's like trying to describe the Mona Lisa in words. We have to pay careful attention to the descriptions and visualize them in order to grasp the intended impression and message; this is an enterprise rather different to simply attaching meaning to symbols. Interpretation of symbolism, where symbol A [e.g. gold] has meaning B [e.g. faith], is not quite the same as getting the impression of a visual presentation which is being described in words. And often Revelation presents us with a kaleidoscope of images, which is quite different to simply interpreting symbols. Rather the art of interpretation is to grasp the overall impression being generated. For this is the genre of apocalyptic.

The various features of the vision of the High Priestly Jesus are repeated in the letters to the churches. This High Priest is presented as ultimately powerful and active. But that must be understood in connection with the fact He is the High Priest announcing atonement for His people. And that means our salvation. All His work in history is towards that end. He is powerful to save, to forgive, to atone. And all His work with men and nations in history is towards that end. "Eyes like a flame of fire" (Rev. 2:18), feet like burnished bronze" is repeated in the letter to Thyatira, holding seven stars (Rev. 2:1), sharp sword in hand (Rev. 2:12,16), the first and last (Rev. 2:8). The idea is that this glorified Jesus, before whom John fell in awe as if dead, is actually alive and involved amongst His people now. Despite all the weaknesses and failures revealed in the letters. The Jesus in Heavenly glory is here on earth with us, that is the idea. And the High Priest who appears and pronounces ultimate salvation is also the judge and critic of human sin and failure. This is why the Day of Atonement was known in Judaism as the day of judgment. So it is, as it were, in the same breath as profound pardon is announced, that we have the messages to the churches. This pardon is not some blanket statement. It is made knowing full well the weaknesses of God's people- and it is in the same breath that forgiveness is announced that repentance is appealed for. We cannot be passive to this amazing forgiveness- we are to respond in repentance. In this sense we repent because we have been forgiven, rather than God holding forgiveness as a prize to be given to the penitent. And this is to be the basis of our witness to the world. We are to "cry" unto Zion that "her iniquity is pardoned", but we are also to 'cry' for her to repent, to be "made straight", for the rough places to be 'made plain'; to "cry aloud...lift up thy voice like a trumpet, and show my people their transgression (Is. 40:2-4; 58:1). It's exactly because they have in prospect been forgiven that we are to call them to repent. The forgiveness has already been granted; iniquity has been pardoned. But We are to 'cry' out this fact; and also to 'cry out' for their repentance. But they have to respond to that.

We note that even with Divine nature, the Lord's humanity is stressed. He is as a "son of man". John's resurrection narratives stress the continued human aspect of the exalted Lord Jesus; and He is called still "the man Christ Jesus" even in His Heavenly glory (1 Tim. 2:5).

The vision of Rev. 1 has close links with that of Dan. 10. If the Rev. 1 vision is concerning the Angel, then so is that of Dan. 10. The context of the Daniel vision is that he had been praying for the opposition to the restoration to be overcome. He was therefore given this vision of the mighty Angel who was going to answer his prayers; Daniel describes the vision as being "of a certain man" (Dan. 10:5); when the Angel comes to him to tell him that despite the opposition He was going to answer his prayers, Daniel describes him as "one like the appearance of a man" (Dan. 10:18), or as is said here, "like a son of man". So the association with Daniel 10 was a message that ultimately, the opposition would be overcome on account of the glorious "son of man" who abides amongst the believers.

1:14 *And his head and his hair were white as white wool, white as snow, and his eyes were as a flame of fire-* The similarities with the visions of Daniel signpost the basic message that opposition to God's people will be finally overcome, even though they are currently in exile and under Gentile power.

To a certain degree, the acceptance or rejection which will be shown to us in the day of judgment can be visited on us in this life, in accordance with our actions. Thus the Lord Jesus appears here as the judge of the churches, in that the description of him there being very similar to that in Dan. 7 and 10, where he is portrayed as the judge at the second coming. Asaph knew that God *now* judges, and therefore asks God to arise and judge openly in the earth according to those judgments (Ps. 82:1,8). His eyes are as fire right now- He sees every aspect of our tribulations.

1:15- see on Jude 14.

*And his feet were like bronze refined in a furnace, and his voice was like the voice of many waters-* This voice of judgment is going forth now. The essence of judgment day is now; see on :14. The connection is also with the vision of cherubim given to Ezekiel; again, like Daniel, to encourage God's people who were temporarily under Gentile power.

Ezekiel's cherubim refer to God's people, as well as the Angelic hosts and the hosts of Babylon; perhaps the message was simply that God was awesomely involved- as awesome as the cherubim vision- with His people on earth. The same Angelic system that brought the hosts of Babylon upon Judah also went with Judah into captivity, and would return from there with them- if they still wished to be part of that Angelic system. And yet most of Judah opted out of it, and remained in Babylon, just as we can opt out and remain in Babylon today. In this context it's interesting that the vision of Jesus as the Son of Man in Rev. 1 has similarities with the cherubim vision of Ez. 1 (feet like brass, Ez. 1:7 = Rev. 1:15; shining face, Ez. 1:13 = Rev. 1:16; voice like many waters, Ez. 1:24 = Rev. 1:15). Perhaps this suggests that Israel's failure to identify with the cherubim led to a refulfilment of the prophecy in the person of the Lord Jesus, who was in person all that God intended Israel to have been. Thus the prophecies of Israel as "the servant of Yahweh", given in the context of the restoration, could have been fulfilled in the people of Israel, but were reapplied and fulfilled in the person of the Lord Jesus.

The opening vision of Rev. 1 presents the Lord in His post-resurrection glory; but elements of that description occur throughout Revelation in portraying the beasts. The point is, they are all false-Christ's. The Lord has a voice as the sound of many waters (Rev. 1:15), but the serpent, on the surface, speaks with just the same voice (Rev. 12:15). The four empire-beasts of Dan. 7, the kingdoms of this world, are a parody of the four living creatures of the cherubim (Rev. 4:6). See on Acts 12:20.

1:16- see on Lk. 12:49.

*And he had in his right hand seven stars-* Referring to the Angels of the seven churches, held protectively in the Lord's hand, whatever persecution may come upon them. See on :20.

*And out of his mouth proceeded a sharp two-edged sword, and his countenance was as the sun shines in its strength-* That same right hand was what touched John; see on :17. The idea of the sun shining in its full strength is the picture of Divine judgment being openly manifested (Jud. 5:31). The sharp two-edged sword has similar associations (Ps. 149:6). But the Lord is presented as having those judgment characteristics right now. This is typical of what we find in Revelation; a kaleidoscope of images often paying no attention to time as we know it. The encouragement is that even under the heat of Gentile persecution, the Lord sees with eyes as of a flame of fire, and is giving judgment right now. It's not that He is as it were looking the other way, and shall open the books and review things at judgment day. See on 2:12.

1:17 *And when I saw him, I fell at his feet as one dead-* As noted on :16, the Lord appears in the form of His latter day judgments, although that day is not yet in our kind of time. And so John goes through a symbolic death and resurrection, as Daniel did when beholding a similar vision in Daniel 10.

*And he laid his right hand upon me, saying: Fear not. I am the first and the last-* This is quite some striking visual image: of the Lord with the stars in His hand (:16,20) placing His hand upon John individually. The idea is that the Lord can act for both the individual and the collective churches at one and the same time. Quite how it all looked to John perhaps cannot be imagined. But the great mystery would have been expressed, of the Lord's individual and collective relationship to us at the same time.

"Fear not" coming from the Lord is language to be associated with a calming of one who feels spiritually unworthy. John writes in absolute terms of our acceptance with the Lord and abiding in Him; but even he felt the tension of his humanity when faced with the Lord.

"The first and the last", the alpha and omega, the beginning and end of the alphabet, is perhaps to get the idea over that time is not really as we see it. The Lord is portrayed in the garb of how He will be at the final judgment; but He is like that in essence right now.

1:18 *The living one; and I was dead, but behold, I am alive for always, and I have the keys of Death and of Hades-* As John lay 'dead' before the Lord (:17), so the Lord reminds John that He too has passed through death and is now alive.

Baptism commits us to a life of sharing His death and resurrection. When John fell at the Lord's feet "as dead", the Lord responded by saying: 'I too was dead, but no more; I'm alive for evermore, and as I died with you and for you, so I live with you and for you, and you do the same for me' (Rev. 1:17,18). The idea is 'I am living'. His ongoing living is manifest to us in the gift of the Spirit, the Comforter, which would replace His physical presence with the disciples on earth, making His presence and life just as real to us as if He were literally present. And that promised gift of the Spirit was to be with us "always" (Jn 14:16). In this sense He is "the living one" right now and always. He is not passive, divided from us by space and spirituality; He is alive and living through us.

The theme is of persecution, of living locked up in life situations we feel trapped in. But the Lord has the keys to death itself. The fact we are guaranteed to overcome even death, which is completely in His power, means that no human system or situation can ultimately trap us. And this has encouragement for those who may not be politically persecuted, but feel locked up in domestic and social situations.

1:19 *Therefore write the things which you see, and the things which are, and the things which shall hereafter come to pass-* This command to "write" was asking John to commit a seriously criminal offence. For within the Roman empire, such application of emperor and kingdom language to another king, the Lord Jesus, and articulating a plan for His Kingdom to come and the destruction of earth's proud empires... all this meant that the written form of the book of Revelation would have been forbidden literature, and the writing and production of it was criminal and even a capital offence. John's motivation was therefore in order to strengthen by all means the believers with the hope of the Kingdom and ultimate victory against all evil empires. He is encouraged to make this sacrifice and "write" these things *because* the Lord has the keys of death itself (:18). If even death itself is no barrier for us, and we are not finally under the power of it; how much less are we under the power of all structures which appear to lock us down in this life.

Unlike Hebrew, the tenses in Greek are precise and have specific reference. Here John was told to write down the things which he had seen, the things which presently are, and the things which shall be "hereafter". I suggest the things he had seen were the things of the vision of the Son of Man; the things which are refer to the messages to the seven churches; and "the things which shall be hereafter" is a phrase developed in Rev. 4:1, where John is

bidden come and see "the things which must be hereafter". The things from then on all refer to the future, the last days and the coming of Christ. The vision of the Heavenly throne room in chapters 4 and 5 therefore refers to how things are in the Heavenly court *in the last days*. That is confirmed by comments on many of the verses in chapter 4.

1:20 *This is the mystery of the seven stars which you saw in my right hand, and the seven golden candlesticks: The seven stars are the angels of the seven churches, and the seven candlesticks are seven churches-* As suggested earlier, seven being the number of completeness, we are intended to understand these churches as representative of all believers, over all time and space. The same basic situations occur amongst all believers, even if the form varies. The seven churches and seven lampstands are in contrast to the red dragon with seven heads and scarlet beast with seven heads (Rev. 12:3; 17:3,7). In outline visual terms, we are getting the impression that the church is the total antithesis to the systems of the world which dominate her. We are either in the world, or in the weak and dysfunctional lampstand system of the Lord Jesus.

I suggest the "angels" refer to both heavenly Angels in the throne room of God, and to the leadership of the churches on earth which they represent before God in Heaven. There appear to be guardian Angels not only for individuals but also for groups of believers- e. g. Israel, or an ecclesia. The stars of the ecclesias in Rev. 1:20 are defined as the Angels of the ecclesias. The seven lamps are the seven spirits / Angels of God before His throne (Rev. 4:5)- yet they are clearly representative of the seven churches on earth of which Revelation has earlier spoken. There seems no reason to doubt that literal Angels are being referred to, especially as elsewhere Angels are also likened to stars-e. g. Job 38:7; and the king of Babylon "exalted (himself) above the stars" (Is. 14:13- referring to Israel and their representative Angels). There seems no more symbolism attached to the phrase "Angels" in Rev. 1, seeing it is in the context of the candlestick parable being interpreted: "The seven stars are the Angels of the seven churches". The apparent rebuke of the Angels is because they are so closely associated with their charges. However, to some degree the words of Jesus in the letters may also apply personally to the Angels- e. g. "I will... remove your candlestick" (2:5) may imply God would take away the Angel's charge from his care unless the Angel repented- i.e. changed his way of dealing with the ecclesia. The frequent calls to "repent" in the letters can easily apply to the Angels changing their mind or way of dealing with the ecclesia. The word is not bound to have a moral dimension. Thus 2:16: "I will come to *you*... and fight against *them*"; or "unto *you* (the Angel)... I say and unto *the rest*" (2:24). Similarly the command to "strengthen the things (the faithful believers- strengthened spiritually by the Angel) which remain" (3:2) cannot apply to a whole church which has many apostate members.

There are so many links between the opening letters to the ecclesias, and the rest of Revelation. The wording is so similar- the themes of persecution, faithfulness, and the promised blessing of the faithful. The letters aren't just 'tacked on' to the prophecy. The dramas which the ecclesias were experiencing on earth are explained by the rest of the book, in its first century, relevant-to-its-hearers level of interpretation. Jerusalem was surrounded by her enemies, the temple was about to be destroyed. They were being persecuted by Jewish and Roman powers, and we see in the rest of the book how this looked from Heaven's perspective- the way the Angels were orchestrating and yet also resisting all this, how God perceived the Jewish and Roman authorities as dragons, whores etc., and how the traumas of AD66-70 were in fact all in His plan and part of a larger picture. It's like the book of Daniel. The book isn't just a life of Daniel with a few prophecies thrown in. It's a life of Daniel, in captivity, awaiting revival, longing for Messiah. And the prophecies give us Heaven's perspective on it. However, Revelation has more relevance than to just the first century hearers. Just as the events of AD66-70 are typical of the last days, so Revelation likewise has

its ultimate fulfilment [regardless of any others it may have had over history] in the crisis of the last days, in the final showdown between Babylon and Jerusalem, between the true Christ and the anti-Christ. The book will speak to us in the final tribulation as no other book can- because it's all about the last days.

## REVELATION CHAPTER 2

*2:1 To the angel of the church in Ephesus write: These things says he that holds the seven stars in his right hand, he that walks in the midst of the seven golden candlesticks-* The Lord is in the midst of the churches in the sense that He "walks" amongst or "with" the churches / believers. This is an idea John uses several times in his Gospel; that the Lord walked amongst or in the midst of men (Jn. 6:66; 7:1; 11:54; 12:35). It is also John who records the wonderful promise of the Comforter; that the Lord's physical absence would be compensated for by the gift of the Spirit in the hearts of believers, so that it would be as if He were present with them still. The Jesus who walked the streets and lanes of Galilee with His followers still walks amongst us today.

If Timothy was the elder of the church at Ephesus, it would appear that the Lord's rebuke of the 'angel' or elder of that church in Rev. 2:1 may well have been directed at Timothy or his successor (assuming an AD66 date for the book of Revelation). This could imply that Timothy failed to follow Paul's charge to him of 2 Tim. 4, and that his initial devotion waned in some ways. And yet on the other hand, a study of 1 Timothy shows that the situation in Ephesus was desperate at that time; doctrinal apostasy and return to the surrounding idol cults or Judaism seemed inevitable as the weaknesses seemed so deep. And so Paul's advice to Timothy was followed and only in the power of the Spirit did Timothy turn things around in Ephesus. But it was at the cost of losing *agape* love (:4). All the same, there is encouragement here that apparently awful and almost hopeless spiritual situations can be turned around by wise leadership and in the power of the Spirit.

*2:2 I know your works and your toil and patience, and that you cannot tolerate evil men, and did test them that call themselves apostles, and yet are not, and found them false-* This intolerance of false apostles and teachers would have been in obedience to the commands to Timothy regarding these types at Ephesus in 1 Timothy. The situation there seemed hopelessly weak, and the false teachers entrenched. And yet empowered by the Spirit and with timid Timothy rising up the challenge of dealing with the situation, the problem with the false teachers had been turned around. And yet, at the cost of losing *agape* love (:4), making all this but a pyrrhic victory.

There is a marked warning throughout the letters that there will be a spirit of self-deception and hypocrisy amongst the latter-day ecclesias. Jezebel "*calls* herself a prophetess" (2:20), some "*say* they are Jews and are not" (2:9), others "*say* they are apostles, and are not" (2:2), Sardis had "a name that thou livest" but was dead (3:1). This must be seen in the context of other NT warnings that deceivers would enter the ecclesia, appearing to have the Apostolic gifts of the Spirit. As noted on 1 Jn. 4:1, John's own communities of converts had faced this problem. There was a conscious program of infiltration of the ecclesias by "false brethren unawares brought in" (Gal. 2:4), originating from the 'satan', the great adversary of early Christianity- Judaism. As noted on 1 Jn. 4, John himself had given various tests as to how false and true apostles could be identified. It seems Ephesus had put these into practice. These false

apostles were part of a whole system of fake Christianity, called the antiChrist, the fake Christ. In the immediate context, as demonstrated throughout our commentary on 1 John, this referred to the Judaist opposition to Christianity and the program of conscious infiltration of the early churches.

2:3 - see on Acts 20:34.

*I know you are enduring patiently and bearing up for my name's sake, and you have not grown weary-* Patient, long term 'bearing' alludes to the longer term workers of the parable, who complained that they had borne the heat and burden of the day, but struggled to accept that their weaker brethren could receive the same gift of salvation as them (Mt. 20:12). As :4 puts it, they had left their first *agape*. They were motivated by the Lord's Name, enduring persecution for His sake; but the lack of true love was seen as threatening their salvation (:4,5).

2:4 *But I have this against you, that you left your first love-* That we should love as the Lord loved us is the utterly essential basis of the Gospel; it was the "beginning" of what the Lord preached and it was likewise the first thing John included in His message when preaching the Gospel (see on 2 Jn. 5,6). To leave or put away *agape* from this core place was to fall far indeed and required repentance (:5). The attributes of zeal and doctrinal soundness listed in :2 and :3 are seen by many as all that is required to be fairly sure of salvation. But actually they are irrelevant compared to the supreme aspect of *agape* love. "Left" can carry the idea of 'dismissed'. They had come to the mentality that such love could be dismissed as of fundamental importance. The more 'religious' issues of zeal and preserving purity of teaching had assumed such importance in their minds that they had dismissed *agape*, the love of others as the Lord loved us, from its primary place.

The Lord Jesus had "somewhat against" six of these seven ecclesias in the Lycus valley. He had "somewhat against" one ecclesia because they allowed prostitution to go on within the ecclesia. But exactly the same rubric is used here in the letter to Ephesus; the Lord had "somewhat against" them because they had left their first *agape*, they no longer had a spirit of true love within the ecclesia as they once did- even though they were full of zeal in other ways. The similarity of the rubric is surely intended to teach us that lack of true love is just as obnoxious to the Lord Jesus as those other sins which appear so much bigger in human eyes. Indeed, sin is serious, in all its guises. See on 1 Cor. 11:18.

*I suggest we have here a Johannine version of Paul's teaching in 1 Cor. 13. That we can suffer great things for the Lord's cause, even give our body to be burned. But without love, this is nothing. We have the same spirit here. We would rather assume that anyone who was burned at the stake is for sure going to be saved. But not so. You can do this but do it without love. And so it means nothing.*

2:5- see on 3 Jn. 10; Rev. 1:20.

*Therefore remember from where you have fallen and repent, and do the first works. Or else, unless you repent, I will come to you and move your candlestick out of its place-* As noted on :4, the supreme place of *agape* love is such that without it, the Spirit would not burn within them. John in his letters has connected such love with the indwelling of the Spirit, the oil within the candlestick. The lack of such love reflected a lack of the spirit or mind of the Lord Jesus; and without that, we are "none of His". So the candlestick was no longer burning; which is why the Lord spoke of removing it, because it had gone out and was just useless clutter. Thus is pointed up an utterly fundamental point: that doctrinal purity and religious zeal, including exclusion of false teaching, is not the same thing as being in fellowship with the Lord. Without



love, the spirit of Christ, we are just religious clutter, a candlestick with no oil lamp burning in it. The huge "fall" spoken of here uses the same word as in Gal. 5:4, where the Galatians 'fell' from grace because of Judaist influence. And we suggest the same influence was at work here in Ephesus.

Rev. 2:5 does not tell the sound members of the ecclesias to disfellowship those who had not done "the first works". The "first works" of Ephesus were her "first love" (*agape*). The Lord is using "works" here (as often in the New Testament) to refer to attitudes- Ephesus were doing all the right actions, but the "work" of a loving mind was missing. Note a selection of passages where "works" refers to abstract spiritual fruits like faith, rather than to physical actions: Jn. 6:29; 8:39; Prov. 12:22 LXX; Rom. 2:15; Col. 1:10,11; 2 Jn. 11,7; Rev. 2:6 cp. 15. And that loving mind would naturally be manifest in "works".

Notice the end-time language found throughout the letters to the seven Ecclesias: Ephesus: repent, and do the first works; or else I will come unto thee quickly. (2:5) Pergamos: Repent; or else I will come unto thee quickly, and will fight against them with the sword of my mouth. (2:16)

Thyatira: Behold, I will cast her [Jezebel] into a bed, and them that commit adultery with her into great tribulation, except they repent of their deeds. But that which ye have already hold fast till I come. (2:22, 25)

Sardis: If therefore thou shalt not watch, I will come on thee as a thief, and thou shalt not know what hour I will come upon thee. (3:3)

Philadelphia: Because thou hast kept the word of My patience, I also will keep thee from the hour of temptation, which shall come upon all the world, to try them that dwell upon the earth. Behold, I come quickly. (3:10-11)

Laodicea: Behold, I stand at the door, and knock. (3:20)

This is initially speaking of the state of the ecclesias before AD 70. But it is also a prophecy of the end time condition of the ecclesia churches. We can therefore conclude that the various problems and states of spirituality described in these letters looks forward to that of the last days. Between the seven churches here mentioned, we have a picture of the wider state of affairs in the body of believers at the time of the Lord's return.

*2:6 But this you have: you hate the works of the Nicolaitans, which I also hate-* 'Nicolai' means literally 'victory of the people', and that is roughly the meaning of 'Balaam', who is elsewhere used in the letters as representative of the Judaist false teachers. Although the Lord effectively tells them that their lack of love will lead to their condemnation unless they repent, He still notes their positive points. And we see a huge measure of Him as a person in that. To even note the positive in those who had left His love, their first love. But perhaps the Lord is listing all their apparently good points to highlight and point up their major inadequacy- for lack of love meant that all these apparently positive points had no final meaning.

*2:7 He that has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches-* The Lord is "the Lord the Spirit" (2 Cor. 3:18). The comforter, the gift of the Spirit, was effectively the Lord personally. His physical absence was made good by the presence of the Spirit. The Comforter was to teach them (see on Jn. 14:18). So the idea behind "He that has an ear, let him hear... the Spirit" may be an appeal to those who had received the Comforter to actually listen to what it was teaching them. The primary speaker of the letters to the churches was the Angel representing the Lord- the Angel Gabriel? But they were actually from the Lord Jesus Christ, "The Lord the Spirit" (2 Cor. 3:17 RV). The one special Angel in the midst of the Cherubim in the Old Testament visions of Ezekiel 1 would then represent the Son of Man ("The Lord the

Spirit") in the midst of the lightstands (Rev. 1:13) and the lamb on the throne surrounded by Angels in the four living creatures of Rev. 4 and 5. The Lord Jesus didn't personally pre-exist, but the idea of Him was perhaps represented in Old Testament times by an Angel.

*To him that overcomes, I will permit him to eat from the tree of life, which is in the Paradise of God-* We see here how the Lord Jesus functions as His Father, without being God in a Trinitarian sense. For now *He* has the authority to permit man back into the garden. There is much language of both judgment and blessing used in the letters; and nearly all of it can have a present as well as a future application. For in John, the Lord so often insisted that eternal life was given by Him now, in the sense of the gift of the Spirit of His life into the hearts of believers; and thereby they could live now the life which they shall eternally live. And in John 6 He predicated that eternal life upon eating Him. "The tree" is the same word used of His cross. And it can be argued that He was effectively crucified in a garden, for again it is John who notes that He was buried in a garden "in the place where he was crucified" (Jn. 19:41). The association of that garden with the "Paradise" of Eden restored was clearly in the Lord's mind on the cross, when He assured the repentant thief that he would indeed be with Him "in paradise" (Lk. 23:43). He saw that miserable crucifixion field as part of the future "paradise"; He was effectively assuring the thief 'You and I will be here in this very place again- in My Kingdom, when Eden is restored, and this garden where we are dying is part of the Kingdom restored on earth'. So the Lord saw in that thief the representative of all who shall "overcome"; overcome their doubt about the Lord's grace and fear that their sins are too great a barrier between Him and themselves.

2:8 *And to the angel of the church in Smyrna write these things: The first and the last, who was dead and lived again, says-* Again, the Lord is presented as Lord of time. His death was the beginning ["first"] and not an end; His living again is "the last", in that sense, the end of 'time' as we know it, for He lives for ever. For the significance of "write", see on 1:19.

2:9 *I know your tribulation and your poverty (but you are rich!) and the blasphemy of those that say they are Jews, and they are not, but are a synagogue of Satan-* As noted on 1 Jn. 4:1 and elsewhere, the main enemy of the early churches were the Judaist infiltrators who came in under the guise of being Christian brethren (Gal. 2:4). There was an entire system, the Satan / adversary, consciously seeking to destroy the Christian movement. Exclusion from the synagogue system was the punishment for confessing the Lord Jesus (Jn. 9:22), and this meant economic exclusion, unable to buy or sell. Hence their poverty, and tribulation orchestrated by these Jewish infiltrators. They typically operated by making false accusation against the Christian [in this sense acting as a devil, which means 'false accuser'], and then getting local Gentile civil powers to punish the Christians, just as they did with the Lord.

"Satan" often refers to the Jewish and Roman adversaries of the church in the first century. There is no indication here that there was a super-human being working through those Roman and Jewish systems. If it is argued that those systems received power and direction from the Devil in the sense of a super-human being to persecute the church, it must be remembered that the Lord Jesus told the Roman governor: "You could have no power at all against me, except it were given you from above", i.e. from God (Jn. 19:11). Thus it is God, not the Devil, who gives power to human governments to persecute His people, as He gave them power to do so to His Son. "The most high rules in the kingdom of men, and gives it to whomsoever he will"

(Dan. 4:32). Thus God was ultimately the power behind the Roman Satan, or system, that was persecuting the Christians in the first century.

2:10 *Do not fear the things which you are about to suffer. Behold, the Devil is about to throw some of you into prison, you may have tribulation ten days-* The Devil that gave the ecclesia at Smyrna “tribulation ten days” was clearly the Romans. It was only they who could cast them into prison. The casting into prison (place of punishment), tribulation and afterwards being honoured (physical reward), recalls the experiences of Joseph and Daniel who were persecuted by the civil powers of Egypt and Babylon, as those at Smyrna were by the civil powers of the Roman “Devil”. It has been shown that there were several ten-year periods of special persecutions of Christians in the Smyrna area: under Domitian, A.D. 81–91; under Trajan, 107–117 and under Diocletian, 303–313. The Septuagint in places uses the term *diabolos*, false accuser, to translate the Hebrew ‘Satan’. ‘Satan’ therefore carried the sense of both an adversary and also a false accuser. “The synagogue of Satan” in Smyrna may well refer to not only Jewish adversarial opposition to the Christians, but also that they falsely accused them to the Roman authorities. There could also be the suggestion that the Jewish synagogue in Smyrna was in fact working with the ‘Satan’, the Roman empire, against the Christians. Kraybill considers that the phrase “synagogue of Satan” is “a way of highlighting commercial or political relationships some Jews had with Rome”. He also gives evidence that Jews in the provinces of the empire cooperated with the Roman government in order to ensure that they continued benefiting from the Roman legislation that exempted Jews from doing military service and paying taxes to the imperial cult (J. Nelson Kraybill, *The Imperial Cult and Commerce in John’s Apocalypse* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1996) pp. 170, 186). In Domitian’s time, a tax was levied to support the emperor and the imperial cult. Jews were exempted from this, and Christians refused to pay it. The “synagogue of Satan” in Smyrna loudly “say they are Jews” (Rev. 2:9), in order to avoid this tax and get benefits from the Roman empire at the time; but probably denounced the Christians to the Roman ‘Satan’ because of their refusal to pay that tax. So “synagogue of Satan... who say they are Jews but are not” was an appropriate description of them (Mark Bredin, ‘The Synagogue of Satan Accusation in Revelation 2:9’, *Biblical Theology Bulletin* Vol. 28 No. 4 (Winter 1999) pp. 160–164).

The Devil and Satan in the New Testament often refer to the political and social power of the Jewish or Roman systems. Thus we read of the Devil throwing believers into prison (Rev. 2:10), referring to the Roman authorities imprisoning believers. In this same context we read of the church in Pergamos being situated where Satan’s throne, was – i.e. the place of governorship for a Roman colony in Pergamos, where there was also a group of believers. We cannot say that Satan himself, if he exists, personally had a throne in Pergamos. The Bible repeatedly stresses that human political authority, civil authorities etc. are God given, deriving their power from Him (Rom. 13:1–7; 1 Pet. 2:13–17); never are they said to derive their authority from ‘Satan’. Yet they can be called ‘Satan’ in that they are adversarial at times to His people.

The allusion is to Luke 21:12 concerning the latter-day tribulation. "Some of you" may correspond to "some of you shall they cause to be put to death" (Luke 21:16), seeing that they are exhorted to be "faithful unto death". The prison tribulation would be for "ten days... and I will give unto you a crown". This points back to Daniel's 'trial' of ten days (Dan. 1:12), and his later going into prison and emerging to receive a crown. Daniel's 'devil' was Babylon, and the 'devil' of Rev. 2:10 refers to a like power in the last days. The idea of ten days of affliction suggests the 10 days of

self-examination and affliction of souls before the day of Atonement- as if the purpose of the final tribulation is to evoke self-examination and repentance in preparation for the High Priest's appearing on the Day of Atonement.

There is the possibility that some may be preserved from the tribulation: "You *may* have tribulation ten days". This will be "because you have kept the word of my patience" (Rev. 3:10). Others will suffer, and even die, but are assured of salvation if they respond to the trials properly. There may be a similar meaning behind Is. 26:20: "Come, my people, enter into your chambers, and shut your doors about you (i.e. pray intensely- 2 Kings 4:33): hide yourself as it were for a little moment, until the indignation be overpast". However, this primarily refers to the deliverance of Israel from Assyria in Hezekiah's time; and the hiding in chambers in Jerusalem while surrounded by the terrifying Assyrian army was hardly the quiet get out we might imagine this verse offers. However, it seems from the Olivet prophecy that the household *will* go through this time of trouble. The fact it is in some sense not required if we are spiritual enough indicates that the household will be weak in the last days- and therefore we will need it.

There are all manner of possible futures envisaged within God's plans, because He so respects human freewill. This explains the conditional element in prophecies, and in this case the possibility of persecution for some at some points in time. The horn of Dan. 7:21 "prevailed against" the saints. "Prevailed" here can mean 'could prevail' implying that this persecution could be avoided (cp. "You may have tribulation"). Likewise the Hebrew for "make war" can mean 'approached to make war'. Thus it may be possible for the saints to avoid the persecution in some way, e.g. by their "holy way of life" (2 Pet.3:8) shortening the days of tribulation. The fact that the prophecies speak as if there will be persecution may suggest that there will not be sufficient effort in this direction for all the saints to be saved from this. See on 3:10.

*Be faithful unto death, and I will give you the crown of life-* For all the encouragement that the Father and Son are ultimately in control, death under persecution was still a real possibility. But the reward would be "the crown of life". This may refer to the *stephanos* given to the victor in a race; but the word is also used about such wreaths given to guests at a wedding, or to the bride herself. The imagery of marriage suppers is far more common in Revelation than that of running an Olympic race.

2:11 *He that has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. He that overcomes shall not be hurt by the second death-* For "he that has an ear, let him hear..." see on 2:7.

2:12 *And to the angel of the church in Pergamum write: These things says he that has the sharp two-edged sword-* As noted on 1:16, such language is appropriate to the Lord in the day of His final judgment. But effectively, judgment is now; the Lord is not passive toward human behaviour, and the opening of books at the last day should not imply that He is not now our immediate and insistent judge. The sword will be used in judgment of enemies; so it is as if the Lord is standing in judgment over the churches right now, and was looking to severely judge the church in question.

2:13- see on 1 Cor. 15:10.

*I know where you live, where Satan's throne is, yet you remained loyal to my name and did not deny my faith, even in the days of Antipas my witness, my faithful one, who was killed among you, where Satan dwells-* The Lord is fully aware of our situations. And whatever judgment He makes, even of condemnation (see on :12), that judgment is made taking into full account past evidence of spirituality and

commitment, as well as with total knowledge of all our surrounding environmental factors.

Pergamos being “where Satan’s seat (throne) is”, shows that the Satan referred to is not a personal super-human being. If it is, then his throne was literally at Pergamos, for all to see. It has been shown that the Roman administration of the area was based here, thus the Lord Jesus commends the ecclesia for holding to the Truth, despite being in close proximity to the source of persecution. Thus “Satan” again refers to the Roman authorities. It is also significant that a huge throne dedicated to the Greek gods has been discovered there.

Pergamon was the first city in Asia to have a temple devoted to emperor worship (I.T. Beckwith, *The Apocalypse of John* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1967) p. 456). However it must also be noted that Pergamon was a centre for snake worship associated with the shrine of Asclepius (J.A.T. Robinson, *Redating the New Testament* (London: S.C.M., 1976) p. 228). Revelation speaks of ‘Satan’, the adversary, as being characterized by the serpent (Rev. 12:9; 20:2). “Satan’s throne” may also be a reference to the altar of Zeus in Pergamon. or the special throne-seat of Dionysus in the theatre there. “The city featured various Pagan sites of worship, including a monumental altar to Zeus, and a temple dedicated to Augustus and Rome, which served as the centre of the cult of the Roman Emperor in Asia Minor. Pergamum was in fact the capital of the Roman Province of Asia” (H.A. Kelly, *Satan: A Biography* (Cambridge: C.U.P., 2006) p. 144).

However, we must bear in mind that the 'satan' described in the New Testament and Revelation is often Jewish and not pagan. It was Jewish opposition to the Christians which led to the local Roman authorities acting against them, as happened with the Lord and Paul. It may be also that there was in Pergamos some centre of Jewish opposition.

The faithful group who existed "even where satan's seat is" may point forward to the existence of an ecclesia at the very headquarters of the final satan/beast. For the situation in the seven churches represents how things will be in the last time. Our suggestion elsewhere that some faithful natural Jews would be taken to such a place, e.g. a rebuilt 'Babylon', would make this possible.

2:14 *But I have a few things against you, because you have there some that hold the teaching of Balaam, who taught Balak to cast a stumblingblock before the children of Israel, to eat things sacrificed to idols and to commit fornication-* Balaam was an apostate Jew, who sought to collaborate with the surrounding Gentile powers in order to bring Israel down. He did so by getting Israel to sin sexually by sleeping with cult prostitutes as a sign of their devotion to Gentile idols, knowing this would trigger God's displeasure with Israel, hoping it would mean the withdrawal of His blessing and protection of them. Twice it is emphasized that the false teachers will lead spiritual Israel into the worship of idols, after the pattern of Balaam and Jezebel (:14,20). Both of these advocated the use of the idols of the surrounding nations for political purposes, whilst apparently supporting the true worship of Yahweh at the same time. The false teaching in the early churches was very similar. As noted on 1 Corinthians and 1 Timothy 2, the use of cult prostitutes entered the Christian churches. The idol worship and prostitution were therefore part of the same scene and not two separate issues. The mix of paganism and Christianity was therefore similar to the mix of Yahweh worship with paganism advocated by Balaam. And again, the source of the problem was Judaist infiltration.

Israel were on the very borders of entering the land when they succumbed to Balaam's false teaching, and the new Israel of the last days, on the brink of the

Kingdom, will face and may fail a like temptation. As Balaam well understood, the way to break the strength of a fundamentalist religious movement is to morally corrupt them. The spirit of sexual permissiveness which is in this Sodom-like world of the last days, is evidently affecting the brotherhood of our age.

It may be that the Islamic powers will impose the worship of Islam upon natural Israel and perhaps upon the Western world, and may use their oil stranglehold to make the rest of the world persecute any pro-Jewish religions who will not offer a nominal acceptance of Islam. This would pressurize Christian churches to make similar compromises with their surrounding non-Christian world.

2:15 *So have you also some that hold to the teaching of the Nicolaitans-* "Nicolas" has a similar meaning to 'Balaam', 'victory of the people'. However precisely this group were, they would have been advocating the same mix of Christianity with paganism as noted on :14. *Niko*, to overcome, is a word often used in these letters to characterize the faithful as 'overcomers'. The Nicolaitans were therefore framing themselves in spiritual terms when in fact they were the very opposite. And we will meet this kind of idea later in Revelation, where e.g. the whore is described with terminology appropriate to the priestly cult, and Babylon appears as Jerusalem.

2:16- see on Rev. 1:20.

*Therefore repent, or else I will come to you quickly, and I will make war against those with the sword of my mouth-* As noted on :12, the language of latter day judgment is applied to situations now. The Lord judges now; His coming quickly or suddenly can refer to His coming in judgment, rather than His second coming. Even the final word of Revelation 22:12 that the Lord is coming quickly can be read as a connection back to this statement here. For the first recipients of Revelation, the Lord's coming was going to be sudden in that like a thief in the night, He would come in judgment in ways they did not expect. The reference may be to the events of AD70, although these would not have unduly affected Jewish Christian groups in places like Pergamos. Perhaps rather the reference may be to Nero's sudden announcement of persecution against Christians. Or to some unrecorded intervention of the Lord in judging them.

Again we must emphasize that the language of making war (19:11) with the sword of His mouth is all appropriate to His second coming. But the essence of that judgment is now. There are clear connections between the rod of final judgment and the word / mouth of God. Ez. 21:9,10 equates the sword with the rod of the Lord Jesus Christ: "A sword is sharpened... it is the rod of My Son" (AVmg.). The sword is a clear symbol of the word of God's judgment (Eph. 6:17; Heb. 4:12; Rev. 19:21). Is. 11:4 confirms this link between the judgment word of the Lord Jesus and His rod: "He shall smite the earth with the rod of His mouth, and with the breath of His lips shall He slay the wicked". Ps. 2:9 shows the power of this word / rod: "You shall break them with a rod of iron; you shall dash them in pieces like a potter's vessel". Ps. 110:2 describes the rod of Christ's strength being sent out of Zion to enable Him to rule the world; Is. 2:3 envisages the judgment word of the Lord Jesus going out from Zion. However, in all these cases the rod does not just mean spoken words and mental understanding, but also refers to the physical punishments to be seen in the last days. Thus Micah pleads with Israel to see that God's Hand was behind their present distresses, which were effectively God's word spoken to them: "The Lord's voice cries unto the city... *hear* the rod, and who has appointed it" (Mic. 6:9). And so here the

Lord warned Pergamos that unless they repented- i.e. obeyed His word- He would come and fight against them.

There is a significant amount of language used in the letters of Rev. 2 and 3 which has unmistakable reference to the final 'coming' of the Lord. This must have some application to the second coming, and/or A.D. 70. This means that the letters must also be indicative of the state of the latter-day ecclesias. No less than a significant seven times in the letters do we read of Christ 'coming' to the believers (Rev. 2:5,16,25; 3:3, 10,11,20). "I will come unto you quickly... I will give unto every one of you according to your works" (2:5,23) is language found in Mt. 16:27 and Rev. 22:12, also concerning the second coming: "I come quickly... to give every man according as his work shall be". The Lord's coming "unto you quickly" has particular aptness when this is understood as being addressed to believers living on the brink of the second coming.

2:17- see on Jn. 1:14; 1 Tim. 6:19.

*He that has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches-* see on 2:7.

*To him that overcomes, to him will I give of the hidden manna-* Here we have another example of allusion to Jewish legend. It suggests that the churches addressed were known to John whose Gospel was clearly aimed at Jews; they probably included his converts. Hence the allusions to Jewish terminology that would have been inappropriate if largely Gentile converts were being addressed. The Lord Jesus speaks of giving His people "of the hidden manna" – referring to the myth that Jeremiah had hidden a golden jar of manna in the Holy of Holies at the destruction of the temple in 586 BC, which then ascended to Heaven and is to return with Messiah. The Lord doesn't correct that myth, as He doesn't correct misunderstandings about demons– He as it were runs with it and uses it as a symbol to describe the reward He will bring. He adds no footnote to the effect 'Now do understand, this is myth, that jar never really ascended to Heaven nor will it come floating back through the skies one day'. Perhaps this is why the New Testament often quotes the Septuagint text, even where it incorrectly renders the Hebrew original – because God is not so paranoid as to feel bound to only deal in the language of strictly literal truths. If first century people were familiar with the Septuagint, even if it is a poor translation of the Hebrew original in places– well OK, God was willing to run with that *in order to engage with people in their language*.

*And I will give him a white stone, and upon the stone a new name written, which no one knows but he that receives it-* It has been suggested that this refers to a custom of writing a name on a stone, breaking the stone in half at random, and each friend keeping one half. The half stone would only fit exactly with the other half stone, and when the friends met in the future, they would fit the stones together as proof of their earlier relationship. Relationships in the Kingdom of God will be in that sense private and unenterable. Bible characters often have epithets in God's record of them- Judas who betrayed, Jeroboam who made Israel sin. We will be given such a name / summation of our relationship with the Lord in the Kingdom. Nobody else knows / understands / appreciates this name. This is a clear statement that other believers cannot enter into the personal relationship between a man and his God. Likewise, none of us can know the name which was written on the Lord Jesus (Rev. 19:12). None of us will ever quite be able to enter into the nature of the relationship between Father and Son. If we could, He would not be our Lord. Paul possibly expresses the same idea of an unenterable relationship in 1 Cor. 2:15: "He that is spiritual discerneth all things (about God), yet he himself is discerned of no man" (AVmg.). Our real spiritual being is a "hidden man" (1 Pet. 3:4).

Eating the hidden manna is to be paralleled with being given the stone. The context implies this will be done at the day of judgment. According to a number of commentators, a white stone was laid down by the judge as a sign of acquittal and acceptance. The Lord would therefore be implying that after our encounter at the judgment, there will be an ongoing relationship in the Kingdom of God between us, a locking together of stones which no-one else possesses. The white stone is also parallel to the white, stone-looking manna of the wilderness years (Ex. 16:14,23; Num. 11:7). The reward we will be given in the Kingdom will be our spiritual food, to be eaten 'daily' throughout the Kingdom. Israel were to eat on the seventh day (a type of the Kingdom) the manna which they had gathered and prepared on the sixth day. The manna is a symbol of God's word as expressed in Christ (Jn. 6). Biblically, a name refers to personality and character. The new name which no one else knows thus refers to the reward "prepared" for us individually, the new personality which we will be in the Kingdom, the room in the Father's house prepared for each of us (Jn. 14:1). This latter idea alludes to the way that there were chambers around the temple named after individuals (e.g. Ezra 10:6). We will *each* have our own chamber, in this figure. This new personality will be written on the manna / stone, it will be the result of our own very personal distilling of the essence of God's word. The concept of a name written on a stone sends the mind back to the way in which the names of the tribes of Israel were written on the stones of the breastplate, each reflecting a different aspect of the light of God's glory (Ex. 28:17). We will do this through our personal understanding of and response to God's word. It is a comforting yet sobering thought that the Lord sees us as 'names'; not just as people. Biblically, the name speaks of the character. When He says He will confess us before the Father (Mt. 10:32), He means He will confess our name before God (Rev. 3:5); He knows us according to our names / characters. He speaks of ecclesial members as "names" in Rev. 3:4; He calls His own sheep by name, and they each know His voice, responding to His word *individually*. The call to one sheep will only be recognized by that sheep; the others won't respond (Jn. 10:3). He will take individual note of each sheep, treating them accordingly, as the shepherd leads more gently those that are with young (Is. 40:11). It seems that even now, we each have our own individual name with the Father and Son, encompassing their understanding of our essential character. It may even be that in the record of Scripture, God inspired the writers to record the names of individuals according to His judgment of them (or at least, how the faithful viewed them at the time), rather than by the names they actually went under. What mother would have named her child Nabal (fool), or Ahira (brother of evil, Num. 1:15), or 'sickness' or 'wasting' (Mahlon and Chilion)? These names were either given to them by others and the use adopted by God, or simply God in the record assigned them such names.

We will relate to each other in terms of our spiritual characteristics. We will each have a name or character which is individual to us. We will relate to each other not by names as pieces of language, but by reason of the characteristics which they speak of. To relate to each other for ever as we do now, in human terms, would be totally unfulfilling. There is an urgent need for us to develop a spiritual aspect to our relationships now, especially between husbands and wives, parents and children.

Compare the engraving on the stone "which no man knows" with the Urim and Thummim stones; the engraving upon them would not have been known to anyone except the High Priest, who perhaps saw them once per year in the Most Holy. Rev.



2:17 also speaks of the "hidden manna", hidden in the Most Holy. It would fit the context if the "white stone" refers to the Urim and Thummim. Alternatively, the reference may be to the "white stone" of the tables of the covenant. The new name written upon them would then connect with the covenant which God writes on the believer's heart as part of the new covenant: "I will put my law in their inward (cp. "hidden") parts, and write it on their hearts" (Jer. 31:33; 2 Cor. 3:3). Whilst the terms of the covenant are the same for each believer, the personal promise of the Kingdom is something which no other person can enter into. So we should never be 'bored' with hearing about the basic Gospel, the promises which comprise that covenant.

2:18 *And to the angel of the church in Thyatira write: These things says the Son of God, who has his eyes like a flame of fire and his feet are like to burnished bronze-* The cherubim visions of Ez. 1,9 and 10 are applied in the New Testament to the glorified Christ (Rev. 2:18; 1 Pet. 4:17; 2 Pet. 2:4-9). This surely implies that they were ultimately fulfilled in the Messiah; and perhaps we are to understand that they could have had fulfilment in a Messiah figure at the time of the restoration. But the immediate point here is that the Lord who will stand in latter day judgment stands in judgment on His church right now. Judgment in essence is now.

2:19 *I know your works and your love, faith, ministry and patience; and that your last works are more than the first-* There was real spiritual progress here; and yet we see how legitimate spirituality can sadly co-exist with serious unspirituality, both within the church and within individuals. For the "nevertheless..." of :20 is serious indeed.

2:20 *But I have this against you: you tolerate the woman Jezebel, who calls herself a prophetess, and she teaches and seduces my servants to commit fornication and to eat things sacrificed to idols-* "The woman Jezebel" in some manuscripts and RVmg. reads "Your wife Jezebel", as if perhaps the wife of the 'Angel', the pastor of the group, is in view. This would be likening this element of the ecclesia to weak-willed Ahab. The fornication / use of prostitutes and eating of idol food are not two separate things; they are part of the same issue of importing elements of the surrounding pagan cults into the Christian church, whereby at the breaking of bread there was also eating of idol food and sleeping with cult prostitutes. As noted on 1 Cor. 11 and 1 Tim. 2, this was far from the only church which had these problems.

Jezebel teaching believers to commit fornication is the language later to be used concerning Babylon: a prostitute encouraging fornication. This connection suggests that the false teachers within the latter day church will be connected with political 'Babylon' and the beast. The similarities between the "man of sin" within the church and the beast / little horn teach the same thing.

2:21 *And I gave her time that she should repent, and she does not want to repent of her fornication-* Jezebel in the first century, and her equivalent in the last days, will be given "time to repent of... fornication", but they will not take up the offer. This "space" is interpreted by John Thomas as the 1260-day period, which would appear reasonable. I have elsewhere applied this to the tribulation period. The inference is that the state of fornication exists within the churches *before* the tribulation begins, and that the tribulation of that period is designed to bring about repentance.

Thus they will be given a period to repent, the beginning of which will be at the time when the saints first realize that the Lord is about to return (cp. the virgins starting to go forth, Mt. 25:1).

2:22 *Behold, I will cast her into a bed, into great tribulation, and those that commit adultery with her-unless they repent of their works-* Perhaps a 'bed of sickness' is appropriate punishment for her behaviour in 'bed'. We see here how God's plans are open ended. If this element refuse to repent, then they would have "great tribulation". If they repent, then they will not need to pass through it. We noted the same on :10. Yet Jezebel was given space to repent but didn't, therefore judgment was pronounced; but even then, *if* she repented, she wouldn't be punished. This is simply the eagerness of God for human repentance.

2:23 *And I will strike her children dead-* John's letters use "children" to mean converts or those over whom a person has pastoral authority. This lends support to the impression that Jezebel was in the leadership of the church, see on :20. This could have been a threat of literal death, just as Ananias and Saphira were smitten with death. Or the reference could be to the second death at the last day, the judgment for which was given by the Lord in this life when He perceived their refusal to repent.

*And all the churches will know that I am he who searches mind and heart, and I will repay each of you as your works deserve-* "I am... and I will..." alludes to the Lord's manifestation of the Yahweh Name, He who is, was and will be. And He is *now* (Gk.) ordained as judge of living and dead (Acts 10:42)- and we should preach Him as such. He *is* now the judge of the dead in the sense that His very being and victory is in itself the judgment of all men. Those who reject His message right now are judging themselves. Note the parallel here between mind and works; this was at the core of the Lord's doctrine of the Kingdom, that the thought is seen by Him as the action. The Lord Jesus continually searches our hearts or spirit, in His function as "the Lord the Spirit" (Rom. 8:27; 1 Cor. 2:10; 2 Cor. 3:18). The extent to which this is true will be manifested in the Lord's final judgment.

2:24 *But to you I say, to the rest that are in Thyatira, as many as do not have this teaching, who do not know the so-called deep things of Satan: I will not impose any other burden-* The faithful element at Thyatira were told that they had "none other burden" than to keep themselves separate from "the depths of satan" taught by the false teachers among them. The absence of any command to immediately withdraw fellowship from these people in the run up to AD70, but rather to concentrate upon one's own continuing to hold true doctrine, fits in with the parable of the tares. There is certainly no truth to the idea of guilt by association or a closed table, or the Lord would have taught the need for separation.

"The *depths* of satan" indicates that the pressure on the faithful will be subtle; there will be a distinctly academic and sophisticated edge to the wrong teachings that will circulate within the ecclesia. "The depths of Satan as they speak", refers to the false teaching of the Judaizers, the Jewish Satan, who were pretending to offer deeper spiritual understanding through their false doctrine. They spoke evil about deep spiritual things which they did not understand (Jude 10), speaking words which seemed superficially impressive spiritually (Jude 16). The Judaizers' reasonings about keeping the law and worshipping angels, "intruding into those things which he has not seen" (Col. 2:18; i.e. "which they know not", cp. Jude 10, had "a shew of (deep, spiritual) wisdom" (Col. 2:23). There are many other such examples.

2:25 *Apart from that which you have: To hold fast until I come-* It seems that it is God's especial wish that a man conquer some specific human weakness in his life. If he succeeds in this, God may make concessions to his other areas of human weakness. It seems that the Thyatiran believers had none other burden put upon them than to

resist the teaching and practice of the "woman Jezebel" amongst them- although it would seem there were other 'burdens' which the Lord *could* have put on them.

2:26 *And he that overcomes, and he that keeps my works to the end, to him will I give authority over the nations-* "Works" have featured twice in this letter. They are commended for their "works" (:19), but must repent of their bad works of allowing Jezebel to teach fornication (:21), knowing the Lord will judge according to our works (:23). But the key is to keep [perhaps, 'keep hold of' as in :25] the works of the Lord Jesus. For salvation is not of our works, but of trust in Him and having His righteousness imputed to us.

This has a specifically last days relevance: "He that overcometh, and keepeth my works unto *the end*, to him will I give power over the nations" – "the end" being the second coming. Surely the Lord is referring back to his comment that in the final tribulation period, he who endures to "the end" of the period will be saved (Mt. 10:22)- as the one who comes to the end of the days in Dan. 12 is blessed. Enduring to the end therefore means keeping (guarding, doctrinally) the works of Christ- holding on to the One Faith until the end. This evidently won't be as simple as it sounds. The works are "His" works, and may refer to obeying the great commission in taking the knowledge of Him to all the world in the last days. This reference to the great commission is confirmed by the comment that the reward will be to receive power / authority over the nations- the very phrase used in Mt. 28:18 about how the Lord has received just this, and therefore we are to go to all nations with the Gospel and baptize people. All that is true of the Lord is to be true of us; if we keep *His* works rather than our own works, then the gift of "all power" to Him over the nations is also true for us.

2:27 *And he shall rule them with a rod of iron-* The allusion is to Psalm 2 which is clearly about the future Kingdom on earth. Yet the Psalm is given a first century fulfilment in Acts 4:24-28. The same prophecy has multiple fulfilments; and that is exactly what we find in the book of Revelation. As the Lord will rule the world with a rod of iron (Ps. 2:9) and brake the nations to powder at His return (Dan. 2:44), so will each of those in Him. And notice how Ps. 2:1,2, a prophecy about opposition to Jesus personally, is appropriated to those who preach Him, because they are in Him (Acts 4:25,26).

The Lord Jesus will rule, or shepherd (Gk.) His enemies with a rod of iron. He can somehow both shepherd and crush at the same time. Our relationship with Him is a reflection of these two aspects of His character. Perhaps the idea here is that His punishment of sinners is even then an attempt to shepherd them to be His sheep.

*As the vessels of the potter are broken to pieces; as I also have received from my Father-* The unbelieving will be broken to shivers, "as the vessels of a potter". But this is in fact quoting Jeremiah's words concerning the breaking of the individual believer who is rejected at the last day (Jer. 18:4-6; 19:11). The point of the Lord's quotation is surely that those He rejects will share the world's condemnation.

Dan. 2:44 describes how the kingdoms of this world will be broken and scattered as the chaff before the wind, as a potter's vessel. Yet this is exactly the language of Jer. 13:24 concerning Israel's latter destruction. The apostate amongst Israel will be "dashed" (Jer. 13:14) as the nations of the world will be (Ps. 2:9). The faithful will have some kind of part in the judgment of the systems which persecuted them, be they Jewish or Gentile.

The structure of the book of Revelation reflects this theme- the first series of visions are of judgments on God's people Israel, whilst the second part of the book is

judgments upon the Gentile powers of Rome / Babylon [however we wish to interpret them]. Likewise the plagues upon Egypt recorded in Ex. 7-10 are frequently alluded to in later Scripture concerning the judgments upon the apostate people of God. Quite simply, God's rejected people suffer the judgments of this world.

2:28 *And I will give him the morning star*- The morning star is the Lord Jesus personally (22:16); as demonstrated in the previous verses, all the Lord's titles, works and functions are ours if we are in Him. The angels of the churches are likened to stars (1:20), held tightly in the Lord's hand. The Lord is stressing His personal identity with His people; they are stars, as He is. And He will give us Himself, He will be all in all within us, as in essence He is now through the Spirit. This is the reference of 2 Pet. 1:19, where the day star arises in our hearts at His return. The Lord likened the manna to Himself, which He gave us personally to eat, to absorb Him into ourselves (Jn. 6:31-33). So the idea of fully giving of Himself into us at the last day should not be strange, at least to any reader of John's writings who had already read John's gospel. For there we find frequently taught the idea of taking the Lord Jesus personally into us, His very self into our very selves, His spirit and life into ours.

The Lord's return in glory will be as the arising of the sun (Mal. 4:2). The morning star, or Venus, arises whilst it is still dark, and is the herald of the sunrise. Perhaps there is some reference here to the idea that the faithful will have some portent of the Lord's coming just before it happens; perhaps through persecution, or because the day star arises *in our hearts* before His return (2 Pet. 1:19).

There was something radical in the association of the Lord Jesus with Venus, and the promise of this title to all His followers. For Julius Caesar, and other Caesars, had encourage the cult of Venus worship on the basis that the Caesars were descended from Venus and were the incarnations of Venus on earth. To apply their titles to the Lord Jesus and His followers was a radical form of rebellion against the norms and values of the society in which they lived; just as we are to be likewise rebels.

2:29 *He that has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches*- see on 2:7.

## REVELATION CHAPTER 3

3:1 *And to the angel of the church in Sardis write: These things says he that has the seven Spirits of God and the seven stars. I know your works*- Seven is the number of totality. The seven stars refer to the angels of the churches. The total power of the Spirit is in the Lord's hand to be used for the care and development of His churches, His people. There is infinite potential power available; and His Spirit is essentially His mind, and not just His power. He wishes our spirituality, as we surely do. And yet God's knowledge is attained through His omnipresent Spirit; He thereby has totality of knowledge and thereby of judgment. God makes His Angels Spirits; perhaps mechanically, if you wish, His presence and power is articulated through the ministry of the Angels. This would be why :5 follows on in the context of the Angels and Jesus uniting to declare our verdict at the judgment: "I will confess his name before my Father, and before His Angels".

*You have the reputation of being alive, but you are dead*- The name or reputation of being alive when they were spiritually dead is the very inversion of what is true of the Lord. His Name amongst men is achieved because He was dead but is now alive, alive in His people through the gift of His Spirit which many of them were now in denial of.

3:2 – see on Rev. 1:20.

*Be watchful and establish the things that remain, which are ready to die-* The 'things that remained' uses the same word used for 'the remnant'; He has just used it of the faithful remnant in Thyatira (2:24). The 'angel', the eldership on earth who were represented by Divine Angels in the Heavenly throne room, were bidden strengthen that remnant, for even that was about to spiritually die. The 'you' referenced in "your works" therefore refers to the angel / eldership. They had not watched, i.e. watched out for, the spiritual wellbeing of their flock.

I have explained earlier that the seven churches here provide a picture of how the churches will be in the last days before the Lord's return. The Olivet prophecy, like the Lord's letters, gives a huge emphasis on the need to watch in the last days (e.g. Mk. 13:5,9,23,33,35,37). The watching is for the safety of the house against the 'thieves' of false teachers; we are each the porter, with the responsibility for the rest of the household on our shoulders (Mk. 13:34,35). Throughout the Lord's letters there is this same pointed emphasis upon the need to watch. The idea of the remnant being "ready to die" immediately suggests the parable of the virgins, whom we have portrayed as struggling to keep the flame of real faith from dying away. Seeing that the majority of Sardis are pronounced as "dead" (3:1), this encouragement to keep alive what was about to die can be read as a call to each of the faithful in the last days to not only keep their own faith alive, but to make every effort to keep alive those who appear fatally ill. This command presumes that it will be evident to the faithful what constitutes spiritual life and death. As our experience of the last days goes on, the difference between wheat and tares becomes increasingly marked - without having to anticipate the separation that will come at harvest. "Be watchful" is in the context of strengthening what remains, providing further proof that the command to watch in the last days fundamentally concerns watching over the state of the ecclesia and one's own faith, rather than 'watching' the political state of the world. It seems that for generations, we have thought that 'watching' meant reading 'Signs of the times' articles which were actually no more than a running commentary on the state of the world. The Hebrew word translated "watch" is also rendered "to take heed to oneself". The Hebrew word has the same idea. Thus David spoke of his *soul* watching (Ps. 130:5,6). Habakkuk 'watched' for what God's word really said (Hab. 2:1); God watches over things in the sense of being sensitive to them (Jer. 31:28 Heb.). This Old Testament background to the idea of watching carries through to the NT. It's because we *don't* know the time that we are commanded to watch- not 'signs of the times', because we don't know the time; but rather, to watch ourselves. Thus Acts 20:31 speaks of watching in the sense of being aware of the possibility of personal and collective apostasy. In 1 Cor. 16:31, watching means to stand fast in the One Faith; in Eph. 6:18 and 1 Thess. 5:6,11 it refers to praying for each other spiritually. In the last days, many brethren will turn away, Paul warned Timothy, but by contrast "*you* - watch" (2 Tim. 4:5). If we watch, both ourselves and others, the Lord's return will not be like a thief for us (Rev. 3:3). Thus watching is a sign of our acceptance by the Lord (Lk. 12:37). Yet *watching* our doctrine and way of life, realizing the real danger of mass latter day apostasy, is increasingly unpopular.

*For I have not found your works complete in the sight of my God-* The Lord is right now in the presence or "sight" of God, representing us before Him. And He found Himself having to represent the works of these believers to the Father, and He did not 'find' them complete; they were an appearance of religious activity rather than being the works done in faith and motivated by grace which the Father seeks.

3:3- see on Jud. 16:20.

*Therefore remember how you have received-* They are bidden recall their first conversion; at that time, believers 'receive' the Spirit (s.w. Jn. 14:17; 20:22; Gal. 3:2,14; 1 Jn. 2:27). To receive Jesus as Christ is to receive His Spirit (Jn. 1:12,16). The Corinthians received the Spirit, but were "not spiritual" at the time Paul wrote 1 Cor. 3:1. These believers were likewise being asked to remember the Spirit gift received, and to allow it to function within them.

*And did once hear and keep it, and repent-* They needed to "keep" the Spirit they had been given. The idea of 'keeping' does not solely refer to obedience to commandments, but to allow the Lord's word, His gifted Spirit, to abide / remain within them.

*Therefore if you shall not watch, I will come as a thief, and you shall not know what time I will come upon you-* The watching in view is not simply of themselves but of others; see on :2. "I will come as a thief" is an evident allusion to 1 Thess. 5:2 concerning the thief-like coming of Christ to the unworthy in the latter-day church. "You shall not know what time I will come upon you" implies that they *should* have 'known the hour'. This probably continues the allusions to 1 Thess. 5 - this time to :1: "Of the times and the seasons, brethren, ye have no need that I write unto you (faithful ones). For yourselves know perfectly that the day of the Lord so cometh as a thief in the night" (AV). 1 Thess. 5:1,2 in turn alludes to Mt. 24:43 (R.V.): "But this ye know" that "the goodman of the house" would have watched if he knew when the thief would come. The wise at Thessalonica 'knowing' the times and seasons of the thief's coming therefore implies that their 'knowledge' was in terms of appreciating what the spiritual trials of the last days would be like. Rev. 3:3 brings all these strands together in warning the apostate members of the latter-day ecclesias. Not watching is equated by the Lord with not knowing the time. The evident allusion to the disciples not watching (Mk. 14:37) suggests that if we don't know the time, we will be like them- unprepared when we ought to be on the tiptoe of expectancy. The connection with the disciples also hints that when the Lord told them that they didn't know the time, he was in some sense rebuking them rather than making a general statement about the impossibility of *ever* knowing the time of his return.

3:4- see on Rev. 2:17.

*But you have a few names in Sardis that did not defile their clothes, and they shall walk with me in white; for they are worthy-* The Lord refers to His people not simply as 'people' but as "names". The Hebrew idea of a name is that it expresses personality and character. We are not numbers on a screen, but unique persons, known intimately to the Lord. These faithful ones were undefiled by the fact the others in their church were apostate- yet another disproof of any theory of 'guilt by association'. The clothes undefiled refer to the gift of righteousness imputed at baptism abiding; just as the gift of the Spirit received abode with them (:3). "Walk with me" is yet another reminder that the destiny of the believer is to share the Lord's destiny; all that is true of Him is to become true of us. And this includes the idea of being "worthy", which we are not in our own strength, but only on account of being in Him, the worthy one.

Again we must give full weight to the fact that the "few" in Sardis who had not defiled their clothes attended an apostate ecclesia; and yet they are *not* seen as "defiled" by the Lord Jesus. This is proof positive that there is no such thing as guilt by association with erring members of an ecclesia. Those faithful members were not

rebuked for not disfellowshipping the others. The Lord's criticism of the ecclesias seems to be that they had allowed false teaching to develop, rather than the fact they hadn't separated from it. Smyrna was an ecclesia which received no criticism at all from the Lord; they weren't rebuked for not disfellowshipping the other local ecclesias who were apostate (Rev. 2:8-11). The elders at Sardis, an ecclesia holding many false teachers, were told to strengthen what remained (the Greek is usually used regarding people)- they were to strengthen the faithful minority, but nothing was said about withdrawing from them because they fellowshipped weak brethren.

3:5- see on 1 Cor. 4:9; Rev. 2:17.

*He that overcomes shall thus be dressed in white garments, and I will in no way blot his name out of the book of life-* "Thus be dressed" refers to the way that the Lord who spoke these words was at that very time dressed in white garments; they were to share His status, all that is true of Him is to become true of all in Him.

Blotting out of the book of life suggests that individuals were originally included in the plan for eternity, but are removed. Moses asking to be removed from that book is therefore a mark of his extreme love for Israel; willing to sacrifice his place in eternity for them. God did not accept this kind of substitutionary atonement, however. I have suggested that John wrote and spoke his gospel to appeal to his fellow Jews; and his letters were written to his converts. Revelation was perhaps also primarily intended for Jewish converts, and the initial references to the 'satan' refer to the Judaist conspiracy to wean his converts back to the synagogue. The idea of our names remaining in the book of life would have suggested to a Jewish audience that we'll all be like Moses was at the end, in essence; we'll share his finest hours. Our names will not be blotted out of the book of life, as Moses' wasn't (Ex. 32:32). For Jews, Moses was the acme of spirituality, a spiritual pinnacle they could never realistically attain to. But here they are promised that they are not mere Levites but in Christ, can share the peaks of Moses.

But there is the real possibility of names being removed from the book. This is the greatest tragedy; that a person at one point was on track for eternity, but lost that status. We must do all we can to 'watch out' for others, therefore (see on :2); and never, ever, to make anyone stumble from the way which leads to eternal life.

*And I will confess his name before my Father and before His angels-* As noted on :4, we are 'names' and not numbers; in the Hebraic sense of a name reflecting the sum total of a person's character and being. Who we are as unique persons is confessed before the father; and our names, that code, if you will, which summarizes 'us', is recorded eternally in the book of life. This points up the eternal importance of personality and spiritual character; for to some degree, who we are today is who we shall eternally be. Salvation is personal. We as persons shall be saved, meaning 'we' shall be immortalized.

3:6 *He that has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches-* See on 2:7.

3:7 *And to the angel of the church in Philadelphia write: These things says he that is holy, he that is true-* The Lord's essential character is important to establish, because it is He who has the power to eternally open and close the way to eternity in His Kingdom. 'Holy and true' was one of the many titles heaped upon the Caesars, and again the radical, subversive nature of the book of Revelation appears. For the ultimate holy and true one is not Caesar, but the Lord.

*He that has the key of David, he that opens and none shall shut, and that shuts and none opens-* The quotation is from Is. 22:22, where Eliakim is given delegated rulership in David's Kingdom. Perhaps the idea of David having the key to his

kingdom alludes to the way that he consciously chose his successor and did not let it pass automatically to his firstborn. But the power to eternally shut and open the Kingdom has been delegated to us, in the sense that if we do not preach to others, or make them stumble from the path, we have closed up the Kingdom to them. The keys of knowledge are in our hands as preachers, and we can thereby open or shut up the Kingdom to men (Mt. 16:19; Lk. 11:52; see on Jn. 20:23). We have just been reminded that a man's name can at one stage be in the book of life, and then be removed; eternity can be closed to a person, as well as opened. The foolish virgins find the door to the Kingdom eternally locked against them. We get a strong sense from this imagery of the future we may miss, and how commitment to the things of the Kingdom logically demands 100% commitment from us.

3:8 *I know your works (behold, I have set before you an open door, which none can shut), you have a little power-* Although no *man* can shut the door, the Lord can (see on :7). An open door speaks of an opportunity (1 Cor. 16:9; 2 Cor. 2:12; Col. 4:3). It is the Lord who takes the initiative, opening the door to the Kingdom, by grace. It is for us to respond to His initiatives. Their "little power / strength" could imply that it could have been far stronger; but all the same, the Lord commends and accepts them. There are ranges of response to the Lord, and He is willing to accept that some ground will yield more harvest to His glory than others. Some work harder and longer in the vineyard than others; but all receive the penny of salvation.

*And did keep my word and did not deny my name-* The aorist suggests this keeping of the Lord's *logos* was at a particular time in the past. They had presumably been called upon to deny His Name and stop abiding in His "word". And they had refused. This could have referred to the local Jewish synagogue expelling them (Jn. 9:22), with the associated economic and social isolation which ensued for a diaspora Jew. Or in the Gentile context, it could have referred to exclusion from pagan trade guilds, with the same effect; or perhaps a call to show loyalty to the Caesar cult. But :9 suggests that the persecution had originated with the 'satan' of organized Jewish opposition.

3:9 *Behold, I will make those of the synagogue of Satan, who say they are Jews and they are not, but do lie- behold, I will make these come to you and bow down at your feet, and to know that I have loved you-* The persecution of :8 had been brought about by an organized group of people called here a false synagogue, implying they were Jews, but in name only. Perhaps one of their arguments was that God did really love the Christian Jews; because Judaism had a lot to say about themselves as the unique lovers of God, who enjoyed His special love. John in his letters has argued that if a Jew does not accept Jesus as Lord and Son of God, then such a Jew is outside "the love of God". For he who denies the Son denies the Father also. These Judaist troublemakers will be resurrected and at the last day, see those they persecuted enter God's Kingdom. They will bow before the feet of those they persecuted, just as they will say "Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord!", but all too late for their personal salvation.

Some now in the ecclesia will be dashed to pieces by the Lord at the last day (2:27). Mal. 4:3 speaks of them being ashes under the soles of *our* feet, as if the faithful will play a part in the destruction of their faithless brethren. After our judgment, *we* "will return and discern between the righteous and the wicked, between him that serves God and him that serves him not" (Mal. 3:18). Then in our own understanding the Kingdom of God will be likened to wise and foolish virgins; then we will see the tares clearly. Then the apostate false brethren in Philadelphia will worship before the feet of their faithful brethren. It may be in this sense that we will



judge Angels / ecclesial elders (1 Cor. 6:3 cp. Rev. 2:1 etc.). Or it could be that the rejected will destroy each other. The surrounding world with whom they will then be associated will destroy themselves, brother against brother (Zech. 14:13); and they will have a part in this destruction. If we bite and devour each other, we may be consumed by each other (Gal. 5:15)- this is the same idea of brethren killing brethren.

3:10 *Because you did keep the word of my patience, I also will keep you from the time of trial which is to come upon the whole world, to test them that dwell upon the earth-* The Lord told the Philadelphians that He had set before them an open door, which elsewhere is a figure for an opportunity to preach (Acts 14:27; 1 Cor. 16:9; 2 Cor. 2:12; Col. 4:3). He parallels such preaching with keeping His word and not denying His Name. For those who do these two things, i.e. respond to the open door preaching opportunities of the pre-tribulation period, "I also will keep you from the hour of temptation [tribulation] which is to come". If we preach now, and the door is open as never before, then perhaps we will be saved from the tribulation. For one of its aims, as in the first century, will be to inspire us to witness as we ought to have been doing. See on Rev. 2:10, where we noted again this idea of various possible outcomes and chronologies stored up in God's purpose, in response to human freewill decision making. And the same is true especially of latter day chronologies of events leading up to the Lord's return. If the latter day faithful [perhaps especially referring to Jewish Christians within the land promised to Abraham] keep the Lord's word, He will keep them from the "tribulation" designed "to try them that dwell upon the earth" / land - of Israel. So whether or not some shall experience the latter day tribulation depends on factors such as their repentance and witness of the Gospel to all nations.

3:11 *I come suddenly. Hold fast to what you have, that no one takes your crown-* As noted on :3, they were to hold fast to the gift of the Spirit they had been given at conversion, and allow this to continue to guide their path towards salvation. For it is the Spirit which they had already been given. They had been given "eternal life" in the sense of the spirit of that life which they would eternally live. In this sense they already had their crown; but as names in the book of eternal life could be blotted out, so the crown now potentially given can be taken away. The *stephanos* may refer not only to the victor's crown at the games, but to the wreath worn by those invited to a wedding or feast- an image elsewhere used in Revelation, rather than that of the games. Our part in the wedding can be taken away and given to another if we do not want it. Another will take our crown or wreath. This suggests the allusion is to floral wreath given to wedding guests; for a victor's crown in the games could hardly be given to another. But in the Lord's parable, the invitations to the Jews to come to the feast were taken from them and given to others.

3:12 *He that overcomes, I will make him a pillar in the temple of my God; and he shall leave there no more, and I will write upon him the name of my God, and the name of the city of my God, the new Jerusalem, which comes down out of heaven from my God; and my own new name-* There was apparently a large pillar in Philadelphia which may have been the reason for this idea. The name of Yahweh being written on a person suggests they are a priest, even the high priest. Instead of the names of the twelve tribes of Israel written on his chest, we here have the name of the new Jerusalem written- which city speaks of all the believers. This is a major theme of the letters; that the role and exaltation of the Lord becomes true for all who are in Him. As the Lord was the central pillar of the new temple, so shall we be.

It is not surprising that the Lord, as the Son of God and His supreme manifestation to men, should also carry God's name. He could say "I am come in my Father's name"

(Jn. 5:43). Because of his obedience, Jesus ascended to heaven and God “gave him a name which is above every name” - the name of Yahweh, of God Himself (Phil. 2:9). So this is why we read Jesus saying in Rev. 3:12: “I will write upon him (the believer) the name of my God... and I will write upon him my new name”. That the name was still new suggests these letters were given not so long after His ascension. At the judgment, we will share the Lord's exaltation; He will give us God's name; we then will fully carry the name of God. He calls this name, “My new name”. We can now properly understand Is. 9:6, where concerning the Lord Jesus we are told, “His name (note that) shall be called, Wonderful, Counsellor, the mighty God, the everlasting Father...”. This is a prophecy that the Lord would carry all the titles and Name of God - that He would be the total manifestation or revelation of God to us. It was in this sense that he was called ‘Emmanuel’, meaning ‘God is with us’, although He personally was not God. The way He speaks here of “my God” even in His resurrected glory is proof enough of that. Thus the prophecy of Joel 2 that men would call on the name of Yahweh was fulfilled by people being baptised into the name of Jesus Christ (Acts 2:21 cp. 38). This also explains why the command to baptize into the name of the Father was fulfilled, as detailed in the Acts record, by baptism into the name of Jesus.

And yet the idea of bearing God's Name refers to what already in essence is happening to all who are in the Lord Jesus, by baptism into His Name.

3:13 *He that has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches-* see on 2:7.

3:14 *And to the angel of the church in Laodicea write: These things says the Amen, the faithful and true witness, the beginning of the creation of God-* The subsequent judgments are prefaced by this reminder that the Lord Jesus is the final truth, the “Amen”, and had Himself suffered unto death as the ultimately faithful martyr / witness. Laodicea was a hopeless case, it seemed; but the Lord reminds them that He is the beginning of a new creation (2 Cor. 5:17), and the power of the Spirit which had created the natural creation was available to them too. He had begun the work of new creation in them, and it could still be brought to completion if they repented.

3:15 *I know your works, how you are neither cold nor hot. I wish you were either cold or hot-* The reference may be to the hot and cold springs near Laodicea. It is easy to assume that ‘hot’ refers to hot zeal for Him, and ‘cold’ to total indifference to Him. But why then would He wish them to be totally “cold”, and not rather praise them for having at least some heat? For in earlier letters, the Lord takes full cognisance of the fact there is some ‘heat’, some good points, even in those He chooses to condemn. So I suggest we must read in an ellipsis here. He may mean ‘I wish [that you realize that you can only be] either cold or hot’. They themselves considered themselves lukewarm, but thought this was acceptable to Him. And here we have a penetrating attack upon our own spiritual psychology; for we too would likely consider ourselves lukewarm, not coldly indifferent but not red hot in response to Him.

The site of Laodicea has suffered major earthquakes, but in recent times the original first century town has been uncovered. It was a thriving small town that became prosperous from its location at a crossroads. A large home has been unearthed which had a meeting room in the woman's quarters where crosses and other Christian symbols had been inscribed, and the surviving mosaics suggest Christian themes. This room would not have held more than 30 or 40 people. Typical of other house churches uncovered at other sites, it seems the majority of the church were female. These women apparently increased in wealth, making them lukewarm in faith. Only about

300 meters from that house there is evidence of warm springs, now inoperative because of the earthquake damage. I suggest these are the source of the Lord's reference to lukewarm water. The suggestion is often made that the reference is to the current hot springs at Pamukkale, but this is a long way away and there is no evidence that there was any viaduct bringing that warm water to Laodicea. There would have been no need for this as the water has so much calcium carbonate in it that it can't be drunk. And there were already warm water springs at Laodicea before the earthquake. After Constantine legalized Christianity, a church was built at Laodicea and the Council of Laodicea is full of strict religious ordinances about not doing anything in the Lord's service without the agreement of bishops, and laying down very restrictive and unBiblical demands upon believers. We see the path of declension- material prosperity leading to lukewarm faith, yet still bearing the name "Christian". And then this led to the formalism and mere religion of organized churchianity.

3:16 *As you are lukewarm, and neither hot nor cold, I will spew you out of my mouth-*

There is no third way. We may as well realize this. The Lord Jesus *hates* the fact that some think there is a third road; He would that we recognized, as He does, that there is really no 'lukewarm' position- only hot or cold. He seems to ask us to realize this: "Either make the tree good, and his fruit good; or else make the tree corrupt, and his fruit corrupt" (Mt. 12:33).

We know that from God's perspective, we *are* either cold or hot. We either serve Him or mammon. We are either on the road to the Kingdom or to death. So surely the Lord is speaking from *our* viewpoint; He wished that those believers would have the attitude that they were either cold or hot, rather than thinking there was a middle course. In essence, their weakness is ours; for time and again, we hide behind the philosophy of 'balance' in order to justify a "neither cold nor hot" attitude. Our lack of serious devotion, both individually and as a community, rests in this sophistry of 'balance'; lukewarmness has become respectable, both in the brotherhood and in the world; total commitment is branded as fanaticism and simplistic dogmatism.

As tourists came to taste the waters of the Laodicean springs, so the Lord tasted the believers there. The spewing of them from His mouth connects with how the sharp sword of judgment proceeds out of His mouth (1:16; 2:16; 19:21).

3:17 *For you say, I am rich, I have prospered, and I need nothing-* The implication was that they believed some kind of false prosperity Gospel, reasoning that their wealth was a result of their spirituality and God blessing them for it. Hence the next half of the verse insists that contrary to what they are think, they are in fact deeply unspiritual. This verse is a powerful argument against the prosperity Gospel, for apparent material blessing is portrayed here as *not* the reward for spirituality but the fruit of unspirituality. The language of saying to themselves that they were rich and "have prospered" is exactly that of the rich fool (Lk. 12:21). So we can safely assume that "you say..." refers to what they, like him, said to themselves within their hearts. And these words of the heart are what we are judged by. But the same Greek word used here is used of how those who accepted 'Babylon' were made rich and prospered because of her (18:3,15,19). And Babylon is presented in Jeremiah as considering she needed nothing Whatever 'Babylon' referred to in the Laodicean context, these apparent Christians had materially benefitted from connection with her- be it the synagogue system, the pagan trade guilds or the Roman Caesar cult. And there may well come a latter day wave of prosperity- for those who associate with latter day Babylon. But for Christians, it will cost them their eternity.

*Not realizing that you are wretched, pitiable, poor, blind, and naked-* They perhaps considered that their material wealth must reflect their spiritual wealth. They were unaware that spiritually they were poverty-stricken and naked, needing to develop the riches of faith and clothing of righteousness. It seems to follow that their feeling of being spiritually rich and needing nothing was fuelled by being "increased with goods" - as if the material prosperity of the very last days will lead some to interpret this as God's blessing upon them, and a sure sign of their acceptability. "I am rich..." is alluding to Hos. 12:8, where Israel's wealth was associated with a feeling that they were therefore without sin: "Ephraim said, I am rich... in all my labours they shall find no iniquity in me that is sin". This encourages us again to think that the first recipients of these letters were Jewish converts. Likewise, the description of them as wealthy but naked is taken straight out of Ez. 16:7 about natural Israel; suggesting that it is Jewish converts who are being written to here.

They were unlike Paul, who lamented "O wretched man that I am" (Rom. 7:24 s.w.), throwing himself upon the Lord Jesus in total faith in His grace. The Greek for "miserable" is found only in 1 Cor. 15:9, where apostate Christians considered that they had "hope in Christ" only in this life, and were therefore considered by the Spirit to be "miserable". For them, their level of association with Christianity gave them some psychological benefits in this life, but the wonder of sin forgiven and certain eternity ahead had not dawned upon them. They refused to accept that they were "poor in spirit" and could, upon that recognition, have sure hope for the future Kingdom (Mt. 5:3 s.w.). They refused to see themselves in the man born blind from birth of John 9, who is set up as representative of us all; they would not recognize that they were totally naked before the eyes of the Lord Jesus (Heb. 4:13). From these references we see that wretched, miserable, poor, blind and naked all refer to what we all naturally are; by refusing to see themselves as such, the Lord's work and provision for them was not seen as necessary.

The unfaithful now walk naked, in the Lord's eyes; but they will do so in the final condemnation of Rev. 16:15. They can walk naked *now* and repent, clothe themselves so as to cover the nakedness of condemnation which they now have; but not then.

3:18 *I counsel you to buy from me gold refined by fire, so that you may become rich-* John's writings continually allude to the power of the gift of the Spirit. It is the Spirit which is the true way to becoming enriched (1 Cor. 1:5; Eph. 3:16; the same word for "prospered" in :17). "Buy from me" obviously recalls the parable of the virgins, where the rejected go to buy oil [cp. the Spirit] all too late. The idea is that we can *now* do, spiritually, what the rejected will so desperately wish to do in the time of their condemnation, but will be unable to. Gold refined by fire is the figure Peter uses for Jewish converts who were being refined by the tribulations of the first century, both at the hands of the synagogue system and the Romans (see on 1 Pet. 1:7). The Jewish converts at Laodicea had flunked out of these testings by fire through their association with 'Babylon'; see on :17. The counsel to buy this refinement by fire would be another way of saying that they ought to have submitted to the tribulations, so that their faith would have been developed.

*And to clothe yourselves with white garments, that the shame of your nakedness be not revealed-* In the latter day church scene, it seems some because of their refusal to repent, will then have a final tribulation at the end of the holocaust period. Their salvation is what the Lord searches for. There is the suggestion that this group may choose not to suffer the initial stages of the holocaust, in that Rev. 3:18 implies that they are only *counselled* to buy the golden faith that is produced by the fiery trial of

the latter day tribulation. Thus as with offering the pinch of incense to Caesar, there will be opportunity to avoid the tribulation by some apparently tokenistic obedience to the beast. By doing this they will waste "the space" given "to repent of her fornication", and will experience a final tribulation.

We are clothed with white garments at baptism. The appeal to clothe themselves with them is an appeal for re-conversion. They could cover their shame now- but they choose not to. And yet, unknown to them, in God's eyes these people foam out their own shame (Jude 13).

*And anoint your eyes with eyesalve so you may see-* "Eyesalve" didn't really improve vision, but just as the Lord used the wrong idea of demons without correcting the science, so here. The idea is that they needed to apply something to help them 'see' differently, not least to 'see' themselves as they truly were before God (:17). That 'eyesalve' is surely the Spirit, which the Lord will give, but which we must be willing to apply. Anointing of itself implies pouring out the oil of the Spirit. For it is the Spirit which opens the eyes of our understanding (see on Eph. 1:18).

3:19 *As many as I love, I reprove and chasten. Therefore be zealous and repent-* The Lord must have acted in the lives of those wealthy but lost believers in order to bring them to repentance. And He did so out of love. And the arrogant, self-assured wealthy are hard to spiritually love. But the Lord did, and for all time sets us an example of loving sorrow for the wealthy in their spiritual lostness. The Lord's reproof, according to Jn. 3:18, is in who He is as a person; within the light of Him as a person and character. He was therefore seeking to bring Himself to their attention; chastening is intended to direct our focus onto the Lord Jesus. It is the gift of the Comforter which reproves (Jn. 16:8); as baptized believers, they had once received this, and the Lord wishes for that potential Spirit gift within them to be allowed full reign. The Hebrew and Greek words for 'chastening' also mean 'teaching'. None of the Lord's chastening is solely punitive; He seeks to teach, and we need to perceive that in whatever chastening we receive. And the end product of that teaching is repentance.

3:20- see on Mt. 24:15.

*Behold, I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and will eat with him and he with me-* The Lord stands at the door and knocks at His return, and the faithful will open immediately to Him (Lk. 12:36). And yet the essence of His coming is now. He wishes to enter hearts; those who accept His Spirit have Him 'coming' to them (Jn. 14:18 s.w.). His presence through the Comforter is just as real as was His presence amongst men in Palestine during His mortal ministry. The Lord is here writing to those who have turned away from Him in Laodicea. He is urging them to let Him come to them, to allow the Spirit to enter and fill them.

The Lord stresses, with apparently needless repetition, that to the man who responds to His word, "I will eat with him and he with me". There is something very touching in the picture of a man living alone (unusual in the first century), presumably due to old age or persecution, with no wife (either dead or left him); and the Lord of all knocks at his door. He lets him in (i.e. responds to the word of Christ), and they eat together. Two men, eating a man's meal, earnestly bent together over the table. It's a fine picture of the mutuality between the Lord and the believer. Even in failure and weak moments, that mutuality is still there. The same word is used of the Lord having "supper" and 'eating' with us in the communion meal (Lk. 22:20; 1 Cor. 11:25), and so the fellowship of the breaking of bread is also specifically in view.

In the latter day application, the Lord knocking on the door and 'coming' when the believer opens, hints at His second coming once the ecclesia shows a suitable level of spiritual response. In the same letter to Laodicea, the ecclesia being "rich and increased with goods" (:17) recalls the days of Lot and Noah, both typical of the second coming, and the unworthy walking naked is a figure picked up in 16:15 concerning judgment day. Our attitude and response in the split second when we know 'He's back' will effectively be our judgment. When the Lord speaks about knocking on the door of our hearts and our response (Rev. 3:20), He is picking up the language of the Song of Solomon 5:2-8, where the bridegroom (cp. Jesus) knocks at the door of the bride. But notice the sequence there:

While she sleeps at night, the bridegroom comes and knocks [unworthy virgins sleeping instead of being awake; the Lord Jesus comes]

She replies that she's not dressed properly, makes excuses about her feet, she can't come and open [the unworthy don't respond immediately]

He tries to open the door from the outside, putting his hand through the latch-hole [by grace, after the pattern of Lot being encouraged to leave Sodom when he hesitated, the Lord will be patient even with sleepy virgins in His desire for their salvation]

Her heart is moved with desire for him [the rejected still call Jesus 'Lord, Lord'; they love Him emotionally]

She starts dressing herself up, and then is overtaken by desire and rushes to the door, her hands dripping all kinds of perfume and make up over the lock as she opens it [cp. the virgins going to buy oil, the unworthy trying to prepare themselves all too late, not trusting that their Lord loves them as they are at the moment of His coming]

But he's gone, he *withdraws himself* [all too late, the door is shut, He never knew them]

Her soul fails [the shock of rejection]

She seeks him but doesn't find him, calls but he doesn't answer [Prov. 1:28; the rejected call, but aren't answered; they seek the Lord early, but don't find Him.

Hos. 5:6 is likewise relevant: "They shall go with their flocks and with their herds to *seek* the LORD; but they shall not find him; he hath *withdrawn himself* from them".]

She feels tired of her relationship with him ("sick of love").

She is persecuted by the world around her ["condemned with the world"]

The basic point is that if we don't immediately respond to the Lord's knock, we show ourselves to not love Him enough. If we don't open immediately, it's as if we didn't open at all. The Lord wants us as we are, bleary eyed and without our make up, but with a basic overriding love of Him, and faith in the depth of His love, which will lead us to immediately go out to meet Him. And as noted above, His coming to us is effectively now. We shall open to Him in that day if we have opened our hearts to Him today.

3:21- see on Mk. 10:37.

*He that overcomes, I will allow him to sit down with me on my throne, as I also overcame and sat down with my Father on His throne-* Here we see the very intense extent of our possibilities in Christ; all that is true for Him really can be true for those "in Christ", even those as apparently far gone as Laodicea. These descriptions of the faithful in the Kingdom show how they are counted as righteous by grace; they overcame *even as* the Lord overcame. They are described as clothed in white linen, just as was the Victorious Saviour straight after His death (Mt. 27:59). A comparison of our struggles with the Lord in Gethsemane, let alone the cross, reveal that we do not overcome as He did. We have not resisted unto blood in striving against our own

sin. We will have the *right* to the tree of life (Rev. 22:14); yet our salvation is by pure grace alone.

'Israel' means 'he who will rule as / with God'. This would therefore be the basis of Rev. 3:21, which promises that he who overcomes (also translated "prevail") will be a ruler with God, on His throne. It seems that the Lord has his mind back in Gen. 32, and he saw all who would attain His Kingdom as going through that same process of prevailing with God, overcoming, and being made rulers with Him.

3:22 *He that has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches-* see on 2:7.

## REVELATION CHAPTER 4

4:1 *After these things I looked, and beheld a door opened in heaven-* John is being given a peep into the heavenly throne room. The 'court of heaven' was a common Jewish idea. The events on earth are reflected there, with representative Angels standing before God and receiving His judgments. The Angels may represent sinners and sinful entities, but Angels themselves do not sin. The comfort is that situations in earth are not out of control, but are known and perceived totally and instantly in Heaven. The opening of a door speaks of an opportunity being provided, perhaps in response to a knock (see on 3:8,20). It could be that John and others had sought desperately to understand their persecutions and how things really were in Heaven; and John's visions were the answer.

*And the first voice that I heard, as if a trumpet was speaking to me, was as one saying: Come up here, and I will show you the things which hereafter must come to pass-* Unlike Hebrew, the tenses in Greek are precise and have specific reference. In Rev. 1:19 John was told to write down the things which he had seen, the things which presently are, and the things which shall be "hereafter". I suggest the things he had seen were the things of the vision of the Son of Man; the things which are refer to the messages to the seven churches; and "the things which shall be hereafter" is a phrase developed here in Rev. 4:1, where John is bidden come and see "the things which must be hereafter". The things from then on all refer to the future, the last days and the coming of Christ. The vision of the Heavenly throne room in chapters 4 and 5 therefore refers to how things are in the Heavenly court *in the last days*. That is confirmed by comments on many of the following verses in chapter 4. The vision is in the form of "a voice of a trumpet". The same Greek words are found in Mt. 24:31 and 1 Thess. 4:16 about the "sound [s.w. "voice"] of a trumpet" which will be heard at Christ's return. The same words are used of the trumpets heard at the final outpouring of woe upon the land at the Lord's coming (Rev. 8:3). The vision therefore has a clear end time reference, and describes the scene in Heaven at that time, rather than being a general picture of how things are in Heaven.

4:2 *Immediately I was in the Spirit-* Being "in the Spirit" was in response to the invitation to come 'up' to Heaven to view the court room (:1).

*And beheld a throne set in heaven; and one sitting upon the throne-* The setting up of the throne recalls the language of the throne being 'set' for judgment at Christ's return (Ps. 122:5; Dan. 7:9). As noted on :1, the entire vision in chapter 4 is of the state of affairs at the last day being reflected in the Heavenly throne room. Thrones set on earth are set in Heaven, just as David on earth sat as it were on the throne of God in Heaven as king.

4:3 *And he that sat on it was to look upon like a jasper stone, and a sardius; and there was a rainbow round about the throne, like an emerald to look upon-* The rainbow suggests that Divine judgment has come to an end, and the faithful remnant saved. As noted on :1, this is a picture of things at the last day. The Lord sits upon the judgment throne with a rainbow as a halo around it, meaning that His judgment is overarched by grace and a desire in fact not to condemn the world, even if they spurn His grace and choose His condemnation.

Jasper is the gem used to describe the appearance of all the faithful (21:11,18,19); the Lord's righteousness and exalted status will finally be true of all who are in Him. The sardine or sardius likewise (21:20), and the emerald (21:19). These are also stones in the High Priestly breastplate, representing the tribes of the Lord's people. We, His people, shine from His face. This is the extent of His total identification with us, and ours with Him. See on 5:3.

4:4 *And round about the throne were twenty four thrones; and upon the thrones I saw twenty four elders sitting, dressed in white garments, and on their heads were crowns of gold-* This again is reflecting the situation of the last days. The elders are 'clothed in white clothing', but every time those words occur in Revelation the context is of believers who have overcome the tribulation and are now clothed in white (3:5,18; 7:9,13). The vision of such clothing in Heaven may suggest that the elders thus clothed are the representative Angels of the believers on earth. Revelation is full of this kind of representation of human situations before the court of Heaven. Their golden crowns (4:4) are the crowns of victory which the faithful wear after judgment (the *stephanos* is specifically a victory wreath- 1 Cor. 9:25; Phil. 4:1; 1 Thess. 2:19; the crown which shall be given "at that day", 2 Tim. 4:8; James 1:12; 1 Pet. 5:4; Rev. 2:10). Golden crowns are worn by the latter day enemies of God's people (Rev. 9:7); the specific usage of *stephanos* here, the victory wreath, suggests that they are celebrating their brief victory and establishment of a fake Kingdom of God. This is exactly what Moslems expect their Mahdi to do as a result of their latter day victories against the Jews. The ten horns of the beast are also crowned (13:1); the brief victory of the beast is a parody of the establishment of the true Kingdom of God.

These 24 elders recall the 24 orders of priests, who represent all the Lord's redeemed people. For we are a nation of priests, constantly in His service. As noted on :3, the Lord is presented as having the stones of the high priestly breastplate shining from His face as He sits enthroned, as a king-priest after the order of Melchizedek. We too shall be enthroned. Priests who are enthroned are king-priests; the Lord likewise was a king-priest after the order of Melchizedek, and we shall eternally have this status. We have just read that the faithful shall share His throne (3:21). As noted several times on Hebrews, we are not only benefitted by the Lord's high priestly work for us, but merge with Him, entering into the Holiest as did the High Priest- to do the work of the High Priest for the salvation of others.

I am of the view that the seals and vials of Revelation have such strong connection with both the Olivet prophecy and the actual events in the land in AD66-70 that it is impossible to discount the application of Revelation to this period. This means that it would have been written some time before AD70. A major theme is the need to resist the Caesar worship and maintain their separation from the world around them. Indeed, the whole of Revelation can be read, in its' AD70 application, as an account of the struggle between Christ and Caesar. Such strong imagery is used in order to emphasise that there could be no third road. It was one or the other. Thus Rev. 4,5 presents a picture of the throne of Heaven, but it is replete with reference to the imperial ceremonial court. Consider the points of contact and contrast:



- Greco-Roman kings were considered to be divine, and their courtrooms were arranged in concentric circles centring upon the Caesar / King- just as with the true throne room
- Their attendants were often arranged in groups of 7s and 12s- after the supposed seven planetary spheres and the 12 signs of the zodiac. Compare this with the 7s, 12s and 24s [2 x 12] in Revelation (4:4,5,10; 5:6-10). The 24 elders are a parody of the 24 lictors or bodyguards who surrounded Domitian and other Caesars. Instead of praying for Caesar and the empire, Revelation presents a radical counter culture. Caesar and his empire are presented as a fake Kingdom, which is to be prayed against- resulting in the overthrow of that Kingdom by the Kingdom of God. And the death of the Lord Jesus is seen as having already guaranteed this, and achieved it in prospect. Likewise casting crowns before Caesar is parodied in :10. This is ultimately done before the Lord Jesus, and is done for ever. All these allusions show how the Roman kingdom / empire is the antithesis of the true and ultimate Kingdom / empire, of God through the Lord Jesus. The 'iron rule' of Rome is the antithesis of the 'iron rod' with which the Lord Jesus shall rule the nations through His people (Rev. 2:26). There is no overlap between the two empires. Human politics cannot bring about God's Kingdom. The kingdoms of this world are to become the kingdoms of our Lord and of His Christ. And in the lead up to that, Christian culture and Roman culture [or the world's culture] are absolutely separate and counter to each other.
- These attendants sung hymns of praise to the Caesar (cp. 4:8-11; 5:9-14)
- The Caesar dispersed justice to the empire / kingdom, symbolised by a scroll (cp. 5:1-8).
- Language such as God, Son of God, Lord's day, saviour of the world was used in the imperial cult.

Suffice it to say that today just as much as in the 1st century, there is a radical clash of cultures and belief systems between us and this present world. The radical nature of the conflict cannot be overstated.

However, the primary audience of the book of Revelation was likely Jewish Christians in Jerusalem, who were drifting back to Judaism and becoming caught up in the wave of nationalism which led to the Jewish War and the events of AD70. And so for them, the reference of the 24 elders would have been to the Jewish system which was now far eclipsed by the glory of the Heavenly system which had the Lord Jesus at its epicentre. There may well be reference to "the smaller Sanhedrin" at Jerusalem which had 24 elders in the lead up to AD70. Again, symbols and images of worldly power, of the society around us, are subsumed and deconstructed beneath the wonder of the exaltation of the Lord Jesus. And so it should be in our worldview.

4:5 - see on Rev. 1:20; Jer. 1:11,12.

*And out of the throne proceeded lightnings, voices and thunders-* As noted on :1, the vision of the Heavenly throne room in chapters 4 and 5 refers to how things are in the Heavenly court *in the last days*. In this context, the seven heads and mountains of the beast perhaps have their match in the seven spirits / Angels before God's throne. As found in Daniel, the situation on earth is not at all out of control; rather is it a reflection of the Heavenly throne room, just as the beasts of Daniel 7 arise out of the sea as a result of the [apparent] 'striving' of the spirits / Angels / winds. The lightnings which flash out of the throne were not just what were 'usually' there in Heaven; rather are these the lightnings which flash in the last day events of Rev. 8:5; 11:19; 16:18, recalling the flashing of lightning as a sign of God's especial and saving activity of His people (Ps. 18:14). As lightening, fire and thunder 'proceeds' out of the throne and from the mouth of Him sitting upon it (1:16; 4:5), so the same word is used

of how fire and judgment proceed out of their mouth of God's briefly victorious enemies (9:17,18). So often the contrast is drawn between the things of God's Kingdom and God's people, and those of His opposition. The thundering recorded here is that of Rev. 19:6 at the time of the second coming of Christ. The great voice out of the throne ["voices" may be a reflection of the Hebrew idea of an intensive plural] is the great voice out of the throne of Rev. 16:17; 19:5 when "it is done". It is the voice of victory which effectively comes out of the throne at the last day (Rev. 7:9,10).

The 24 elders of Rev. 4:5 represent rather than symbolize the believers, whose guardians they are. These Angels represent the saints in the court of Heaven. In this lies the practical meaning of all this; that we, our 'case', our thoughts and deeds, are represented in none less than the court of Heaven; and there they are judged, discussed, and responded to.

*And there were seven lamps of fire burning before the throne, which are the seven Spirits of God-* It is the faithful who are "before the throne". The seven spirits refers perhaps to the totality of God's Spirit and His power. Seeing He makes His Angels spirits, it could be that God's power is apportioned between seven senior Angels. But the connection with the seven churches and stars, who are the angels of the churches, is also clear. As the indwelling Spirit dwells and abides within us, so we are represented as the seven lamps burning always before Him in Heaven. In the last day, of which this vision speaks, we shall be turned to Spirit nature. We are the elders, and we are the seven spirits. The symbolism reflects different aspects of the same realities.

There are four references in Revelation to the seven spirits (Rev. 1:4; 3:1; 4:5; 5:6), making a total of 28. Which is the same number of times Revelation uses the term "the Lamb". The idea is that the totality of the Spirit is under the control of the Lord Jesus- which follows from His enthronement as King of the cosmos, on God's behalf, with all power / Spirit given to Him. To Him who was once a little boy growing up in Nazareth, clinging to His mother, struggling with childhood hurts and illnesses... so highly was He exalted. But these seven spirits are clearly to be connected with the seven lamps burning before the throne of Rev. 4:5, the candlestick with seven lamps burning "before the Lord" (Ex. 40:25). And that candlestick is the church, according to Rev. 1-3. The fullness of His power works through the church in her mission of being sent into the world with the Gospel, just as the seven spirits of God in Zechariah 4:10 [the basis of the candlestick imagery in Revelation] go to and fro throughout the earth. We have total power behind us in seeking to fulfil the great commission. Like those sent forth by the Lord during His ministry, we return from each mission admitting that we lacked nothing.

*4:6 And in front of the throne there was as it were a sea of glass like a crystal-* The allusion is to the bronze "sea" or laver in the temple. Verse 5 has just alluded to the candlestick. Here there is a tranquil "sea of glass", but this is the very same symbol as used in Rev. 15:2 concerning how this situation is arrived at *after* and *as a result of* the fiery judgments upon God's enemies in the last days. This confirms the suggestion on :1 that we have here a vision of the state of things in the last days, seen from Heaven's perspective. This glass sea is "clear as crystal"- which is the very metaphor used to describe the Kingdom conditions (Rev. 21:11; 22:1). Again and again, Revelation 4 uses the language of the period surrounding the establishment of God's Kingdom on earth. It's a prophetic vision of the things which shall be

“hereafter” (4:1), rather than a description of how things were in Heaven at John’s time and how they have been ‘up there’ for the last 2000 years.

In confirmation of this, note that the whole scene happens “in front of the throne”, but this phrase is repeatedly used later in Revelation to speak of the situation before the judgment throne of the Father and Son, when this as it were is set up on earth. Before that throne the faithful shall be found faultless (14:5), and they sing before that throne a new song because of their triumph (14:3). Those who overcome the tribulation of the last days are found “before the throne” (7:9,11,15). So what we are seeing in chapter 4 happening ‘before the throne’ is not a mere description of ‘what was going on before God’s throne at John’s time, and has been going on all along since then’. No. This is about what shall happen before that throne *at the day of judgment at the second coming*. That is the time referent of Revelation’s language of “before the throne”. For the sea of humanity is hardly calm as crystal glass before His throne, and will not be until the last day.

*And in the midst of the throne and round about the throne, four living creatures full of eyes before and behind-* There are evident similarities between Ezekiel’s cherubim, and the four living creatures of Rev. 4. They are both described as “full of eyes” (Ez. 1:18 = Rev. 4:6), with four very similar faces (lion, calf, man, eagle in Rev. 4:7 = lion, ox, man, eagle in Ez. 1:10); and both have wings (Rev. 4:8 = Ez. 1:8). Yet the living creatures of Revelation speak of being redeemed by the blood of Christ and made king-priests in God’s Kingdom (Rev. 5:8-10)- as if they are the redeemed people of God. The four faces are likely to be connected with the four standards of the tribes of Israel (Lion = Judah, Man = Reuben, Ox = Ephraim, Eagle = Dan). Each of those tribes had two other tribes assigned to them in the encampment procedures of Num. 2. There is extra-Biblical tradition that the cherubim in Solomon’s temple had the same four faces which Ezekiel saw on the cherubim- lion, ox, man and eagle. Those to whom Ezekiel related his vision would have immediately understood the point- that the earthly sanctuary was a reflection of the Heavenly, and that above that was a huge Angelic system operating, which also represented God’s people- them. But that huge system was to remove to Babylon, and then the final visions of Ezekiel show that glory returning. Ezekiel, as the representative “son of man” as he’s so often styled, was caught up within that system and transported at ease between Babylon and Jerusalem- and those who wanted to opt in with God and His Angels could likewise be taken to Babylon and returned. Those who chose to remain in Babylon were therefore resisting being part of an awesome system of God manifestation and Angelic operation. We have that same choice in things great and small today.

Just as the lamb with seven heads faces off against the dragon and beasts with multiple heads, so here, the four living creatures [AV “beasts”] are the equivalent of the “four beasts” of Daniel, who morph into the beasts of Revelation. Again the idea is that the apparently invincible systems seen “on earth” are nothing compared to their far greater equivalent “in Heaven”. And the faithful are given a glimpse of Heaven’s perspective, and asked to make that their worldview.

We have just read that the faithful shall share His throne (3:21). And exactly there is where we find the living creatures. The “four living creatures” are a means of expressing God’s manifestation, be it in Angels or Israel in the past. But now, at the point of the last day of which this vision speaks, the reference is to us. This is why we / they are both in the midst of the throne and round about it. We are in one sense before the throne, receiving His grace, casting our crowns there (:10); and in another sense, sharing with Him in His throne itself.

4:7 *And the first creature was like a lion, the second creature like a calf, the third creature had the face of a man and the fourth creature was like a flying eagle-* See on :6. The four beasts full of eyes which are found here (:6,7) are the Heavenly reflection of the four beasts of Daniel 7, and the powerful little horn with its cunning eye is thus presented as a weak parody of the Heavenly reality. As noted on :1, the vision of the Heavenly throne room in chapters 4 and 5 refers to how things are in the Heavenly court *in the last days*. These beasts all exist in the last days in some form, but shall be subsumed within the "four living creatures" of the cherubim, representing the glorified believers; see on :6.

4:8 *And the four living creatures each had six wings, full of eyes round about and within-* The 'beasts' / 'creatures' of the nations shall be subsumed within and by the cherubic "living creatures", representing the believers (see on :6). Their being "full of eyes" is a repeatedly noted feature, and I suggest refers to how we shall then know all. A large element of our struggle in this world is that we do not have full vision, we cannot attach precise meaning to event, nor see the immediate future. This plays no small part in the psychological struggle of believers especially, who sense that there *is* meaning to event, and the hand of God is and shall be in their immediate future history, but cannot see it all in detail.

We note that these four living creatures are the same as the cherubic figures of Ez. 1, but there are differences. In Ez. 1, *each* creature has four faces and four wings, whereas these have six wings, like the seraphim of Is. 6. Perhaps the idea is that here we have a composite image of the seraphim and cherubim, a vision more glorious and extensive than anything revealed in the Old Testament.

*And they have no rest day and night-* As the Angelic entity of Heaven, representing the believers, has no rest day nor night from His service and praise, so the beast worshippers have no rest day or night from their judgment (4:8 cp. 14:11). These are the only times in the entire New Testament that this Greek phrase for 'having no rest' are used. Indeed, so often Revelation uses phrases and words which occur only in Revelation. So I suggest the scene at this stage is that of the last days (see on :1), and here we have ceaseless praise during the period of the beast's destruction. See on :1. But here again we have an allusion to the Imperial cult. Tacitus writes of how "day and night the applause and acclamations of the Augustiani echoed around the palace". But we are being shown at this point that the true Kingdom or empire is God's, and His throne is the locus of it, and not Caesar's palace in Rome.

*Saying: Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord God, the Almighty, who was and who is and who is to come-* This again is an allusion to the Imperial cult; here, to the way the Emperor was to be addressed as "most holy [*sacratissimi*] emperor". "Our Lord and our God" was how Domitian demanded to be addressed. But the Lord God is the Almighty. Not Caesar. At every point, we find a demand for the believer to jettison the cult of Emperor worship, just as we are called upon to view our world as passing away, and to give our loyalty to the Kingdom of God and His Son. The idea of eternity was commonly found in the Imperial cult. Caesar was eternal, Nero being addressed as "the only one from the beginning of time", and so were Roman cities (*urbs aeterna*), the Roman people (*Aeternitas Populi Romani*), and empire itself (*pax aeterna*). But all these ideas are the antithesis of the Kingdom / empire of God, they were all to pass away, and instead of Rome, the New Jerusalem would alone last eternally. Likewise, "was / is / is to come", clearly alluding to the Yahweh Name, is the ultimate reality opposed to the sea-beast which "was / is *not* / is to come" (Rev. 17:8.11). The dragon and beasts are represented as pathetic fake imitations of the

ultimate Divine reality. They are often described as deceivers; whereas in the mouth of God's people there is no deceit. And we are to view this world likewise.

4:9- see on Rev. 5:6.

*And when the living creatures shall give glory and honour and thanks to him that sits on the throne, to him that lives for ever and ever-* The giving of honour to Him who sits upon the throne (4:9) is an idea only found elsewhere in 19:7, where honour is given to the Lord on the throne "for the marriage of the Lamb has come, and His wife has made herself ready". Again, we are directed to understand the giving of honour as appropriate to the Lord's second coming. The picture is specifically of the last days; see on :1. The "living creatures" have something to "thank" the Lord for, and to glorify and honour Him for. I suggested on :6 that at this point, they refer to the glorified believers.

*4:10 The twenty four elders shall fall down before him that sits on the throne and shall worship him that lives for ever and ever, and shall cast their crowns before the throne, saying-* Those who enter the Kingdom will genuinely, from the very depth of their being, feel that they shouldn't be there. They will cast their crowns before the enthroned Lord, as if to resign their reward as inappropriate for them. Indeed, they shouldn't be in the Kingdom. The righteous are "scarcely saved" (1 Pet. 4:18). The righteous remnant who spoke often to one another about Yahweh will only be "spared" by God's grace (Mal. 3:17).

This is another of many allusions to the emperor cult, whereby local kings and rulers knelt and cast their crowns before the Roman emperor or before images of him. It was a statement of utter submission. But this picture is applied to the Lord Jesus, and contributed towards making Revelation such a subversive and illegal document within the Roman empire. The things we stand for are no less radical and break all the norms of the societies in which we currently live.

Because it is by God's will that we are created, because He is from everlasting to everlasting, because God is creator (:11), we cast our crowns of 'reward' before His throne in a sense of unworthiness, just as David in Ps. 8 had the overawing sense of 'Who am I...?' when he reflected upon God's creation.

Depending upon how we translate the verbs, there could also be the sense here that the casting of crowns goes on "for ever". To throw down your crown is something done on the cusp of emotion, from deep recognition of unworthiness before the One whom we so deeply respect. But that cusp of emotion shall endure for ever.

*4:11 Worthy are you, our Lord, to receive the glory and the honour and the power. For you did create all things, and for your sake they existed and were created-* "Our Lord" refers to the Lord Jesus, and is again a subversion of the way Caesar was addressed in this way. His creation of all things recalls the prologue of John's gospel, where clearly a new creation is in view (2 Cor. 5:17), a creation of a world of persons in His image. And as the faithful find themselves accepted and immortalized before His throne, they will realize that indeed the new creation has come to its final term. And they stand there because of His creation of them, and not in their own strength, created of His will [NEV "sake", AV "pleasure"] and not their own. The allusion may be to Jn. 1:13, where the Lord Jesus is presented as bringing us into spiritual being not of our will but of His. In :8,11 we read of "the Lord God Almighty, who was and is and is to come" 'receiving [*lambano*]' "glory, honour and power [*dunamis*]". The only other time we read of this is in Rev. 11:15-17, when the seventh Angel sounds

and the Kingdom of God is established: “We give You thanks O Lord God Almighty, who is and who was; because You have taken [*lambano*] Your great power [*dunamis*] and have reigned”. The vision here is specifically about the state of the Heavenly throne room at the last day; see on :1.

## REVELATION CHAPTER 5

This continues the vision of chapter 4, which we have clearly located in the last days. The sealed book of 5:1 is the book of life, which is only opened at Christ’s return (Dan. 7:10; Rev. 20:12). The opening of the seals is therefore something which is the opening of the book- and the events associated with them therefore occur at the last hour, when the book is opened. Any appropriacy to events at other points in history is intended and was of encouragement to those of that day, but the essence of the fulfilment is in the last days. The joy of the redeemed that the Lamb has opened the book through His blood is not just joy that prophetic revelation has been given in the seals; it is joy that they have been redeemed because the book has been opened (5:5,9). The Lamb’s blood was required to open the book, and it is redemption, a place in that book of life, which was enabled by the Lord’s death. The actual opening of the scroll is performed by the Lord Jesus in His role as “the lion of the tribe of Judah” (see on :5), and according to Gen. 49:5 this refers to the Lord in His latter day manifestation, triumphing over the prey. The redeemed burst into praise when the Lamb takes the book of life to open it- they thank Him for redeeming them, and for making them “kings and priests, and we shall reign on earth” (:10). This sounds like they are about to start reigning. The time when this is said is therefore that of the establishment of the Kingdom on earth.

Not every detail has been given of how that end has been achieved, but in chapters 4 and 5 we see a broad sweep from the beginning of the last days right through to the full establishment of the Kingdom.

That the scroll refers to the book of life was first pointed out to me by Peter Watkins. One of the most compelling reasons is the way that Daniel 7 is being alluded to, and the parallel with the opening of the books at the judgment is in the scroll of Revelation 5 being opened:

|     | <i>Daniel 7:9, 10</i>                                 | <i>Revelation</i>                                                                                                             |
|-----|-------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| (a) | thrones were set                                      | the 24 elders upon 24 thrones (R.V.) (4 :4).                                                                                  |
| (b) | the Ancient of days did sit.                          | a throne set in heaven, and One sat on the throne (4:2).                                                                      |
| (c) | His garment white as snow.                            | like unto a jasper (4:3).                                                                                                     |
| (d) | His throne like the fiery flame.                      | and a sardine stone.                                                                                                          |
| (e) | His wheels as burning fire.                           | (Ez. 1:15-21. Not mentioned in Revelation except by implication in connection with the four-fold cherubim-chariot of Rev. 6). |
| (f) | a fiery stream issued and came forth from before Him. | the sea of glass.                                                                                                             |

|     |                                                                                              |                                                                                                                                             |
|-----|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| (g) | thousand thousands ministered unto Him and ten thousand times ten thousand stood before Him. | the number of the angels was ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousands of thousands (5:11).                                            |
| (h) | the judgement was set and the books were opened.                                             | I saw the dead small and great stand before God; and the books were opened: and another book was opened, which is the book of life (20:12). |

5:1 *And I saw in the right hand of him that sat on the throne a scroll written within and on the back, sealed with seven seals*- Note the parallels with Ezekiel- the four living creatures, a throne scene, a scroll- with judgments against Israel on it, to be fulfilled in a Babylonian invasion. This similarity with Ezekiel would explain the correspondence between the cherubim vision of Ez. 1:22-28 and that of Rev. 4:2-6. But as explained in the introduction, the scroll is the book of life. But the opening of it involves the breaking of the seals, which speak of judgment upon Israel at the hands of an invasion by a latter day Babylon. Perhaps this is the significance of the scroll having writing on both sides; referring on one hand to the blessing of acceptance and salvation, and on the other to judgment to come. This would explain why the scroll of 10:10 is both sweet and bitter. The book of life is only opened once all the seals are broken, and I suggested in the introduction to this chapter that this implies the seals refer to events which happen in short succession in the very last days, just prior to the opening of the book of life. That surely is required by the 'decorum of the symbol'.

5:2 *And I saw a strong angel proclaiming with a great voice: Who is worthy to open the scroll and to undo the seals of it?*- The great voice recalls the great voice of Goliath challenging Israel to provide a man who could provide their salvation; see on :4. None of course are worthy, and John opened his writings with the statement that not even John the Baptist was "worthy" (Jn. 1:27). This points up the power of imputed righteousness in 3:4 where the faithful are called "worthy". All that is true of the Lord becomes true of us if we are in Him, but by grace alone. All the New Testament commands to "walk worthy..." are ultimately not obeyed by any of us. Only He is worthy.

5:3 *And no one in the heaven, or on the earth, or under the earth, was able to open the scroll, or to look thereon*- See on :2. No Angel, no human believer currently live nor any who had previously lived and died, was worthy. Perhaps John somehow saw all the past and present believers flash before him in the vision. Being unworthy to even look upon the book of life recalls the impossibility of man looking upon God. The parallel suggests His close identity with all the names in His book of eternal life. In similar style, the face of the Lord Jesus is portrayed as identified with the stones of the breastplate, representing God's people; see on 4:3. But the idea may be that nobody was able to look at the scroll in the sense of reading or understanding it. And thus the simple point is made- that we cannot know who shall finally be saved. And apparently none in heaven, no Angel, knows that either. For we are all a work in progress and have freewill to act in such a way that our name may be removed from that scroll; see on 3:5. Who exactly will be saved amongst the last generation is therefore an open question right to the very end. But I suggested on :1 that the writing on the scroll was on both sides; the names of those saved, and yet also the final judgments. And nobody could even read or know that final picture apart from the

Lord. And this again would be because the final chronology of events and nature of the various judgments are to some extent open; if for example Israel repent and accept the Lord early in the process, then various aspects of the judgments will not be necessary. These issues, of defining who are saved and also of knowing the exact chronology of latter day events, have been wrongly fascinating for many. But we not only cannot know them, we are unworthy to know them.

5:4 *And I wept much, because no one was found worthy to open the scroll, or to look thereon*- See on :3. Weeping because no man could open the book of life, of salvation, has similarities with Israel's inability to find a champion against Goliath. Goliath, representing the seed of the serpent, a personification of sin (i.e. the Biblical devil), needed a man to fight him (1 Sam. 17:8,9). The men of Israel cowered in fear, wishing they could only have the strength and courage necessary, but looking on another helplessly as the invincible giant made his boast. How to overcome him and the evil intent of this man against God's people was what the men's conversation revolved around: "Have ye seen this man that is come up? Surely to defy Israel is he come up". They also discussed the glorious reward being offered: "It shall be, that the man who killeth him, the king will enrich him with great riches, and make his father's house free in Israel" - and throw in his daughter for good measure too (1 Sam. 17:25). But "all the men of Israel, when they saw the man, fled from him, and were sore afraid" (1 Sam. 17:24). Now what more precise description could we wish for of our feelings in the struggle against sin? There seems a similarity here with men and their Angel representatives in the court of Heaven weeping because no man was found worthy to look upon or open the book of life- until our Lord prevailed on the cross. John is representative of all of us, weeping at his inability and unworthiness to open the book of life.

5:5 *And one of the elders said to me: Do not weep. Behold, the Lion that is of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, has conquered; he can open the scroll and the seven seals of it*-Why this unusual title for the Lord in this context? Surely because the events are happening at the time when He is fulfilling His role as the lion rather than the lamb. That time for active and aggressive manifestation of Jesus against others- not least against the other beasts of the latter days- is at His return. The allusion is obviously to Gen. 49:9 which speaks of Judah's lion as aggressively triumphing over his prey- the work of the Lord Jesus *in the last days at His return*. In Rev. 5:5, the lion of Judah 'prevails', the language of struggle, in order to open the scroll. The loosing of the seals therefore speaks of the Lord's activity at the time of His coming in triumphant judgment upon the other beasts of the field.

The Lord "conquered" or 'prevailed' / 'overcame' in order to open the scroll. This is the language of the Lord's overcoming on the cross (s.w. Lk. 11:22; Jn. 16:33). As the Lord urged us to be of good cheer because He has overcome / conquered (Jn. 16:33), so the Angel urges John. And the word is frequently used of how all the faithful 'overcome' their world (Rev. 2:7,11,17,26; 1 Jn. 2:14; 4:4; 5:4 etc). But the Lamb alone has "overcome"; yet we in Him are finally counted as having achieved His victory. Just as He alone is worthy, but we are counted worthy (3:4). This concept of being "in Christ" is so common in Paul, and John too is expressing the same wondrous idea but in different ways. This great truth lifts us up above all feelings of personal inadequacy and failure to achieve. For we are part of One so much greater than us, and His Name and victory are ours.

The concept of conditional prophecy opens up a significant window into the tension facing the Lord Jesus as He approached the cross- indeed, throughout His ministry. So much depended upon Him. If He had failed, so much would simply not



have come true as God intended. Rev. 5:5 stresses how the Lamb alone, through His sacrificial death [hence the figure of a lamb] was able to open the seals, and thus enable history as God intended to unfold. Indeed, the sealed scroll can also be understood as the book of life, whose opening was only made possible by the Lord's death. This had as its basis the language of Dan. 12:4, where Daniel sealed the book. Rudolf Rijkeboer comments: "Daniel's prophecy of the seventy year-weeks takes us to the time of the Messiah, but not really beyond. How things would continue would depend on the Saviour, if He was victorious. That he would be victorious was... by no means a foregone conclusion. It depended totally on the Saviour's own free will... while the scroll remains sealed... that particular future is not going to happen at all!". In this sense we understand that through the cross, the pleasure or 'intention' of God would be furthered by Messiah's 'hand' through His crucifixion (Is. 53:10).

5:6- see on Jer. 1:11,12.

*And I saw in the midst of the throne and of the four living creatures and in the midst of the elders, a Lamb standing, as though it had just been slain-* The living creatures, representing the victorious believers, are in the midst of the throne (see on 4:6). We are set down with the Lord in His throne (3:21). But superimposed upon them is now the ever stronger image of the Lamb standing and not sitting. He is at our centre, in Him He is us and we are Him. For in no other way can we be portrayed as sitting upon the throne. The slain lamb is still standing, rather than lying down as a dead body. Perhaps the idea is that the Lord died on the cross in a vertical position, as if dead whilst still standing in victory.

The lion's triumph is only because He had previously been the sacrificial lamb; but He is portrayed as a rather aggressive looking lamb, having seven horns and seven eyes (5:6). Again we note that the beast with his ten horns and a little horn with eyes (Dan. 7:20) is an anti-Christ, a parody of the real Jesus. We note the sustained emphasis that the Lamb alone was "worthy" to open the scroll of life (4:11; 5:2,4,9,12); but the Lord graciously says that His redeemed people will walk with Him because they too are "worthy" (3:4). This is a deep insight into the extent of imputed righteousness, and what it means to be counted as "in Christ". The marks of His sufferings will be in Him eternally, and thereby we will be eternally reminded of the things we now only dimly appreciate (Rev. 5:6; Zech. 13:6). See on Mk. 9:47.

Rev. 4:9 alludes to the Isaiah 6 vision, and applies it to the future judgment. Yet silhouetted within the vision of the judgment throne is a slain lamb (Rev. 5:6), as if before the judgment, all will be aware of the Lord's sacrifice. The accepted will utter praise immediately after realising the wonderful verdict pronounced for them- in terms of praising the Lord Jesus for his sacrifice, and recognising their eternal debt to the blood of His cross (Rev. 5:9). The cross and the judgment and reward are connected. This is why the Sephardim called the Day of Atonement, with all its typology of the cross, "the day of judgment". To come before the cross is to have a foretaste of judgment; there and then was the judgment of this world.

*The lamb had seven horns and seven eyes, which are the seven Spirits of God, sent forth into all the earth-* The Lord's death meant that the Spirit was given to all His people (Jn. 7:39). And it was in the power of the Spirit that they went out into all the earth with the Gospel, in fulfilment of the great commission. I noted throughout Jn. 14-16 that the Comforter has especial relevance to the fulfilment of the great commission. And yet the reference is also to the Lord Jesus becoming Lord of all Angels, becoming Himself "the Lord the Spirit" (2 Cor. 3:18). His Spirit is therefore

sent forth into all the earth, just as His followers go into all the earth with Him and the message of His Spirit.

And yet a specifically latter day interpretation is also discernible once we perceive the allusions to Zech. 6:5-7, where the horsemen spirits of the Lord go forth throughout the earth / land promised to Abraham. This theme will be later developed in the seals, trumpets and vials. But at this stage the comfort is that in the awful situation to come upon that area in the last days, the details of which we are to read about in the next chapters, the Lord's Spirit is intensely present, preserving and empowering His people.

### The Chronology And Structure Of Revelation

The lamb slain is clearly a reference to Passover. I suggest that the key to the interpretation of Revelation is in understanding how its structure is linked to its interpretation. This doesn't mean that interpretations which ignore the structure are wrong; the book is open to multiple fulfilments, as most Bible prophecies are. The New Testament often quotes the Old Testament out of context- phrases and verses are taken up and given an interpretation which can't be extended to the surrounding context of the Old Testament passage. And so it's surely legitimate to likewise interpret Bible prophecy in a similar piecemeal manner. However, this doesn't preclude a hermeneutic [scheme of interpretation] which takes an entire book and seeks to make sense of it from start to finish.

Throughout latter day Bible prophecy, there is mention of a 1260 day / 42 month / three and a half year period of final tribulation. The Jews had a three and a half year reading cycle, similar in principle to the annual *Bible Companion*, whereby there were specific readings from the Pentateuch and prophets, with a Psalm read every Sabbath. This system was based around the feasts. The book of Revelation is likewise based around the feasts. It should be noted that the Gospel of John, which appears so similar in style to Revelation, was likewise based around the Jewish feasts; and a case can be made that it was intended to be read over a three and a half year cycle along with the Jewish lectionary readings (Aileen Guilding, *The Fourth Gospel And Jewish Worship* (Oxford: O.U.P., 1960)). Hence John's account of events seeks to place them all within the period of the various feasts; and his material can be seen as a kind of exposition of the Old Testament 'readings for the day' according to the Jewish triennial reading cycle.

There are many connections between the various sections of Revelation and the Jewish feasts. Here's a summary:

| Revelation | Feast                   | Allusions                                                                                                                                                                                                                   |
|------------|-------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 5          | Passover                | Rev. 5:6,9 = Ex. 12:13                                                                                                                                                                                                      |
| 7          | Tabernacles             | Rev. 7:9,15,16 RV = Ex. 23:16; 34:22; Zech. 14:1                                                                                                                                                                            |
| 8,9        | Day Of<br>Atonement     | Lev. 16:31; more detailed links in Harry Whittaker's<br><i>Revelation: A Biblical Approach</i> pp. 104,105.                                                                                                                 |
| 11         | Dedication &<br>Purim   | The Torah readings for these feasts were Num. 29:1-9<br>Zech. 2- 4 about the dedication of the temple; Rev. 7:1-17<br>Esther 9:19,22. The period from Tabernacles to Purim is<br>exactly 5 months- as mentioned in Rev. 9:5 |
| 12         | Pentecost &<br>Passover | The Jews traditionally ask: "On this Sabbath, shall we reap?"                                                                                                                                                               |

|         |                         |                                   |
|---------|-------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| 14      | Tabernacles             |                                   |
| 15 + 16 | Atonement &<br>Passover | Lev. 16; Ps. 118 the Hallel Psalm |
| 19      | Passover                | Ps. 113,114 Passover Psalms       |
| 21,22   | Tabernacles             |                                   |

Laying out the material chronologically, we have:

Chapter 5: Passover

6 months

Chapter 7: Tabernacles

Chapters 8& 9: Atonement and Tabernacles

1 year

Chapter 11: Dedication 5 months (Rev 9:5)

Chapter 11: Purim

Chapter 12: Passover and Pentecost

Chapter 14: Tabernacles

1 year

Chapter 15: Atonement

Chapter 16 & 19: Passover

Chapter 21 & 22: Tabernacles

1 year

The conclusion would therefore be that we have in the book of Revelation a literal account of the three and a half years tribulation, with the Jewish feasts being the key marker points. And it would appear there will be an especial period of five months tribulation as described between chapters 9 and 11.

Not all prophecy has to be predictive. The Lord Jesus spoke of His future sufferings and commented that once those things happened, the disciples would be able to make sense of them *at that time* because of His previously spoken words about them (Jn. 8:28; 13:19; 14:29; Acts 11:16). And so it may be futile to try to work out precisely how things will be before they actually happen; but as we pass through the final three and a half years, those who understand will be amazingly encouraged as they see everything falling into place. It will be the most amazing, detailed and practically encouraging fulfilling of prophecy that anyone has ever lived through. And given the whole nature of the tribulation, it will be encouragement that the faithful will sorely need.

*5:7 And he came and he took the scroll out of the right hand of him that sat on the throne-* This appears to speak of the Lord Jesus taking the scroll from God. Salvation is from God, but the Son has opened that salvation to us. But all this is indeed a kaleidoscope of images. The Lord Jesus is enthroned (:6), yet He comes to the throne where the living creatures are; He is as a lamb, then a lion, now apparently again in human form. As explained in the introduction to chapter 1, this is classic apocalyptic genre. Over interpretation will lead to false interpretation. The images rotate as in a kaleidoscope, because each image portrays a different aspect of the truth being revealed.

*5:8 And when he had taken the scroll, the four living creatures and the twenty four elders fell down before the Lamb, having each one a harp and golden bowls full of incense, which are the prayers of the saints-* The living creatures represent the faithful who are set down in the Lamb's throne and the throne of the Father (see on 4:6). But now they fall before the throne. And here the living creatures are

differentiated from the "saints", whose prayers they hold. See on :7 for the idea of a kaleidoscope of images being presented, and the danger of over interpreting these visual forms.

In 15:2 it is those who overcome the beast who have harps. The living creatures and elders are entities in the Heavenly throne room, representing the believers on earth. Whilst the victory is the Lord's, it has been brought to realization by the prayers of the saints. Chapter 8 emphasizes how the incense of their prayers triggers the events which happen on earth to bring about the Lord's visible return to establish His Kingdom. Their bowls of prayer cannot be separated from the seven vials or bowls of judgment which are later poured out on the earth / land; they are poured out as a result of the bowls of prayer offered by the saints. 5:9 will go on to talk of a new song being sung. This is to be connected with the offering of incense; we are being invited to behold a reflection of a temple service in Heaven itself. Edersheim describes the offering of incense in the temple as follows, and note his mention of the "new song" being sung afterwards, just as we have here in 5:8,9: "As the President gave the word of command which marked that 'the time of incense had come,' the whole multitude of the people without withdrew from the inner court and fell down before the Lord, spreading their hands in silent prayer. It is this most solemn period, when, throughout the vast temple-buildings, deep silence rested on the worshipping multitude, while within the sanctuary itself the priest laid the incense on the golden altar, and the cloud of odours rose up before the Lord, which serves as the image of heavenly things in Revelation (Rev. 8:1, Rev. 8:3, Rev. 8:4). The prayers offered by priests and people at this part of the service are recorded by tradition as follows: 'True it is that Thou art Jehovah, our God and the God of our fathers; our King and the King of our fathers; our Saviour and the Rock of our salvation; our Help and our Deliverer. Thy name is from everlasting, and there is no God beside Thee. A new song did they that were delivered sing to Thy name by the seashore. Together did all praise and own Thee as King, and say, 'Jehovah shall reign who saveth Israel'".

Revelation describes Angels rushing in response to human prayers, vials of judgment being poured out on earth as a result of the incense of prayer accumulating... this is the power of prayer. If prayer is like incense, we must give Dt. 33:10 RVmg. its full weight- that incense would come up "in your nostrils". This is how intimately we are invited to see our prayers being received by God; this is the power of prayer. The golden vials full of prayers of Rev. 5:8 become the vials of judgments which are poured out on the land in Rev. 8:5- so close is the connection between the events that mould history, and the incense of prayer.

5:9 *And they sing a new song, saying: Worthy are you to take the scroll and to open the seals of it. For you once were slain, and did purchase for God a people with your blood, people of every tribe, tongue and nation-* See on :8 for the significance of this "new song". Is. 42:9,10 says that we sing the "new song" now, because we sing / meditate of the "new things" which will be in the Kingdom. In that day, we will "sing a new song" (Rev. 5:9; 14:3). And yet this is undoubtedly picking up on the way in which we can *now* sing the 'new song', every morning (Ps. 33:3; 40:3; 96:1; 98:1; 144:9; 149:1).

This presents us with the picture of men and women redeemed from *every* kindred [tribe / clan], tongue [*glossa*- language], people [a group of people not necessarily of the same ethnicity] and nation [*ethnos*- ethnic group, lit. 'those of the same customs']. And they are found to be redeemed at the time when the book of life is opened, which is at the Lord's return. Which we believe to be imminent. This means that not only redeemed 'Yugoslavs' will stand before the throne in the end; but

Macedonians, Serbs, Croats, Slovenes, Montenegrins, Bosnians... every ethnic group, with every custom, will have representatives who will have believed the Truth and been saved. This idea is confirmed by considering how 70 bullocks had to be sacrificed at the feast of ingathering (Num. 29), prophetic as it was of the final ingathering of the redeemed. But 70 is the number of all Gentile nations found in Gen. 10. And it is written: "When he separated the sons of Adam, he set the bounds of the people according to the number of the children of Israel" (Dt. 32:8). A total of 70 went down with Jacob into Egypt; and thus 70 seems an appropriate number to connect with the entire Gentile world. And representatives of *all* of them will be finally ingathered. It seems highly doubtful to me that over the past 2,000 years, the Truth of Christ has been taken to every *ethnos*, tribe, clan, custom and language, especially in Africa and Asia. So it follows that only once *we* have done it in our generation will this come true. The brethren in those parts especially have work to do yet, it seems to me. And we should all support them as best we can. But these days, one only has to stand on the streets of London, Sydney or New York handing out fliers to reach every nation and tongue. I have a real belief that given the current rate of progress in preaching, the current generation *could* witness literally world-wide representation by those who understand true Christian doctrine- *if* we *all* do our bit. It is very difficult for me to reproduce in writing the kind of picture I have in my mind. But it is a thrilling and all consuming, all-demanding vision.

We are a purchased people, redeemed, bought out of slavery, by the Lord's sacrifice. A true appreciation of the Lord's work on the cross, a real ability to say that the Son of God loved *me* and gave Himself for *me*, will reflect itself in our attitude to materialism. The Lord gave His blood in order to purchase our body and our spirit for himself (1 Cor. 6:19,20; Rev. 5:9 RV). *Therefore* we must surrender our body and spirit, all that we have, to Him. We are not our own. To hold *anything* back is to deny the cross; to deny the Lord what He paid so terribly to possess: our lives, our hearts, our bodies.

The very close association of the Angels with their charges is shown by the Angels identifying themselves with their charges by saying that Christ had "redeemed us" out of every nation, and given them the hope of being king-priests in the future Kingdom (Rev. 5:9,10). Unto the Angels the world to come has not been put in subjection, nor do they belong to specific nations, but because they identify so closely with us they can speak in this way. Rev. 5:9 RVmg. speaks of the Angels in the Heavenly throne room, representing us, praising God that He had purchased men unto Himself "and madest them to be [AV "made us"] ... a kingdom... and they [AV "we"] shall reign on the earth" (Rev. 5:9,10). If the RV is correct, we have a picture here of our Angels thanking God in advance for the salvation which He has prepared for us their charges. It would seem from this that our 'guardian' Angel changes according to what we are trying to achieve for God. Similarly the great Angel of the Exodus appears to have been Moses' personal guardian because Moses and the Angel were working for the same ends.

5:10- see on Rev. 6:9.

*And made them to be a kingdom and priests to our God; and they shall reign upon the earth-* Several times so far in Revelation we have noted the faithful presented as enthroned priests, king-priests, after the order of Melchizedek. And the Lamb Himself is likewise presented. It's not that some will be kings and others priests; we shall be king-priests. If we can gain a clear picture of God's intended roles for the priests under the Law, we will have further insight into our future work as

king-priests. Through what He achieved for us on the cross, we have been made *now* king-priests, with the future hope of reigning on earth (Rev. 1:6; 5:10).

As noted in the introduction to chapter 5, this whole vision refers to the last day. The redeemed burst into praise when the Lamb takes the book of life to open it- they thank Him for redeeming them, and for making them king-priests who shall now reign on earth. This sounds like they are about to start reigning. The time when this is said is therefore that of the establishment of the Kingdom on earth. Seeing there is no conscious survival of death, it is hard to imagine how the redeemed could have said this to Jesus 2000 years ago, especially seeing that many of them were not then in existence. The vision goes on to the time of the total establishment of the Kingdom on earth, when all existence in heaven, earth and sea praise the Lamb (5:14).

5:11 *And I looked, and I heard a voice of many angels round about the throne and the living creatures and the elders; and the number of them was ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousands of thousands-* We are seeing a vision of the heavenly throne room, where the Angels represent before God the believers on earth. Now we have the kaleidoscope of images merging again; the Angels about the throne are the believers crying out in the joy of victory and final receipt of grace.

This huge number reflects Abraham's seed as innumerable. The living creatures in and around the throne symbolize the redeemed; see on 4:6. The great number of the redeemed could mean that many are saved relative to the wonder of salvation, seeing that many are called but few chosen; and there are plenty of other suggestions that the redeemed are but a minority amongst humanity. But on the other hand, the numbers are intended to be gawped at as huge. This needs to be given full weight by those who consider that only their tiny denomination or fellowship shall be saved.

5:12 *They were saying with a great voice: Worthy is the Lamb that has been slain to receive the power, riches, wisdom, might, honour, glory and blessing-* Angels and those faithful they represent upon earth (see on :11) are united in realizing that this wonderful salvation is thanks to the Lamb. Not the lion, but the Lamb, thanks to His death, the book of life has been opened and the reward given. The seven terms used are all elsewhere used about the power, riches etc. of the pagan world which has dominated the believers in their lifetimes. The glory of the kingdoms of this world is to be given to the Lamb.

5:13 *And I heard every created thing in heaven and on earth and under the earth and in the sea, and all that is in them, saying: To Him who sits on the throne and to the Lamb, be blessing, honour, glory and might, for ever and ever-* Ps. 69:34 speaks of how *everything* in the sea, heavens and on earth should praise God. This cannot refer to believers in all those places. Rev. 5:13 uses similar language to describe how every creature in the sea, under the earth and on the earth and in Heaven, all praised God for Christ's ascension into Heaven. The dead do not praise God. The impression is given that the whole natural creation will in some way render praise to God. But those under the earth in :3 are dead believers. Those under the sea are believers who died at sea who are to be resurrected when the sea gives up its dead (20:13). Those "on earth" are the believers who are still alive at the second coming. They together with those in heaven, the Angels (see on ;11), unite in praise.

5:14 *And the four living creatures said: Amen. And the elders fell down and worshiped-* On 4:6 we discerned that the living creatures, the cherubim, are a visual way of expressing God's manifestation; and in this case they refer to the believers, along with their Angel representatives in the court of Heaven. The elders likewise represent the believers and their Angel representatives. Every form of representation of the redeemed is portrayed as falling down in praise. The language of rapturous

praise of One by all is taken from the image of the Roman triumphs and coronation of Caesars. Again, the images of the imperial cult are being applied to the Lord Jesus; which was radical and subversive stuff in Roman society. It is no less subversive in our age, in spiritual terms.

## REVELATION CHAPTER 6

6:1 *And I looked when the Lamb opened the first of the seven seals; and I heard one of the four living creatures saying as with a voice of thunder: Come!* The living creatures as they are in Heaven represent God in manifestation through His Angels, who represent His people on earth. The voice of thunder is as it were God's voice. The contrast is between the "four beasts" of the cherubim, and the four beasts of Dan. 7 which will reappear later in Revelation. God's heavenly Kingdom is already triumphant over them; we are just waiting for the day when this is manifest on earth. This is the same conflict and contrast between the Lamb with seven heads of Rev. 5, and the various beasts with their heads and horns. The apparently invincible are conquered by the apparently weaker, whose power is so much greater. And this is the same principle we see in our lives of conflict with the flesh and the world systems structured around us. The invitation "Come!" is later repeated by John at the end of Revelation as an invitation to come and inherit the Kingdom. The Gospel is an invitation into the things of God, to see things from His Heavenly perspective, from the standpoint of His Kingdom. The repeated invitations here to "Come!" are rendered in some manuscripts as "Come and see!". In John's language, this has meant coming and seeing the things of the risen Lord (Jn. 20:1). It is His death and resurrection which has opened the things of Heaven.

### General Observations

The seven seals, seven trumpets and seven vials, subdivided as they are in places into subdivisions, all appear to be parallel. But they aren't necessarily describing the same events. I suggest the seals refer to the judgments to come upon God's people and land, Israel / the land promised to Abraham; and trumpets and vials describe God's commensurate judgment of the beast system which inflicts these judgments. The similarities are because as they have judged, so they will be judged. The cup they give others to drink must be drunk by themselves. And it could be argued that their judgment will be even more severe and complete. Thus in the seals, a fourth part of things are affected; in the trumpets, a third part; whilst the vials speak of total destruction. As with the judgments on Egypt, which form the basis for the seven vials, the people of God may initially be affected by the outpouring of those judgments, but those who are sealed are saved from them.

The vials are really bowls or cups poured out on the land. The same word is used in one of the Aramaic targums on Is. 51:17,22,23 concerning how the "cup" of judgment drunk by Jerusalem will be given to her judges, the beast system of latter day Babylon. This explains why the vials / bowls / cups are based around the plagues on Egypt, representing the abusers of Israel:

|                     |                                                  |
|---------------------|--------------------------------------------------|
| Vials in Revelation | Israel's experience and plagues on Egypt, Exodus |
|---------------------|--------------------------------------------------|

|                                                                                                                                                                                                               |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Boils 16:3,4                                                                                                                                                                                                  | 9:8-12                                                                                                                                                                                                                          |
| 2 and 3.<br>Water to blood,<br>water sources<br>contaminated,<br>16:6                                                                                                                                         | Water to<br>blood 7:14-21                                                                                                                                                                                                       |
| 4.Scorching<br>heat from the sun,<br>16:8,9                                                                                                                                                                   | This will<br>specifically not<br>come upon God's<br>people (Is. 49:10;<br>Ps. 121:5,6; Rev.<br>7:16), just as the<br>later plagues did<br>not harm the<br>Israelites in<br>Egypt.                                               |
| 5.Darkness<br>16:10,11                                                                                                                                                                                        | 10:21-23                                                                                                                                                                                                                        |
| 6.Gathering<br>to Armageddon-<br>perhaps<br>Jerusalem. The<br>word could mean<br>'The desirable<br>city', 'His fruitful<br>mountain', 'the<br>mount of<br>assembly'. It may<br>refer to the Mount<br>Megiddo. | Mount<br>Megiddo was<br>where repentant<br>Israel won a great<br>victory against<br>the Canaanites,<br>the tribes within<br>the land (Jud.<br>5:19).                                                                            |
| 7.Lightning,<br>plague                                                                                                                                                                                        | As on Egypt.<br>The reference is<br>also to Ez. 13:8-<br>16 which<br>describes such<br>things coming on<br>Jerusalem-<br>perhaps the idea<br>is that those who<br>now dominate<br>Jerusalem will be<br>punished in this<br>way. |

The first four seals, the four coloured horsemen, are based upon the horsemen of judgment in Zechariah 1, which vision is repeated in Zechariah 6 but with the difference that the four horsemen go out to judge the nations who have performed these judgments upon Israel, e.g. "the north country". These four horsemen inflict punishments and judgments which are full of Old Testament allusions to prophecies



concerning how God would judge His people, His land and specifically Jerusalem for their impenitence. Ezekiel 5-7 is full of the same language about what shall come upon Jerusalem, e.g. famine is described in the same language as in Revelation 6 (Ez. 4:16). The four judgments of Rev. 6:8 are those of Ez. 14:21- to come upon Jerusalem. The language of Jeremiah's prophecies against Judah are particularly alluded in these first four seals (Jer. 6:22-26; 14:11,12; 15:1,2; 16:4,5; 18:11-21; 21:8-10; 38:2; 44:11-14). And the language of the fifth seal is alluding to the Lord's word of judgment upon Jerusalem in Mt. 23:35. Most significantly, the language of the four horsemen is taken directly from the curses upon Israel for disobedience to the covenant in Dt. 32:23-35.

Clearly enough, beyond any question to the serious Bible student, the focus of the four horsemen is upon God's people in their land, and especially the city of Jerusalem, in the last days. The Old Testament allusions continue in the appendix to the seals which we find in Revelation 7:1-17. There, the sealing of some of God's people is obviously based upon Ez. 9:4, where the same was done to the faithful at the time of the Babylonian invasion.

The theme of 'seven' judgments coming upon the land surely connects with the claim that Mohammad waged seven military campaigns against the infidels in the land [promised to Abraham]. The Hadith several times speaks of the "seven military expeditions led by the Messenger of Allah himself (may peace be upon him)" (e.g. Book 19.4469), or of the "seven battles" he was victorious in (Book 19.4462). This would explain the seven fold structure of the seals-trumpets-vials. The Moslem pretenders to the pattern of Mohamad bring seven judgments upon Israel, and are punished by likewise receiving back seven judgments, drinking the cup they made others to drink. The Hadith claims that Mohammad predicted three cycles of calamities in the last days, which would be subdivided into various other calamities: "Hudhaifa b. al-Yaman reported: By Allah, I have the best knowledge amongst people about every turmoil which is going to appear in the period intervening me and the Last Hour; and it is not for the fact that Allah's Messenger (may peace be upon him) told me something confidentially pertaining to it and he did not tell anybody else about it, but it is because of the fact that I was present in the assembly in which he had been describing the turmoil. and he especially made a mention of three turmoils which would not spare anything and amongst these there would be turmoils like storms in the hot season" (41.6908). This is exactly the Biblical picture- of three cycles of judgments and turmoils in the land (seals-trumpets-vials), subdivided into various specific calamities. As the jihadists strive to obey the letter of their writings, they will thereby be fulfilling the outline picture of the last day crisis which is foretold in Revelation.

The typology of the invasions recorded in Judges as well as those of Babylon and Assyria teaches that the latter day Arab incursions during the period of prolonged downtreading will have consciously aimed to destroy the agriculture and even the physical structure of the land of Israel. Dt. 28 and Lev. 26, which have a specific application to the latter-day curses upon Israel, emphasize this curse of famine and its related problems of disease and death. This is exactly the language of the seal, trumpet and vial judgments of Rev. 6,9 and 16, largely falling upon the earth/land of Israel. Our Lord's prophecy of famines at the time of the end had its primary fulfilment in the land of Israel around A.D. 70 - and its secondary reference is fundamentally to the land of Israel too (Lk. 21:11), although this does not rule out this prophecy's partial reference to famines in the surrounding world also. It should be noted that the record of the curses in Lev. 26 splits them up into six

sections, each introduced by a phrase like, "If ye will not for this hearken unto me... then..." more curses would come (Lev. 26:14,18,21,23,27,36). It is tempting to associate this with the series of six judgments to be poured upon Israel and the Arabs as outlined in the six seals (Rev. 6) and six vials (Rev. 16), leading up to the seventh period, of Israel's repentance and Christ's Kingdom. There are many other points of contact between the curses and the language of the seals and vials. The implication of this is that there are at least six periods of God's appeal to Israel to repent through their trials, which they will refuse to accept. "If you will not for all this *hearken* unto me" (Lev. 26:18) may suggest that God's word will be spoken to Israel along with the trials. This again indicates that the Elijah ministry will operate within Israel during their period of Arab downtreading. "If you will not be *reformed* by me" (Lev. 26:23) uses a Hebrew word elsewhere translated 'to teach', defined by Strong as 'to chastise by words'. This provides further confirmation of the idea.

It's noteworthy that the seven seals and seven trumpets and seven vials all conclude with the seventh being the establishment of the Kingdom. So there are actually six judgments in each case. The Hadith (Book 41.7040) speaks of six signs before the last day: "Hasten in performing these good deeds (before these) six things (happen): (the appearance) of tribe Dijjal, the smoke, the beast of the earth, the rising of the sun from the west, the general turmoil (leading to large-scale massacre) and death of masses and individuals". These six are very similar to the things spoken of in the seals and trumpets- signs in the sun, mass death, smoke, beasts of the earth. The jihadists are seeking to consciously fulfil the Hadith and so, due to the allusions the Hadith and Koran make to Revelation, they will end up fulfilling God's word of their own volition.

#### The Seventh Seal?

It is my belief that prophecy is to some extent conditional, and the outcome is variable upon human repentance, God's gracious holding back of legitimate, prepared judgments, the intensity of His people's prayers etc. The lack of any detail about a seventh seal, even though it is opened, is significant. All we read is that there was silence in Heaven at that time for half an hour (Rev. 8:1). This has the same feel to it as the seven thunders whose details were specifically not written down (Rev. 10:4). Why mention them? I submit that the final judgments intended upon the land and God's people are not in fact going to be performed, although they are potentially prepared- because of God's gracious response to human repentance, prayer and the suffering of His dear people.

This idea that the seventh seal is not opened is confirmed by the observation that the sixth seal is the composite one that contains the trumpet and vial prophecies — the *sixth* seal and not the seventh.

| Sixth Seal            | Seven Trumpets             |
|-----------------------|----------------------------|
| (Revelation 6: 12-17) |                            |
| great earthquake      | great earthquake (11:13)   |
|                       | another earthquake (11:19) |

|                                                |                                                                               |
|------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| sun black                                      | third part<br>of sun smitten<br>(8: 12)                                       |
| moon as<br>blood                               | third part<br>of moon<br>smitten (8:12)                                       |
| stars fall<br>from heaven                      | "there fell<br>a great star<br>from heaven"<br>(8:10)                         |
|                                                | third part<br>of stars<br>smitten (8:12)                                      |
| the great<br>day of his<br>wrath               | "your<br>wrath is come"<br>(11:18)                                            |
| Sixth Seal<br>great<br>earthquake<br>sun black | Seven Vials<br>great earthquake<br>(16:18)<br>darkness in kingdom of<br>beast |
| islands moved                                  | every island fled<br>away (16:20)                                             |
| mountains<br>moved                             | mountains were not<br>found (16:20)                                           |
| the great day of<br>his wrath                  | the vials of the wrath<br>of God (16:1)                                       |

### The Seals and the Olivet Prophecy

It is clear enough that the Olivet Prophecy has application both to the "last days" of AD70 and also to our last days. Revelation is the Lord's expansion upon His words on Olivet- and therefore we should use this as a framework for interpreting the book. It applies to both the first century and also our last days, and the seals are perhaps the clearest example of this.

|               |              |              |                 |
|---------------|--------------|--------------|-----------------|
| Rev.<br>6:1,2 | Mt.<br>24:14 | Rev.<br>6:14 | Mt.<br>24:35    |
| :3,4          | :6,7         | :16          | Lk.<br>23:30    |
| :5,6          | :7           | :17          | Lk.<br>21:36    |
| :7,8          | :7           | 7:1          | Mt.<br>24:31    |
| :9            | :12          | :3           | Lk.<br>21:18,28 |
| :11           | :14          | :14          | Mt.<br>24:19,21 |

|     |     |     |              |
|-----|-----|-----|--------------|
| :12 | :7  | 8:3 | Lk.<br>21:36 |
| :13 | :32 | :5  | Mt.<br>24:27 |

John was told that the events of the seals "must take place"- *dei genesthai*. The Olivet prophecy uses the same phrase (Mt. 24:6; Lk. 21:9).

We have seen that the Olivet prophecy describes the events of both AD70 and our present last days, with special reference to the tribulation of God's people, both natural and spiritual. The connections between the Olivet prophecy and the seals would therefore indicate that the seals, and therefore much of Revelation, has reference to these same two time periods. Fairly conclusive evidence for a pre-AD70 date for Revelation has now been published. In any case, the connections with the Olivet prophecy cannot be shrugged off as incidental. The seals, then, can be applied to our latter day tribulation. There seems no reason to insist that they should be interpreted chronologically; they can quite comfortably be seen as describing different aspects of the same period. This is how series of judgments described in the prophets often have their fulfilment (notably in Isaiah), rather than being a chronological prophecy of events. Zech. 12:3-11 is a passage which contains seven occurrences of the phrase "In that day...". The passage does not have to be interpreted chronologically; this is a list of events which will occur around the same time, "in that day". They are snapshots of the same scene from different angles. The seals and the repeated references to a three and a half year tribulation period can be understood likewise; they do not necessarily refer to chronologically different events, but are giving different aspects of information about the same basic scene. The lack of strict chronological sequence in prophecy is a major feature of the Old Testament; thus a consideration of the phrase "in that day..." in Isaiah reveals that the context 'jumps around' all over the place, from the first coming of Christ to the Babylonian invasion to the Kingdom. There is no reason to think that Revelation is any different.

All the seals must be opened if a scroll is to be opened. The scroll doesn't become partly visible because one seal has been broken. I suggest the imagery is chosen in this way in order to lead us away from seeking to interpret the events of the seals as being continuous historic, consecutive events. Rather are they different aspects of the total picture of what has to happen before the book of life can be opened. The idea of opening a sealed scroll is obviously alluding to Dan. 12:1-4, where Daniel was told that the scroll would be opened specifically in the last days- i.e. the seals to it would be then removed. This means that we have to look to the last days for the time when the seals are removed.

In my youth I attended regular continuous historic studies of Revelation, noting carefully in my wide margined Bible the suggested fulfilments of the various seals, trumpets and vials in events during the Roman empire and subsequent European history. Some of these fitted better than others. I couldn't deny that there was a fairly good fit in some areas, but in others, eyebrows had to be raised. The fit seemed forced and lacked the ring of truth in terms of credible interpretation. We don't need to take a red pencil and put a line through all those interpretations. Like the continuous historical interpretations of the image in Daniel 2, they have a certain validity. But just as the image was specifically about a latter day entity which stands erect and complete in the land promised to Abraham in the last days, destroyed in totality by the Lord's return, so Revelation has its major fulfilment in the last days. Any shadowy fulfilments we may discern over history are incidental compared to the ultimate and main, intended thrust of latter day prophecy- which is focused upon the events in the

land promised to Abraham in the last days before Christ returns. We live at the end of human history; the previous fulfilments are but mere shadows compared to the ultimate reality which is now starting to unfold before our eyes.

#### The Horsemen

The Hadith claims that the Moslems will be as horsemen in the final conflict at the end of the age: "The Last Hour would not come until... there would be a terrible fight and the Muslims would prepare a detachment (for fighting unto death) which would not return but victorious... Allah will decree that the enemy should be routed... Allah's Messenger (may peace be upon him) said: I know their names and the names of their forefathers and the colour of their horses. They will be best horsemen on the surface of the earth on that day". (41.6927). As we find so often in Revelation, the descriptions of the main players are expressed in terms which fit admirably with Moslem self-understanding as expressed in the Koran and Hadith.

#### The Four Horsemen and Zechariah

The vision of horses going forth to bring judgment is clearly alluding to the similar vision in Zech. 1:8-12; 6:1-8, and we need to get a handle on what is in view there in order to understand how this will come true in the last days:

"I stared into the night, and there was a man mounted on a red horse! The horse was standing among the myrtle trees in a ravine. Behind him there were red, brown, and white horses. Then I asked, "Who are these, sir?" The messenger who was talking to me answered, "I will tell you who these are." The man who stood among the myrtle trees answered, "These are the ones whom the LORD sent out to wander throughout the earth." Then they reported to the angel of the LORD who stood among the myrtle trees, "We have wandered throughout the earth—and look!—the entire earth is at rest. Everything is quiet and peaceful." And the angel of the LORD replied, "LORD of the Heavenly Armies, how long will it be until you show mercy to Jerusalem and to the cities of Judah, with whom you have been angry for these past seventy years?"... Again I lifted my eyes and saw, and behold, four chariots came out from between two mountains. And the mountains were mountains of bronze. The first chariot had red horses, the second black horses, the third white horses, and the fourth chariot dappled horses—all of them strong. Then I answered and said to the angel who talked with me, "What are these, my lord?". And the angel answered and said to me, "These are going out to the four winds of heaven, after presenting themselves before the Lord of all the earth. The chariot with the black horses goes toward the north country, the white ones go after them, and the dappled ones go toward the south country." When the strong horses came out, they were impatient to go and patrol the earth. And he said, "Go, patrol the earth." So they patrolled the earth. Then he cried to me, "Behold, those who go toward the north country have set my Spirit at rest in the north country."

The horses of Zechariah 1 are those nations who have trampled up and down the earth / land of Israel, subduing it until it is quiet. The chariots / horses of Zechariah 6 are the Angel cherubim representatives of those nations, who are sent out against them in judgment. Such judgment is portended in chapter 1 also, where straight after the vision of the horses we read of the four horns who have abused Israel being cut off by the carpenter Messiah of Israel. Significantly, there is an Angel stationed with the horses in the valley from which they emerge, as if to show that the judgments upon the land were Angelically controlled; Israel was not at the hands of chance human evil, indeed the horses report back to the Angel. This sets the scene for the horses / chariots of chapter 6 going out in judgment against those nations. The land lying still and at rest is explained further in 1:11,12- it was because the cities of Judah were

lying in ruins after the horse powers had trampled over them. This all looks forward to how Jerusalem shall be trodden down in the last days, after the pattern of how the Babylonians trod it down (Is. 5:5; 28:18; 63:18; Lk. 21:24)- which is when this prophecy will have its final fulfilment. We can look, therefore, for the three or four entities which trod down the land and people of Israel to have their latter day equivalent, and a like judgment from Heaven. And this is what Revelation 6 is explaining in more detail- in a latter day context. The immediate message in Zechariah's time was therefore that a future treading down of the land and Jerusalem was to happen, but the silver lining of that cloud was that this would finally lead to the eternal restoration of Israel. This is exactly the same style as in Ezekiel 38; we noted in studying the context of that prophecy that it was given at the time when news of Jerusalem's fall had come to the rebellious captives in Babylon amongst whom Ezekiel was sitting. They were being told that another even worse desolation was to happen, patterned after the events they were now hearing of, and yet from this would come the eternal restoration of Israel in God's Kingdom on earth. But not immediately.

The two brass mountains of Zech. 6 are from where the horses / judgments issue forth- towards the north and south of Israel. The mountains must therefore be in central Israel. I suggest the mountains in view are both in Jerusalem- the Mount of Olives and Mount Zion, in between which is the valley of Jehoshaphat. These mountains and that valley are from where God's latter day judgments proceed (Joel 3:2,16; Zech. 14:14). Or it may be that they are the two mountains formed by the cleavage of the Mount of Olives predicted in Zech. 14:4, at which time "half of the mountain shall remove toward the north, and half toward the south". This would connect with the horses / chariots going out towards the north and south here in Zech. 6. Any difficulties with exact chronology may be accounted for by the suggestion that the meaning and nature of time will change in the time around the Lord's coming, as I have outlined at length in *The Last Days*.

The four horses / chariots are understood by most commentators to have connection with the four metals and beasts of Daniel's prophecies. Their connection with the four winds / spirits of the Heavens (Zech. 6:5) recalls the way that the four beasts of Daniel 7 arise as a result of the same four winds / spirits being active. I have explained elsewhere that the four metals and beasts of Daniel's prophecies refer to powers that will dominate the land and people of Israel in the last days, whatever historical application they may have had. The metals and beasts all exist together in the last days, because they are all judged together at the coming of Christ to earth.

Potential Fulfilments of the Horses of Zechariah Chapters 1 and 6

The way prophetic words can be rescheduled in fulfilment is demonstrated by the 70 years. They came to fulfilment at the time of Daniel's prayer in Dan. 9:2; but also at the fall of Babylon and edict of Cyrus (2 Chron. 36:22,23; Ezra 1:1); and yet also in the second year of Darius (Zech. 1:1,12). This latter period would have been timed from the actual destruction of the temple (2 Kings 25:2,8,9); whereas the captivity began before that. And the predicted restoration didn't happen as prophesied. But it will ultimately happen- at the Lord's return.

The little horn of Daniel 7 grows out of the fourth kingdom, represented by the fourth beast. But in Daniel 8, a very similar horn grows out of Greece, the third kingdom. We can therefore conclude that the antichrist figure of Daniel 8 would have appeared as an outgrowth of the Greek kingdom, and been destroyed by Messiah's coming. But this didn't happen, and Antiochus Epiphanes became but an incipient fulfilment of the antichrist of the last days. Zechariah, like Daniel, contains many

conditional prophecies- “And this shall come to pass, *if* you will diligently obey the voice of the Lord your God” (Zech. 6:15). Zech. 9:13 appears to be another such conditional prophecy, similar in reference to that of Daniel 8 about the possibility of Messiah’s coming at the time of the Greek empire. God says He will place Ephraim within the bow of Judah, to be fired at her enemies; and He would “raise up your sons, O Zion, against your sons, O Greece” (Zech. 9:13), leading to the final salvation of God’s people, the establishment of Messiah’s Kingdom, and her Messianic king coming unto her (Zech. 9:9). But this didn’t come true; the resistance of the Maccabees was not based on true spirituality, and the Romans took over control of the land from the Greeks. No Messianic Kingdom was established. This would explain the purposeful ambiguity of interpretation which there is in the image of Daniel 2; a good case can be made for the sequence Babylon-Media-Persia-Greece, and yet also for the sequence Babylon-Medo Persia- Greece-Rome. Daniel 8 predicts the breakup of the Greek empire after Alexander’s death into four horns, out of which a little horn arises (Dan. 8:8). The only other prophetic reference to four horns is again in Zechariah, when we read of how the four horns who had scattered God’s people were to be cut off by the carpenters (Zech. 1:18,19). The carpenters surely look forward to the carpenter Messiah. He could have appeared and cut off those four horns; but He did not, and so another prophetic sequence was allowed, in which another [fourth] beast arose, this time with ten horns, not just four. And in Revelation we find this developed further, in that seven heads also appear on the beast, and a whore rides the best, sitting upon [another?] seven hills / kingdoms. The number and ferocity of the enemies of God’s people seems to increase over time. If Israel had repented earlier, then all this would have been unnecessary. The three horses of Zechariah 1 thus become four horses in Zechariah 6. The fact the four cherubim chariots are sent out in judgment of those same coloured horses speaks of how all earthly entities have their representative Angels in Heaven.

This same situation can be found in the way that Zechariah 1 opens the prophecy with a vision of three kinds of horses- red, white and speckled. These represented the powers which had subdued the land of Judah and left it in the desolate state it was at the time of Zechariah (Zech. 1:12). It’s tempting to interpret them as Assyria, Babylon and Medo-Persia; or perhaps Babylon, Media and Persia. Straight away, we read of *four* horns, representing the powers who had desolated God’s people; and how they would be destroyed by the carpenters, surely looking forward to the carpenter Messiah. And the vision of Zech. 6 has *four* and not *three* kinds of horses- red, black, white and speckled. This may be Zechariah’s way of saying that because of Israel’s inability to fulfil the required spiritual preconditions, the longer version of the prophetic program was going to come into play. Although as always, there is the distinct message of hope, that finally God’s triumphant purpose with Israel shall come to realization.

#### The Final Scenario

The vision of Zechariah 6 could have had fulfilment in Zechariah’s time; the three horses of Gentile oppressors in chapter 1 are matched by the horses of the Divine cherubim in chapter 6, who are sent forth to judge those powers. But there are four of them- because by the time of chapter 6, the prophetic program had been extended to coax repentance from Israel. And now in Revelation 6, we have a similar scene in the last days- four horses of different colours are sent out into the earth / land of Israel. The context is the same- these are the powers which will dominate Israel in the last days, under Angelic control, in order to bring about her repentance and eternal restitution to God. I don’t think we have to look for four literal entities. The ‘four’

clearly connect with the four beasts and four metals, and the speckled horses of Zechariah invite comparison with the feet of iron and clay; especially if we read the Hebrew *amots* in Zech. 6:3 as meaning 'red' [AV "bay"]- they would be speckled with red, as if the strength of the red horse was partially in them. Until Zechariah's time, there had been various horses of Gentile powers, the fulfilments of the metals of Daniel 2 and the beasts of Daniel 7, dominating the land and people of Israel. They had trodden down the land and people until they were silent (Zech. 1:10,11). This treading down is to happen in the last days, when the image stands complete, and all the beasts exist together. This is the burden of the first four horses pictured in the first four seals.

We need not look for these events to come chronologically; for all the seals have to be removed before a scroll can be opened. The event of 'opening the scroll' is presented by the metaphor as one event, and the seals are presenting different aspects of the events required for the scroll to be opened.

The horses were "sent" by Yahweh "to walk to and fro through the land" (Zech. 1:10). These are the same Hebrew words found in Jer. 25:9 for how Yahweh "sent... all the families of the north...and Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon" into the land. The horses are thus confirmed to represent the nations who had subjugated the land. And the same Hebrew words are found in Hab. 1:6: "I raise up the Chaldeans... which shall march [s.w. "walk to and fro"] through the land". These horses are effectively parallel with the four horns who 'scattered' Israel (Zech. 1:19). Israel were to be "scattered [s.w.] beyond the Euphrates" (1 Kings 14:15); the number four is not perhaps referring to four specific powers, but rather alluding to the way that Israel's domination according to Daniel's visions was to be by 'four' entities.

The coloured horsemen of Revelation 6 are therefore full of reference to the nations who subdued the land and people of Israel, and also to the Angelic powers who ultimately permitted those nations to do that work, and who finally judged them. The horsemen are presented in Revelation as clearly under the control of the living creatures, the Angel cherubim, and that was the same as in Zechariah. The first horse was white and conquering; this doesn't mean that firstly there was a period of military victory, followed by one of hunger and necessity. The seals don't have to be chronologically separate from each other. The opening of the book of life will require a military conquering of the land / earth of Israel, as well as the sufferings of the other seals [hunger, famine etc.].

6:2 *And I looked and beheld a white horse, and he that sat thereon had a bow, and there was given to him a crown, and he came forth conquering and to conquer-* In the first century application to the "last days" which culminated in AD70, the rider on the white horse "bent on conquest" would initially refer to the victorious Roman march towards Jerusalem in Spring 67. The rider takes peace from the earth (cp. Mt. 24:6,7)- the disruption of the '*pax Romana*', the peace of the Roman empire. "Caesar has obtained for us a profound peace. There are neither wars nor battles" (Epictetus, *Discourses* 3:13:9). The riders on the black and pale horses would then refer to the famine and death resulting from the Jewish war.

The description of the rider on the white horse going out to conquer is intended to be linked with the description of the Lord Jesus in Rev. 19:11. Yet the rider of Rev. 6:1,2 is part of the judgments upon the land. It refers to an anti-Christ, a fake Christ, the ultimate false Messiah; perhaps the Islamic Mahdi.

The white horse here must be understood as the latter day version of the white horse of Zechariah chapters 1 and 6, which went forth to conquer the land promised to Abraham and to tread down its cities and inhabitants. The simple point is that the land



of Israel will be conquered; the current technological advantage of the IDF and the bravado of the state of Israel will not ultimately save them. Only faith in Christ will. And yet the figure of a rider on a white horse is used later in Revelation regarding the Lord Jesus. This doesn't mean that it is the Lord Jesus who is in view here in 6:2. For often in Revelation, the powers and entities who dominate God's land and people are presented in terms elsewhere used about the true Kingdom of God and its king. Thus the whore who rides the beast represents the city of Babylon, but the descriptions used have clear connection with the description of the true city of God. This is not to say that they are one and the same. It means that the antiChrist is a fake, imitation Christ, and his Kingdom is likewise an imitation of the true. So the white horse conqueror of the land is an antiChrist- bearing in mind that the Greek idea of *anti* carries the idea of an equivalent or imitation, rather than [as in Latin] someone 'against'. The Hadith in book 19.4388.4390, 4392 and 4437 claim that Mohammad rode on a white horse during the time of the early Moslem battles with the Jews. The language of conquering is very current amongst Islamic jihadists: "Allah hath decreed: Lo! I verily shall conquer" (Sura 58.21).

The horses invite connection with the locusts like horses and "the sound of chariots of many horses rushing to battle" in Rev. 9:7,9,17, which I later interpret as the hordes of Israel's neighbours from the Euphrates who will rush into the land promised to Abraham to destroy it. Horses are frequently used in the Bible to represent military action. In Rev. 14:20, blood comes up unto the horse bridles- these invaders meet a terrible destruction. The final destruction of Israel's enemies features the destruction of their horses (Rev. 19:18), and that prophecy compares their horses with the white horse of the Lord Jesus and His followers also on white horses (Rev. 19:11,14,19,21). This juxtaposition of 'horses' suggests that the white horse conqueror of 6:2 is not Christ, but rather an antichrist, an imitation, fake Christ.

The rider on the white horse was "given" a crown, a *stephanos* of victory, and with that 'gift' he goes out to 'conquer'. We find the same Greek words translated 'given' and 'to conquer' in Rev. 13:7, where "the mouth" of the beast is "given... to make war with the saints [God's people, Israel] and to *overcome* [s.w. "conquer"] them". The mouth of the beast is his publicity agent, the false prophet, the little horn- the antichrist figure. And it is this same individual who is pictured in 6:2 as riding the white horse, an imitation Jesus, an anti-Christ. The same Greek word translated conquer / overcome is also found in a similar context in Rev. 11:7: "The beast that ascends out of the bottomless pit [having experienced a death and amazing 'resurrection'] shall make war against them [the two faithful witnesses] and shall *overcome* them and kill them". But the same word is found frequently throughout Revelation and John's letters, speaking of how ultimately God's people shall conquer / overcome. The point is, they will temporarily be overcome, but they shall gloriously overcome at the end. "A troop shall overcome him, but he shall overcome at the last" (Gen. 49:19).

The crown of the antichrist connects with how the horns of the beast have crowns. His bow connects him with Gog, the individual leader of the assembly of ten nations from within the land promised to Abraham who will invade Israel in the last days. In Gog's defeat by Divine intervention, his bow will be smitten out of his hand (Ez. 39:3). The bow is the weapon of Esau / Edom, the father of the Arab peoples (Gen. 27:3); and it is repeatedly used about the weaponry of the Babylonians and Assyrians and the neighbours of Israel, whose desolation of the land and Jerusalem are the prototypes of the latter day desolation (Is. 5:28; 13:18; Jer. 4:29; 6:23; 46:9; 50:29,42; 51:56). Jeremiah perceived that the bow of Babylon was effectively the bow

of Yahweh, drawn against His own people in judgment (Lam. 2:4; 3:12). Again we see that the horses, their riders and weaponry are also those of God, just as the coloured horses of Zech. 1 are matched by the same coloured horses which comprised the Angel cherubim in Zech. 6. Zech. 9:10 speaks of how the horse, chariot and battle how will be “cut off from Jerusalem” just prior to the establishment of God’s Kingdom on earth. Here in Rev. 6:2 we have the development of that situation- and the focus will finally be upon Jerusalem as the holy city of Islam, now proclaimed by some Jihadist theologians as more holy than Mecca.

6:3 *And when he opened the second seal, I heard the second living creature saying: Come!- See on :1*

6:4 *And another horse came forth, a red horse, and to him that sat thereon it was given to take peace from the earth, that they should slay one another. And there was given to him a great sword-* The red horse is literally a flame / fire coloured horse [*purrhos*]. The same root word is found in describing how the horses released from beyond the Euphrates spit “fire” [*pur*] upon the earth / land of Israel, with which they destroy the people there (Rev. 9:17,18). Perhaps the “fire, smoke and brimstone” which they bring upon the land means that they consciously think they are bringing Divine judgment upon Israel- this is indeed the radical Islamist position. Or there may be reference to some form of warfare which makes use of fire, some kind of white phosphorous or other weaponry which creates intense fire which water cannot quench. The only other time we meet the colour ‘flame-coloured’ [“red”] is at Rev. 12:3, the great red dragon. This horse is therefore to be associated with that system of latter day domination of the land.

Constantly, the comfort is given that none of these calamities upon the land are a result of radical evil, evil that is totally free of any control; for “it was given unto him...”. All the traumas to come upon the land are under direct Divine control through the Angels.

“Him that sat thereon” is the same phrase used of how the whore sits upon the beast (Rev. 17:1,3,9,15; 18:7). The whore is the embodiment of the beast, of the same red colour as the red horse. They are symbols for the same thing- an entity of latter day domination of the land which is controlled by an individual-the antichrist, the rider of the horse, the rider of the beast.

It is ultimately the Lord Jesus who sends a sword rather than peace upon the earth (Mt. 10:34); the horses and their woes are all, therefore, under His direct control. There seems to be allusion to Mt. 10:34 because Rev. 6:4 goes on to say the red horse rider has a sword, and he causes those in the earth / land to kill each other. Mt. 10:34 records the Lord teaching that He had come to send a sword in the form of division between persons. The red horse rider causes those living in the territory of the land promised to Abraham to kill each other; and this is the scenario we currently see unfolding in that very area. It is conflicting forms of religion which are clearly at the root of that conflict; this is the characteristic of the feet of mixed iron and clay, that will not cleave to each other.

Revelation is written in Greek but is clearly a Hebrew book. We can safely assume that the *ge* / “the earth” in view is the same as the Hebrew *eretz*- the land of Israel. And this is indeed how *ge* is often specifically used in the New Testament in speaking of the land of Israel. In Matthew alone: Mt. 2:6,20,21; 5:35; 9:26; 12:42 the Queen of Sheba came from the uttermost part of the *ge*, the land promised to Abraham; 17:25; 23:35 “all the righteous blood shed upon the earth”; 27:35. And almost every reference to *ge* in Revelation can be understood as the land promised to

Abraham [this of course is not the same as the territory currently occupied by the state of Israel].

The great sword was "given unto him". Again the idea is that these invasions of the land are allowed and even empowered by God. The idea of being given a sword likewise implies that the horse and rider are executing judgment from God. This is how present day Israel are crying out for serious Divine judgment, from the immorality of Tel Aviv to the arrogance of the IDF, overarched by a refusal to repent for crucifying God's Son and refusing Him to this day.

The Greek translated "sword" is the word for a knife; being given a great knife has connotations of sacrifice. We think of Islamic State beheadings, publicized by them with pictures of jihadists holding a knife over their victims. This is exactly the picture we have here. This is what we are seeing before our eyes on the media.

*6:5 And when he opened the third seal, I heard the third living creature saying: Come! And I looked and beheld a black horse, and he that sat thereon had a balance in his hand-* The black horses of Zech. 6 were sent into "the north country", associating this horse with the invasion from the latter day Assyria / Babylon. It could be that the message is simply that there will be terrible famine in the land, and tiny amounts of food will cost much money. But the rider has the balances in his hand, as if he is the merchant and seller. We think of the prediction that none will be able to buy or sell without the mark of the beast; the suggestion may be that the invading power sells food to some within the land for high prices. Islamic militants insist upon conversion to their form of Islam but will make concessions if a *jizya* tax is paid. So it may be that we have here a description of how famine will come about for God's people as a result of such actions.

*6:6 And I heard as it were a voice in the midst of the four living creatures saying: A measure of wheat for a denarius and three measures of barley for a denarius-* Comparing the prices here with those mentioned for food during the siege of Samaria in 2 Kings 7, these prices are very high but not as great as when "an ass's head was sold for 80 shekels, and the fourth part of a cab of dove's dung for five" (2 Kings 6.25). The figures are not such as we would expect if real famine, and particularly the famine conditions of a siege, were in view. A man could buy three times as much barley as he needed for a day's wage. This isn't talking about actual death by famine, but rather food being sold at grossly inflated prices compared to income- that's surely the impression being created. This would fit my suggestion that the dominators of Israel are pictured as selling food at grossly inflated prices to those under their control, in a manner reminiscent of the Jewish ghettos of central Europe under Nazi domination. Corn, wine and oil were the three main crops of Palestine, and the three are mentioned together in Dt. 7:13; 11:14; 28:51; Hos. 2:8,22. We are again being told that these events are specific to the land of Israel and not the whole world. Shortages of these things were the result of Israel's disobedience to the covenant; and they would be given again if Israel were obedient (Lev. 26:26; Ez. 4:16).

*And do not damage the oil and the wine-* The GNB appears to be closest to interpreting this: "Do not damage the olive trees and the vineyards!", as if this is a command or edict. Perhaps the allusion is to the way that during the famine in the time John was writing, Domitian ordered the prosecution of those who allowed their vineyards to go out of cultivation or who cut them down in order to grow food. In this case, we have a picture of extreme famine, along with prosperity- to the point that the ruling elite ordered that the vineyards must not be cut down, lest they have no wine. This was how it was during the famine in Domitian's time- a shortage of grain but an abundance of wine. This is exactly the kind of inequality we see in the world today

and which will be seen in the land promised to Abraham in the last days. Possibly Jewish wealth contrasted to Arab need.

The Greek translated "hurt" occurs several times later in Revelation, also in the sense of hurting or damaging. The Angel of Rev. 7:2,3 is told not to "hurt" the physical land until God's servants have been sealed. And likewise in Rev. 9:4, there is the proviso that men must be hurt, but not the plants of the land. The word is used about the hurting of the people on the earth (Rev. 9:10,19), and the faithful are initially not "hurt"- until they are killed after they have completed their witness (Rev. 11:5). The voice that states "hurt not the olive trees and the vineyards" comes from between the four beasts- it is an Angelic limitation placed upon the damagers of the land / people in the land promised to Abraham. The sense may be that initially, the physical land is not to be damaged; the people of God, and then the entire dwellers in the land, are to be 'hurt', and not the physical land. Therefore the lack of food created by the rider on the black horse would not be because of famine, but rather as I suggested- because of selling food at high prices as a form of destruction of those who refuse to convert to the Islamic State.

Another consideration is that the phrase could be rendered "Hands off our oil and wine!". Oil and wine occur together in pictures of abundance and luxurious living (Num. 18:12; Dt. 7:13; 8:8; 28:51; 2 Chron. 11:11; 32:28; Prov. 21:17; Jer. 40:40; Joel 2:24); and note especially that these are part of the luxury of the Babylon-beast system in Rev. 18:13. The implication could be that the desolators of Israel enjoy a brief period of opulence, having grabbed the wealth of Israel and the Jews, and submitting those they have conquered to heavy *jizya* tax and exorbitant prices for food.

6:7 *And when he opened the fourth seal, I heard the voice of the fourth living creature saying: Come!- See on :1.*

6:8 *And I looked and beheld a pale horse, and he that sat upon him. His name was Death, and Hades followed behind him. And there was given to them authority over a quarter of the earth, to kill with sword and with famine and with death and by the wild beasts of the earth-* The plural "given unto *them*" presumably refers to death and hades. It's unclear whether "the fourth part of the earth" is geographical, or refers to a quarter of the population. The idea which we meet in the Revelation of 'parts' of the land and people being damaged or killed is in line with the Koran, which speaking of judging "the children of Israel" says that Moslems are "to cut off a part of those who disbelieve" (Sura 7.127).

As it stands, it seems redundant to say that death and the grave [*hades*] kill with sword, famine, wild beasts and death. How can 'death' be one of the four listed methods of killing? Perhaps it refers to some specific kind of death- a death penalty of execution (the word is used in this way in Mt. 10:21; 15:4; 20:18). Likewise how can any one horse rider have power over wild animals? The first century fulfilment was clearly in Christians being thrown to the lions; a related word is used for how Paul fought with wild beasts (1 Cor. 15:21). I would suggest that the latter day fulfilment will be in that those who refuse to convert will meet their end in one of four ways at the hands of this horse rider- death by the sword, i.e. in battle; by controlled and enforced starvation, as in the Nazi death camps; "death" in the sense of the death penalty; or death by being thrown to wild animals, as was done to the early Christians by the Romans.

The Greek word translated "sword" here is *rhompaiā*, which has already been used of that proceeding from the mouth of the Lord Jesus (1:16; 2:12,16). It is connected not

so much with killing in battle or war, but with deliberate, judicial, putting to death. This recalls the Islamic jihadist approach to killing those who will not convert to Islam- they are seen as being killed in a judicial sense, before a court of Moslems who are both judge, jury and prosecution, as well as the execution squad.

The four judgments mentioned here clearly allude to the judgments upon the land of Israel for disobedience (Lev. 26:21-26), and also to Ez. 14:21: "I send upon Jerusalem my four disastrous acts of judgment, sword, famine, wild beasts, and pestilence, to cut off from it man and beast!". The 'fourth part' of the land that is thus judged is therefore likely to be Jerusalem. Again we see that the location of the 'earth' is not the entire globe but the land promised to Abraham. The Ezekiel passage goes on to say that out of those judgments will come forth a repentant remnant- which is the same picture we have throughout latter day prophecy. It is this remnant which will enable the return of Christ to Israel. The same pattern is to be found in Ez. 33:27-29; the four judgments on the land, involving a total desolation, result in the repentance of the remnant: "Thus says the Lord Yahweh: As I live, surely those who are in the waste places shall fall by the sword; and him who is in the open field will I give to the animals to be devoured; and those who are in the strongholds and in the caves shall die of the pestilence. I will make the land a desolation and an astonishment; the pride of her power shall cease and the mountains of Israel shall be desolate [i.e. not producing food- leading to famine], so that none shall pass through. Then shall they know that I am Yahweh, when I have made the land a desolation and an astonishment, because of all their abominations which they have committed".

6:9- see on Lk. 18:7; Dan. 5:23; Rom. 14:8,9.

*And when he opened the fifth seal, I saw underneath the altar the souls of those that had been slain for the word of God and for the testimony which they held-* All the people of God make "testimony". That is a major theme of Revelation. The image here may not, therefore, have to refer to the deaths of some specific martyrs at a specific point in time. The allusion is to how "The blood of the bull the priest shall pour out at the base of the altar of burnt offering" (Lev. 4:7). We are all committed to a sacrificial death, because we were baptized into the death of Jesus. We are living sacrifices. They were told that vengeance for them would only come when the full number of martyrs had been made up; and that rather sounds like the idea of there being a specific number of believers, which once arrived at will trigger the Lord's return [when "the full number of the Gentiles are come in", Rom. 11:25]. We are all the martyrs. That is the idea. The Jewish Christians were tempted to look to the Maccabean martyrs and emulate them. But the true witness / martyrdom was for the witness of Jesus, following Him who was the faithful and true witness. We are all to make that witness, rather than merely being supporters of others who are showcased as martyrs.

The fact the people are 'slain' on the altar connects with our comment on 'death' in 6:8. These are those slain by the Islamic militants for refusing to convert to their false religion. The allusion is to the blood at the base of the altar from the sacrifices, representing the blood or lives lived of the faithful who had been sacrificed. It is blood which is under the altar; the "souls" are represented by the blood. The witness of their lives, who they essentially were, cried out to God, just as Abel's blood cried out. Cain, his brother, becomes the prototype of Israel's latter day persecutors- it is their own half-brothers, their Arab neighbours, who slay them. The Hebrew for 'Cain' is the root of the word 'Canaan'. The persecutors of the faithful are Canaan- the inhabitants of Canaan, Israel's aggressive neighbours

In their death they as it were died with their Lord, the slain lamb (Rev. 5:6). The Greek suggests to be butchered, which is absolutely the behaviour of the jihadists to their victims. Note that those in view are not necessarily Western hostages, but those who are butchered for the sake of their witness to God's word. What we are seeing in the butchering of any who get in the way of the Islamic militants in the 'earth' / land promised to Abraham is a precursor of what can be expected on a wider scale, especially of true Christians witnessing to God's word.

The believer's death is a pouring out of blood on the altar (Phil. 2:17 Gk.), which is language highly appropriate to the Lord's death. It follows from this that the death of one in Christ is the pinnacle of their spiritual maturity, as the Lord's death was the pinnacle of His. It is a spiritual victory, more than the temporal domination of the flesh which it can appear.

Their preaching God's word was a *marturia*, a legal testament at court, and this was the basis of their martyrdom. The jihadists believe that all who refuse to accept their version of Islam must in some form come before an Islamic court, often presided over by themselves as both judge and prosecution, and then be legally butchered as a result. From their perspective, they are not guilty of wanton butchering; they claim they are doing it in fulfilment of Muslim legal requirements. The parallel is in Rev. 20:4: "Them that had been beheaded for the testimony of Jesus and for the word of God; and such as worshipped not the Beast nor his image and received not his mark". The 'slaying' is particularly by beheading; and Islam is the only world religion today which legitimizes and practices beheading. And they are publicly doing it.

Seeing that there is no conscious survival of death, could this not refer to the guardian Angels of the former martyrs, crying out for the blood of their charges to be avenged? They are *so* closely identified with them that they can ask for "our blood" to be avenged. It's apparent enough that this is not the people themselves speaking- for they are dead. Surely then it refers to their Angels, who identify so strongly with them? Perhaps in the same way, Rev. 5:10 has guardian Angels thanking Jesus for making "us" king-priests to reign on earth. And when the believers are finally glorified, there is an ecstatic voice in Heaven, exalting that the Lamb's wife has made herself ready (Rev. 19:6). Surely this must refer to the Angels rejoicing that their charges have finally made it to salvation? We, for whom they laboured perhaps for centuries, preparing our genetic pool [note how the Angels "prepared" Edom unto destruction long before it happened, Ez. 35:6], and the myriad of circumstances we would meet which were designed to bring us towards the Kingdom. No wonder they will be so ecstatic. Or in another figure, the blood of the dead believers cries out from under the altar, demanding vengeance on this world: on the Catholic, Protestant, Babylonian, Roman, Nazi, Soviet systems that slew them for their faith (Rev. 6:9). To God, their blood is a voice, just as real as the voice of Abel, which cried out (in a figure) for judgment against Cain (Gen. 4:10). After their death, those who had already died are spoken of as being given "white robes" and being told to rest a bit longer. Yet the white robe is given at baptism; a man may cast off Christ, but the prodigal is given again the robe if he returns (Lk. 15:22 s.w.); we are given white robes in this life through our acceptance of the blood of Christ and living in response to that redemption (Rev. 7:13,14; 22:14 Gk.). God giving believers white robes after their death can surely only be understood as His remembrance of how in their lives they had put on those robes. But His view of time is different, and He sees them as doing it again and again, as He considers how they had died for His cause and how thereby He will surely raise them. This is just as we would relive in our own minds the baptism of one of our children who has died. We know of course that there is no

immortal soul, and that we personally feel nothing in death. But there is an immortal spirit, in that who we essentially are, our personality, lives on in the memory of a loving Father.

6:10 *And they cried with a great voice, saying: How long, O Master, the holy and true, until you judge the inhabitants of the earth and avenge our blood?*- Just as the Lord cried with a loud voice at His death (Mt. 27:46,50; Lk. 23:46). The suffering and even death experienced by the faithful during the tribulation will identify them with the crucifixion sufferings of their Lord. In Revelation, it is usually an Angel who 'cries with a loud voice' (Rev. 5:2,12; 7:2,10; 8:13; 10:3; 11:12,15; 12:10; 14:2,7,9,15; 16:1,17; 18:2; 19:17- a very considerable theme). We have here another example of Revelation's theme that the believers on earth have their position reflected in Heaven, by Angels in the court of Heaven. Their representative Angels loudly proclaimed to the court of Heaven the injustice done. It was not so much they themselves who cried out, seeing that death is unconsciousness, but the witness of their lives [their 'soul', the 'blood'] represented by their Angels before the throne of God in Heaven.

There is no conscious survival of death. But the lives of believers are remembered before God, and He has dialogue with them in the sense that we have chats in our mind with our loved ones who have died. For they live on in our hearts, as proclaimed on many gravestones. The fact God has such conversations with us after our death... simply shows His love for us. The faithful calling for vengeance on their adversaries is clearly based upon the parable of the widow crying out for justice in Lk. 18. She is promised that vengeance will come "speedily", just as here the response is that after a "little longer" (:11), vengeance will come. Revelation comforts believers that their sufferings at the hands of systems of evil are only for "a short time" or "a little while" (Rev. 6:11; 12:12; 17:10). But this is from Heaven's perspective. For those 'on the ground' suffering persecution and death during that "short time", this would give perspective. But it would only be comforting if they accepted Heaven's perspective, as taught in Revelation. Believing in the ultimate return of Jesus and the eternity of God's Kingdom on earth... this enables us to locate our own sufferings, even if they last a lifetime, within the broader perspective of eternity. The comfort that suffering is only 'for a moment' only finds meaning if we accept the reality of the eternity ahead. In this sense, the Lord's return is "soon". But the woman in Lk. 18 prayed during her lifetime, not after her death. The extension of the idea here in Rev. 6 may therefore lead us to understand that our prayers are remembered by God, and the answer is still 'worked on' even after our death.

Rev. 6:10; 13:15; 14:9 describe the persecuted Christian remnant of the last days in the language of Daniel. The conclusion is that they (we?) will find strength to endure through the understanding of prophecy. Daniel's spirit of "How long...?" is so exactly reflective of the attitude of all God's children down the years that it is hard to deny that Daniel is being framed as the representative of all the saints. Indeed, these very words are quoted in Rev. 6:10 concerning the attitude of the slain saints of the last days.

"How long, O Lord" is clearly alluding to Is. 6:11-13: "Lord, how long? He answered, Until the cities are waste without inhabitant and houses without man and the land becomes utterly waste, and Yahweh has removed men far away, and the forsaken places are many in the midst of the land. If there is a tenth left in it, that also will in turn be consumed: as a terebinth, and as an oak, whose stump remains when they are felled; so the holy seed is its stump". The context is the same- an utter desolation of the land by an 'Assyrian' invader, resulting in the repentance of the

remnant. This is the context of many other 'How long?' laments in the prophets- the answer is 'Until Israel repent!' (Jer. 4:14 "Jerusalem, wash your heart from wickedness, that you may be saved. How long shall your evil thoughts lodge within you?"; 4:21; 12:4; 23:26; 31:22 "How long will you go here and there, you backsliding daughter?"; Hos. 8:5 "How long will it be until they are capable of purity?"; Hab. 1:2). Particularly relevant is Zech. 1:12: "How long will You not have mercy on Jerusalem and on the cities of Judah". The significance is in the fact that the vision of four coloured horsemen is based upon Zechariah 1, and so the "how long?" theme continues the allusion. Again we note that the territory in view is Jerusalem and the land promised to Abraham. The answer of Dan. 12:6,7 to the question is more precise; effectively it is the same as the answers which said 'How long? Until Israel repent!': "How long shall it be to the end of these wonders? I heard the man clothed in linen, who was above the waters of the river, when he held up his right hand and his left hand to heaven, and swore by Him who lives forever that it shall be for a time, times, and a half; and when they have made an end of breaking in pieces the power of the holy people, all these things shall be finished". Daniel's answer to 'How long?' appears to be 'Until the three and a half year period is finished, and God's people have been thoroughly broken in pieces'. For it seems it is only then that the necessary repentance will occur. Those interested in trying to work out a chronology of events might take note that these particular believers must be killed earlier in the tribulation period. The cry 'How long until justice?' is answered by the news that three and a half years tribulation must pass, and more must yet be killed.

The "holy and true" Lord is defined earlier in Rev. 3:7 as the Lord Jesus. This is not the usual Greek word translated "Lord". We have to think long and hard as to why a word with such negative connotation as *despotes* should be used about the Lord Jesus. Why not the more natural *kurios*? I suggest that the more tyrannical and draconian *despotes* is used exactly because a despot, the antichrist, is then reigning over the land, and has caused the death of these believers. But for them, their *despotes*, their Lord, is not him, but the true Christ. Hence they address Him as the "holy and true" *despotes*- hinting that there is a false one, one that is *not* holy, to whom they have refused allegiance.

"Do You not judge" perhaps needs the emphasis placed on 'You', seeing they have been judged by some human court and punished with death; see on 6:9 *Their testimony*. The same words for "avenge our blood" are found in Rev. 19:2- the blood of God's servants is avenged at the hands of the "great whore". The horse riders of the seals are therefore part of the beast system dominated by the whore. The avenging of Israel's blood will be by God's "sacrifice in the north country by the river Euphrates" in the latter day of Yahweh's vengeance, the day of the Lord of Hosts (Jer. 46:10). This suggests again that the shedders of Israel's blood are those from the north country, Babylon / Assyria, who come from the Euphrates. And this is the current source of jihadist Islam.

Their call for vengeance means 'Avenge our blood on those men who shed it'. To describe those men as 'earth dwellers' seems somehow redundant and rather too obviously self-evident- unless there is some particular significance to being an earth dweller. We need to understand the 'earth' here as specifically the land promised to Abraham, and not the whole planet. The significance of the murderers as being 'land dwellers' is perhaps because these people have come over the Euphrates, the northern border of the land promised to Abraham, and they are invaders now dwelling in the land. The other NT references to dwelling in the earth / land are specifically about dwelling in the land promised to Abraham; Abraham moved into the land of Canaan,



in which land the Israelites now dwelt (Acts 7:4); Abraham dwelt in the land of promise (Heb. 11:9). The earth / land dwellers are singled out for particular judgment because of how they have persecuted God's people (Rev. 8:13; 11:10; 12:12). It's as if being an earth dweller is a cause for judgment; this is far more understandable if we understand the term to refer to neighbouring invaders who are now dwelling in the land promised to Abraham in the last days. The earth dwellers are those who worship the beast and give power to him (Rev. 13:8,12,14; 17:2). The domain of the beast is the 'earth' or land promised to Abraham, seeing it is based upon the fourth beast of Daniel 7, whom we have demonstrated to have this specific dominion. Rev. 14:6 draws a distinction between the earth dwellers and every nation, tongue and tribe- which would lend support to our definition of them as the invaders who now dwell in the land promised to Abraham in the last days.

Ez. 32:30, Rev. 6:10 and some other passages give the impression that the dead are somehow alive. And yet we know from an impregnable array of Bible passages that the dead are unconscious. These 'difficult passages' are surely giving us a window on God's timeless perspective. Apart from the death state, there are other examples of where future things are spoken of as having already happened (e.g. Ez. 39:29). God's future actions are simply spoken of as having already happened (e.g. Ez. 32:18). Living believers are called "martyrs" even before they are killed, because God foresees that they will be killed (Rev. 11:7).

6:11- see on Mk. 13:13.

*And each one was given a white robe, and they were told that they should wait a little longer-* The gift of the white robe is in response to their cry for justice. And they are comforted that vengeance will come in a "little" time; and they are given white robes, the sign of acceptance at the wedding banquet. He that overcomes is given a white robe (Rev. 3:4,5). But it is given on their death. The whole judgment process is a metaphor, and it is for our benefit. The "judge" has already decided the outcome on a man's death. White is also the colour Revelation uses for victory, and Roman generals wore white robes after victory. From Heaven's perspective, they have 'won'. The empire had in fact lost; and through their death, the martyrs were in fact the victors. The desire for vengeance is therefore 'only' a desire to see the victory manifest on earth openly. It is the deep sense of our own personal salvation, by utter grace, which is to be the comfort that God will finally judge this world, and justice will be given. But we are reminded that justice will be given by being reminded of our own salvation- by grace. And that tempers our desire for justice and vengeance. For we ourselves were saved by grace alone. The desire for vengeance is natural to us all. But we are not to judge, but to leave judgment to God. And we are assured here that the coming of His Son in judgment is going to meet all those human needs for recognition and vengeance; and therefore, we will not in fact meet those needs by trying to take things into our own hands in this life. God's comfort to the oppressed is that He will wipe away their tears (Rev. 7:17; 21:4). Revelation speaks particularly to those being persecuted. And "wipe away" is the word used in the LXX for the wiping away of evil people and systems from the face of this earth (Gen. 7:4,23; Ex. 17:14; Dt. 9:14). But it is also used of the wiping away of our sins (Ps. 51:3; Is.43:25). The two ideas go together. The final comfort will be that truly we have been forgiven for our own serious sins; and also, in the same comfort, there is the assurance that the evil of sinful men has also been permanently taken away. The cry "How long...?" is based upon Zech. 1:12: "Lord Almighty, how long will you withhold mercy from Jerusalem and from the towns of Judah, with which you have been angry with these seventy years?".

Again, the idea is that the cry for action is not simply for vengeance but also for the grace of forgiveness. A deep awareness of our own personal failure and dependence upon grace... gives dimension to our desire to see vengeance upon others. This too is the message of the white robes being given in response to their cry for vengeance; because they have "washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb" (Rev. 7:13,14). White robes are a sign that they have repented and been forgiven and counted righteous. And that is the response to the cry for 'justice now' and revenge.

Those who come through the great tribulation of the last days are clothed in the same way (Rev. 7:9,13,14), and this tribulation is clearly that which the Lord in the Olivet prophecy predicted for the last days immediately prior to His coming. Revelation aims to give us Heaven's perspective on events on earth; the martyred believers are counted as being clothed in white robes, they are assured of salvation. This is an interesting parody of the belief of Islamic jihadists, that their martyrdom will assure them of salvation. This will in fact be the case for those whom they kill. It is Angels who are presented as clothed in white robes (Mt. 28:3; Mk. 16:5; Jn. 20:12; Acts 1:10; Rev. 4:4). Again we see how the martyred believers have representative Angels whose clothing is as theirs will be finally. The promised reward of white robes is also for those who "overcome" whatever they must pass through in their generation (Rev. 3:4,5,18). Our sufferings are in that sense no less than the terrible persecution unto death which is in view here in Rev. 6 and 7 for the latter day believers in the land promised to Abraham. The Lord is intensely aware of the suffering and death of every individual believer in Him; hence "Unto every one of them...".

The same word for "rest" is used in Rev. 14:13 about those blessed ones who die in the very last days before the Lord's coming, during the great tribulation: ""Write this: Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord from now on." "Blessed indeed," says the Spirit, "that they may rest from their labours, for their deeds follow them!"". The "little season" is the very same term used in Rev. 20:3 of the "little season" during which the dragon is let loose on earth after his 'death' in the bottomless pit and he has recovered from his deadly wound. This connection strengthens the suggestion that Rev. 20:3 speaks of events at the time of the establishment of the '1000 years', and not at their end [AV "fulfilled" can be translated 'established']. The 'season', Gk. *chronos*, "time", is perhaps part of the time, times and half a time of the tribulation period of Dan. 7:25; 12:7; Rev. 12:14.

*Until the number of their fellow servants and brothers who were to be killed as they had been, was completed-* Note the AV makes a mess of translating this. The significance of "every one of them" is that God is working to a precise number. Paul speaks of how the full number of the Gentiles must come in (Rom. 11:25). God is working to an exact number, and this is why the calendar date of the Lord's return and the outworking of these prophetic possibilities is to some extent open ended. The sooner that number come in, the sooner the number to be slain are slain, then He will come. "Killed" doesn't have to mean that this passage only refers to those martyred in violent death. The idea is rather of sacrifice, that the life of every believer is poured out as an offering to God; we are all living sacrifices, and our death is the final outpouring of our blood, to flow to the bottom of the altar. There were runnels on the altar to enable this to happen. In this sense, the blood of the believers is associated with the altar, which represents the Lord Jesus (Heb. 13:10 "We have an altar...").

Note how the work of preaching is paralleled with the experience of suffering for that latter day witness which makes the converts. The full number of Gentile converts will be reached when the full number of preachers have died. We can expect there to be conversions to Christ despite the obvious risk of death for making that conversion. That is what happened in the first century, and that is the power of the Gospel. The Gospel must be preached for a witness to all nations, and the end shall come (Mt. 24:14). But *marturion*, "witness", can simply be a legal term referring to testimony or witness in a prosecution; through the Islamic 'trials' of those who refuse to convert, the Gospel will be spread by the witness of those who are slain for their testimony and refusal to convert to Islam. The "times of the Gentiles" (Lk. 21:24) appear to refer to the time of Gentile domination of Jerusalem, and yet it is reapplied to refer to the time of Gentile opportunity to learn the Gospel, according to how Paul alludes to it in Rom. 11:25.

"Fellowservants" suggests those who serve the same Master, the Lord Jesus. The difference between fellowservants and brothers may be intentional. Perhaps the group in view are Jewish Christians of the last days; their fellowservants are their fellow Christian believers, and their brothers may refer to other Jews. Of course the two terms may be used in simple parallelism, referring to the same group. Another insight is that "fellowservant and brother" is only elsewhere used in Revelation about the Angels (Rev. 19:10; 22:9). There must be some purpose in this. Perhaps the hint again is that these slain believers have their representative Angels in the court of Heaven. Their agony and crisis, just as for all of us, is intensely recognized and portrayed in Heaven. This is why there is an Angelic voice *in Heaven* rejoicing that the false accuser "of our brothers" has been cast down (Rev. 12:10). The Angels see us their charges on earth as their brothers. Truly man is not alone, beyond the steely silence of the skies there is huge Angelic activity and support for all our witness for His sake. Note how in 19:10 the brothers have the testimony of Jesus; in 22:9 the brothers are the prophets. A prophet is strictly one who speaks forth God's word, not necessarily a predictor of the future. The prophets in the new Israel therefore are the preachers, the forth tellers, of God's word. The view of Judaism was that the prophets were a category of white faced saints somehow of an altogether higher category than ordinary members of God's people. But the Lord Jesus created a new Israel in which all His people were preachers, and thus all are prophets.

The sixth seal concludes with the great day of the Lamb coming, with the fig tree casting her immature figs (cp. the fig tree parable), and great changes in Heaven and earth. This must have some reference to the second coming. If it does not, then where is the principle of interpreting Scripture by Scripture? This sixth seal appears to be an extension of the fifth seal, where persecuted believers plead for vengeance to be shown against their persecutors. They are assured of their salvation (by being given white robes), and rest "for a little season, until their fellowservants also and their brethren, that should be killed as they were, should be fulfilled" (6:11). Once these brethren were killed, the Lord would take vengeance- by His second coming. It follows that this violent persecution of brethren is going on before the second coming. Perhaps the "little season" refers to the three-and-a-half-year period? The persecuted souls under the altar would then describe the early sufferers in the persecution. It should be noted that once a set number of believers have been slain, then the Lord will come (Rev. 6:11 Gk. and modern versions). This must mean that there will be violent slaying of believers going on right up until the Lord's return (so the Greek for

“killed” implies); which suggests that we have yet to see violent persecution before the second coming.

A further indication that the fifth seal concerns the last days is in the obvious connection between the altar scene and the parable of the widow crying for vengeance on her persecuting adversary; she would be avenged "when the Son of man comes" (Lk. 18:3,5). Thus the intense prayers of the persecuted saints of the last days are what prompt the second coming; at least, this is how God wishes us to see it. If our prayers were that fervent now, perhaps the tribulation could be avoided. Revelation 7 then describes how the 144,000 are sealed to ultimately survive the persecution, and due to the accumulated intense prayer of the persecuted believers, the seventh seal of judgment is poured out on the world (8:3,4), resulting finally in the establishment of the Kingdom.

After their death, those who had already died are spoken of as being given “white robes” and being told to rest a bit longer (Rev. 6:11). Yet the white robe is given at baptism; a man may cast off Christ, but the prodigal is given again the robe if he returns (Lk. 15:22 s.w.); we are given white robes in this life through our acceptance of the blood of Christ and living in response to that redemption (Rev. 7:13,14; 22:14 Gk.). God giving believers white robes after their death can surely only be understood as His remembrance of how in their lives they had put on those robes. But His view of time is different, and He sees them as doing it again and again, as He considers how they had died for His cause and how thereby He will surely raise them. This is just as we would relive in our own minds the baptism of a child who has died. We know of course that there is no immortal soul, and that we personally feel nothing in death. But there is an immortal spirit, in that who we essentially are, our personality, lives on in the memory of a loving Father.

6:12 *And I watched as he opened the sixth seal. There was a great earthquake, the sun became as black as sackcloth made of hair, and the whole moon turned the colour of blood-* This along with the sun becoming dark recalls the Lord's crucifixion, and is another reason to think that the sufferings of the believers in the tribulation lead them to a close identity with His sufferings, that they might share in His resurrection. And that principle in fact works out in all our sufferings, in whatever generation and context we live in. Mt. 24:7 says that there will be a number of earthquakes in the last days. And it may be that the various earthquakes recorded in Revelation are not all referring to the same earthquake. Zech. 14:5 associates an earthquake with the coming of Christ after Jerusalem has fallen to her latter day enemies. The seals appear to refer to the sufferings experienced by God's people (both natural and spiritual) in the land promised to Abraham; just as the horses of Zechariah 1 speak of the judgments upon the land, and then the horses of Zechariah 6 speak of the judgments upon those nations. The seven vials and the various judgments upon the beast system include similar language, but appear to refer to the Divine judgments upon the persecutors of His people. These judgments will be similar to those they meted out to Israel, according to the principle that the beast system is tormented with the same things they brought upon their victims (Rev. 18:7), being made to drink the same cup she gave others (Rev. 18:6). The earthquake of Rev. 6:12 is matched by the earthquakes of judgment upon Israel's persecutors in Rev. 11:13,19; 16:18.

"The sun became... black" is a clear example of the language of the Olivet prophecy about the last days being developed in Revelation. The allusion is to Mt. 24:29: "During [Gk. *meta*, AV "after"] the tribulation of those days, the sun shall be darkened and the moon shall not give her light". We are clearly being pointed to a

distinctly latter day interpretation. Whatever application this had in the first century (Acts 2:20), the final and main fulfilment is in our last days. The first century fulfilment may have included a literal element in the events of AD70 and the Lord's crucifixion, and so it may also be in the last days. But sun, moon and stars are introduced to us in Joseph's dream as symbols of Israel. We have here for sure a prediction of the total destruction of the Jewish system. It may be that initially a third part of the sun and moon are darkened (Rev. 8:12)- which suggests a literal darkening is not primarily in view. Rev. 9:2 says that the sun is darkened as a result of the beast system arising from the bottomless pit, the deadly wound healed and the vicious revival of the beast system [after an initial Western destruction of them?]. The sun being darkened and the moon turning into blood is the sign that the day of the Lord is about to come (Joel 2:31,32). We are to understand this event as happening immediately prior to the Lord's coming.

"Black as sackcloth of hair, the moon became as blood" are terms hard to interpret. Hair sackcloth would suggest mourning; but why would the sun mourn in this context? And why would the moon become blood? What really could that mean in terms of symbology? I see no very credible explanation in terms of symbology. But I came across online Special Paper 186 [1981] of the Geological Society of America, by Troy Pewe: *Desert Dust: Origin, Characteristics and Effect on Man*. In this very technical article, the author makes the throwaway comment that the words "Black as sackcloth of hair, the moon became as blood" are a superb description of an approaching dust storm coming out of the desert. The Americans called their 1991 military operation in Iraq 'Desert Storm'. The picture is of an army coming out of the desert; and this is exactly relevant to the invasion of Israel by the hordes who burst across the Euphrates and move across the desert to engulf God's land and people.

6:13 *And the stars of the heaven fell to the earth*- This would continue the usage of sun, moon and stars as in Joseph's dream- as symbols of the Jewish system (Gen. 37:9; Dt. 1:10). The sons of Jacob, the stars, will fall into the earth, losing their power and station. This is a direct quotation of the Lord's words about the situation in Israel and Jerusalem specifically in the very last days (Mt. 24:29). We note that the King of Babylon sought to exalt himself above the stars (Is. 14:13)- the Jews in Jerusalem. The connection may imply that the latter day king of Babylon is briefly successful in this, and those stars fall. The latter day little horn, the antichrist, succeeds in dominating God's people and casting them down like stars to the ground, and stamping upon them (Dan. 8:10). This is the basis for the Lord's prediction that Jerusalem shall be trodden down, stamped upon, by the Gentiles. We note the repeated focus upon the fate of Jerusalem and its inhabitants.

*As a fig tree casts her unripe figs when she is shaken by a great wind*- The fig tree and fruit on it is a Biblical picture of Israel's spiritual state. The "winter fruit" or "unripe fruit" refers to fruit that came covered in leaves in the Summer, but never turned ripe. It therefore remained until the Winter, and the strong Winter wind blew it off the tree. The reference is clear- Israel had time to produce spiritual fruit, but they didn't; and so the falling of their stars to earth is precisely because they had not brought forth spiritual fruit. The falling of the figs is parallel with the falling of the stars. The same word for "shaken" is used of the shaking of the Jewish heaven and earth / system in Heb. 12:26. The "mighty wind" continues the allusion to a desert dust storm which has caused the moon to look like blood (see on 6:12). The wind is representative of both an Angel and also an army. Recall how the four winds / Angels

blow on the sea to cause the beasts to arise in Dan. 7. The mighty wind of the invaders is Angelically directed by God. The day of judgment at Christ's coming is likened to a mighty wind in Mt. 7:25,27. This mighty wind is to be connected with the four winds we will soon encounter in Rev. 7:1, which will blow upon the earth / land in judgment but will not affect the sealed, righteous remnant. The strong wind blows away the unripe fruit. It could be that the singular mighty wind prepares the way for the four winds of chapter 7, replete as they are with connection with the four winds of Daniel 7 which cause the beasts to arise in domination of the land.

6:14 *And the sky was removed as a scroll when it is rolled up*- Remember this is all in the context of the scroll being opened by the lamb. For that book to be opened, the scroll / heaven [NEV "sky"] of political Israel has to be closed and removed for ever. The Old Testament passage in view here in this section is clearly Is. 34:4-8. This however speaks of God's final judgment of Edom, which is Esau (Gen. 36:1,8). Revelation 6 is talking about judgments against Israel; but the point is that what latter day Esau / Edom does to Jacob will be done to them: "All of the army of the sky will be dissolved, the sky will be rolled up like a scroll, and all its armies will fade away, as a leaf fades from off a vine or a fig tree. For My sword has drunk its fill in the sky. Behold, it will come down on Edom and on the people of My curse for judgement. Yahweh's sword is filled with blood, it is covered with fat, with the blood of lambs and goats, with the fat of the kidneys of rams; for Yahweh has a sacrifice in Bozrah and a great slaughter in the land of Edom. The wild oxen will come down with them and the young bulls with the mighty bulls; and their land will be drunken with blood and their dust made greasy with fat. For Yahweh has a day of vengeance, a year of recompense for the cause of Zion".

*And every mountain and island were moved out of their places*- In the first century application, the removal of every mountain would refer to the Roman legions flattening the approach roads: "[Vespasian] sent both footmen and horsemen to level the road, which was mountainous and rocky" (Josephus, *Wars of the Jews* 3.7.3). Having outlined the mountainous setting of Jotapata, Josephus says that Vespasian decided "to raise a bank against that part of the wall which was practicable" (*Wars* 3.7.8).

I mentioned in notes at the beginning of Revelation 6 that the things done to Israel / the land during the seals are then repeated to Israel's abusers during the trumpets and vial judgments. The cup they made her drink must be drunk by them. And in keeping with this, the same ideas are found in Rev. 16:20- when Babylon falls, "every island fled away, and the mountains were not found". However, the repetition of the terms shows that literal islands and mountains are not in view- they cannot totally disappear twice. The supporters of Israel, the powers represented by mountains and islands, those who seemed so stable and eternally fixed in their place, will remove; just as the figurative mountains and islands supportive of Babylon will likewise. I have explained elsewhere that the West must fall or be rendered ineffective.

The final tribulation of Israel will be at the same time as the Elijah ministry; and the intention is to bring down the mountains, making a smooth way for the second coming of the Lord Jesus (Is. 40:4; Lk. 3:5). These judgments, involving mountains moving, are all part of that preparatory process.

6:15 *And the kings of the earth, the princes, the chief captains, the rich, the strong and every slave and freeman*- The kings of the land are parallel with the stars who fall from the sky, the heavens and earth who are rolled up. The leading lights of the Jewish system are the kings of the land. The kings of the land are described later

in Revelation as facing judgment for their support of the beast against Israel. The current Jewish rulers of the land are to be replaced, therefore, by a new set of rulers of the land; who will be punished with the same judgment they meted out to the rulers whom they overthrew. The “princes” (AV “great men”) translates the same Greek word found in Rev. 18:23 about how the great men of the earth supported Babylon but would now be judged. Indeed, the terms used here in 6:15 are elsewhere found about those who will be judged in the land for having supported Babylon. The Jewish mighty ones, the stars and heavens, will be replaced, however briefly, by those of the Babylon / beast system. Likewise “chief captains” is found again in Rev. 19:18. The wide range of people listed here in 6:15 stretch right across society; and similar words are used about the entire range who accept the mark of the beast (Rev. 13:16) and follow the beast (Rev. 19:18). Jewish society in the Israel of today is to be replaced by that of their invaders and the system of the beast. We note that the whole fabric of society is included here- from kings to slaves. God's judgment will affect all. None are exempt.

*Hide themselves in the caves and in the rocks of the mountains-* This hugging of the earth is a result of the stars and unripe figs falling to the earth (:13). The kings of the land are thus connected with the stars and unripe figs- representative of Israel's unspiritual leadership. The allusion is to Is. 2:19-21, which was initially addressed to the proud Jews who were in Jerusalem just prior to the Assyrian invasion. They are the prototypes of arrogant, self-assured Israel in the land today: “Men shall go into the caves of the rocks and into the holes of the earth from before the terror of Yahweh, and from the glory of His majesty, when He arises to shake the earth mightily. In that day men shall cast away their idols of silver and their idols of gold which have been made for themselves to worship, to the moles and to the bats; to go into the caverns of the rocks and into the clefts of the ragged rocks, from before the terror of Yahweh, and from the glory of His majesty, when He arises to shake the earth mightily”. But Isaiah 2 speaks of this hiding in the rocks as part of the preparatory process for the establishment of the Kingdom of God on earth, on the tops of the very mountains where men only recently had been hiding themselves (Is. 2:2-4). Yet again, we are dealing with last days language, and also specifically about the situation in and around Jerusalem.

The hiding in caves from the face of the Lamb recalls the desire of those in Jerusalem living just before the Babylonian invasion: they wanted to hide themselves from the Lord's presence (Jer. 23:24). Likewise the Jews of Amos 9:3 sought to hide themselves in the mountains of Carmel. The idea of hiding from the Lamb very much suggests the kings of the land in view are Jewish rulers of Israel. The Lamb's wrath was being manifested through the events of the seals, and the Jewish leadership desperately seek to hide from it.

Living in the caves and mountains recalls the behaviour of the faithful in Heb. 11:38. Perhaps that connection is purposeful, to hint that through all this suffering, a minority will come to faith in Christ and repentance.

In the first century fulfilment, the ideas of hiding in caves, wishing the rocks to fall on them etc. refers to how the Jews hid underground in the 67-70 war. "On the following days [the Romans] searched the hiding places, and fell upon those that were underground and in the caverns" (Josephus, *Wars of the Jews* 3.7.36). The Lord had told the women who watched His death that they would ask the mountains and hills to fall upon them to cover them (Lk. 23:29,30 cp. Mt. 24:1,2,19,34).

6:16 *And they said to the mountains and to the rocks: Fall on us-* This again is a quotation from the Lord's words about the judgment to come upon Israel because of

their crucifixion of Him (Lk. 23:30). It is also a quotation from Hos. 10:8, when because of "the sin of Israel... they shall say to the mountains, Cover us, and to the hills, Fall on us". My point is that these passages are all talking specifically about Israelites; the kings / rulers of the land of the sixth seal are Jews in the last days within an Israel that is to be crushed amidst unspeakable abuse and atrocity, as the pent up Moslem and Arab wrath of centuries explodes upon them. The Hosea passage in its context speaks of Israel lamenting that they have no human leaders any more (Hos. 10:3,7) and how "the nations shall be gathered against them" (Hos. 10:10). This is precisely the message of the sixth seal- the heavens / stars of the Jewish system fall, sun and moon no longer shine, and all nations are gathered together against Jerusalem at Armageddon.

*And hide us from the presence of Him that sits on the throne, and from the anger of the Lamb-* There are multiple Old Testament statements that in the final time of Israel's sufferings, God will hide His face from them (e.g. Dt. 31:17,18; 32:20; Ez. 39:29; Mic. 3:4). This is from their perspective- the reality is, according to this insight here, that Israel themselves seek to hide from His face [NEV "presence"]. If the reference is to God enthroned in Heaven, this fear seems rather misplaced. Would sinful men experiencing judgment really feel they were in the presence of the throne of God in Heaven, and wish to run away from the one enthroned? The reference is more appropriately understood in a futuristic sense. In some sense, Jesus is now visibly enthroned, on the throne of David in Jerusalem, and the sinful Jews slink away from His throne, just as the rejected are pictured doing in 1 Jn. 2:28 Gk.. Rev. 4:2,9 have introduced the Lord Jesus as enthroned *at His return*. These sinful Jewish leaders have some sense of this, and wish to slink away from His presence in rejection. These people seek to be hid from the face / presence of the wrathful Lamb, but in 14:10 we read of how some will be tormented in the presence / before the face of the Lamb. Their desire to escape His judgment doesn't come to anything.

Note the juxtaposition of ideas in 'the wrath of the lamb'. It is not simply that the Lord died as a lamb but returns as a rampant lion. He will have both lion and lamb aspects at His return. God's character is not just partly severe, partly gracious. His grace and His judgment of sin are wonderfully interconnected within His character. Thus destruction comes from Shaddai, the fruitful, blessing one (Is. 13:6); and the meek, harmless Lamb has great wrath (Rev. 6:16,17).

Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today and forever. Who He was then, as He walked around Palestine 2000 years ago, the lamb for sinners slain, is who He will essentially be at His second coming and judgment. It's not quite so that He was once a meek lamb but will roar back as an angry aggressive lion of Judah. Revelation brings out the paradox of "the wrath of *the lamb*"- not the roaring lion. Even in condemning men, His basic passion for humanity, His pain for the lost, comes out. Thus He will call those whom He rejects "Friend", just as He addressed even Judas, a man not fit to breathe the same air as He did. And in any case, it was in His role as the lion of Judah that He opened the seals through His death, not at His return. In His mortality He was the one who served rather than the one who sat at meat; and when He returns He will again come forth and serve us, His Divine nature notwithstanding. He so earnestly desired that even the wicked children of Jerusalem who did Him to death should be gathered together into His Kingdom. As He was, so He will be, and so He is even now.

6:17 *For the great day of their anger comes, and who is able to stand?*- The situation clearly refers to the last day. The Old Testament 'day of wrath' is usually against Israel and her leaders; and these are in view here, the kings of the land. The



Babylonian invasion was the day of wrath (Dt. 29:28; Jer. 32:31; 44:6; Lam. 1:12; 2:1.21.22; Zeph. 2:2,3). The same word translated “wrath” is used by the Lord in the Olivet Prophecy concerning how there shall be “wrath upon this people”. The people of Israel are therefore those who suffer under the sixth seal. “The great day” is Joel’s “great and notable day of the Lord”, the second coming. Jude 6 uses the very expression in talking about “the judgment of the great day”, “the great day of God Almighty” of Rev. 16:14.

"And who shall be able to stand?" alludes to Mal. 3:1-3 concerning the coming of the latter day Elijah prophet to Israel: “Behold, I send My messenger, and he will prepare the way before Me; and the Lord, whom you seek, will suddenly come to His temple; and the messenger of the covenant, whom you desire, behold, He comes! says Yahweh of Armies. But who can endure the day of His coming? And *who will stand* when He appears? For He is like a refiner’s fire, and like launderer’s soap; and He will sit as a refiner and purifier of silver, and He will purify the sons of Levi, and refine them as gold and silver”. At the time of the sixth seal, Elijah (or the Elijah ministry) will be active in Israel amongst Jewish people. Those who do not respond to this ministry will be unable to stand before the Lord.

## REVELATION CHAPTER 7

### Revelation 7: The 144,000

The seals speak of the latter day outpouring of judgment and trouble upon the land and people of Israel, perhaps throughout the entire territory of the land promised to Abraham. God’s judgments on His people are never simply the wrath of a powerful Deity; they are intended to elicit repentance. They are His appeal to men. After the seals, we read of the sealing of 144,000 from the twelve tribes of Israel. This could be all purely symbolic- 12 tribes multiplied by the 12 disciples, making 144, and thousands of them, speaking therefore of Jews who had come to Christ. But the laboured repetition of the “12,000” and the names of each tribe is striking. It may simply be that the Lord wishes to stress how every single one of those latter day believers is known to Him. Or it could be a literal number, and the ethnicity / tribal origins of the Jews is known to the Lord. But I somewhat doubt that kind of literalism is to found in Revelation or the entire apocalyptic genre. Perhaps there is a geographical reference- Jews from the entire extent of the land and tribal allotments of Israel.

### The Seals and Islam

Reading through the seals is like reading parts of the Koran and Hadith which speak of the judgments which Islam wishes upon the Jews. This is not simply because the Koran is full of garbled allusions to the Old and New Testaments [e.g. Sura 2.249 confuses several Bible stories: “And when Saul set out with the army, he said: Lo! Allah will try you by [the ordeal of] a river. Whosoever therefore drinketh thereof he is not of me, and whosoever tasteth it not he is of me, save him who taketh [thereof] in the hollow of his hand. But they drank thereof, all save a few of them. And after he had crossed [the river], he and those who believed with him, they said: We have no power this day against Goliath and his hosts. But those who knew that they would meet Allah exclaimed: How many a little company hath overcome a mighty host by Allah's leave! Allah is with the steadfast”]. The reality is that radical Islamists, in strict obedience to the Koran, will seek to bring these judgments upon the people and

land of Israel because they think this is what the Koran tells them to do; and in so doing they will fulfil Revelation. For the kind of brutality they practice is only possible for a person who has been brainwashed with religious or political philosophy. That's why jihadist volunteers are firstly sent for weeks of 'teaching' before being sent to fight. The kind of extreme, severe abuse of Israel which is required by the language of Revelation and Daniel 7 is such that it would require people fuelled by deep religious programming to execute it. The Quran often speaks of God's severity against the Jews because of their supposed sins against Mohammad and refusal to accept Islam, e.g. Sura 2.211: "Ask of the Children of Israel how many a clear revelation we gave them! He who altereth the grace of Allah after it hath come unto him [for him], lo! Allah is severe in punishment". This is the reasoning which will inspire the Moslems to abuse the Jews so intensely. "Because of the wrongdoing of the Jews... we have prepared for those of them who disbelieve a painful doom" (Sura 4.160,161). Unashamed aggression is taught by the Koran multiple times, e.g. Sura 9.123 "O ye who believe! Fight those of the disbelievers who are near to you, and let them find harshness in you". "Then seized I those who disbelieved, and how intense was my abhorrence!" (Sura 35.26). And so we could continue:

"Fight (slay and kill) those who do not believe in Allah, nor in the last day (judgement day), nor do they prohibit what Allah and His Messenger have prohibited, nor they follow the religion of truth (the religion of Islam) out of those who have been given the Book (Jews and Christians), until they pay the tax, in acknowledgment of superiority and (recognition that) they are in a state of subjection (to Islam)" (Sura 9:29).

"Worst among men in enmity to the believers (Muslims) wilt thou find the Jews and pagans" (Sura 5:82).

"O ye who believe, take not the Jews and the Christians for your friends and protectors. They are but friends and protectors to each other, and he amongst you that turns to them for friendship is one of them Verily, Allah guideth not a people unjust (Jews and Christians)" (Sura 5:51).

"Those who reject Islam among the people of the book (Jews and Christians) and among the polytheists (all other religions) will be in hell fire to dwell in there for ever and they are the worst of creatures" (Sura 98:6).

Not only Revelation, but many other latter day prophecies are full of language strikingly similar to that found in the Koran. The jihadist Moslems seek to obey the Koran, and by doing so, they will be fulfilling Bible prophecy about the last days. For example, Joel 2:6 LXX speaks of how in the final day of the Lord, Israel will be invaded by a latter day Assyrian, "a numerous and strong people" (:2), and "Before them shall the people [of Israel] be crushed: every face shall be as the blackness of a caldron (AV "gather blackness")". The Koran in Sura 7.106 speaks of this happening at the last day, when Moslems will blacken the faces of those who refuse to convert to their religion: "On the Day when [some] faces will be whitened and [some] faces will be blackened; and as for those whose faces have been blackened, it will be said unto them: Disbelieved ye after your [profession of] belief? Then taste the punishment for that ye disbelieved".

The punishments of the seals are the very punishments which the Koran says must be brought upon the Jews in order to make them repent and accept Islam and that Mohammed was a messenger to them: "We shall test you with fear, hunger, loss of wealth, lives and fruits [so that] when afflicted with calamity [they will] say, Truly! To Allah we belong and truly, to Him we shall return" (Surah 2.155,156). These

calamities will indeed cause a remnant to repent- but return to the God of Israel, rather than convert to Islam. Surah 4.160,161 and the Hadith [expansions] upon it speak of starving the Jews and torturing them, which is how I interpreted Rev. 6:5-8: "Because of the wrongdoing of the Jews we forbade them good things which were [before] made lawful unto them, and because of their much hindering from Allah's way, and of their taking usury when they were forbidden it, and of their devouring people's wealth by false pretences, We have prepared for those of them who disbelieve a painful doom".

Sura 17, *Al-Isra*, is about future Moslem judgments upon "The children of Israel". Sura 17.7,8 speaks of how latter day Moslems will repeat the historical judgments of the Jews upon them. This explains why some Jihadist groups see themselves as the revival of Babylon and Assyria: "So, when the time for the second [of the judgments] came [we roused against you others of our slaves] to ravage you, and to enter the Temple even as they entered it the first time, and to lay waste all that they conquered with an utter wasting. It may be that your Lord will have mercy on you, but if ye repeat [the crime] we shall repeat [the punishment], and we have appointed hell a dungeon for the disbelievers". The language of utter wasting and taking the temple mount is exactly that of latter day Bible prophecies about what is to happen to Israel in the last days. The Hadith and some Suras of the Koran are full of such language of what shall be done to the Jews and Israel: "we annihilate it with complete annihilation... or punish it with dire punishment... There is not a township but we shall destroy it ere the Day of Resurrection, or punish it with dire punishment" (Sura 17.16,58). And radical Islam is all set up to fulfil it. The same Sura continues to liken that final destruction of the Jews to a book of judgment being opened: "We shall bring forth for him on the Day of Resurrection a book which he will find wide open. [And it will be said unto him]: Read thy Book" (Sura 17.13,14). Likewise Sura 17.58: "There is not a township but we shall destroy it ere the Day of Resurrection, or punish it with dire punishment. That is set forth in the Book [of our decrees]". This is the significance of the judgments upon Israel in the last days being likened to a scroll / book being opened.

*7:1 After this I saw four angels standing at the four corners of the earth, holding the four winds of the earth, that no wind should blow on the earth, or on the sea, or upon any tree-* When we come to Revelation, especially bearing in mind its' constant allusions to the Old Testament, the 'earth' can generally be understood as the land of Israel. All the weight of Biblical evidence is in this direction. There are undeniable similarities between the events of the seals and vials, and what happened in the land in AD66-70. The whole idea of pouring out judgment upon the 'earth' refers to the OT images of such judgments being poured out upon the land. Consider too how Rev. 7:1: "And after these things I saw four angels standing on the four corners of the earth, holding the four winds of the earth, that the wind should not blow on the earth...". If the earth has corners, it can't really be the globe, rather, an area such as the land.

There seems to be an association between the "four winds", the four "living creatures" and the four "beasts" mentioned at various points in Scripture. It is suggested that these all refer, even if indirectly, to a literal four cherubic Angels. Rev. 7:1 is the clearest evidence: "I saw four Angels standing on the four corners of the earth, holding the four winds of the earth". The stress is on "the four winds". Dan. 7:2,3 connects the winds and the beasts: "Behold, the four winds of Heaven strove upon the great sea. And four great beasts came up from the sea". The "four winds" may refer to Angels- God makes His Angels spirits or winds.

"The four corners of the earth" is proof enough that the earth / land doesn't refer to the whole planet but to a specific territory on the planet- the land, promised to Abraham, with defined borders. The Hebrew word translated 'borders' in the context of the borders of the land is also translated "corners". We think of Ez. 7:2: "You, son of man, thus says the Lord Yahweh to the land of Israel, An end: the end has come on the four corners of the land". The four Angels on the borders of the land connect with the four Angels on the Euphrates, the northern / eastern border of the land, who shall release the hordes they are holding back to surge towards Israel. That process may already be in operation. We are here introduced to the idea that there are Angels holding back the winds of destruction on the borders of God's land and people. This explains the miraculous survival of the state of Israel since 1948. The hordes of neighbouring enemies have been restrained- by the Angels on the borders of the land. But they will remove that restraint, and we can see that already happening. It's worth noting that the key enemies of Israel in the Old Testament are described as dwelling in the corners of the earth / land (Jer. 9:26; 25:23; 49:32); and Israel are described as going into captivity in the corners of the earth / land promised to Abraham (Dt. 32:26; Is. 11:12). So it's appropriate that the winds of destruction come from these same corners of the land. Rev. 20:8 defines "the nations which are in the four quarters of the land" as being "Gog and Magog"; clearly the Ezekiel 38 Gog is being defined as the epitome of the nations along the borders of Israel, who both historically and currently are Israel's main enemies.

The four winds of the earth / land create a picture reminiscent of Dan. 7:2; the four beasts which dominate the earth / land of Israel in the last days all arise as the result of the four winds / spirits / Angels operating over the sea of nations. Now, the four winds / spirits / Angels are told not to blow upon the land and sea until the faithful have been sealed. The connection would teach that the final domination of the land by the beast systems occurs after the events of the seals; or perhaps, the seals are part of that domination period, but there is a break, the winds of destruction are held back, so that those Jews who have responded in repentance can be sealed. In Ez. 37:9, the wind from the four winds comes to spiritually revive the spiritually dead Israel who have returned to their land from dispersion. But here in Rev. 7, these four winds are the winds of destruction. It is from them and the desolation associated with them- that spiritual life is breathed into Israel. The winds are controlled by the four Angels who 'stand' or 'are appointed' at the four corners of the land- it may be that they were appointed from Old Testament times, not least in Daniel 7.

Significantly, the Koran likens the judgment of Jews and apostates to the coming of winds. The whole of Sura 77 is entitled *Al-Mursalat* (The Emissaries, Winds Sent Forth). These winds of judgment come "when the stars are put out, and when the sky is riven asunder, and when the mountains are blown away" (Sura 77:8-11). This is all very much the language of the seals, trumpets and vials. The judgments upon Israel are brought by the Moslems in terms of their own understanding of condemnation. And they too will be judged in the same way- the thing they greatly fear comes upon them, the cup they give Israel to drink, they must drink.

We noted at the beginning of the seals in Revelation 6 that the first four seals, the four horsemen, are based upon the horsemen of Zechariah 1 who desolate the land of Israel and scatter her people. Here in Revelation, the thought then moves on to the four winds- and the same is to be found in Zechariah, where Zech. 2:6 associates them with the scattering into the provinces of Babylon and Persia: "flee from the land of the north, saith the Lord: for I will gather you from the four winds of heaven" (LXX). The land of the north (Babylon, where Judah were in captivity in Zechariah's time) is "the

four winds” because its territory covered much of the land promised to Abraham. The same Hebrew words are found in Zech. 6:5, where the four horses responsible for desolating Israel are “the four winds [AV “spirits”] of the heaven”. Judah were also gathered from the four winds in the sense that the Angels were with them, as demonstrated by Ezekiel’s vision of the four beast cherubim. This is surely the idea of Mark 13:27: “Then shall He send His Angels, and gather together His elect from the four winds, from the uttermost part of the earth [land] to the uttermost part of Heaven”. The earth / land in view is that promised to Abraham, and the heartland of Israel’s enemies is [and always has been] at the uttermost part of it, at the Euphrates border. The parallel between Heaven and earth here in the Lord’s teaching is in line with what we find so often in Revelation- the situation on earth is reflected by the Angels in Heaven who stand in the Heavenly throne room.

The four winds / four Heavenly cherubim beasts are the Heavenly antithesis of the four winds and four beasts of Daniel 7 on earth who desolate the land. The four horns which arose from the third empire were “towards” the four Angelic winds of Heaven; there was a connection between them (Dan. 8:8; 11:4). There is no such thing as radical evil- even the worst desolators of God’s people are under direct Angelic control. We note too the prophecy of the four winds in Jer. 49:36 against Elam, modern day Iran: “I will bring upon Elam the four winds from the four quarters of heaven. And I will scatter them to all those winds”. The “quarters” of Heaven suggest that Heaven, like the earth / land with its corners, is a territory. I suggest that ‘Heaven’ here is a reflection of the earth / land promised to Abraham. Elam / Iran will likewise be judged by the Arab nations living in the corners of the land promised to Abraham, and will be scattered into those areas.

The four winds [plural] are spoken of as one wind (7:1). This is rather like how the four beasts are effectively one beast. Scattering to the four winds was scattering to “the land of the north” (Zech. 2:6). The four cherubim beasts of Ezekiel chapters 1 and 10 are effectively one system, moving the same way. We shouldn’t therefore be necessarily looking for four distinct entities to dominate the land in the last days. The ‘four’ refers to Heaven’s organization, and how it is reflected on earth.

"Holding the four winds" is better 'restraining'. This sounds similar to the idea of the Angels restraining the hordes which then burst over the Euphrates to desolate the land; and to the restraining influence which stops the antichrist being revealed in 2 Thess. 2:5-7. This period of restraint is maybe seen by John in order to serve as a dividing point between the suffering of the six seals, and the fact that some in the land repent as a result of this. These are sealed, and then the trumpet judgments are poured out, and then the desolating powers are destroyed, as outlined in the seven vials. But there may not be an actual period of time required to ‘seal’ the 144,000. The language of winds blowing is that of the final judgment in Mt. 7:25,27.

*7:2 And I saw another angel ascend from the sunrising, having the seal of the living God; and he cried with a great voice to the four angels to whom it was given to hurt the earth and the sea-* The East is ‘the sunrising’. The idea of the sun rising connects with the language of the Lord Jesus returning as the sunrise (Mal. 4:2). Again the time is located around the second coming of the Lord. The allusion may be to the Lord’s description of His coming as a bright shining arising from the East (Mt. 24:27).

Other references to sealing refer to a mark being placed on a person by God which *He* recognizes, although the world doesn’t see it. Thus Paul’s converts were a seal of His apostleship (1 Cor. 9:2)- to God, but not to men. The seal of God is simply that “The Lord knows them that are His” (2 Tim. 2:19). We are sealed by being given

the Spirit in our hearts, very privately and intimately (2 Cor. 1:22; Eph. 1:13; 4:30). But that knowledge is to Him, and is not publicly displayed. For people to be sealed, they are as it were known by God, stamped with His mark. It might even be that there is a mass baptism into Christ of Jewish people in the land- that would certainly be a point at which believers are sealed. This would admirably fulfil the otherwise strange prophecy of Zech. 13:1, that a fountain will be opened in Jerusalem in which the inhabitants of Jerusalem can be washed from their sin.

The outline idea is of an Angel putting a mark on God's people so that other Angels don't harm them with the judgments they are pouring out. And this of course recalls the Passover Angel hovering over the homes of the Israelites who had placed the mark of the Lamb on their doorposts, so that "the Destroyer" Angel would not destroy them. Ez. 9:4 is similar- a mark is placed upon the forehead of those in Jerusalem who are repentant, so that they are not hurt by the judgments of the Babylonian invasion and destruction of the temple. These allusions further encourage us to understand the 144,000 as Jewish Christians within the land / earth.

"The four Angels" connect with how in Daniel 7 it is the four beasts who do the hurting of the land. But these are but the earthly counterparts of the Heavenly cherubim, which are portrayed also as four beasts. And here the point is made explicit- there are four Angels coordinating the desolation of the land in the last days.

"To whom it was given to hurt" again reminds us of the constant comfort that it is God who allows the desolation and even ultimately empowers it.

*7:3 Saying: Do not hurt the earth, nor the sea, nor the trees-* Significantly, the Koran stipulated that trees are not to be damaged during campaigns against infidels. The same word for "hurt" was used in 6:6, where the oliveyards and vineyards were not to be then hurt. This may mean that now the judgments upon the land are poured out upon it.

*Until we have sealed the servants of our God on their foreheads-* This sealing of the 144,000 is presented at the beginning of Revelation 14 as the counterpart to the sealing of the other inhabitants of the land with the mark of the beast in *their* foreheads which we find at the end of Revelation 13. The faithful who come through the traumas of the six seal judgments of chapter 6, refusing to take the easy way out by receiving the mark of the beast in their forehead, are sealed with the Father's Name in their foreheads. They are known by Him, and they know Him. The presence or absence of 'marks in the forehead' decides whether the beast system will persecute people or not; and in response to this, the Divine judgments will likewise be upon those who lack the Father's Name but instead have the beast's name (Rev. 9:4; 13:16; 14:1,9; 20:4). And it is those who have the Father's Name in their foreheads who will again be given it yet more permanently at the day of judgment (Rev. 22:4). This means that their response to the beast's persecution is in effect their day of judgment ahead of time; because they refuse to accept his mark in their foreheads, therefore the Father will give them His mark in their foreheads- which is the reward of the faithful at the last day. This is a feature I commented upon extensively in *The Last Days*- that our response to the tribulation is effectively our judgment day. And this has an appropriacy to it- for if the generation alive at the Lord's coming will be the only one to never die, they need to be prepared in a unique way for the passage into eternity which they will experience. And this will be achieved through their experience of the tribulation.

The mark of the beast in the forehead is clearly intended to be understood as the inverse of the "seal of God" which is in the forehead of the believers (Rev. 9:4). The word *sphragis* used there definitely means a seal, and it is matched by the "mark" of

the beast. That mark can be understood, therefore, also as a seal- and what more likely than the seal of Mohammed? It may be that signet rings are used to stamp documents, or it forms part of an insignia without which no business can be done in the land. The Koran itself speaks of how true Moslems will have the mark of Mohammad on their foreheads as a sign that they worship: "Muhammad is the messenger of Allah. And those with him are hard against the disbelievers and merciful among themselves. Thou [O Muhammad] seest them bowing and falling prostrate [in worship], seeking bounty from Allah and [His] acceptance. The mark of them is on their foreheads from the traces of prostration" (Surah 48:29). In Revelation 14:9,11, having the mark of the beast is connected with worshipping him. The Islamic jihadist movement set to take over Israel is a highly religious movement, seeking to strictly obey the Koran. They are highly conscious of these verses. They perceive those who don't have *their* mark in the forehead as having the mark in the forehead of condemnation (Surah 9:35); the idea of a seal being placed upon non-Moslems who refuse to convert to Islam is found also in Sura 7:101: "Thus doth Allah print upon the hearts [minds / foreheads] of disbelievers". All this is in fact the picture presented in Revelation of sealing with forehead marks. We have either the mark of the beast [Islam], or of the Father. And so the Koran also says in This is exactly the idea of Sura 7:46,48: "And on the Heights are men who know them all by their marks... the dwellers on the Heights call unto men whom they know by their marks". Islam believes that the unbelievers are sealed by God in their unbelief- whilst the Moslems are sealed as believers. "Allah has set a seal on their hearts and on their hearing, and on their eyes there is a covering. Theirs will be a great torment" (Sura 2:7). Note too that the Koran and Hadith repeatedly speak of faithful Moslems as the servants of Allah, with Mohammad as the supreme servant. The description of the 144,000 as "servants of our God" is purposeful in this context; in the time of Moslem domination of the land, they will be the *true* servants of God, in opposition to the Moslems who falsely claim to be His servants. In this context it's worth noting the claim that "The value of the word "Muhammad" equals the value of the word "Jesus." (Jesus = 444, Muhammad = 444). Therefore, "Muhammad seal" and "Jesus seal" both equal 666".

The seal is the Name of the Father, Yahweh (14:1). The only personage in the Old Testament who had the Yahweh Name in their forehead was the High Priest, who on his mitre had written 'Holiness / Dedicated to Yahweh'. The idea was that all of the 144,000 are as the High Priest- in that they are "in Christ" and all that is true of Him is true of them.

*7:4 And I heard the number-* This is added to highlight the contrast with the "great multitude which no man could number" (7:9). This 'hearing' contrasts with how John "saw" the great multitude. I suggest that the same group are in view, just seen from different perspectives. He heard something happening in Heaven- there, the 144,000 are marked off or sealed. There is not necessarily any physical mark upon the faithful, repentant Jewish remnant, apart from that they refuse to wear the mark or seal of the beast, which I have suggested is the seal of Mohammed. There will therefore be a tension between the seals- the seal of Mohammed, the mark of the beast, which is visible; and the invisible seal of God which is seen only in Heaven.

*Of those that were sealed, a hundred and forty and four thousand-* The 12 x 12 is obviously intentional, as if to say that this group is the true Israel. The thousands would refer to their being 'many'. The sealing of a group of faithful within Israel parallels the 7000 "reserved" by God out of Israel for Himself at the time of Elijah's ministry. The three and a half year ministry of the historical Elijah looks forward to the latter day Elijah ministry during the tribulation for the same period. As 7000

faithful were 'reserved' by God for Himself at that time, so the 144,000 are in the last days. The 7000 remnant in Elijah's time were "left" or 'remained' to God (1 Kings 19:18). The same word is used of the latter day remnant within Israel: "He that is left in Zion, and he that remains in Jerusalem, shall be called holy, even every one that is written among the living in Jerusalem" (Is. 4:3). This is the same idea in essence as in Rev. 7- the 144,000 are numbered and written, carefully noted by God. The same word is used of the latter day Jewish remnant in Is. 11:11,16; 17:6; 24:6 (the few men that will remain when the earth / land is made desolate); 37:31 (the faithful remnant in Jerusalem at the time of the Assyrian invasion which typifies that of the last days); 49:21; Jer. 21:7 (the remnant who remain after the plague, sword and famine of the Babylonian invasion have devoured them, all of which are the source material for the events of the six seals which the 144,000 have come through); 50:20 ("I will pardon them whom I reserve", speaking of the forgiveness of the latter day repentant remnant); Amos 5:3 (the ten percent of Israel who 'remain'); Zeph. 3:12 (the 'remnant' of the "afflicted and poor people" who "shall trust in the name of the Lord"); Zech. 9:7 (the remnant who will "be for our God" after the destruction of the majority of Israel); 12:14 (the 'remaining ones' who weep in repentance for crucifying Jesus).

The 144,000 are the antithesis of the followers of the beast- these follow the Lamb wherever *He* goes. It's highly significant that Muhammad is supposed to have had 144,000 followers or *Sahaba* [Thomas Patrick Hughes, *A Dictionary of Islam*, "Ashab"]. This is supposed to connect with the claim that there are 144,000 prophets in Islam [Elwood Morris Wherry & George Sale, *A Comprehensive Commentary on the Quran*]. The 144,000 who follow the Lamb are thus in purposeful contrast with the 144,000 who are supposed to have followed Mohammad wherever he went. This confirms the entire thrust of our exposition- that whatever previous historical fulfilments there have been, the latter day application of Revelation is to events in the land promised to Abraham in the last days whilst it is under Moslem domination.

Revelation is full of language which is also found in the Koran- because Islam, like Babylon, Assyria and Rome before them, are offering God's people a fake replica of real spirituality and the true Hope of Israel. They are an anti-Christ, an imitation Jesus, a false 12 tribes of Israel rather than the true. This explains why the promises of the Kingdom of God in Revelation are full of language which is also used in the Koran for the reward of faithful Moslems. Revelation will have intense relevance to the persecuted under Moslem domination- the rewards offered by Islam will be seen to be a fake Kingdom of God. Thus in Sura 2:25,266: "Give glad tidings [cp. 'the Gospel'] to those who believe [Moslems]... for them will be gardens under which the rivers of Paradise flow... they will be provided with a fruit therefrom... trees with all kinds of fruit... they will abide therein for ever". The final visions of Revelation offer eternal residence in a restored Paradise and eating the fruit of the tree- to those who refuse to accept the religion of the beast, Islam.

*Sealed out of every tribe of the children of Israel*- This makes more poignant the omission of Dan and Ephraim from the list. Due to their apostasy, they are no longer numbered amongst the children of Israel. The order of the tribes is also not according to their age, but it may be according to their faithfulness to God. This is therefore the picture at the time of final judgment, when the true Israel have finally been made up and numbered.

The very laboured mentioning of 12,000 faithful within each tribe may be because they are the antithesis to some yet unseen aspect of the beast. In the ISIS magazine *Dabiq* No. 4 (October 2014) the Islamic State on the back page (p. 56) quote a hadith which states: "They will then gather for the *Malmanah* (the grand



battle before the Hour) [the equivalent of Biblical Armageddon], they will come under eighty banners, with each banner there will be twelve thousand people". The IS wish to consciously fulfil such Islamic prophecies in order to hasten the coming of the antiChrist and then the Mahdi. Perhaps in an attempt to fulfil these predictions, there will be groups of 12,000 Moslems who play some role in the earth / land promised to Abraham. Their antithesis- the Jews who refuse to convert to Islam- are therefore here presented as twelve tribes of twelve thousand.

The Koran claims that the twelve sons of Jacob were in fact 'Moslems', and that current Jewish claims to being descended from Jacob's twelve sons are false (Surah 2.140 "Or say you that Ibrahim (Abraham), Isma'il (Ishmael), Ishaque (Isaac), Ya'qub (Jacob) and Al-Asbat [the twelve sons of Ya'qub (Jacob)] were Jews or Christians? Say, "Do you know better or does Allah (knows better; that they all were Muslims)? And who is more unjust than he who conceals the testimony)". Again we see the relevance of the sealing of people from the 12 tribes of natural Israel- if at the very time this happens, they are being accused of not being from those 12 tribes, and that in fact it is Arab Moslems who are the true 12 tribes. This situation is reflected by the way in which the descriptions of the 144,000 are in terms elsewhere used by the beast system. Thus they are sealed, just as the beast seals his followers; the great multitude who proclaim "Victory!" before the throne (7:10) are parodied by the beast's followers doing the same in 13:4.

It is worth noting that two thirds of the Jews within the land are to be "cut off" in the holocaust, meaning that a third survive it (Zech. 13:8,9). Having spoken of this period in Rev. 6, Rev. 7:4 speaks of 144,000 Jews as surviving it. A third of the Jews in Israel is about 1.4 million people; it may be that only a tenth of those will ultimately be found worthy. The 144,000 are sealed so that they avoid God's judgments, which would fit the idea of the righteous remnant miraculously surviving in an Arab occupied Jerusalem.

*7:5 Of the tribe of Judah were sealed twelve thousand. Of the tribe of Reuben twelve thousand. Of the tribe of Gad twelve thousand-* See on :4 and :8.

*7:6 Of the tribe of Asher twelve thousand. Of the tribe of Naphtali twelve thousand. Of the tribe of Manasseh twelve thousand-* See on :4 and :8.

*7:7 Of the tribe of Simeon twelve thousand. Of the tribe of Levi twelve thousand. Of the tribe of Issachar twelve thousand-* See on :4 and :8.

*7:8 Of the tribe of Zebulun twelve thousand. Of the tribe of Joseph twelve thousand. Of the tribe of Benjamin were sealed twelve thousand-* See on :4. It's been observed that the tribe of Dan is excluded from the list of the redeemed tribes in Rev. 7. Dan didn't take possession of their inheritance; they despised it. And so they excluded themselves, rather than being excluded for e.g. bad behaviour. The other tribes all had their moments of terrible failures; but these didn't exclude them. The only one excluded was the one who didn't want to be there.

*7:9 After these things I saw and beheld a great crowd, which no one could number-* An allusion to how the seed of Abraham would be innumerable (Gen. 13:16; 16:10; 32:12; Hos. 1:10). The great multitude are the true Israel, and are thus parallel with the 144,000 from the tribes of Israel.

*Out of every nation, comprised of all tribes, peoples and tongues-* The reference is limited by the context to the tribes of the earth / land promised to Abraham; see on "All nations" later in this verse. This is the same term used about the nations, tribes, peoples under the domination of the beast (17:15), and seems almost a title of the beast system in 11:9. The great multitude are therefore being parodied by the followers of the beast, who also claim [as the Jihadists do] to be universal in their

support base. This is just as the 144,000 followers of the lamb are parodied by the supposed 144,000 followers of Mohammad. The events of the last days will bring about the final and ultimate clash of God's Kingdom and the kingdoms of men.

*Standing before the throne and before the Lamb, arrayed in white robes and with palms in their hands-* They "stood before the throne", as men will "stand before" God at the day of judgment (Rev. 20:12 s.w.). They had white robes, a term used about those slain at the start of the tribulation (6:11). In this we see the connection between the seals and the sealing of the 144,000 / great multitude. A specific group is in view- those who were slain in the tribulation.

*Of all nations-* The multitude came 'out of' [*ek*] "great tribulation" (:14); yet they also come *ek*, out of, the nations, peoples, languages of :9. The suggestion would be that this group of various peoples are those where the tribulation has occurred. The very same Greek phrase "nations, tribes, peoples and languages" is used later in Revelation for the peoples within the land promised to Abraham who support the beast system (11:9; 17:15). The beast / whore rides upon them- and her dominion is over the earth / land, which is therefore where these tribes and peoples are located. This also solves the logistical problem of imagining that literally every tribe and language group of the Amazon or central Africa or Pacific islands must come under the direct control of any one world system. We can legitimately translate *ek* as 'out of'; the same word is found in Rev. 18:4 where "My people" are asked to come "out of" Babylon and the beast system- the mass of peoples and tribes within the land promised to Abraham from Euphrates to Egypt, which is under the control and religion of the beast. It's a typical Western stereotype to assume that all the people living in that area are simply 'Arabs'. That's as facile as saying that Europe is inhabited by 'Europeans'. The area is full of various tribes and ethnicities, as the conflicts in Iraq and Syria have demonstrated. So the statement that the great multitude had come *ek* out of the various nations and tribes is not merely a statement of fact, it is a commendation of the fact that they had spiritually 'come out of' those peoples. Rev. 15:2 repeatedly uses the word *ek* to speak of how the faithful had come out of the beast system: "Them that had gotten the victory over [*ek*, out of- "over" is not the correct translation] the beast, and over [*ek*, out of] his image, and over [*ek*, out of] his mark, and over [*ek*, out of] the number of his name". Rev. 7:9 says that the faithful come *ek* out of the *phule*, the tribes [AV "kindreds"]. But we have just read with painstaking repetition of how the 144,000 have come *ek* out of the *phule*, the tribes, of *Israel*! We must not fail to give this due weight in interpretation. The 144,000 come out of the tribes of Israel, and the great multitude come out of the tribes who are willingly dominated by the beast. The picture is that the tribes of Israel submit to the beast, but the faithful refuse to do so. Such a covenant is suggested by Dan. 9, and I have commented upon this elsewhere in writing about the Antichrist. This coming 'out of' the beast system may be in view in Mt. 24:31, where we learn that the Lord will gather His elect *ek*, out of, "the four winds". And Rev. 7:1 in this very context speaks of the four winds of desolation to come upon Israel, from which the 144,000 are preserved.

Think of the misunderstood Jesus, welcomed by the crowds with palm fronds in hope of an immediate Messianic Kingdom. Surely John intends us to think back to that when we read in Rev. 7:9 that the Lord will be welcomed by another large crowd, from every nation, carrying palm fronds and calling out praise to Him for dying on the cross and redeeming them. Here are those who truly understand Him. The Lord had in mind this contrast between the crowd and those who would truly understand Him when He said that "Now is the son of man glorified" in the things of the cross (Jn.

12:23) in contrast to the crowds who were shouting “Glory in the highest!” at the prospect of Him there and then inaugurating the Messianic Kingdom (Lk. 19:38). See on Jn. 5:23.

7:10 *Salvation to our God who sits upon the throne*- See on Jn. 20:28. Revelation is full of allusion to Roman imperial court scenes and rituals. In its first century application, it was an appeal for Christians to not convert to the imperial cult, even at the risk of persecution and death. In its latter day reference, Revelation may well be found to be full of reference to and parody of the culture and structure of the entity which dominates the land in the last days. In the first century, the Caesar declared himself as the ‘saviour’. The Roman emperors often gathered people from all nations and languages within the empire, who stood before his throne and cried ‘Victory!’ or ‘Salvation!’ to the Caesar. This was seen as legitimizing the Caesar as chosen and approved by the entire empire. Radical Islam loves to use the cry of ‘Victory!’ and to talk of how each town they overrun has been liberated or saved. They also like to claim that they have support from worldwide and not simply from Arab Muslims. The crowd of believers here parodies their claims by giving the true international worship to the true God rather than the false one.

7:11 *And all the angels were standing round about the throne and about the elders and the four living creatures; and they fell before the throne on their faces and worshiped God*- The implication is that the Angels are deeply impressed when they see these things working out. They are struck by the wisdom and power revealed in the whole Divine design (:12). This gives a window into what immortality will be all about. We will still be impressionable; able to observe new things with wonder and a sense of praise; and not necessarily able to precisely imagine how plans shall work out.

7:12 *Saying: Amen. Blessing, glory, wisdom, thanksgiving, honour, power and might to our God for ever and ever. Amen*- As noted on :11, this gives some insight into what it will be like to have the kind of immortal nature which the Angels now have. They are presented as observing how things work out in God’s plan, and then being deeply impressed with the whole wisdom and wonder of it all. In seeing God’s power and might manifest in such a way, they wish that this shall for ever be the case. And so it shall be. “Amen”.

7:13- see on Rev. 6:9.

*And one of the elders asked me: These that are dressed in white robes, who are they and from where did they come?*- This is the clothing of Angels; they are presented as at one with their Angelic representatives in the court of Heaven. The Lord Jesus is likewise presented as clothed both in white and in a red “garment dipped in blood” (Rev. 19:13). The whore who leads the beast is also described as clothed in white linen (Rev. 18:16) and also in *porphura* (Rev. 17:4), a word which can mean ‘dyed red’. The external clothing of the real Christ and the antiChrist is similar; because the antiChrist is indeed a fake Christ. Moslems also believe in dressing in white robes; it’s as if this group who come out of the Moslem dominated land of Israel are the antithesis of their persecutors.

"From where did they come?" carries the idea that they had come out of something, namely, the beast system (:14). See on :9 *Of all nations*.

7:14 *And I replied: My lord, do you know? And he explained to me: These are they that came out of the great tribulation*- The great tribulation in latter day Israel of Mt. 24:9,21,29. ‘Coming out’ can be a Hebraism for coming forth successfully from a trial- e.g. “When He has tested me, I shall *come forth* as gold” (Job 23:10). These are

the group who respond to the traumas of the six seals and repent. Their white robes connect with those given to those who die during the tribulation under the fifth seal ("And each one was given a white robe", Rev. 6:11).

*And they washed their robes*- Perhaps a reference to mass baptisms into Christ in the beast dominated Israel of the last days?

*And made them white in the blood of the Lamb*- It is the function of the three and a half year Elijah ministry [which will occur at the same time as the tribulation] to be "like fullers' soap" so that Israel may "abide the day of [Messiah's] coming" (Mal. 3:2). Fullers' soap is what makes white. The reference is to those in Israel who respond to the Elijah ministry and make their clothes white. These are the 144,000 or great multitude.

The 144,000 are redeemed from all the tribes of Jewry in the last days, and they wash their robes [through baptism] in the blood of Jesus as a result of "the great tribulation" (Rev. 7:14 RV) which they pass through. This great multitude are Jews yet out of every nation and language (Rev. 7:9)- for as Ron Abel shows in *Wrested Scriptures*, the great multitude and the 144,000 are to be read as identical. The witness to them will thus be world-wide. This "great tribulation" is one of many links discernible between Revelation and the Olivet prophecy. The Lord had prophesied that the "great tribulation" such as never was for Israel will occur in the very last days before the return (Mt. 24:21). It is only for the sake of "the elect" that the days of the great tribulation are shortened. This elect are surely the 144,000 of Rev. 7- Jewish brethren in Christ, converted during the very last days. It is this "elect" which is to be gathered from "the four winds" (Mt. 24:31) by the Angels. This suggests that they are not just Jews in the land who are converted, but those throughout the world-wide Diaspora. For the time of Jacob's trouble, worse than anything they have ever experienced (including the holocaust) must affect all Jewry world-wide. And this includes the USA and other apparently pro-Jewish or tolerant nations.

We must face the questions: Are the 144,000 the same as the great multitude? And are these 144,000 the same as the 144,000 in Revelation 14? I believe they all refer to the same group of faithful believers, perhaps literal Jews, who repent during the early part of the tribulation which is described in the six seals. But each passage gives different aspects of the same picture. The seven trumpets are the tribulations brought about by the four winds of 7:1. These can still be responded to by those within the land. The 144,000 group are preserved from them, just as Israel experienced the first plagues to come upon Egypt but were preserved from the later ones (cp. Is. 26:20). The seven vials are clearly based upon the plagues upon Egypt, and they are part of the extensive description of the beast's judgment which [interspersed with visions of the faithful] dominate the rest of the book of Revelation.

But are these 144,000 the same as the 144,000 in Revelation 14? The differences don't necessarily have to make them different; John hears the 144,000 and then sees the great multitude, just as earlier John hears about the Lion but turns to *see* a Lamb (Rev. 5:5,6); and so it could be that he is *told* about the 144,000 and turns to *see* a great multitude. It would be facile to suggest that the Lion and Lamb are two different beings. They are simply different aspects of the same personage- the Lord Jesus. And this is common in Revelation and Jewish apocalyptic generally. So the differences are not fundamental, but rather presenting to us different aspects of the same group. In one sense they are the innumerable seed of Abraham, in another sense they are the 12 tribes, the true Israel. The great multitude are dressed in "white robes"- and this has just been used about those slain at the start of the tribulation (6:11). A specific group

is in view- Jewish believers who suffered in the land at the hands of the beast during the time of the seals.

There are similarities between the 144,000 and the “great multitude”. The 144,000 of Rev. 14:3 are “before the throne” just as the “great multitude” of Rev. 7:15,17 are. If the 144,000 represent the church generally, it’s hard to understand why there should be such a laboured enumeration of them as coming from the various listed tribes of Israel. The idea surely is that they are Jewish Christians from within the land- perhaps the mention of the 12 tribes is to show that they will come from the entire geographical inheritance of Israel.

The great multitude have palms in their hands (:9) as if they are lining the streets of Jerusalem to welcome Jesus as King (Mt. 21:8). The term “great multitude” is repeatedly used in the Gospels for the crowds who followed Jesus. So although they do refer to the group of Jewish Christians of the last days, they are clearly to be understood as looking forward to the entire community of Jesus-followers. Rev. 7:14 says of the great multitude: “These are they which came out of great tribulation”. The many connections with the Olivet Prophecy would surely mean that the tribulation in view is partly that of the last days (Mt. 24:21,29).

*7:15 Therefore are they before the throne of God, and they serve Him day and night in His temple, and He that sits on the throne shall spread His tabernacle over them-* There is maybe the suggestion here that after the judgment process, the Lord will come down off His throne and mix with us, after the pattern of Joseph reassuring his brethren.

*7:16 They shall hunger no more nor thirst any more-* Quoting from Is. 49:10 about the repentant Jewish remnant of the last days. Hunger, thirst, no more burning [AV “heat”] and the sun no longer falling upon them [Gk.] all has reference to the experiences in the land during the six seal judgments. The comfort for that group is that these things will be no more.

*Neither shall the sun strike upon them, nor any heat-* The sun is symbolic of the Lord Jesus, but those who have passed through the tribulation will have been under the heat of the anti-Christ, the fake “sun” (cp. Mt. 13:6). The “heat” could refer to the heat of torture or to nuclear warfare. The word literally means a glow or burn. There seems no doubt that the Islamist elements within the earth / land promised to Abraham would not hesitate to use nuclear weapons in their assault upon Israel. However the Hebrew used in Is. 49:10, which is being quoted, refers to the *sirocco* or scorching desert storm wind, an idea used earlier for the Islamist invasion of Israel in the last days.

7:17– see on Lk. 13:15.

*For the Lamb that is in the midst of the throne shall be their shepherd, and shall guide them to springs of living water-* Again we have a kaleidoscope of images. The Lamb is both in the midst of the throne and leading them as a shepherd. he Lamb, once a sheep, is the appropriate shepherd; His shepherding is on the basis of His own human experience, as a sheep.

The “springs of living water” to which they are led could refer to us; for repentant Israel will be given teachers to teach them (Jer. 3:15). In John’s languages, the spring of living water is the gift of the Spirit given in the Lord Jesus. It is ultimately the spring which gives the water of life eternal (22:1). This last generation of repentant Jews will indeed be given the life eternal.

*And God shall wipe away every tear from their eyes-* Quoting from Is. 25:8 about the resurrection and immortality of the last day (thus it is quoted in 1 Cor. 15), again about the repentant Jewish remnant of the last days. In the context, this happens on

Mount Zion, which is where the 144,000 are found in Rev. 14, at a time when “Moab” and Israel’s neighbour enemies have been destroyed. Those who enter the Kingdom will genuinely, from the very depth of their being, feel that they shouldn't be there. When we read that the Lord will “wipe away” tears from their eyes, this is the same word used in Acts 3:19 to describe how the sins of repentant Israel will be “blotted out” when the Lord returns. The conclusion seems to be, therefore, that the Lord Himself will comfort them with the reality that their sins and being unworthy of the Kingdom is all truly forgiven. The judgment will have achieved its end for them- a true realization of sinfulness.

## REVELATION CHAPTER 8

The trumpets of Rev. 8-11 are clearly based upon the plagues of Ex. 7-12. Yet those plagues were each one designed to induce repentance in Egypt; there were various possible futures and outcomes related to each of them. If, e.g., after plague eight, Pharaoh had truly repented- then the other plagues wouldn't have happened. And perhaps it will be the same with the trumpets of the last days. See on Rev. 16:12.

The six seals of Rev. 6 brought judgment upon God’s people Israel within the land or earth promised to Abraham. A minority responded and were “sealed” in Rev. 7. Now there are seven trumpets, which are judgments on the Jews who are impenitent, and also on others within the land. But trumpets are warnings. In these judgments there is still an appeal being made, even though time is more than up for both Israel and her enemies. The trumpet judgments begin with desolations upon the physical land, in order to help people in the land understand what is going to happen to them. After the trumpets, there is yet another desperate appeal for repentance; and then in 15:7,8 the temple is closed, and the vials are poured out- of final and utter destruction. The vials come in rapid succession, because they are not intended to elicit repentance. Their finality is implied by the words “the seven *last* plagues”. Whereas under the seals and trumpets, only a third or quarter of things were destroyed, under the vials there is total destruction. The language of the trumpets and vials is similar- because Babylon is being made to drink the cup of judgments which she gave others to drink during the seals and trumpets:

:

| Trumpets                                                              | Vials                              |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------|
| 1st. earth                                                            | earth                              |
| 2nd. sea (salt water)                                                 | sea (salt water)                   |
| 3rd. rivers and fountains (fresh water)                               | rivers and fountains (fresh water) |
| 4th. sun, moon, stars                                                 | sun, moon, stars                   |
| 5th. sun and air darkened                                             | kingdom of beast full of darkness  |
| 6th. River Euphrates                                                  | River Euphrates                    |
| 7th. "The kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of our Lord" | "It is done"                       |

This explains why the trumpet judgments are effected through a variety of agents, some of them evidently human. The vials, however, are all poured out by Angels.

It should be noted that the seven signs, relating to the destruction of the beast, are also related to the seven trumpets:

| Trumpets         | Signs                 |
|------------------|-----------------------|
| (Chapters 8 -11) | (Chapters 12 onwards) |

A great star falls from heaven  
(8:10)  
A third part of the stars is  
smitten (8:12)  
"Woe, woe, woe to the inhab-  
iters of the earth" (8:13)  
The beast that comes out of the  
bottomless pit . . .  
. . . makes war against the  
witnesses and overcomes them . . .  
. . . they of the people and  
kindreds and tongues . . .  
. . . they that dwell upon the  
earth... (11:7-10)  
Resurrection and judgment  
(11:18)  
"Thy wrath is come" (11:18)  
Temple of God opened (11:19)  
Lightnings, voices,  
thunderings, earthquake and hail  
(11:19)

The dragon is cast out of heaven  
(12:9)  
The dragon's tail casts down a third of  
the stars (12:4)  
"Woe to the inhabitants of the earth"  
(12:12)  
The beast that comes out of the sea . .  
.  
. . . makes war against the saints and  
overcomes them . . .  
. . . power over kindreds and tongues  
and nations . . .  
... all that dwell upon the earth . . .  
(13:1-8)  
Resurrection and judgment (20:4 and  
11-13)  
The vials of God's wrath  
(chapters 15,16)  
Temple of God opened (15:5) Voices,  
thunders, earthquake and hail (16:18,21)

8:1 *And when he opened the seventh seal, there followed a silence in heaven for about half an hour*- Literally “*whenever* he opened the seventh seal...”, as if there is an element of doubt as to whether it will be opened. See on :13. On 6:1 I discussed whether in fact the seventh seal is opened, or has anything in it; hence the silence.

But the silence is also an allusion to the silence in the temple at the time of the incense offering (see on 5:8). The run up to the final tribulation will provoke a “praying always, that ye may be accounted worthy... to stand before the Son of man” (Lk. 21:36). Perhaps this intense latter day praying of the faithful is what Rev. 8:1 refers to, in speaking of “silence in heaven” when the seventh seal was opened- for this is one of Revelation's continual allusions to the temple service: “In the Temple, when the incense was offered, the people retired from the court and prostrated themselves in silent prayer”.

8:2 *And I saw the seven angels that stood before God; and there were given to them seven trumpets*- The presence of the article “the” indicates these seven Angels have already been referred to. But the only time we have so far read of them in Revelation is in the description of the seven Angels of the churches who represent the believers before God (Rev. 1:20). The seven Angels feature later in Revelation, pouring out the vials of Divine wrath upon the land and the beast system. The Angels responsible for God's people are the same ones who pour out such terrible calamities upon the land. This is the power of our representation before God in the court of Heaven. This is exactly in context, because we go on to read that because of the prayers of the believers, things are poured out upon the land and Angels blow trumpets. This is the power of prayer, and it will be especially evident in the last days.

The theme of ‘seven’ judgments coming upon the land surely connects with the claim that Mohammad waged seven military campaigns against the infidels in the land [promised to Abraham]. The Hadith several times speaks of the “seven military expeditions led by the Messenger of Allah himself (may peace be upon him)” (e.g. Book 19.4469), or of the “seven battles” he was victorious in (Book 19.4462). This

would explain the seven fold structure of the seals-trumpets-vials, and the feature of 'seven' judgments in various others way within the Apocalypse. The Muslim pretenders to the pattern of Mohamad bring seven judgments upon Israel, and are punished by likewise receiving back seven judgments, drinking the cup they made others to drink.

The Hadith claims that Mohammad predicted three cycles of calamities in the last days, which would be subdivided into various other calamities: "Hudhaifa b. al-Yaman reported: By Allah, I have the best knowledge amongst people about every turmoil which is going to appear in the period intervening me and the Last Hour; and it is not for the fact that Allah's Messenger (may peace be upon him) told me something confidentially pertaining to it and he did not tell anybody else about it, but it is because of the fact that I was present in the assembly in which he had been describing the turmoil. and he especially made a mention of three turmoils which would not spare anything and amongst these there would be turmoils like storms in the hot season" (41.6908). This is exactly the Biblical picture- of three cycles of judgments and turmoils in the land (seals-trumpets-vials), subdivided into various specific calamities. As the jihadists strive to obey the letter of their writings, they will thereby be fulfilling the outline picture of the last day crisis which is foretold in Revelation.

It's noteworthy that the seven seals and seven trumpets and seven vials all conclude with the seventh being the establishment of the Kingdom. So there are actually six judgments in each case. The Hadith (Book 41.7040) speaks of six signs before the last day: "Hasten in performing these good deeds (before these) six things (happen): (the appearance) of tribe Dijjal, the smoke, the beast of the earth, the rising of the sun from the west, the general turmoil (leading to large-scale massacre) and death of masses and individuals". These six are very similar to the things spoken of in the seals and trumpets- signs in the sun, mass death, smoke, beasts of the earth. The jihadists are seeking to consciously fulfil the Hadith and so, due to the allusions the Hadith and Koran make to Revelation, they will end up fulfilling God's word of their own volition.

The Angels "stood before God". We have just read of how the great multitude, the minority of the Jews in the land who repent as a result of the six seals, stand before God (7:9), as do their representative Angels (7:11). They are "before God" in that their representative Angels are literally in His presence in the throne room of Heaven. Now, those Angels act on behalf of those believers. And the prayers of the believers are likewise before God (:3). There is only one mediator, the Lord Jesus. The Angels do not mediate those prayers, but Heaven is aware of the prayers on account of their Angels. Our final 'standing before God' at judgment day (20:12) is effectively going on now. We are right now in the presence of His judgment throne.

Again we note the idea of "given"; they were "given" the trumpets. The judgments and calamities to be poured out are not because of any radical human evil, unrestrained in the world. These things are all under God's direct Angelic control. The trumpet sound is very much associated with the return of Christ to earth (Mt. 24:31; 1 Thess. 4:16). Our change to immortality will be when the *last* trumpet sounds (1 Cor. 15:52); and the seventh trumpet announces the full establishment of God's Kingdom on earth (11:15). These trumpets therefore speak of events immediately surrounding the Lord's return.

The trumpet judgments contain several of the plagues on Egypt:



|    | <i>Trumpets</i>                          | <i>Plagues on Egypt</i>                              |
|----|------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------|
| 1. | Fire from the altar cast upon the earth. | Dust of the furnace (of the altar) sprinkled abroad. |
| 2. | Hail and fire.                           | Hail and fire.                                       |
| 3. | Sea became blood.                        | Waters turned to blood.                              |
| 4. | Darkness.                                | Darkness.                                            |
| 5. | Locusts.                                 | Locusts.                                             |
| 6. | Abaddon, the Destroyer.                  | The Destroyer Angel (Ex. 12:23).                     |
| 7. | Men slain by angels.                     | The firstborn slain by angels.                       |

The seal judgments of chapter 6 came upon Israel to bring them to repentance, and a majority repented, as explained in the sealing of the 144,000 in chapter 7. Now, that repentant remnant are spared the plagues on Egypt, as it were; but the impenitent amongst Israel will suffer along with 'Egypt', the unbelieving world. This is as predicted in Dt. 28:59,60- the plagues of Egypt will come upon unbelieving Israel: "Then the Lord will make thy plagues wonderful, and the plagues of thy seed, even great plagues... He will bring upon thee all the diseases of Egypt".

8:3 *And another Angel*- Perhaps representative of the Lord Jesus, seeing He is the mediator of prayer.

*Came and stood over the altar*- "Over the altar" gives the image of the Angel standing next to the altar but taller than the altar, in order to take fire off it. The bronze altar of sacrifice in the Jerusalem temple had steps going up it, according to the Mishnah. Josephus says it also had a ramp; so that the priest could be "over the altar" to place sacrifices upon it, and [as in this case] to take fire off it for the censor of incense. This altar is clearly distinguished from the *golden* altar, i.e. the altar of incense which although outside the Most Holy Place is often described as being 'before Yahweh' as it is here called "before the throne". This is because it was just in front of the curtain dividing the Most Holy from the Holy Place, and the incense from it entered in to the Most Holy. In this sense the incense altar provided "a perpetual incense before the LORD" (Ex. 30:8), before Yahweh's presence over the ark in the Most Holy. Just as we are not actually in God's literal presence, and yet our prayers and status in Christ mean that effectively we are. This is the wonder of prayer. We can get that close to God. Ex. 40:5 implies that effectively, the curtain dividing the incense altar from the ark was not there: "You shall put the golden altar for incense before the ark of the testimony". And moreso, in Christ, that veil is torn down. This also explains the otherwise strange description of the incense altar in 1 Kings 6:22 as "the altar that belonged to the inner sanctuary". On the Day of Atonement, the veil was effectively

removed, and in that context Heb. 9:3,4 can say that "behind the second curtain stood a tent called the Holy of Holies having ['to which pertained'] the golden altar of incense and the ark of the covenant". If this is not a Day of Atonement allusion, then the Greek for "having..." can legitimately be read as meaning 'to which pertained...', because there was such a strong association between the incense altar and the Most Holy Place.

Ex. 30:6 speaks of the incense altar as "where I will meet with you". And yet this is said of the ark within the Most Holy Place: "And there I will meet with thee, and I will commune with thee from above the mercy seat" (Ex. 25:22;; Num. 17:4). But when did God actually commune with men from the mercy seat in the ark? The High Priest only entered the Most Holy Place once per year on the day of Atonement. So when Ex. 30:6 appears to say that it was the altar of incense "where I will meet with you", we are to understand that the God who dwelt over the ark actually communicated at the altar of incense. The context of Ex. 30:6 is all about the incense altar. And it is there, in prayer, that God meets with man. LXX has "wherein I will make myself known to thee from thence". This suggests that God from the Most Holy ["from thence"] makes Himself known to man at the incense altar, i.e. in prayer. This is why the tabernacle generally is described as the place "where I will meet with you, to speak there to you" (Ex. 29:42). It was "the tent of meeting" in that the God who met man in the Most Holy Place came out of that place to meet man at the incense altar. The incense altar was therefore the place of communion between God and man. The incense wafted through into the Most Holy Place, and God met with man in His word "from thence". Relationship with God is therefore two way. We speak to Him in prayer, and He speaks back through His word. This is why prayer and Bible reading are so critically important. All this clearly teaches that prayer is not a list of requests. The many prayers in the Psalms have very few requests compared to simply talking with God in communion. "Pray without ceasing" [alluding to the constant offering of incense morning and evening] cannot mean that we send up an unbroken barrage of requests. Rather does it mean that we are to be in unbroken communion with God.

There are two altars in view here. The Angel takes fire from the bronze altar of sacrifice, which we have recently encountered in 6:9 as the symbol of the sacrifice of the faithful during the tribulation, under which is their blood which cries out for vengeance, and uses this to ignite the incense on the golden altar of incense, which we again encounter in 9:13. The sacrifice of the faithful remnant, their endurance unto death, gives power to the prayers offered for the coming of Christ. The sacrifice of the believers during the tribulation in 6:9 gave rise to the prayer "How long...?", the begging for the Lord's coming. And it was because of their sacrifice that their prayers were heard. That is represented here by the fire from the blood covered altar of sacrifice being used to ignite the incense of prayer on the incense altar. Our lives are in that sense a prayer, and give credibility and integrity to our words of prayer. Otherwise, prayer is mere words. But those prayed words cannot be powerful unless they are rooted in a life lived before God. God is not a magician and prayer is not of power just because of the words, otherwise prayer is merely like a pagan incantation. If this were not the case, then answers to prayer would simply go to those who know how to wordsmith their language nicely and persuasively. That is a mistake made by so many Orthodox believers, but we can all tend to believe it too.

The cry of the blood of the martyrs was "How long, O Lord, will you not judge and avenge our blood on those who dwell on the earth?" (Rev. 6:9,10). That prayer was now being answered. There is no conscious survival of death. Those people were dead, but their prayers were as it were still active in God's mind, and He was working

to respond to them. And the events of AD70 were a partial answer to them, judging "those who dwell on the earth / land [of Israel, in the primary context]" (Rev. 8:13). The scene here is also clearly based upon that of Israel under persecution in Egypt. "I have surely seen the affliction of My people who are in Egypt, and have given heed to their cry" (Ex. 3:7). God's response was to send the plagues. Here, the incense ascends to God and He sends the sequence of trumpet plagues which clearly allude to the plagues on Egypt (hail, fire etc., :7). My point is that the cry of Israel was not specific words, but a situation which God took heed to. Likewise incense is not simply representative of words prayed, but of the life and life situation behind them. And it was likewise responded to by God in the first century in the events of AD70, as it will be in our last days.

*Having a golden censer; and there was given to him much incense, that he should add it to the prayers of all the saints upon the golden altar which was before the throne-* One Angel is given much incense- i.e. prayers- presumably by the individual guardian Angels. He then offers this up on the altar (Christ) to God, and the response from God comes in the form of the Angels sounding their trumpets. It is interesting to note that actually these Angels had already been prepared for what they were going to do (Rev. 8:2) when they had been earlier before the throne of God. God knows our prayers before we say them. He knew what the prayers of the people at that time would be, and had earlier prepared the Angels to answer them, and this was unleashed by their cumulative prayer. But without that prayer- that human part of the equation- the prepared answer would not have been put into action. The prayers were offered up by one Angel- this either means there is one Angel with overall responsibility for offering up prayers to Christ (the altar), or that there is one Angel who collects together the prayers from one period of time or about one particular subject and then offers them up to Christ. The fact "much incense" is mentioned presumably means that there was much prayer made at this time, and this was added to the "prayers of all saints" (v. 3) which had already been made about this.

The sky, the trillions of kilometres between Heaven and earth, are in fact no ultimate distance. That's the simplest message of those visions. In Revelation we see the incense of human prayers arising into Heaven, resulting in Angels coming to earth, pouring out bowls, blowing trumpets, and major events happening on earth (Rev. 5:8; 8:3). Prayer is noticed; it brings forth quite out of proportion responses.

Rev. 8:3-5 as well as Rev. 11:6 certainly allude to Elijah as a pattern for our latter day witnessing. Much incense of latter day prayer is added to the existing incense, resulting in fire being brought down on earth after the pattern of Elijah (Rev. 8:3-5 RV). The especially intense prayers of the latter day remnant are added to the cumulative prayers of former generations, and result in the second coming and the beginning of the final judgments.

8:4 *And the smoke of the incense, with the prayers of the saints, went up before God out of the angel's hand-* The same Greek words for 'smoke ascended up' are found in Rev. 14:11; 19:3 concerning the smoke of the destruction of the beast system. This ultimately will be brought about by the prayer of the latter day remnant. As I point out in *The Last Days*, much emphasis is given to prayer in the latter day prophecies. But the ascending up of the smoke of their prayers is also to be compared with the ascending up of the smoke from the bottomless pit in 9:2, which gives rise to the locust invasion which torments those in the land. This judgment on the land is therefore a direct response to human prayer. And God finds our prayers pleasant, just

as the Mosaic sacrifices and the sacrifice of Noah were a "pleasing odor" to God (Gen. 8:21). But the smell of sacrifices was not pleasant to human smell. But it was to God. Likewise Eph. 5:2, "Christ gave Himself for us, a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God". Prayer likewise may seem a bizarre exercise to the secular man. For sweet smelling incense is the symbol of prayer: "May my prayer be counted as incense before You" (Ps. 141:2; Rev. 5:8). It gives God joy: "Oil and incense make the heart glad" (Prov. 27:9). But that incense must be "beaten small" in humility: "he shall take a censer full of coals of fire from the altar before the LORD, and two handfuls of sweet incense beaten small; and he shall bring it within the veil" (Lev. 16:11-14). The impression we get from Lev. 16:12 is that as much as possible should be brought: "a censer full of coals of fire... two handfuls of sweet incense". As much coal and incense as possible. The idea is that we should indulge in prayer, and not be minimalists. As there was always fire on the altar (Lev. 9:9), so prayer can always be offered.

8:5- see on Rev. 5:8.

*And the angel took the censer, filled it with the fire of the altar and cast it upon the earth-* The fire from the bronze sacrifice altar was used to ignite the incense on the incense altar; see on :3. The earth / land has the fire of judgment thrown at it because of the prayers of and about those who were slain in it during the tribulation. This is the scene at the altar in 6:9; the blood on the altar leads to a promise of judgment against those who shed it. The Lord perhaps foresaw all this when He used the same words about how He came not to cast peace on the land but fire and a sword (Mt. 10:34; Lk. 12:49)- because Israel refused to accept Him. The scattering of fire on the land recalls Ez. 10:2, where fire is scattered over the city of Jerusalem; and the Babylonian desolation which this primarily refers to is a prototype of the latter day desolation of Jerusalem. Clearly, "I have come to cast fire upon the earth" (Lk. 12:49) required the incense of prayer to trigger it. The events of AD70 were therefore in response to the blood of the martyrs of Rev. 6, "the souls under the altar", arising as prayer-incense and triggering this response from Heaven. We see here how God's people were totally uncompromised with the Jewish world around them, who of course were praying and fighting for the preservation of Jerusalem and victory against Rome. But the Roman judgment of Jerusalem and the temple with fire, was in fact all sent from the Lord Jesus, triggered by prayer and the blood of those slain by the Jewish system. The judgments are thrown onto the earth / land directly from the incense altar to show that it was the lives and prayers of the faithful that brought about those judgments. Whereas in the world systems around the believers, prayer was to be offered for Jerusalem and the land [by Jews] and for the empire [by Romans].

The cry for vengeance of the blood of the souls under the altar in Rev. 6 is answered throughout the visions of judgment in the rest of Revelation- e.g. "Hallelujah! Salvation and glory and power belong to our God; because His judgements are true and righteous; for... He has *avenged the blood* of his bond servants on her" (Rev. 19:1,2). But this was all brought about by the incense of prayer. Just as the incense ascended up, so the judgment of their persecutors is "smoke" that "rises up forever and ever" (Rev. 19:3). And this is why in Rev. 16:6,7 we find the altar apparently speaking: "They poured out the blood of the saints and the prophets, and blood have You given them to drink. They are worthy. And I heard another ["another *angel*!" is not in the original] out of the altar saying: Yes, O Lord God the Almighty, true and righteous are Your judgments". The dialogue from the altar is because the voice of prayer is the voice of the lives of the martyrs, and being

dead they still speak from God's perspective, as does the blood of Abel (Heb. 11:4 "he, though being dead, still speaks"; "the blood of sprinkling that speaks better things than that of Abel", Heb. 12:24). Likewise when the sixth trumpet sounds, John hears "a voice from the four horns of the golden altar before God" (Rev. 9:13). The vials etc. which form part of the sixth trumpet were all triggered by the voice from the incense altar- God's voice responding to the voice of the incense / prayer which had been offered there, and the voice of the martyrs of Rev. 6:9 which came from that altar.

The direct connection between prayer and the outpouring of judgments is continued in Rev. 15:7, where "one of the four living creatures gave to the seven angels seven golden bowls full of the wrath of God". In Rev. 5:8, the golden bowls are filled with incense, which is stated there to represent prayers. The similarity of the "golden bowls" is to show how prayer results in the triggering of the outpouring of Divine judgment. On one hand, God is sovereign and does as He wishes; and yet He also will only do what He does in response to man. The fire thrown onto the earth in Rev. 8:3-5 is thrown from the incense altar. And that fire came from the altar of sacrifice where the blood of the martyrs cries for vengeance. The clear idea is that prayer is directly related to God causing major geopolitical events and judgments on this earth. This is where understanding Revelation changes our whole perception both of ourselves and of the world around us.

*There followed thunders, voices, lightnings and an earthquake-* Whatever the specific fulfilments of these things, we must not fail to gather the overall impression which would have been taken by a first century illiterate Jewish audience. Thunder, voices, flashes of lightning, seven trumpet blasts and an earthquake all go together with the classic theophanies whereby God 'comes down' to earth with a great trumpet sound (Ex. 19:16-19; Is. 19:6; Rev. 11:19; 16:18). And this is triggered by the incense of prayer.

What was seen in the Heavenly throne room at the start of the vision (4:5 cp. 11:19). This awesome Divine activity in the temple of Heaven, the throne room (11:19), is triggered by the prayers of men on earth. Voices, thunder, lightning and earthquake are all experienced in the events which make Babylon fall in 16:18 under the seventh vial (16:17). The voice of thunders proclaims the establishment of God's Kingdom in 19:6. Putting these things together, we see that the voices, thunders and lightnings are all part and parcel of the same final judgment of the beast system and establishment of God's Kingdom at Christ's coming. There is no way that these various passages refer to events over a 2000 year period. They are the events of the very last days. The earthquake which is associated with voices, thunders and lightnings is clearly that of 16:18, for the same words are used. The literalistic, linear thinking mind would expect that there must be a progression of chronological events between chapters 8 and 16. But that is not how apocalyptic works, nor do we find such a chronological development in Old Testament Bible prophecy. Rather are we given repeated snapshots of the same events from different angles, and often the end point is declared and then there is an explanation of how that position was arrived at. This is true of Biblical language generally- consider how in 2 Samuel 24 we are told that the Lord spared Jerusalem because of David's prayer, but then the text reverts in time to explain how that came about.

The same earthquake is in view throughout Revelation (6:12; 11:13,19; 16:18). We naturally think of the great earthquake which is to accompany the return of the Lord

Jesus in Zech. 14:5. The earthquake is described in various parts of the Revelation prophecy because chronological order is not very significant in apocalyptic. The images overlap, giving a kaleidoscope effect.

The language in 8:5 and indeed throughout the trumpets is alluding to the prophecy of Jerusalem's destruction in Isaiah 29:

"I will distress Ariel, and there shall be moaning and lamentation... I will encamp against you all around... and you will be brought low... in an instant, suddenly, you will be visited by the LORD of hosts with thunder and with earthquake and great noise, with whirlwind and tempest, and the flame of a devouring fire. And the multitude of all the nations that fight against Ariel, all that fight against her and her stronghold and distress her, shall be like a dream, a vision of the night... so shall the multitude of all the nations be that fight against Mount Zion... In that day the deaf shall hear the words of a book, and out of their gloom and darkness the eyes of the blind shall see. The meek shall obtain fresh joy in the LORD... For the ruthless [the Islamic Jihadists] shall come to nothing and the scoffer cease, and all who watch to do evil shall be cut off... Jacob shall no more be ashamed, no more shall his face grow pale... those who go astray in spirit will come to understanding". It's hard to find a complete historical fulfilment of this- when God revealed Himself to deliver a besieged Jerusalem with thunder, earthquake and great noise, which then results in the repentance of a remnant in Israel. This time is yet to come, and it is the time spoken of in Revelation 8. The earthquake which fells Babylon is Jerusalem's salvation, and it comes at a time when Jerusalem is surrounded by enemy armies. This is the scenario of Zechariah 14- Jerusalem surrounded by armies, who are judged by the Lord's return and a huge earthquake.

*8:6 And the seven Angels that had the seven trumpets-* The blowing of trumpets is commonly used in the OT for preparing war against Israel's enemies. The war being prepared is against Israel's latter day desolators. The obvious connection is with the seven priests blowing the seven trumpets which caused the fall of the great city Jericho (Josh. 6:4,6). Israel's latter day enemies are the equivalent of the Canaanites, the non-Jewish inhabitants of the land promised to Abraham. The Angels are as it were the priests, and we have read earlier in Rev. 8 of the Angels as it were doing priestly duty in the Heavenly tabernacle. The blowing of the trumpets is preparing for the fall of the great city Babylon, the epitome of the beast.

*Prepared themselves to sound-* We imagine them lifting the trumpets to their mouths. The detail adds to the general impression that all the calamities of the last days have been carefully prepared. They are not at all the outcome of random evil which has got out of even Divine control. That point is repeatedly made doubtless because it might well appear like that to those who endure those things. There is a strong theme in Revelation of things being prepared by the Angels and then happening on the land (the locusts are prepared for battle, 9:7; four Angels are prepared for action at a precise moment, 9:15; the persecuted woman has a place of refuge prepared for her, 12:6; the hordes from the East are prepared for release from the Euphrates, which is what we are seeing in the preparation of the jihadist hordes in that very area today, 16:12; the bride is prepared through all her tribulations, 19:7: 21:2). It is that preparation process which we are seeing today in the development of the radical Islamists.

Num. 10:8-10 clearly associates the sounding of the trumpets with the deliverance of God's people from their enemies: "When you go to war in your land against the adversary who attacks you, then you shall sound an alarm with the trumpets, that you may be remembered before the Lord your God, and be saved from your enemies". We have an example in 2 Chron. 13:14,15: "When Judah turned around, behold they were attacked both front and rear; so they cried to the Lord, and the priests blew the trumpets. Then the men of Judah raised a war cry, and when the men of Judah raised the war cry, then it was that God routed Jeroboam and all Israel before Abijah and Judah". Again we see that the context in Revelation is likewise Israel. The judgments which follow are therefore against the enemies of the true people of God. But we must remember that this is all in response to the incense, which was initially the cry of the lives of those martyred by Jewish and Roman systems in the first century. The true Israel were persecuted by the fake Israel, and so there is an element in which these judgments came upon the land of Israel in AD70.

*8:7 And the first sounded, and there followed hail and fire, mingled with blood; and they were cast upon the earth-* One reason why there are such similarities between the seven vials and the seven trumpets [see introduction to this chapter] could be that the vials refer largely to the judgments to come upon the world, and the trumpets to the latter day tribulation of the saints. See on Rev. 11:3.

| Seven Vials | Seven trumpets |
|-------------|----------------|
| 16:2        | 8:7            |
| 16:3        | 8:8            |
| 16:4        | 8:10           |
| 16:8        | 8:12           |
| 16:10       | 9:1            |
| 16:12       | 9:13           |
| 16:17-21    | 11:15          |

The hail is seen prepared in Heaven in 11:9; now it is sent to the earth. Hail is one of the final bowls that is poured upon the beast system in 16:21. What the beast does to those on the land is done to them; the cup or bowl they gave others to drink, they must drink at the time of the bowls being poured out. The idea of "hail and fire mingled" is clearly alluding to the plague upon Egypt, of hail mingled with fire (Ex. 9:24). But the hail plague did not touch the Israelites in Goshen (Ex. 9:26). This is exactly as we would expect- the seal judgments led a remnant of Israel to repent, and through the symbology of the 144,000 in Rev. 7, they are declared the true Israel. They are sealed so that the judgments of the trumpets don't come upon them. So the allusion to a plague on Egypt which didn't touch Israel is appropriate. Is. 32:19 describes the repentant remnant of Israel as being unharmed by hail in the last days. Note that the plagues on Egypt were intended to elicit repentance in Pharaoh and the Egyptians, and that is likewise the purpose of the trumpet judgments upon the beast system. We gasp at God's grace- that He even wants jihadists to repent. We recall too how a confederacy of five kings of the earth / land, under the leadership of the antichrist figure Adonizedek ('Lord of righteousness', a fake Christ), were likewise destroyed by hail during the conquest of Joshua-Jesus (Josh. 10:11).

Hail cast down to the earth is exactly the language of the judgment upon the impenitent amongst Israel in the last days who do not accept the Messiah, the corner stone laid in Zion; those who are not amongst the remnant who repent (Is. 28:2,5,16,17); those Jews who will not 'come out of' the Babylon system will experience her judgments, if they are not part of the repentant Jewish remnant, the

144,000. In similar manner, the impenitent Jews at the time of the restoration were struck with hail, albeit as part of a program intended to bring them even then to repentance (Hag. 2:17).

Hail and blood are used by God to “plead” with Gog (Ez. 38:22). Ezekiel 38 is a latter day prophecy, but we again must note that the judgment of hail, blood, plague etc. is in order to plead even with Gog to repent. Only when the warning trumpets are ignored are the vials of complete destruction poured out and the temple is closed to men (15:7,8).

"Fire mingled with blood" is all part of the Lord's second coming, for He comes with flaming fire in judgment upon those who have refused to know Him (2 Thess. 1:7); thus the eyes of Jesus in Revelation are as a flaming fire (Rev. 1:7; 2:18; 19:12). This is the picture of Him at the time of His coming in judgment to earth. Yet the Angels are His eyes, according to Revelation 1 and 4:5, and they are therefore made a flaming fire (Heb. 1:7). Thus the actual, mechanical outworking of His coming in judgment in fire will be through the medium of Angelic activity. And this is what we have spoken of here in Rev. 8:7.

Casting fire on the land [of Israel] recalls Amos 7:4, which also mentions locusts, whom we will meet in the fifth trumpet: “The Lord God contended by fire... and it devoured the great deep, and would have eaten up the land (R.V., LXX: “the Lord's portion”). The context goes on to predict that “the high places of Isaac (where Isaac was offered- Moriah, the temple mount) shall be desolate, and the sanctuaries [the great sanctuary?] of Israel shall be laid waste”. Notice once again that the punishment by fire is Yahweh ‘contending’. It is again an appeal for repentance.

*The third part of the earth was burnt up, as was the third part of the trees; and all green grass was burnt up-* In Ez. 5:1-5 Ezekiel shaves his hair and is told to divide it carefully into three parts, except for a mere few bound in the hem of his robe. These three parts are then consigned to destruction by fire, sword or scattering. We have just read in chapter 7 of the 144,000 faithful remnant. They will be saved, but the three parts of Israel who remain apart from them are to be destroyed. Note that the context of Ezekiel 5 is specifically Jerusalem. Zech. 13:8,9 speaks of two thirds of Jews *in the land* being killed, and a third being refined. Zech. 14:2 has half of Jerusalem going into captivity. Bearing in mind the difference between Jerusalem and the whole land, these proportions aren't necessarily contradictory. The point is, these Old Testament prophecies of a partial desolation of Jerusalem and the land of Israel are being alluded to in Revelation; and the context is of the last days, rather than of some period in past history.

Not all trees were destroyed by the hail. This is in intended contrast to how the hail upon Egypt destroyed *every* tree of the field (Ex. 9:25- although some escaped, 10:5,12,15) as well as all the grass. Here, all the grass is destroyed but only a third of the trees. We may not need to think in terms of literal grass and trees. Perhaps the point is being made that yes, the situation is analogous to Israel in Egypt and the plagues upon Egypt, but still they are more restrained than those upon Egypt. This would be because God wants the beast system to perceive the similarities [perhaps therefore literal hail will be used], and to repent- before the bowls are poured out, which speak of utter destruction of the beast system. We note that in this case, Moses before Pharaoh must have a latter day equivalent, and we see this in chapter 11, where the two witnesses have similarities to Moses at this time.



The destruction of trees recalls what Babylon did to Jerusalem: "For thus hath the Lord of Hosts said, Hew down her trees (RVmg.), and cast a mount against Jerusalem: this is the city to be visited; she is wholly oppression in the midst of her" (Jer. 6:6). Likewise Ez. 20:47: "Behold, I will kindle a fire in you, and it shall devour every green tree in you, and every dry tree: the flaming flame shall not be quenched, and all faces from the south to the north shall be burned therein". These words were applied by the Lord to Jerusalem's future judgment, both in AD70 and therefore also in the last days (Lk. 23:31). The idea is that the Babylonian judgment upon Israel is to be repeated in the last days. And that may simply be the point of reference to the trees- perhaps we don't need to look for any literal application. It could be that as in the Lord's latter day parable of the fig tree, trees represent nations within the land / earth promised to Abraham. Another Old Testament allusion to be aware of regarding trees is

Zech. 11:1,2: "Open your doors, O Lebanon, that the fire may devour your cedars. Howl, fir tree; for the cedar is fallen; because the mighty are spoiled: howl, O oaks of Bashan; for the forest of the vintage is come down". These words preface a prophecy of the rejection of Jesus and of the resultant judgment for that in the last days.

It's not my style in this exposition to unduly dwell on the very evident application of Revelation to the run up to AD70, for we want to know the relevance to our days. But it's worth noting that there was a literal removing of trees then. Josephus claims that trees were felled indiscriminately to build engines of war and even the crucifixion of prisoners had to cease through lack of timber to make crosses. There has been an especial attempt to reforest the land of Israel since 1948. This is typical of the way that natural Israel have sought to bring about the fulfilment of Bible prophecies about the fertility of the land- in their own strength. And all that reforestation will be burnt up in the tribulation.

We note that the olive and vine trees were not to be hurt during the time of the seals (6:6). But now, a third of them are. The Hadith records how generally, trees should not be destroyed by Moslems when on campaigns: "The first Caliph Abu Bakr (Allah be pleased with him) gave to his army while sending her on the expedition to the Syrian borders[commands] permeated with the noble spirit with which the war in Islam is permitted. He said: "... Bring no harm to the trees, nor burn them with fire, especially those which are fruitful" (The Hadith, Book 19 Jihad and Expedition (*Kitab Al-Jihad wa'l-Siyar*)). As often happens, the jihadist may go well beyond their own religion. Or it could be that these particular judgments on the land are brought about by non-Moslems.

"Burnt up" is the same word used about the burning up in judgment of the last day when Christ returns (Lk. 3:17; 1 Cor. 3:15; 2 Pet. 3:10) and the burning up of Babylon (Rev. 17:16; 18:8). The weeds are gathered together and burnt up (Mt. 13:30), and this is effectively a latter day prophecy of the gathering together of the nations to Armageddon and their being burnt up in the land. "Just as the weeds are gathered and burned with fire, so will it be at the end of the age. The Son of Man will send his angels, and they will gather out of his kingdom all causes of sin and all law-breakers, and throw them into the fiery furnace. In that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth" (Mt. 13:40-42). The furnace is specifically defined as Jerusalem under judgment at the hands of Babylon-Assyria (Is. 31:9; Ez. 22:18), the latter day Sodom and Egypt which are also described as a furnace (Gen. 19:28; Dt. 4:20; 1 Kings 8:51; Jer. 11:4). Sodom and Egypt are Jerusalem of the last days (Rev. 11:8; Is. 1:10; 3:9; Jer. 23:14; Ez. 16:46). The prophecies about this will therefore be

fulfilled in stages within the last few days around the coming of Christ. The furnace of Rev. 9:2 must be understood likewise; the overthrow of Babylon is as when God overthrew Sodom (Is. 13:19; Jer. 49:18; 50:40).

The specific mention of *green* grass may suggest that this happens at Passover time (cp. Mk. 6:39). *Chloros*, here translated "green", is the same word used about the *chloros* [AV "pale"] horse" of the seals (Rev. 6:8). This similarity with the seals is because what was done to Israel is now being done to those who did it. Babylon is drinking the cup she gave others.

8:8 *And the second angel blew his trumpet and as it were a great mountain-* This can refer to Israel and Mount Zion: "Verily I say unto you, If ye have faith, and doubt not, ye shall not only do this which is done to the fig tree, but also if ye shall say unto this mountain, Be thou removed, and be thou cast into the sea, it shall be done" (Mt. 21:21). "This mountain" was Zion, before which the Lord stood at that time, with its altar fire, which never went out. Yet the great destroying mountain is also Babylon (Jer. 51:25). The punishment upon Babylon will come upon an Israel who fail to come out of her.

The mountains had been moved out of their places in the seal judgments (6:14), and now this is in turn done to the enemies of God's people. For the mountain falling represents the destruction of Babylon in the Old Testament. But it also represents Judaism. The fall of Israel as an entity is framed in the same terms as the fall of Babylon. They had failed to come out of Babylon, and so Babylon's judgments come upon them. We're dealing here with a double symbol- of both falling Babylon and falling Israel. By contrast, the "great mountain" of God's Kingdom, the Mount Zion, stands secure (Dan. 2:35; Rev. 14:1; 21:10). The clearest Old Testament allusion is to Zech. 4:7: "Who are you, O great mountain? Before Zerubbabel you shall become a plain. And he shall bring forward the corner stone amid shouts of 'Grace, grace to it!'" The corner stone is the Lord Jesus, whose second coming will mean the fall of the "great mountain". The creation of a plain instead of elevated land is the language of the required levelling of Israel by the work of the Elijah prophet before the coming of Messiah (Is. 40:4). The immediate context of Zech. 4:7 speaks of how the mountain of opposition to Zerubbabel would be removed so that the restoration of Israel's Kingdom could come about. And that opposition was from local Arabs such as Sanballat who were opposing it. Zerubbabel failed to restore the Kingdom and become the Messiah figure he could have become. The essence of the prophecy is to be fulfilled in the last days, when the Lord Jesus will be in perfection the Messiah of Israel. The great mountain will then speak of the fake kingdom of God established by the Babylon beast, which shall be cast down.

*Burning with fire-* This burning with fire is part of the outworking of how fire was cast into the land as a result of the prayers of the faithful remnant (8:5). The mountain is cast down, burning- just as fire is cast onto the earth from above. Yet burning fire is a feature of God's latter day judgment upon the beast, as often spoken of later in Revelation. The Lord Jesus will sit in judgment on the beast enthroned with wheels of burning fire (Dan. 7:19), replete as that language is with reference to the Angel cherubim (Ez. 1:13), the four beasts of Heaven. Again, we are clearly to see in this the language of the last day. The lamps of fire burning before the throne in Rev. 4:5 speak of the view of the Heavenly throne room as it will be in the last day. Finally, the lake of burning fire- fire burning on water- is the end of the beast system. And this same image, fire cast into water and the water burning, is found here in the second trumpet (and also in the third trumpet, where fire hits water again, the rivers). Perhaps we could understand that this is a foretaste of the final judgment of

the lake of fire. Only a third of the water is affected, and then a third part of the rivers, unlike the symbology of the entire lake of fire burning. There is again the implication that even at this late stage, men can see what condemnation will be like and avoid it in repentance. This would be in keeping with how God has worked so many times- He gives worked examples of condemnation to men to warn them of where their path shall lead them. Quite simply, because He wishes their repentance. Significantly, the Koran several times claims that the judgment of unbelievers will be severe exactly because they have rejected warnings (especially Sura 54.16-24). The Moslem followers of the beast will be treated exactly in accordance with their own perceptions of Divine judgment.

*Was cast into the sea-* In this sense, there is a sea of glass mingled with fire in 15:2. The sea of glass speaks of the establishment of the Kingdom of God on earth, but the picture is mingled with fire because the throwing of fire into the sea is what brings about the Kingdom. We see again how apocalyptic is not interested in precise chronology- the events are run together. Different aspects of the same picture are given. What this means, however, is that the casting of the mountain of fire into the sea is definitely a picture of latter day events, immediately around the time of the establishment of the sea as glass, the Kingdom of God on the sea of nations.

The wicked are as a troubled sea (Is. 57:20). But closer examination of that passage reveals that is talking about the Jews at the time of the Assyrian invasion who chose not to be amongst the righteous remnant. This exactly fits our context. And the Hebrew word translated "troubled" means literally 'sent away', and is also translated 'divorced'. The metaphor of divorce is certainly used about God's relationship with Israel, and the destruction of the faithless majority of Israel at the time of the end will be the final climax of that great divorce. such troubling of the sea will be the lot of the majority in Israel, but "Peace, peace" to the repentant remnant (Is. 57:19).

*And the third part of the sea became blood-* In the AD70 application, this may refer to the mass killing of Jews in the Sea of Galilee. Josephus recorded: "One might see the lake all bloody, and full of dead bodies, for not one of them escaped. And a terrible stink, and a very sad sight, there was on the following days over the country. In this way thousands were slain" (B.J. 3:10:9). Likewise, on the Mediterranean coast: "The sea was bloody a long way, and the maritime ports were full of dead bodies ... and the number of the bodies that were thus thrown out of the sea was 4,200" (B.J. 3:9:3). Perhaps something similar will happen in the last days.

Water becoming blood is obviously a reference to the plagues upon Egypt (Ex. 7:20). The continual allusion to those plagues suggest that there has been an abuse of Israel by a latter day Egypt. In *The Last Days* [chapter 5](#) I work out in more detail the typology of Egypt's domination of Israel, with the Passover deliverance being a type of the second coming. That might explain the reference to "green grass", associated as it is with Passover. Bother "rivers" and "waters" are described as being turned into blood in Egypt (Ps. 78:44; 105:29), and both rivers and waters are spoken of here in the trumpets.

A burning mountain coming into the sea would create the impression of a sea of fire- and the lake of fire is the picture of the beast's final destruction (Rev. 19:20; 21:8). There may therefore be no specific symbology in the 'sea' or water beyond this.

Fire destroying things in water is surely an indication that this is from God. The Hadith (Book 41.7012) says that the Antichrist of the last days will do the same: "The *Dajjal* would appear and there would be along with him water and fire and what the

people would see as water that would be fire and that would burn and what would appear as fire that would be water". The Muslims will therefore see the entity bringing these things about- the Lord Jesus- as the antiChrist and thus be the more motivated to engage in mad warfare against Him, to their own destruction.

In Rev. 8:8 we have an Angel casting a mountain into the sea. This must surely connect with the Lord's encouragement that we can cast mountains into the sea by our faith (Mk. 11:23). Therefore... it surely follows that our prayers have a direct effect upon the Angels. They throw mountains around because of our faithful prayer... Inevitably we see a connection with Ps. 46:2, which comforts us not to fear when mountains are cast into sea. Surely the point is that we shouldn't be scared when we perceive the awesomeness of the power of prayer and its influence upon Angels. It's all too easy to ask for things without perceiving how it would really be if that prayer were answered. We need to have specific and focused faith in what we ask for, realizing that legions of Angels are potentially able to operationalize what we ask for. See on Is. 6:7.

Jer. 51:25 calls Babylon a "destroying mountain" which is to be judged by fire to become "a burnt mountain". The use of identical language in Rev. 8:8 must make that passage have some reference to the fall of latter-day Babylon. "Destroying mountain" is the language of Dan. 2:44 concerning the little stone destroying the image and growing into a mountain, symbolizing God's Kingdom. Jer. 51:20-23 stresses no less than nine times how 'Babylon' is to be "broken in pieces", which is another connection with Dan. 2:44 concerning the breaking in pieces of the nations who are confederate with 'Babylon', the head of gold.

8:9 *And there died the third part of the creatures (even they that had life) which were in the sea, and the third part of the ships were destroyed-* The connection is clearly with Rev. 5:13, where the "creatures" [s.w.] in the sea all give glory to the Lamb enthroned. To get to that end point, the creatures in the sea who will not give Him glory must be judged. The seals, trumpets, vials and descriptions of the judgments upon the beast and whore can be read as being all aspects of the final judgment. But it could also be that the last judgment of the unbelieving world comes in stages. Here in the trumpets, a third of the sea creatures die; in 16:3, the sea becomes as the blood of a dead corpse "and *every* living creature died in the sea". The same Greek word for "died" is used there as here in 8:9. As commented previously, God gives warning of His final judgments, in the hope that men will learn from the condemnation of others and repent. We marvel at His patience, portrayed as it is throughout the various judgments we read of. Our human sense would be to simply liquidate the entire unbelieving, abusive system in one shot. But He works, with all the intricacies of the systems of seven interlocking, interrelated judgments, in order to try to elicit repentance at every turn. Truly, as Emil Brunner observed, "the wrath of God is the love of God". Even in His style of condemning wicked men and systems, we see shining through His urgent desire for human repentance and other, better outcomes. "The sea" is the area from which the beast arises (13:1). We can therefore interpret it as the power base of the beast- the nations and peoples within the land promised to Abraham. This would explain the repeated judgments upon the "sea" in Revelation. The emphasis given to "the ships" being judged would therefore speak of the mercantile activities within that area. The only other references in Revelation to "ships" are when we read that the ships associated with the Babylon-beast system are destroyed in her final judgment (Rev. 18:17,19). At the time of the trumpet judgments, only a third of them are destroyed- but finally, they are all destroyed. The destruction of a third of them is again a portent of the final total destruction- and is

therefore an appeal for repentance. Likewise we read that this third part of shipping was "destroyed" but the word is found elsewhere in Revelation only when we read of the total 'destruction' of those who had destroyed the land (11:18).

8:10 *And the third angel blew his trumpet, and there fell from heaven a great star-* The Olivet prophecy speaks of the stars falling from Heaven (Mt. 24:29), and the context begs us interpret this as referring to the collapse of the Israelite ruling system. The imagery can equally refer to the ruling system of any entity. It seems a specific star or leader is in view, and his fall will result in damage on the earth / land. A great star falling from Heaven to earth recalls Isaiah 14, the parable of the fall of the king of Babylon. And this surely looks forward to the last days. Stars represent rulers or leaders, and Rev. 17:10 speaks of how the five kings supporting the beast system 'fall' [s.w.]; here in the trumpets we have detail of the fall of at least two of them.

*Burning as a torch-* This is the language of the earlier vision of the Heavenly throne room, where the seven lamps of fire burn before the throne (Rev. 4:5). The implication is that this is a result of Angelic involvement in the judgment. But there is also a continuation of the theme that the beast kingdom is a fake kingdom of God. It has just been described as a "great mountain", which is the language of *God's* Kingdom. Perhaps the leader who falls will be known as the burning torch or lamp.

*And it fell upon the third part of the rivers and upon the fountains of the waters-* See on 8:8 *burning with fire*. Such judgment on water courses is predicted in prophecies about latter day events in the land of Israel. "The mountains of Israel... Thus saith the Lord God to the mountains and to the hills, to the rivers (R.V. "water courses"; the reference is to wadis) and to the valleys" (Ez. 6:3). Ez. 36:4, 6 uses identical language about the land of Israel, again in a latter day context. Before the Assyrian invasion, typical of the latter day desolation of Israel, Joel 1:20 records that "the rivers of waters are dried up".

The Koran and Hadith speak hundreds of times of paradise as being a place of rivers and fountains of waters. The contrast is with the *living* "fountains of waters" which the repentant 144,000 come to (Rev. 7:17). The "fountains of waters" of the beast system are turned to blood and dried up in the various judgments brought upon them. They are *dead*. The Muslim concept of paradise will be destroyed and inverted. In seeking to establish a caliphate in the land promised to Abraham, with Jerusalem as its capital and the temple mount as its central point of worship, radical Islam is seeking to establish a fake, imitation Kingdom of God- just as Assyria offered Judah a land where each would sit under their own vine and fig tree, appropriating the language of *God's* Kingdom to their own. Whilst there may be a literal element to these judgments upon the waters, I suspect that the judgment must be understood in terms of the Islamic conception of paradise.

8:11 *And the name of the star is called Wormwood-* This is Old Testament imagery for the bitterness of Israel's judgment at the hand of their neighbours, especially Babylon at the fall of Jerusalem: "Behold I will feed them, even this people, with wormwood, and give them water of gall to drink. I will scatter them also among the nations" (Jer. 9:15, 16; Lam. 3:15,19). "Behold, I will feed them with wormwood, and make them drink the water of gall: for from the prophets of Jerusalem is profaneness gone forth into all the land" (Jer. 23:15 cp. Jer. 6:26). The allusion is also to Numbers 5, the trial of the bitter waters of jealousy, for the woman who has been unfaithful to her husband. And that woman is clearly enough representative of Israel, according to many Old Testament allusions.

Sura 37.62 of the Koran speaks of a similar plant that Muslims believe is the food of dwellers of Hell-fire, part of the diet of *Adh-Dhari*, bitter fruit, which intensifies

their torment (Sura 69:36,37). The similarities with the Koran could suggest that the victims of these judgments will be subjected to an Islamic judgment of condemnation, i.e. ministered by Islam. Or the hint could be that the self-righteous jihadists will understand that they are being condemned, they will feel their condemnation in terms they understand.

*And one third of the waters became bitter-tasting; and many men died because the waters were made so bitter-* The parallel is between the waters ‘becoming wormwood’ and the waters being “made bitter”. There may not be too much significance in the term “wormwood”, rather is the idea being developed of a curse and bitterness. The judgments of the trumpets are partly upon those in Israel who didn’t repent during the seals, and thus weren’t sealed in chapter 7; and partly upon their desolators, or others within the land promised to Abraham. The language of bitter waters obviously alludes to Israel’s experience at Marah in Ex. 15:23. The bitter waters were cured by a tree being cut down and cast into the water. This clearly looked ahead to the tree of the Lord’s crucifixion, through which the bitter waters were made sweet. The unbelieving Israelites were tested / tried at the bitter waters (Ex. 15:25). We could reasonably infer that the way only a third of the waters were made bitter is a hint that this partial judgment is intended to lead Israel to repentance, and to acceptance of the tree / cross of the Christ whom they crucified. Again we marvel at God’s ever saving intention, ever desiring human repentance and salvation. After leaving Marah, and learning the lesson of the tree, Israel came to Elim, where there were “fountains of [living] water” (Num. 33:9). The contrast between bitter water and living water is only really found here in Rev. 8:10 and 7:17, where the repentant 144,000 come to living fountains of waters. Those who don’t accept the crucified Christ have the bitter waters of Marah, from which they will not move on to Elim.

8:12- see on Rev. 18:8.

*And the fourth angel blew his trumpet, and a third of the sun was struck and a third of the moon and a third of the stars-* The darkening of a third of the stars and a third of the sun and moon is very much the picture in Rev. 12:4, where a third of the stars fall to earth. The picture of a part of the heavens falling is exactly how the Koran envisages the last day judgment of apostates- “A fragment of the heaven falling” (Sura 52:44). The judgment they envisage upon others will come upon them, and it will be articulated in terms appropriate to their cultural understanding. This, I suggest, is the significance of the similarities between the Biblical pictures of the latter day judgments, and the wording of the Koran and Hadith.

Harry Whittaker sums up the various usages of sun, moon and stars as symbols of Israel: “(a) Joseph’s dream, where sun, moon and stars stand for his father, mother and brethren, i.e. the whole family of Israel.

(b) Revelation 12:1. The woman clothed with the sun and with the moon under her feet, and upon her head a crown of twelve stars similarly represents the nation of Israel. From this starting point the chapter yields a coherent and highly relevant interpretation (ch. 27).

(c) Genesis 22:17: “I will multiply thy seed as the stars of heaven.”

(d) Jeremiah 31:36: “If those ordinances (sun, moon and stars; v. 35) depart from before Me, saith the Lord, then the seed of Israel also shall cease from being a nation before Me forever.”

(e) Joel 2:10: “The sun and moon shall be dark, and the stars shall withdraw their shining” - the final invasion of Israel in the Last Days (cp. ch. 3:15).

(f) Daniel 8: 10: "The little horn waxed great, even to the host of heaven; and it cast down some of the host and of the stars to the ground, and stamped upon them."

(g) Amos 8:9: "I will cause the sun to go down at noon" is coupled with: "I will turn your feasts into mourning."

(h) Luke 23:45: "And the sun was darkened and the veil of the temple rent in the midst." Strange conjunction of phenomena in one verse except it is that both are symbolic of the same thing - the end of the Mosaic economy".

They are "struck", using the same word as is used in the LXX of the smiting of Israel by the Assyrians (Is. 1:5; 9:13), who represent Israel's latter day invaders.

*This meant that the third part of them were darkened; and the day would not shine for the third part of it, and the night in like manner-* Darkness coming upon the earth is the presage of a new creation (Gen. 1:2). The Old Testament prophets use the metaphor about the latter day invader of Israel bringing darkness upon the land (Is. 8:22; Am. 4:13), but that darkness is the necessary precursor for the Lord arising in glory upon the land (Is. 60:2). This language of a darkened earth is therefore the signal that we should expect imminently the active manifestation of God, through the return of His Son. These events therefore specifically reference the time of the immediate return of Christ. The unnatural eclipse of heavenly bodies recalls the period of darkness at the crucifixion. As so often in Revelation, the message is that the sufferings of the last days will enable people to identify with the crucifixion sufferings of Christ, and through that identification with Him to come to share in His resurrection. The essence of this means to salvation in Christ has gone on throughout the lives of all the Lord's people, at whatever time they have lived. However, the victims of the trumpet judgments are those who did not respond to those of the six seals. We again draw our breath in marvel at how the Lord will even seek with those stubborn people to bring them to identity with Him. Note that many of these judgments are a reversal of creation- for God initially made the sun, moon and stars to shine upon the earth (Gen. 1:15,17 s.w. LXX).

8:13 *And I saw and I heard an eagle, flying in mid heaven, saying with a great voice-* According to Vine, "It means, properly, the meridian, the highest point in the heavens which the sun occupies at noon; not the space between heaven and earth". The appeal from the place of the sun at its zenith surely speaks of the Lord Jesus. *En* (AV "through") would be better translated "at", with reference to this specific point. The warning that the next three Angels have very serious judgments to declare must serve some kind of function. It may be to give the impression that these judgments are not to be understood in chronological sequence; they are known before they are pronounced. Or perhaps the declaration is made because, yet again, it is an appeal to repentance.

*Woe, woe, woe!*- This can be read as an invitation to weeping; the weeping of repentance. There is still just about time for repentance, even from those who have turned down the appeals of the six seals. The Muslim jihadists believe they are to pronounce woe upon the enemies in the last hour: "When a decisive surah is revealed and war is mentioned therein... Therefore woe unto them!" (Sura 47:20). The trumpets speak of judgments which are to come on both the beast and the impenitent Jews. But the judgments are brought about by the Moslem beast itself, which is exactly how God's enemies have met their end in history- by destroying themselves. Rev. 17:16 speaks of how the horns of the beast destroy the beast. So the bringing of "Woe" upon those in the land is what the jihadists are preparing to do.

*For those who dwell on the earth-* This talk of “inhabitants” seems rather redundant; until we realize that the reference is likely to those who have but recently invaded the land promised to Abraham, grabbed the wealth of the Jews and are now ‘inhabiting’ it as their own land.

*By reason of the other voices of the trumpet of the three angels, who are yet to sound-* But only two of the woe trumpets appear to be sounded (9:12; 11:14). This recalls how there is no seventh seal either- just a pointed silence in Heaven, instead of an expected outpouring of calamity (see on :1). And now it seems there is no seventh trumpet either. This may be because we are intended to see ‘the end’, the final establishment of the Kingdom, as the seventh trumpet and seventh seal. But the seals and trumpets are of calamities happening to the land and people, not blessings. It could well be that God planned a final calamity which will not happen, just as the seven thunders are prepared but not recorded. His grace and pity may make Him relent; or quite simply the prayers of the faithful for ‘the end’ are powerful in bringing about some measure of shortening of His work. The Old Testament parallel would be in Joseph apparently cutting short the more extended program of education which He had intended for his brothers.

## REVELATION CHAPTER 9

9:1 *And the fifth angel blew his trumpet, and I saw a star from heaven fall to the earth-* If the physical movement of Angels from Heaven to earth to perform certain tasks can be taken literally, Rev. 9:1,11 and certain other passages taken on a more literal slant: "I saw a star (symbolic of an Angel) fall from Heaven unto the earth: and to Him was given the key of the bottomless pit... the Angel of the bottomless pit" (Rev. 9:1,11). It seems that great stress is placed in Scripture on the Angels physically moving through space, both on the earth and between Heaven and earth, in order to fulfil their tasks, rather than being static in Heaven or earth and bringing things about by just willing them to happen. See on Gen. 18:10.

*And there was given to him the key to the pit of the abyss-* The key to death and the grave is in Christ's hand (Rev. 1:18). This person is therefore an anti-Christ. We note how the locusts who are released from it are specifically obedient to their king-leader (9:4,11). The idea of course is that if you're thrown into a bottomless pit ["abyss"] which is locked, there's no way you can ever get out of it. But locusts, representing the desolators of the land, do arise out of it. The figure is similar to that of receiving a deadly wound, a wound that makes one die, and then resurrecting. This is what is said of the beast and its horn (13:3,12). The locusts are connected to that entity. We should be looking, therefore, for the entity which will finally dominate Israel to receive a wound which apparently makes it dead. This could be from Western and / or Israeli intervention against them. There would then be a brief period of worldwide relief- the "peace and safety" period of 1 Thess. 5. But the entity then revives. This scenario is possible as we see from the Western conflict against the Islamic jihadists.

So many of Revelation's allusions to the Old Testament are to material specifically concerning Jerusalem. One could almost argue that the prophecy could have a specific application to the latter day city of Jerusalem. The language of the bottomless pit likewise has specific reference to Jerusalem: "In the floor of the small cave (measuring about 14 feet square with a six foot ceiling) under the great foundation stone in the Dome of the Rock is round marble slab closing a well shaft



known as "the well of the souls" (Bir al Arwah) ... A Muslim tradition holds this is the entrance into the bottomless pit, the abyss. The souls of the dead awaiting judgment are said to be audible beneath. The Talmud claims that this is the abyss above the primeval waters of creation and of the Flood" Lambert Dolphin, *Early History of the Temple Mount*.

The language used here is specifically relevant to latter day Islam. Mawdudi writes of how Muhammed and his message came out of "Arabia- the Abyss of Darkness" (Abul A'la Mawdudi, *Towards Understanding Islam*, 8th ed. (Riyadh, Saudi Arabia: National Offset Printing Press, 1986), p.63).

9:2 *And he opened the pit of the abyss and smoke went out of the pit*- This is the same figure used in 14:11 for the destruction of the beast worshippers. But here it speaks of what they did to deserve that destruction- their actions against Israel and the land promised to Abraham is the grounds for their condemnation. The Hadith mentions smoke as one of the ten signs that the last day is coming: "Allah's Messenger (may peace be upon him) came to us all of a sudden as we were (busy in a discussion). He said: What do you discuss about? They (the Companions) said. We are discussing about the Last Hour. Thereupon he said: It will not come until you see ten signs before and (in this connection) he made a mention of the smoke, Dajjal [Antichrist], the beast, the rising of the sun from the west, the descent of Jesus son of Mary (Allah be pleased with him), the Gog and Magog, and landslidings in three places, one in the east, one in the west and one in Arabia at the end of which fire would burn forth from the Yemen, and would drive people to the place of their assembly" (Book 41.6931). Again, we see the crisis in the land in the last days foretold in terms which Moslems will relate to. Sura 44 of the Koran is entitled *Al-Dukhan*, 'The Smoke'. It speaks of how painful smoke will be the punishment of God's enemies in the last days: "But watch thou [O Muhammad] for the day when the sky will produce visible smoke that will envelop the people. This will be a painful torment. [Then they will say]: Our Lord relieve us of the torment" (Sura 44.10-12). It could be that jihadists bring smoke upon others in an attempt to judge them according to Islam. And they will be judged likewise, drinking the cup they made others to drink. This means that they will be judged as apostates within their own frames of reference.

*Like the smoke of a great furnace*- See on 8:7. The language of Sodom (Gen. 19:28) and Egypt. Both these places are used to describe Jerusalem under domination of her enemies as the place of particular suffering for God's people (11:8).

The invading hordes come out of the bottomless pit- both the locusts (:3) and the beast arise from here (Rev. 9:1; 11:7; 17:8). They come up out of the "bottomless pit", the abyss, the "great furnace" (Rev. 9:2). But the beast arises out of *the land* [promised to Abraham] in Rev. 13:2. We can therefore understand the bottomless pit and great furnace as being within the land promised to Abraham. The locusts of Joel 2:3 are pictured as coming upon Israel as if it is the garden of Eden, and leaving it as a desolate wilderness. This could connect with the revival of the land of Israel since 1948 as the garden of Eden (Ez. 36:35); or it could be that Eden is the same as the land promised to Abraham. Is. 31:9 speaks of Jerusalem surrounded by the Assyrians as a furnace. Judah's captivity in Babylon was as it were in a furnace of affliction (Is. 48:10; Ez. 22:18,20,22). The deliverance of the faithful Jews from the furnace in Dan. 3:6,11 was an acted parable of Judah's deliverance from captivity in Babylon / Persia and her empire- throughout the land promised to Abraham. And yet in Rev. 20:3, the beast is again cast into the bottomless pit, clearly representing condemnation and judgment. So it would seem that the judgment upon the beast / locusts occurs several

times- they are condemned / judged and put in the bottomless pit, and then released, and then placed there again. This probably speaks of various stages in the judgment upon them. But it would be foolhardy to try to work out an exact chronology ahead of time.

*And the sun and the air were darkened because of the smoke of the pit-* Israel's extremist neighbours will not think twice about using nuclear weaponry against her, and one wonders therefore whether this will have a literal dimension. The sun is spoken of as being darkened by the smoke. But the sun itself would not be darkened; that is presented here as it appears from the standpoint of an observer on earth. So often the Bible is written this way, from the Genesis account of creation to the language of demons in the New Testament. Failure to appreciate this leads to wrong interpretation. The darkening of the sun is another connection with the account of the Lord's crucifixion (s.w. Lk. 23:45), the point being that the tribulation of the last days will connect the saints with His sufferings; and having suffered with Him, that generation shall live eternally with Him. It is also a quotation from the Olivet prophecy (Mt. 24:29). This again confirms that we are reading of things to happen in the very last days, before the Lord's return- and not at some point between centuries before that. The darkening of the sun is the very figure used for the latter day suffering of Israel at the hands of her invaders (Joel 3:15; Mt. 24:29).

9:3 *And out of the smoke came forth locusts upon the earth; and power was given them, as the scorpions of the earth have power-* The locusts of the fifth trumpet act in a very un-locust-like way. Unlike real locusts, they have a king. And, astonishing to relate, they are forbidden to touch grass or any vegetation! Once again the instruction seems to be: "Hurt not the earth, nor the trees"- only on this occasion it is given to locusts. *Akrab* being the Hebrew for scorpion, we may be justified in seeing here an allusion to the word 'Arab', the likely ethnicity of many of the boots on the ground of the last days. :3 The connection between these specific locusts and their place of origin is in line with how the Bible uses plant and animal imagery. "The prophets, when they used symbolical language to denote any events, commonly, at least, employed those which had a local or geographical reference; thus, in the symbols derived from the vegetable kingdom, when Judah is to be symbolized, the olive, the vine, and the fig-tree are selected; when Egypt is referred to, the reed is chosen; when Babylon, the willow. And so, in the animal kingdom, the lion is the symbol of Judah; the wild ass, of the Arabs; the crocodile, of Egypt, etc." (Elliott, *Horae Apoc.* i. 394-406). Being consumed by locusts was one of the punishments upon Israel for their disobedience (Dt. 28:38,42; Ps. 78:46; Joel 1:2). Again, we are to understand this language as specifically applying to Israel.

The parallels between Joel and Revelation 8 and 9 are certainly impressive.

|   |                                                | <i>Joel</i>         | <i>Revelation</i> |
|---|------------------------------------------------|---------------------|-------------------|
| 1 | Locusts.                                       | 1: 4                | 9:3.              |
| 2 | Symbolic of<br>a nation.                       | 1:6.                | 9: 4, 7.          |
| 3 | Teeth like<br>lions.                           | 1:6.                | 9:8.              |
| 4 | Trees and<br>pasture withered<br>and burnt up. | 1:<br>12,<br>18-20. | 8:7.              |
| 5 | Destruction<br>from the<br>Almighty.           | 1:<br>15.           | 9: 11.            |

|     |                                                 |                    |                |
|-----|-------------------------------------------------|--------------------|----------------|
| 6   | Fire.                                           | 1:<br>19; 2:3, 5.  | 8:7; 9:17.     |
| 7   | Rivers of<br>waters dried up.                   | 1:20.              | 8: 10;<br>9:14 |
| 8   | Blowing of<br>trumpets.                         | 2:1,<br>11, 15.    | 8:6.           |
| 9   | Darkness.                                       | 2:2.               | 9:2.           |
| 10. | Horses.                                         | 2:4.               | 9:7, 9.        |
| 11. | Chariots.                                       | 2:5.               | 9:9.           |
| 12. | Torment.                                        | 2:6.               | 9:6.           |
| 13. | Earthquake.                                     | 2:10.              | 8: 5.          |
| 14. | Sun, moon,<br>and stars<br>darkened.            | 2:10,<br>31; 3:15. | 8:12, 9:2.     |
| 15. | "Turn ye to<br>me ... "                         | 2:12.              | 9:20, 21.      |
| 16. | The locust<br>army goes back<br>into the abyss. | 2:20.              | 9:1.           |
| 17. | Deliverance<br>for the faithful<br>remnant.     | 2:32.              | 9:4.           |

#### Locusts in Joel

Joel's prophecy is full of reference to the army of locust-horses which invade Israel in conjunction with the Palestinians (Joel 3:4), resulting in the repentance of a remnant who stand on Mount Zion (Joel 2:32), the destruction of the northern invader [another term for the locust army] after their holy war [jihad, Joel 3:9], and then the final establishment of God's Kingdom on earth. He describes the invading army in Joel 2 in terms of a locust swarm, and they come to their end as locust swarms often do in Israel- in the Dead Sea and Mediterranean. In more detail, Joel 3:2,12 speaks of a final conflict in the valley of Jehoshaphat, when the Gentiles "round about" Israel are gathered together and judged- spoken of in Revelation 16 as the battle of Armageddon (which likewise is primarily concerning the peoples "round about" Israel rather than the whole planet). The degree of damage done to the land and people of Israel was limitable- if Judah repented. Hence the frequent appeals for repentance. This prophecy could have had potential fulfilment in the Assyrian and Babylonian invasions of Judah; but the prophecy is alluded to in Revelation and in other latter day prophecies, as if it has specific and complete fulfilment in the last days. The overall context is exactly as presented in Revelation- the seal judgments appeal for Israel's repentance, the minority who respond are the symbolic 144,000 who stand on mount Zion; and then there are the trumpet and vial judgments, which are full of allusion back to Joel. The frequent appeals for repentance mention the possibility that the program of judgment and desolation can be limited- if Judah repent. And finally, Joel speaks of the establishment of God's Kingdom and physical restoration of the decimated land, into the wonder of God's Kingdom on earth at Christ's return. Joel opens by saying that the destruction of the land he was burdened to portray had no parallel in the past, and the Jews would tell their children of it and the account of it would be passed down throughout future history (Joel 1:2,3). This is another way of saying that this prophecy is about a time of trouble for Israel such as never was, and

never will be in the future. And that is precisely the language of the Lord Jesus, Jeremiah and Daniel about the latter day tribulation of Israel.

The Arabs and Muhammed have a unique connection to the locust: "In the Bedoween romance Antar, the locust is introduced as the national emblem of the Ishmaelites. And it is a remarkable coincidence that Muslim tradition speaks of locusts having dropped into the hands of Muhammed, bearing on their wings this inscription – 'We are the army of the Great God.'" (Albert Barnes, *Barnes' Notes on the Bible*, Vol. 18).

9:4 *And it was said to them that they should not hurt the grass of the earth, nor any green thing, nor any tree-* There are many allusions in this section to the anatomy and style of the locust; the highlighted difference here with locusts [who usually eat up the grass] is therefore intentional. The people represented by the locusts were therefore going to be made to act uncharacteristically due to the charismatic individual controlling them. The reason for this is because these locusts have a king- which, again, locusts typically do not (see on *king over them*). And locusts eat grass and green things; but these locusts are commanded by God's word not to do what is natural to them. We have a simple lesson there as to the power of God's word, to make men do what is against their natural inclination and wiring. That word is as powerful in our lives. This is the force of the simple statement that "It was *said* to them that they should not hurt the grass....". This is how alcoholics stop drinking, and how small minded secular houseproud town mice are converted into loving, passionate Christ followers.

Keil in his commentary on Joel 2 describes the geographical origins of the locusts which descend upon Israel: "Swarms of locusts come from south, west, north, and east. Their home is not confined to the desert of Arabia, but they are found in all the sandy deserts, which form the southern boundaries of the lands that were, and to some extent still are, the seat of cultivation, viz., in the Sahara, the Libyan desert, Arabia, and Iraq; and Niebuhr saw a large tract of land, on the road from Mosul to Nisibis, completely covered with young locusts. They are also met with in the Syrian desert, from which swarms could easily be driven to Palestine by a north-east wind... Such a swarm as this might be called the *tsephōnī*, i.e., the northern one, or northerner [Joel 2:20], even if the north was not its true home". These are the very areas from where jihadist fighters are emerging in their tens of thousands, and uniting together to establish an Islamic state and destroy Israel. This geographical connection cannot be merely coincidental!

Concerning trees and vegetation, the Koran says: "When you fight the battles of the Lord... destroy no palm trees, nor burn any fields of grain. Cut down no fruit trees..." (Quoted in Barnes, *op. cit*).

Albert Barnes makes the following commentary upon the statement that the locusts would be commanded to not harm the grass: "The often-quoted order of the Caliph Aboubekir, the father-in-law and successor of Muhammed, issued to the Saracen hordes on their invasion of Syria, shows what was understood to be the spirit of their religion: "Remember that you are always in the presence of God, on the verge of death, in the assurance of judgment, and the hope of paradise. Avoid injustice and oppression; consult with your brethren, and study to preserve the love and confidence of your troops. When you fight the battles of the Lord, acquit yourselves like men, without turning your backs; but let not the victory be stained with the blood of women or children. Destroy no palm-trees, nor burn any fields of grain. Cut down no fruit-trees, nor do any mischief to cattle, only such as you kill to eat. When you make any

covenant or article, stand to it, and be as good as your word. As you go on, you will find some religious persons who live retired in monasteries, and propose to themselves to serve God in that way; let them alone, and neither kill them ('and to them it was given that they should not kill them,' ver 5), nor destroy their monasteries," etc. (Gibbon, iii. 417, 418). So Mr. Gibbon notices this precept of the Koran: "In the siege of Tayaf," says he, "sixty miles from Mecca, Muhammed violated his own laws by the extirpation of the fruit-trees," ii. 392. The same order existed among the Hebrews, and it is not improbable that Muhammed derived his precept from the command of Moses Dt. 20:19, though what was mercy among the Hebrews was probably mere policy with him. This precept is the more remarkable because it has been the usual custom in war, and particularly among barbarians and semi-barbarians, to destroy grain and fruit, and especially to cut down fruit-trees, in order to do greater injury to an enemy".

*But only such men as do not have the seal of God on their foreheads-* They also don't have His seal. So perhaps we are intended to read in an ellipsis: 'Have not [received] the seal of God'. The idea would then be that those who have not responded to the appeal to repent (as a result of the seal judgments) are targetted.

Job is being shown to represent "those men which have not the seal of God in their foreheads" (Rev. 9:4). The idea of sealing is associated with being justified by faith rather than by the Law in Rom. 4:11. If "the earth" in Rev. 9 is read as "the land" and the chapter given a Jewish interpretation, the allusions to Job as representative of unsealed Jewry still depending on the Law become even more relevant. Note the clear connections between Rev. 9 and Job:

| Rev. 9                                                                                                       | Job                                                                                                                        |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| :5 "To them it was given that they should not kill them, but that they should be tormented"                  | Satan could not kill Job, but was given power to torment him.                                                              |
| :6 "Men (shall) seek death, and shall not find it; and shall desire to die, and death shall flee from them". | Job said he was one of them "which long for death, but it comes not; and dig for it more than for hid treasures" (3:21,22) |
| The marauding Saracen bands                                                                                  | The Sabean bands                                                                                                           |
| :11 "A king over them, which is the Angel..."                                                                | The satan/Angel of Job?                                                                                                    |
| :11 "A king... Abaddon... Apollyon" ('Destroyer').                                                           | "The king of terrors" attacking Job's tents (18:14)                                                                        |
| :11 "The bottomless pit"                                                                                     | "Hell is naked before Him, and destruction (cp. 'Abaddon') has no covering" (26:6).                                        |

9:5 *They were told*- AV "It was given". We are surely to read in the ellipsis, that a commandment was given to them. And it is jihadist Islam which forbids damaging trees and plants during military campaigns. Or it could be that the idea is that these jihadists are actually 'told' something by God indirectly communicating with them.

*That they should not kill them*- As locusts don't usually cause death but rather suffering.

*But that they should be tormented*- The same word used about Babylon (18:7,10,15) and the beast worshippers being "tormented" (14:10). The language of torment is not, therefore, reflective of an angry God being mean to sinners. Rather will they drink the cup they gave others to drink.

*Five months*- It could be argued that the book of Revelation will 'come alive' during the three-and-a-half-year tribulation in the land, and it's possible that this is a literal period. In any case, it is based around the fact that the season for locusts is five months, from May to September. Five months is their lifespan, so the idea may be that at the end of it they too will come to their end. Always in Revelation there is the simple message that even the most awful suffering must at some point come to an end- and the tormentors are time limited, and shall meet their eternal end.

The locusts / scorpions judge the people in the land for five months (Rev. 9:5)- part of the three and a half year tribulation period. When it happens, it will all be clear enough. But for now, the point is that these locust / scorpion hordes, the beast, are restrained and yet then released, to come and destroy the unbelievers in the land / earth promised to Abraham; see on :14,15. It is this restraint which we are now seeing released, as the hordes develop and begin to gush forth from the Euphrates.

The AD70 fulfilment could have been in the terrible suffering of the people of Jerusalem for 5 months from May-September AD70. That is exactly the typical life period of locust swarms, between May and September. This period is specifically mentioned by Josephus. The scorpions would then refer to the poisoned arrows used by the Romans during the siege of Jerusalem. 'Scorpion' was a term used for the archers who shot them. But the fulfilment is shadowy, because not all elements of the prophecy here had a clear fulfilment at the time. But that is typical of primary fulfilments of prophecy. The wider fulfilment was possible, but various preconditions were not met [e.g. the repentance of Israel, the spread of the Gospel to the Gentile world]. And so we are left with a partial fulfilment, looking ahead to the total fulfilment at the last times.

*Their torment was as the torment of a scorpion when it strikes a man*- See on :3. There are many links between the trumpets, seals and the Olivet prophecy; and also many links with Josephus' descriptions of what came upon Palestine in AD66-70- e.g. 9:5 "inwardly tormented" Gk. *ebasanizonto* is used in Josephus (*Wars* 5.1.5).

9:6 *And in those days men shall seek death and shall in no way find it, and they shall desire to die and death will flee from them*- Whatever the historical fulfilments, this will be the situation of all those who face God's final judgment at the last day. Those who in that day will "seek death" are those whose behaviour in this life was effectively a seeking of death (Prov. 21:6). They were and are living out the condemnation experience right now. See on 1 Cor. 10:13. In the latter day application, the Koran in Sura 75:10,11 speaks in similar terms of the final judgment of the condemned: "On that day man will cry: Whither to flee! Alas! No refuge!". Islamists

will therefore seek to do this to the Jews whom they believe it is their duty to condemn, and in turn they will drink the same cup, seeking death but not finding it.

9:7 *And the shapes of the locusts were like horses*- Clearly the locusts represent fighters charging to war. The Arab Bedouin call locusts *Farras el Jundy*, 'soldiers' horses'. The description of these horsemen from the East accurately fits the Parthians, who were massed to the East of the Roman empire. There was much angst amongst the Romans of the first century as to whether the Parthians would invade; they did not. But the similarity is explained if we accept that Revelation is open to many possible fulfilments. It could have all happened in the first century, and God moved the players into place. But due to human failure, the whole scenario was delayed to our last days.

"Like unto" continues the idea that John is seeing in outline form something he finds hard to describe, and he keeps likening the vision to things he is familiar with. Hence "As...as... like unto... as it were". This is understandable if he saw modern military hardware.

*Prepared for war*- This is the process we see ongoing around us. The Joel allusions encourage us to see this as Joel 3:9: "Prepare war, wake up the might men". The gathering of thousands of fighters to support an Islamic State in the land promised to Abraham is surely the fulfilment of this.

*And upon their heads as if crowns of gold, and their faces were as men's faces*- The *stephanos* may suggest they are victorious, for a brief period, over the land. But John saw their appearance *like this*. Turbans as worn by Moslems today were not used in his day. If he saw, as I suggest, hordes of latter day Moslems streaming into Israel to proclaim a radical Islamic state, then this is how he would've described them- wearing something like a *stephanos*. The Greek literally means something wrapped around the head. This is the picture of Moslem turbans and jihadist headgear. The Hadith records Mohammed as saying "And turbans are the crowns of Arabs". "Like gold" means he saw a yellow colour. Perhaps this group of jihadists will have yellow headgear or turbans? According to Suyuti's Commentary on the Koran, there are Hadith which make this association: "Abd Allah ibn al-Zubayr: The latter was wearing a yellow turban on the day of Badr, so the angels descended wearing yellow turbans... the Prophet himself came wearing a yellow turban... The day of Badr the angels came down on piebald horses, wearing yellow turbans" [view these quotations online at [http://www.sunnah.org/fiqh/islamic\\_dress.htm](http://www.sunnah.org/fiqh/islamic_dress.htm) ].

9:8 *And they had hair as the hair of women*- The long hair of the jihadist fighters.

*And their teeth were like that of lions*- The quotation from Joel 1:6 means that these forces will be a latter day Babylon or Assyria invading Israel. Lions are a common OT symbol of Babylon-Assyria, the historical prototype of Israel's latter day invader.

9:9 *And they had breastplates, like breastplates of iron* - Another allusion to how the locust has a firm and hard cuticle on the forepart of the breast, which serves for a shield or defence. "Breastplates of iron" speak of the Arabs' armour. The poem Antar makes at least four references to a warrior's cuirass or breastplate. The Koran says, "God hath given you coats of mail to defend you in your wars" ... (Quoted in Barnes, *op. cit*).

*And the sound of their wings was as the sound of chariots, of many horses rushing to*

*war-* Alluding to the noise made by locust swarms. They are similar to chariot horses in that the locust's head is similar to that of a horse. The locusts of Joel 1 which invade Israel are also described as war horses in Joel 2:4-6: "Their appearance is like the appearance of horses, and like war horses they run. As with the rumbling of chariots, they leap on the tops of the mountains, like the crackling of a flame of fire devouring the stubble, like a powerful army drawn up for battle". The similarity with locusts is in the springing motion of chariots on mountain paths. This was surely the first century way of trying to express helicopter gunships and other modern military technology advancing into the land promised to Abraham in final judgment. Joel 2:8 speaks of how this locust army will not be deterred by weaponry: "they fall headlong through weapons [*shelach* means literally a missile], and do not cut themselves in pieces". The greatest missiles and military technology of the IDF and the West will be unable to restrain their ever forward march into the land. Currently, it is superior weaponry that enables Israel to survive and the West to control the jihadists. But the picture of the locust swarm is that absolutely no weapon can stand in their way. Perhaps it is by sheer force of suicidal numbers that the jihadists win- and thousands of Muslims are already flocking to Syria and Iraq to enlist in this great army. In Joel 2, the locust army attacks because Judah failed to respond to the call to repent made in Joel 1. But even at that late stage there is the possibility of repentance: "Yet even now, is the saying of Jehovah, turn ye to me with all your heart, and with fasting, and with weeping, and with mourning" (Joel 2:12). This fits the context of the trumpets admirably. The seal judgments in Revelation 6 appealed for repentance; those few who respond, the symbolic 144,000, are sealed and stand on Mount Zion; and then the trumpet judgments come. But even then there is the chance of repentance, so that God would leave behind a blessing, i.e. the harvest-produce which could be used for a meat offering and drink offering (Joel 2:14)- even though this had "all" been destroyed by the locusts (Joel 1:9, 13). And as a result of this, a remnant of repentant Jews is likewise pictured by Joel standing on Mount Zion (Joel 2:32).

The reference is also to the language of the cherubim chariots; Ez. 10:5 is the only other place in the Bible where we read of the sound of wings as chariots are in motion. The invaders will be led by the Angels, just as the locust army of Joel 2 is described in terms of the irresistible march of the Angels. But there may also be the hint that the invaders see themselves as a cherubic system, continuing the theme of the anti-Christ being an imitation Christ.

9:10- see on Mt. 24:37; Mk. 13:20.

*And they have tails like scorpions and stings, and in their tails is their power-* At first blush, this appears to not be true to the figure of locusts. But Smith's *Bible Dictionary* gives a picture of "a species of locust, the *Acridium Lineola*, a species commonly sold for food in the markets of Baghdad, which has a sting in the tail". We may infer that these symbolic locusts come from Iraq, specifically from the area of the Euphrates. This is in harmony with the later picture within this same chapter of hordes of attackers swarming into the land promised to Abraham from the same area- the Euphrates. The only other reference to a "tail" in the NT is in Rev. 12:4, where the dragon uses his tail to cast down one third of the stars. It could be that we are being shown part of the same process here.

*To hurt men-* Significantly, the same word is used in Lk. 10:19 about how those who are preaching the Lord Jesus will not be hurt by scorpions. This is the context here- these trumpets are part of the judgments which will be restrained from falling upon those who have responded to the seal judgments, the symbolic 144,000. The



same word is used in 7:2,3 of how the 144,000 will not be "hurt". And chapters 10-15 teach that the resistant believers at this time will be engaged in witnessing to Jesus.

*For five months-* See on :5.

9:11 *They have over them as king-* Prov. 30:27 observes that locusts have no king. As noted above, this is the power of God's word in history, amongst men and nations, and also in our own hearts as believers. We are transformed by a higher power, no matter how radically independent and anarchic we may be by natural wiring. There is likely an allusion to Am. 7:1 LXX "and behold one locust grub [was] Gog the king". The picture presented is of an unusual and uncharacteristic unity of the locusts under the leadership of a "king" or caliph, the 'Gog' of Amos 7. This is what students of latter day prophecy are taught by the image's toes of Daniel 2. The components of the final entity to abuse Israel are divided, but uncharacteristically united in their domination of Israel. This will be brought about by the locusts having a king- just as the disparate materials of the image are united in the form of a man, a latter day Nebuchadnezzar.

*The Angel of the bottomless pit-* This presumably is the same as the fifth Angel, who opened the pit at the beginning of this section. As in Daniel, so here, the Angel refers both to an Angel in the court of Heaven, and to the person on earth whom that Angel represents before God. Again we see how that even the terrible individual on earth spoken of here is in fact represented in the court of Heaven and under the control of God's Angel. The allusion is to the destroying Angel of the Passover deliverance (Ex. 12:23; 1 Cor. 10:10). The Angel comes in judgment upon the Egyptians and also upon any unfaithful Israelites who would not trust in the blood of the Lamb; hence all the allusions to the plagues on Egypt here in the trumpet judgments. The locusts unleashed by the destroyer Angel therefore come forth to punish people for what they did to God's people Israel, and also to punish those of Israel who will not trust in the blood of the Lamb / Jesus.

*His name in Hebrew is Abaddon, and in the Greek tongue-* The two languages are perhaps mentioned because both Jews and non-Jews in the land suffer from this invasion. The locusts have an Angel-King over them, called Abaddon / Apollyon- the destroyer. The idea is that their leader has an Angel representative in Heaven. Again, emphasis is placed upon their having a specific leader, the antichrist. 'The destroyer' was the Angel who destroyed the unfaithful Israelites (1 Cor. 10:10), and the charge of the locusts and their leader is against the same group, within the land promised to Abraham.

*Apollyon-* This is the noun from the verb *apollumi*. Lk. 21:18 says that not a hair of the faithful will be *apollumi* in the latter day tribulation, and this is clearly what the Apollyon Angel is responsible for. There are many word plays upon and indirect allusions to Caesar worship in Revelation. Rev. 9:11 is an example- the condemned King of the bottomless pit is called "Apollyon", which G.B. Caird takes to be an allusion to Domitian, "who liked to be regarded as Apollo incarnate". We see here a radical inversion of all the images and beliefs of the cult of empire which surrounded the early believers. And we are called to no less a radical inversion of values of our world; Christianity truly is a counter culture, and therefore there can be no compromise with the world. It is a huge tragedy that Christianity compromised with the Roman empire, which is presented in Revelation as a system that cannot at all be assimilated into.

Often, Angels are described in terms of the men, empires or armies they control- the frequent descriptions of human armies in language which refers to Angels too

provides proof of this (e. g. Is. 66:15; Ez. 26:7,10; Joel 2:5; Nahum 2:3,4,13). Rev. 9:11 is another example: "They (the Arabs?) had a king over them, which is the Angel of the bottomless pit". This Angel is both a Heavenly Angel and the earthly leader over which the Angel has charge. Rev. 9:16 says that "the number of the army of the horsemen were two hundred thousand thousand"- cp. "thousand thousands" of Angels in Dan. 7:10. Rev. 9:17 continues: "Horses... and them that sat on them". Horses and riders in Rev. 6 and Zechariah have clear Angelic connections (Chapter 11); "the heads of the horses were as the heads of lions"- lions and Angels are linked in Rev. 9:17; 10:1,3.

The locusts have a specific leader- an Angel called Abaddon or Apollyon. Angels as in the Divine beings do not sin, as I've demonstrated in chapter 2 of *The Real Devil*. But Daniel 10 and other passages are clear that situations, nations and individual leaders on earth have an Angelic representative in Heaven, before the court of God. The antichrist figure on earth therefore has a representative Angel in Heaven, just as the prince of Persia did in Daniel 10. 'Abaddon' means 'the destroyer', and the term is used of the destroying Angel of Passover, the same Angel who destroyed the unbelieving Jews in the wilderness (1 Cor. 10:10)- and it is also used of the Babylonian invader (2 Chron. 36:19; Is. 14:20; Jer. 4:7; 15:3; 22:7 "I will prepare destroyers against you"; 36:29), the Midianite invasion of Israel (Jud. 6:4), the Philistines / Palestinians (1 Sam. 13:17; 14:15), the Assyrian invader (1 Kings 18:25) and the Syrian invasion (2 Chron. 24:23). All these nations and incidents were from the territory of the IS, and prefigure the latter day invasion of Israel. The point is, there is a specific, singular leader- and this fits well with the Biblical requirements for an antichrist figure to lead the enemies of Israel in the final jihad against her. The destruction, wanton and conscious, wrought by Islamic jihadists surely justifies the leader of the entity being called 'the destroyer'.

The Islamic world has always been divided, and the neighbours of Israel have likewise been characterized by their historical divisions. What is going to be remarkable, therefore, is their temporary unity against Israel. This is the picture presented of the iron and clay not cleaving to each other, but standing together, however fragile, in brief domination of the land promised to Abraham on the eve of Christ's return. This unity will be under one strong leader, the antichrist. The metaphor in Rev. 9 makes this point, by saying that the invading hordes will be as locusts who have a king over them, called Abaddon (Rev. 9:11). Locusts do not have much centralized structure in their movement, and Prov. 30:27 specifically states that locusts have no king over them. But these latter day locusts will have such a king- for a brief period. Muslim tradition speaks of locusts having dropped into the hands of Mohammed, bearing on their wings this inscription - 'We are the army of the Great God.'"

There can be little doubt that Revelation 9 speaks of the very last days. The smoke and resultant darkening of sun and moon is obviously alluding to the Old Testament prophecies about these things happening in the context of an invasion of the land of Israel in the immediate prelude to Christ's coming: "Behold, the day of the LORD comes, Cruel, with both wrath and fierce anger, to lay the land desolate; and He will destroy its sinners from it. For the stars of heaven and their constellations will not give their light; the sun will be darkened in its going forth, and the moon will not cause its light to shine" (Is. 13:9,10). "And I will show wonders in the heavens and in the earth: Blood and fire and pillars of smoke. The sun shall be turned into darkness, And the moon into blood, Before the coming of the great and awesome day of the LORD" (Joel 2:30,31).

9:12 *The first Woe is past. Behold, hereafter there come two other woes-* This could seem relatively pointless information, until we perceive that the idea is to appeal for repentance, even now at a time when the window for repentance provided by the six seals and sealing process of chapter 7 has already passed. I have mentioned earlier that the third of the three woes never seems to happen- perhaps because there is repentance, or because God's mercy is such that He restrains the final destruction. Or perhaps the third woe is the pouring out of the bowls of final destruction upon the beast and impenitent.

9:13- see on Jn. 16:23.

*And the sixth angel blew his trumpet, and I heard a voice from the horns of the golden altar which is before God-* This is the incense altar, and the voice suggests that the combined prayers of the faithful bring forward the execution of God's purpose, causing Angels in Heaven to sound and do things on the earth / land. The words / voice of those prayers really is "before God", just as the incense from the incense altar penetrated beyond the veil into the Most Holy Place. This an attempt to relay the degree to which human words in prayer really are rehearsed before God's very presence, and result in a word of command appropriate to the word of those prayers. Horns are connected with Angels in Zech. 1:18; Hab. 3:4, and these four horns on the altar suggesting reference to the Angel cherubim.

Let's be encouraged by the fact that the sixth Angel releases the hordes from behind the Euphrates because of "a voice from the four horns of the golden altar which is before God" (Rev. 9:13). This is the incense altar, and earlier in the scene we have seen the prayers of the faithful ascending from that altar, eliciting Divine action from Heaven upon the earth (Rev. 8:3-5). The releasing of the peoples beyond the Euphrates which we are seeing before our eyes *is actually a response to our prayers*. We pray and pray for the second coming, and it seems as if nothing very concrete is happening. But it is. The Islamist jihadists were raised up and given control of the Euphrates and are being propelled on their mission to fulfil end time prophecies, so that the culmination may come in the return of the Lord Jesus to earth. In this context we can note that the language of loosing the bound was used by the Lord in His teaching that we can bind and loose things in Heaven (Mt. 16:19; 18:18)- in this case, the Angels. This is the huge significance of human prayer and action for God.

9:14- see on Ps. 78:49; Lk. 1:10,11. For the significance of the Euphrates, see on 16:12,13.

*One saying to the sixth angel that had one trumpet: Release the four angels that are chained at the great river Euphrates-*

If we identify Elam with modern day Persia / Iran, located east of the Euphrates, we note that in Jer. 49:36 Elam is punished by "the four winds from the four quarters of the sky". These four Angels would be the "four winds / spirits" of Jer. 49:36.

The voice of prayer is effectively a voice of command to Angels resulting in dramatic action upon the earth / land, and in this case, the loosing of restraining Angels. The voice of human prayer as it were commands: "Loose the four angels which are bound at the great river Euphrates" (R.V.). They then eagerly go forward to prepare the way for the second coming. The implication is surely that those Angels were geographically bound / limited in the scope of their work by the Euphrates River- and yet in their eagerness to progress the timetable of events leading to the last day, they yearned to go beyond that limitation. The reference to "the Angel of the waters" likewise suggests that an Angel was operative in one geographical area. It

could be that as the future elohim we likewise will have areas of geographical influence in the age to come- the “cities” over which we are given dominion.

There seems no reason to doubt that these, along with most other mentions of 'Angels' in Revelation, can be taken as literal Angels John saw in the court of Heaven, representing individuals and groups on earth. The fact that they were "loosed" implies a restraint from action- as if the action they desired to take was held back by another ("the sixth") Angel "preparing" or 'adjusting' (Greek) them for a certain period. This recalls the Angel of death being restrained or held back by the Angel who hovered over the homes of the Israelites on Passover night in Egypt. It's not that there are good and sinful Angels; but there are Angels who have different tasks, and make exceptions in executing those tasks because of the intervention of other Angels.

God Himself has a close interest in and control of the work of His Angels; thus in Rev. 9:13,14 we read of the sixth Angel sounding, wanting to bring about certain things on the earth. The response to this was "a voice from the four horns of the golden altar which is before God, saying to the sixth Angel which had the trumpet, Loose the four Angels which are bound in the great river Euphrates". This voice was probably either from Christ (the altar), as the head of the Angels, or God Himself; or maybe a mighty Angel representing God or Christ. It instructed the Angel how to bring about His intention by bringing other Angels into operation which this sixth Angel presumably had in its control- hence they were to be "loosed" by Him.

The drying up of the Euphrates spoken of in Rev. 16:12 is what enables the seventh trumpet and seventh seal to come to pass- and they refer to the coming of Christ. It cannot be insignificant that the Islamic State took control of the dams on the Euphrates. The latter day Islamic entity which overruns Israel will likely do the same. The control of rivers, dams, and water installations would be a major weapon in their tactical armoury. This was indeed how it was in the time of Saddam Hussein. For more information on this, see Vidal, John (*The Guardian* 2 July 2014). ["Water supply key to outcome of conflicts in Iraq and Syria, experts warn"](#).

The waters of a river are symbolic of nations (Is. 23:10), specifically the Assyrians in Is. 8:7, Zech. 10:11 and Jer. 2:18- it could be that the reference is to the drying up or destruction [as the metaphor of 'drying up' means] of the nations and tribes of the fertile crescent. And these are the very areas where the Islamic State is so active. The Assyrian armies were those “beyond the river [Euphrates]” which were unleashed by God upon Judah (Is. 7:20). This is the basis for the language of Rev. 9:14, where four Angels are bound by the river Euphrates and unleashed in the sense that a huge army is let loose from beyond that river in order to judge an impenitent Israel. This is surely the latter day fulfilment of the enigmatic comment in 2 Thess. 2:7 that "he who now restrains it will do so, until he is out of the way". We recall that it was an Angel which stood upon the river in Dan. 12:6. We note that Greece likewise was likened to a ram held back by a river, which it jumped over (Dan. 8:3). The latter day power restrained by the Euphrates is therefore to be based upon the historical Assyria and Greece. Again we see how the image of Daniel 2 stands complete in the last days, because the final entity which dominates Israel will incorporate elements of the previous dominators, such as Assyria and Greece.

Euphrates was the boundary of the land promised to Abraham. Israel were thrown out of their land by being taken 'beyond the river [Euphrates]', just as Adam was cast out of Eden, which appears to have been bounded by the Euphrates. The 200,000 (or RV "twice ten thousand times ten thousand") horsemen were bound at [RV; Gk. *epi*] the Euphrates (Rev. 9:14), which is the northern border of the land promised to Abraham (Gen. 15:18; Ex. 23:31; Dt. 1:7; Josh. 1:4; 2 Sam. 8:3). When Judah were

taken to Babylon to be punished, this is described as their being punished in the border of Israel (Ez. 11:10,11). Babylon was located on the border of the land promised to Abraham. The idea is clearly that these hordes will come from that northern border, the Euphrates, and invade Israel. The Islamic jihadists are already using pictures of horsemen as symbolic of their mission. The Greek text speaks of "twice ten thousand times ten thousand", recalling the way that the image of Daniel 2 and the beasts of Daniel 7 will be destroyed when "ten thousand times ten thousand" stand before the judgment seat of Christ (Dan. 7:10). Once the Euphrates is no longer allowed to restrain these hordes, they will race towards Israel- and judgment by the returned Lord Jesus. Note too the language of Mic. 5:6- the latter day Assyrian will "tread within our borders", which include the Euphrates, and then be destroyed by Christ's return. Revelation is putting this another way, in saying that the hordes of invaders will come from beyond the Euphrates, the border of Israel.

The trumpets, seals and vials do not have to be chronologically consecutive events; they are all part of the kaleidoscope of images which we have in Revelation. They are different takes and angles on related events. The sixth Angel loosing the hordes bound at the Euphrates is matched by the fifth Angel coming down to the land and unlocking the bottomless pit with a key (Rev. 9:1,2; this surely refers to a Divine Angel, as it would make no sense for 'satan' to be given the key to his own prison). This released the aggressive locusts to swarm over the earth / land [of Israel] and kill and persecute those in the land promised to Abraham who haven't taken the Father's Name into their foreheads- for all their hypocritical wearing of phylacteries. Again we have the metaphor of restraint being lifted, and swarms of enemies pouring into the earth / land of Israel. The seventh trumpet begins with the news that there will be no more delay (Rev. 10:6)- the idea is again of an imposed delay / restraint being now lifted. Locusts are symbolic of Israel's neighbouring enemies (Dt. 28:38; Jud. 6:5; 7:12; Jer. 46:23; Joel 1:4; 2:25). Especially significant is the reference in Am. 7:1 LXX: "Thus has the Lord God shewed me; and, behold, a swarm of locusts coming from the east; and, behold, one caterpillar, king Gog". The locusts from the east, headed by Gog, released by the fifth Angel, compares with the kings from the east who are released by the sixth Angel. The locusts arise out of the bottomless pit, just as the beast arises out of the bottomless pit (Rev. 11:7; 17:8). The beast is therefore another image for the locusts; they all speak of the enemies of Israel coming from the east and swarming the land. The locusts are described as having long hair, and striking as scorpions (Rev. 9:5,8)- all very reminiscent of jihadist fighters.

The similarities between Revelation 9 and Joel are striking, and without question Joel is speaking of the neighbour nations pouring into the land of Israel: "The appearance of them is as the appearance of horses; and as horsemen, so shall they run. Like the noise of chariots on the tops of mountains shall they leap, like the noise of a flame of fire that devours the stubble, as a strong people set in battle array... They shall run like mighty men; they shall climb the wall like men of war; and they shall march everyone on his ways, and they shall not break their ranks... They shall run to and fro in the city; they shall run upon the wall, they shall climb up upon the houses; they shall enter in at the windows like a thief. The earth shall quake before them; the heavens shall tremble: the sun and the moon shall be dark, and the stars shall withdraw their shining" (Joel 2:4-10).

The four Angels holding winds in Rev. 9:16 surely alludes to the Angels gathering the elect from the four winds (Mt. 24:31; Mk. 13:27). The process of gathering the elect at the last day is part of the same process as gathering the nations

to judgment. It could be that the final gathering of the nations against Israel therefore occurs at the same time as the gathering of the believers to judgment. It would seem that now all is in place for such a gathering of the nations from beyond the Euphrates- and therefore the Lord's coming could be really very near. The whole scene surely consciously recalls that of Daniel 12, where Daniel sees Angels standing on the banks of "the river", announcing that there must be a time of terrible trouble for Israel lasting "time, times and a half" (three and a half years?) and then the whole suffering of Israel would be "finished" by the return of Messiah and establishment of the Kingdom of God (Dan. 12:5-10). "The river" is not defined, but the term is usually used in the prophets for the Euphrates; at the very least it must refer to one of the rivers in the Tigris-Euphrates basin. Note the significance of the river Ulai, a tributary of the Euphrates, in Daniel 8. Revelation expands upon this by saying that the Angels cease restraining the jihadist hordes and then release them in the last days, when the Euphrates dries up. Biblically, the drying up of water is so that armies can pass over (we think of the Red Sea and Jordan being dried up for this intent). The final time of trouble is brought about by Angels standing upon "the river"- and the fact the Euphrates is now in the hands of Islamists is therefore highly significant.

It is also surely no coincidence that there are four nations [represented by the four Angels?] located to the East of the Euphrates, bound by her- Turkey, Syria, Iraq and what is now effectively the nation of Kurdistan. Kurdish independence and the development of a *de facto* state of Kurdistan is something we can expect to develop. It could just about be argued that Iran is also effectively held back from the promised land by the Euphrates, but Iran doesn't in fact border the river. It could be argued that the part of Turkey which is bound by the Euphrates is Kurdish territory, and may form part of a future state of Kurdistan if it is declared. In this case, the four nations could be Kurdistan, Syria, Iraq and Iran- or perhaps some future Islamic entity. These four nations would be under the control of the four Angels bound at the Euphrates, who then release them when the restraint is lifted.

9:15 *And the four angels were released, that had been prepared for the hour and day and month and year-* Vine correctly observes: "This rendering is wrong, since it conveys the idea that the four periods mentioned are to be combined as representing the length of the preparation or of the continuance of the plague. But it is to be noted that neither the article nor the preposition are repeated before day and month and year. The meaning is that the angels are prepared unto the hour appointed by God, and that this hour shall fall in its appointed day and month and year". The parallel is with how the locust-horses are "prepared" [s.w.] unto the final battle. It is this specific battle which is the final date in view here in :15. The way of the kings from the East is likewise "prepared" (16:12 s.w.).

*That they should kill a third of all mankind-* This 'slaying' could be understood as a ritual slaughter [*apokteino*]. The fact it is done at a particular hour on a particular date and year may mean that there is some kind of religious relevance of the exact time of their slaughter; and that the men are slain at the same "hour", suggesting a specific ritual, organized slaughter rather than the gradual killing of people in the process of war or domination of the land. This kind of thing is imaginable in an Islamic state.

"The river" was Biblically the language of Euphrates; the Assyrian invasion is described as the River [i.e. Euphrates] bursting upon Israel (Is. 8:5-8). This invasion is described as the loosing of four Angels (Rev. 9:15,16). It could be that four Angels are involved in the work of arranging this geopolitical situation; or it could be that each Angel represents a particular subdivision of the latter day Islamic entity. Note

how "the Angel of the bottomless pit" refers both to a Heavenly Angel and to a human leader on earth, in that the princes of the earth have their Angelic representative in the court of Heaven. These are surely the same four Angels of Rev. 7:1,2 who had been holding the winds from blowing on the land of Israel; restraining the nations around Israel from destroying it from 1948 onwards. But they will no longer hold back the winds; they will loose the horsemen previously restrained by the Euphrates. This may happen in practice by the restraining power of America and the West being no longer permitted to operate by the four Angels. At the time of writing, it's highly significant that most of the cities, towns and areas on the East bank of the Euphrates are now in the hands of jihadists, of various factions; the river was as it were holding them back from advancing Westwards into the land promised to Israel. But that restraint is now being lifted. This idea of a restraint in place is to be found in 2 Thess. 2:7,8. It could be argued that the Roman Empire was the restraining force written about by Paul there, and there will be another restraining power likewise in the last days. In practice, not only has the West been the power broker restraining Israel's enemies, but Israel's nuclear and technological edge have been. This may be removed, in whatever way, so that this is no longer a restraining item.

9:16 *And the number of the armies of the horsemen was twice ten thousand times ten thousand. I heard the number of them-* The very words used about the 144,000 in 7:4. The contrast is made between the sealed 144,000 and this far larger group of their opponents, 200,000,000. The figures are surely not to be taken literally, rather is the idea that the opponents of the faithful are far more, and are as it were a fake imitation of the faithful, just as the anti-Christ is a fake imitation of the true Christ. This concept fits admirably with Islamist theology, as they consider themselves as the descendants of Ishmael to be the true seed of Abraham, and Isaac to be as the Bible presents Ishmael [the roles of Isaac and Ishmael are switched around in the Koran; Moslems believe that it was Jewish scribes who switched the roles to how they are in the Hebrew Bible].

The significance of "*twice ten thousand times ten thousand*" may be in that the latter day dominators of Israel are split into two broad camps, represented by the two feet of the image of Daniel. It may be a reference to the Sunni - Shia division within Islam, or to the two centres of domination of Israel which will appear based in Gaza and the West Bank. Dan. 7:10 contrasts these "ten thousand times ten thousand" who are to be judged with the thousands who minister unto the judge, the Lord Jesus; the thousands of the Lord Jesus will stand in opposition to the thousands of the latter day invaders, just as the true Christ will face off against the anti-Christ.

"By these three was the third part of men killed" suggests that this invading army has three aspects to its work. The huge number of horsemen must allude to the "great company" of horsemen of Ez. 38:4, which is rooted in the Assyrian invasion. The 200,000,000 horsemen of Rev. 9:16 may correspond to the fact that the strength of the Assyrian army which came against Jerusalem was claimed as being 200,000 men. See on Rev. 16:16. But this huge invasion is portrayed here in chapter 9 as being the cause of punishment of the abusers themselves. So as has happened so many times in Israel's Biblical history, their invaders will turn upon themselves. Perhaps that is one reason why the Ezekiel 38 invasion is not recorded as being successful.

9:17 *And thus I saw the horses in the vision and those that sat on them, having breastplates as of fire and of hyacinth and of sulphur, and heads of lions; and out of their mouths proceeded fire, smoke and sulphur-* These are to be connected with the three methods by which the third part of men are killed in :18, fire, smoke and

brimstone. The third of men are perhaps divided into thirds, and each killed by a different method. Or it may be that the third part of men are killed by a combination of these three factors. I suggested on :15 that this may be a ritual slaughter, performed at a specific "hour" on a carefully chosen specific date of religious significance.

"Jacinth" means 'deep blue'; there may be some specific means by which fire, deep blue and sulphur [brimstone] are used in the destruction process. We are therefore to expect some form of technology which uses these three elements or appearances in order to effect the mass destruction of a large number of people in one hour. The way Babylon's destruction likewise comes in "one hour" would therefore match this; Babylon must drink the cup she gave others to drink.

Another approach is to recall that the fire and jacinth come out of the *breastplates* of these fighters; and yet jacinth [hyacinth] is also one of the stones on the priestly breastplate. In this case we are invited to see these fighters acting as fake High Priests, which would connect with the undoubted theme of 'anti-Christ'- the Islamic fighters acting as if they are the true Israel of God. We note that in the last day, God will put on the breastplate of judgment against His enemies (Is. 59:17). Sulphur and fire have associations with Divine judgment; these people will therefore believe that they are executing God's judgments for Him. This is precisely the spirit of radical Islam.

9:18 *By these three illnesses was one third of all mankind killed, by the fire and the smoke and the sulphur, which proceeded out of their mouths-* The idea could be that one third of the third are killed by fire, another third by smoke, another third by the sulphur. The "all mankind" refers not to the whole planet but to the earth / land promised to Abraham. There have been attempts within the continuous historical approach to locate the fulfilment of this verse at some previous point in history. But the difficulty faced is how to define the earth / land, and "all mankind" within it. Such definitions are arbitrary and *ad hoc*, whereas the Bible envisages only two definitions of the earth / land- either the whole planet, or the land promised to Abraham.

The latter day invasion from the Euphrates (i.e. geographical Babylon) will result in men being killed by fire, smoke and brimstone (Rev. 9:14,18)- nuclear language?

9:19 *For the power of the horses is in their mouth and in their tails. For their tails are like those of serpents and have heads, and by means of them they wound-* There is some stress that their power is in their mouths (:18). Perhaps the reference is to the power or propaganda. We are now seeing Muslims from worldwide gathering to fight against Israel because of the power of this propaganda, spreading through social media so that the word / mouth of the Islamic entity is truly worldwide. The analogy to serpents wounding men clearly makes this element the latter day seed of the serpent; and according to Gen. 3:15, they will be crushed directly by the seed of the woman, the Lord Jesus. The final conflict between the Lord Jesus and the serpent will be its manifestation in this group; who as we have demonstrated above, refer to the Islamic opposition surrounding Israel.

The 'wounding' of men is only after there has been an opportunity for the faithful to be sealed. The same word is in 7:3: "Hurt [wound] not the earth... till we have sealed the servants of God". But now that window of opportunity is over. Those responsible for the wounding are now fast headed to destruction and the point is approached where they cannot repent. For the same word is found in 22:11: "Him that is unjust [s.w. 'wounding'], let him be unjust still".

9:20 *And the rest of mankind, who were not killed with these illnesses, did not repent-* Again we note that even now at the time of the trumpet judgments, there is the desperate desire that some still repent; even though after the seal judgments, there was a sealing of those who had responded and a shielding of them from the judgments



which were to come upon the impenitent.

*Of the works of their hands, that they should not worship demons and the idols of gold, silver, brass, stone and wood-* The allusion is clearly to Dan. 5:4,23, where the very same materials are mentioned as being the idols of Babylon. In the context, the final king of Babylon has been asked to repent in that he had been asked to learn the lesson of his father Nebuchadnezzar, who was smitten with madness and turned into an animal. But Nebuchadnezzar revived from that deadly wound, as it were. It could be that the final leader of the entity known as Babylon is intended to repent because the previous leader was struck down by God, as Nebuchadnezzar had been. But because he didn't repent, he was judged. The appeal of Daniel to him in the very last minutes of his life is therefore to be seen as the equivalent of this final appeal to the leader of Babylon through the trumpet judgments. The 'division' of his kingdom in judgment (Dan. 5:28) perhaps recalls the divided state of the toes of the image just before Christ comes to destroy them. The fifth trumpet began with mention of the opening of a bottomless pit, which I suggested is parallel to the deadly wound of the beast. The reason for this is so that the deadly wounding will be an opportunity for repentance- this deep Divine desire for human repentance, even amongst His worst enemies, is so clearly portrayed in the structure of this apocalyptic. Nebuchadnezzar's 'wound' was intended to elicit repentance in the final king of Babylon. Hence the allusion to that scenario here in the sixth trumpet.

*Which can neither see, hear nor walk-* This again is a quotation from Dan. 5:28. The similarity with the fall of Babylon is clearly intended. And what was particularly obnoxious about the king of Babylon at that time was that he was using the temple vessels in a drunken idol ritual; this in outline terms is the same as placing an abomination on the temple mount, which will be the reason for his desolation. The reference to "sorceries" (:21) is likewise an allusion to the practices of the historical Babylon and Assyria (Is. 47:9,12; Nah. 3:4). Such things were the calling card of Jezebel, the prototype of the whore who rides the beast (2 Kings 9:22). Note she was from Tyre, in modern day Lebanon. We may well enquire how idol worship and sorcery could be part of a radical Islamic state, seeing they are passionately against such things. The point is that this latter day entity is being cast in terms of the historical Babylon; and for all Islam's protest against idolatry and sorcery, from God's viewpoint, these are the very things they are guilty of.

9:21 *And they did not repent of their murders, nor of their sorceries, nor of their fornication, nor of their thefts-* This sounds very much the behaviour of jihadist fighters, murdering and thieving, and sexually abusing those whom they conquer (witness the Islamist treatment of Yezidi and Christian women whom they captured and declared as their 'spoils of war'). We observe that both the people being judged, as well as those judging them, can easily be interpreted as radical Islamist fighters. But this turning upon themselves is what we expect, both from Bible prophecy (e.g. regarding the divided state of the toes of the image in Daniel 2) and from Divine historical precedent. For His preferred method of destroying Israel's enemies has been through making them turn upon each other, rather than direct bolts from Heaven. "Sorceries" is a word we only meet again in Rev. 18:23, speaking of the sorceries of latter day Babylon. This trumpet therefore speaks of the judgment upon latter day Babylon. The LXX uses the word not only of Babylon (Is. 47:9,12) but also of Egypt at the time of the plagues (Ex. 7:22). And the trumpet judgments are full of reference to the plagues upon Egypt.

There are at least 10 references in :20,21 back to the sins of Israel in Old Testament times. The suggestion therefore is that the latter day Islamic entity will fail as Israel failed to heed God's pleading with them in the past, both through prophets and judgments. The idea is that the sins of this Islamic entity are effectively those of the Jews, whom they consider themselves so far spiritually superior to. Islamists love to quote the Old Testament condemnations of Israel as justification for their vendetta against the Jews; but these allusions show that they are in essence just as guilty.

## REVELATION CHAPTER 10

10:1 *And I saw another strong angel coming down out of heaven, arrayed with a cloud; and the rainbow was upon his head, his face was as the sun and his feet as pillars of fire-* It is quite possible that the Angel of Rev. 10:1 who descends from Heaven in a cloud with a face like the sun, holding the books of judgement is referring to Christ's second coming in person. He is called "The messenger (Heb. 'malak', the Angel) of the covenant" (Mal. 3:1). It could be argued that this chapter is a continuation of the sixth trumpet- Alf Norris makes a reasonable case for this.

We find Revelation continually deconstructing the images associated with the might of the Roman empire. David Aune sees this mighty angel of Revelation 10 as allusive to the Colossos of Rhodes, a well known statue and icon of the empire (*Revelation*, 2:556). The bronze material of the Colossos were believed to reflect the sun "like fiery pillars", just as here the Angel has legs which "were like fiery pillars" (Rev. 10:1). The statue was a representation of Helios, the sun god, just as the angel's face "was like the sun" (10:1). More specifically, the Colossos of Rhodes state had its right hand raised, just as the mighty Angel (Rev. 10:5). The Colossos statue stood at the harbor of Rhodes and allowed "ships to pass through its legs", as the Angel stands "on the sea and on the land" (:5). The simple visual message is that the mighty icons of this world are not the true reality. The Angels are at work constructing the ultimate reality, and we are even now to live within that. Early Christians in the Roman empire were living in fear and with a sense of powerlessness. Just as we do in various ways. So these deconstructions of the icons of Roman power and apparent permanence had special meaning.

The same words "mighty Angel" are used in Rev. 5:2, where "a strong Angel" (AV) offers the book, and Jesus the Lamb opens it. Now John, representative of the latter day believers, is asked to follow the role of the Lord Jesus and take the book. The connection with chapter 5 is intentional- hence we read of "*another* mighty Angel". Therefore the little book which is opened is in fact the book of Rev. 5, which is the book of life. Perhaps this is the same "mighty Angel" who judges Babylon (18:21 s.w.), crying "mightily" (18:2 s.w.); that Angel also "comes down" from Heaven in judgment (18:1 s.w. 10:1 "come down from Heaven").

The Angel arrayed with a cloud represents the Lord Jesus, who comes with clouds (1:7; Lk. 21:27; 1 Thess. 4:17), sitting upon a cloud (14:14). The rainbow around his head implies that the face is the sun, producing a rainbow in the clouds around his head. The Lord was transfigured as having face like the sun. He is "the sun of righteousness" which is to arise. His voice like a lion (:3) is the fulfillment of various latter day prophecies: "the Lord roars from Zion and utters His voice from Jerusalem" (Joel 3:16; Hos. 11:10; Am. 3:8). The second coming is clearly in view. An Angel coming down clothed with a cloud is very much alluding to what happened after Israel left Egypt; although Moses alone saw this. John, despised and imprisoned on Patmos, is therefore being encouraged that he is in no less an awesome position than was Moses- who was seen in Judaism as the epitome of human spirituality, and whose experience on Sinai was presented as the highest a man has ever gone to God. The idea is that now the tribulation of Israel is completed, and instead of the coming down of the Angel clothed with cloud on Sinai, there will be the literal return of Christ to earth.

The rainbow about His head is another connection with the opening vision of a rainbow around the throne of the Lord Jesus (4:3). Cloud, rainbow and sun are all part of the same process which results in rainbows becoming visible. From the point of observation, the rain has ceased but the cloud suggests there is still water around. We can maybe infer that this is a picture of some judgments [the rain] having ended, but others still ongoing. And this is in chronological terms about where we are up to in the book- the remaining judgments described in the book are upon the beast systems, judging them as they had previously judged Israel / God's people.

His face as the sun is the very description of Jesus in 1:16. And "feet as pillars of fire" is just like the Lord Jesus in 1:17; 2:18. After all the allusions to Joel in Revelation 9, it's not surprising that this too alludes to Joel, this time to Joel 2:30- pillars of fire, smoke and blood are to be seen in the land in the last days. The context there would require that this is judgment coming upon the land. And yet this image of judgment is presented along with that of the rainbow, the cessation of judgment- in the kaleidoscope of images which forms the apocalyptic genre. That kaleidoscope of images means we should not be unduly concerned about whether the Angel here is an Angel or the Lord Jesus personally.

Harry Whittaker makes a good case for this Angel being that of Daniel 10. And yet, as he also points out, the connections with the Lord Jesus personally are undeniable:

The detailed parallel between Revelation 10, 11 and Daniel 10, 12 set out below requires that John understood the being he saw to be the angel who revealed so much to Daniel.

|      | <i>Revelation</i>                                           |            | <i>Daniel</i>                                                                              |
|------|-------------------------------------------------------------|------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 10:1 | A mighty angel.                                             | 10:5, 12:7 | A man clothed in linen.                                                                    |
| 10:2 | Right foot on the sea, left foot on the land.               | 12:7       | Standing on the waters of the river.                                                       |
| 10:1 | Face like the sun.                                          | 10:6       | Face like lightning.                                                                       |
| 10:1 | Feet as pillars of fire.                                    | 10:6       | Feet like polished brass.                                                                  |
| 10:2 | Open book in his hand.                                      | 10:21      | "I will shew thee that which is noted in the Scripture of truth (the heavenly prototype)." |
| 10:3 | Voice as a lion.                                            | 10:6       | Voice like a multitude.                                                                    |
| 10:5 | Lifts right hand to heaven. (The left hand holds the book.) | 12:7       | Lifts both hands to heaven.                                                                |

|       |                                                           |       |                                                            |
|-------|-----------------------------------------------------------|-------|------------------------------------------------------------|
| 10:6  | Swears by Him that liveth for ever.                       | 12:7  | Swears by Him that liveth for ever.                        |
| 10:7  | Mystery of God to be finished as declared to the prophet. | 12:7  | “All these things shall be finished.”                      |
| 11:2  | Temple court “cast out,” given to Gentiles.               | 12:11 | Daily sacrifice taken away, abomination set up.            |
| 11:2  | Holy city trodden under foot.                             | 12:7  | Power of the holy people scattered.                        |
| 11:2  | 42 months.                                                | 12:7  | Time, times and an half.                                   |
| 11:18 | The time of the dead that they should be judged.          | 12:2  | Many that sleep awake, to everlasting life or to contempt. |

And yet the similarities between this Angel and the Lord Jesus cannot be denied:

|     | <i>The Angel of Revelation 10</i>                                                   | <i>Christ</i>                                                                                                                                                                            |
|-----|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| (a) | Clothed with a cloud.                                                               | “A cloud received him out of their sight ... shall so come in like manner as ye have seen him go into heaven” (Acts 1:10,11). “Behold he cometh with clouds” (Revelation 1:7 and 14:14). |
| (b) | His face as the sun                                                                 | “His countenance was as the sun shineth in his strength” (1:16).                                                                                                                         |
| (c) | His feet as pillars of fire (contrast the kingdoms of men - feet of iron and clay). | “His feet like unto fine brass, as if they burned in a furnace” (1:15)                                                                                                                   |
| (d) | “Cried with a loud voice as when a lion roareth.”                                   | “The Lion of the tribe of Judah hath prevailed to open the seals” (5:5).                                                                                                                 |

|     |                                   |                                                                                                            |
|-----|-----------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| (e) | “A rainbow was<br>upon his head.” | “There was a<br>rainbow round about<br>the throne (4:3) ... a<br>Lamb in the midst of<br>the throne” (5:6) |
|-----|-----------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|

10:2 *And he had in his hand a little scroll that was opened, and he set his right foot upon the sea and his left upon the earth-* The question of course is whether this open scroll is the same scroll, the book of life, which the Lord opened earlier in Revelation, and which He likewise holds in His hand in 5:1; and which is only opened by the releasing of the seals binding it in the very last days. The Apocalypse is a kaleidoscope of images, and we should not be too concerned with trying to define each usage of a symbol in a distinctly separate way. The Lord, represented by His Angel, is standing in judgment upon the land promised to Abraham, judging according to what is written in a scroll. The scroll of "life" was written on both sides, and we saw on 5:1 that this curious feature may mean that it contained both the blessings for the faithful and judgments upon the wicked; hence it tasted both bitter and sweet in :10. In :5 we will read that the Angel representative of Jesus raises His right hand to Heaven; perhaps we are meant to deduce that the small scroll was in His left hand. The book of 5:1 is in the Lord's right hand. That may mean that there we are seeing the blessing aspect, as it has been introduced as the book of life. Here in chapter 10 we have the judgment aspect, hence it is held in the left hand.

The scroll is a little scroll, perhaps not meaning it is a different scroll, but to place the visual emphasis upon the colossal size of the Lord, standing in control of earth and sea; and to fit the decorum of the symbol, in that John will be asked to eat it as if it can be swallowed in one gulp (:10).

The simple take away point is that we, and all the 'earth', are judged not *ad hoc*, according to the emotion of the judge, but according to a predetermined written record based upon actions in this life. The sea is where one beast arises from (13:1), whilst another arises from the earth (13:11). Yet even before they are portrayed as arising, we are assured that the Lord stands firmly in judgment upon both sea and earth; for to have territory under the feet means to judge or be lord over it. If the earth means the territory of the land promised to Abraham, perhaps the sea refers to the territories immediately surrounding it. Although the earth and sea beasts appear to arise *before* this point, we are reminded at this point in the vision that the Angel stands firmly upon both earth and sea. And that Angel then morphs into the returned Lord Jesus. Nothing is outside of His control. All the oppression of history, which makes the saints feel hopelessly outnumbered and overpowered, is in fact firmly under His feet already.

Perhaps the little book is the rest of the vision of Revelation being given to John? Or perhaps this receipt of the book is because now the theme of the visions will move specifically towards the witness made by the faithful under persecution. We need not stress about trying to make chapter 10 follow on from the events of chapter 9 and precede the events of chapter 11. That would be to miss the point of the genre of apocalyptic, seeking to impose a European, linear approach to Semitic thought which is not constrained by the linear, chronological model. We also have to appreciate that this vision of the Lord in glory is one of several which punctuate and form the structure of the book; which to quote another could be summarized as:

A Opening vision (Revelation 1)

- B Seven letters with seven visions of the saints in glory (Rev. 2,3)
- C Christ in glory (Rev. 4,5)
- D 7 seals of judgment upon Israel and sealing of the repentant (Rev. 6,7); the language of 'sealing' in both chapters thereby connects them
- E 7 trumpets (Rev. 8,9)
- 10 Christ stands in glory; commissions John to preach
- 11 Preaching by the saints under persecution
- 12 The church against the beast- the essence of the Apocalypse
- 13 Preaching by the saints under persecution
- 14 Christ stands in glory; the Gospel preached
- Ea 7 vials (Ch. 15 & 16)
- Da 7 judgments on Babylon, presented as Israel (thus connecting with 'D'); the faithful presented in 19:1-10 in the language of Rev. 7 (Rev. 17:1-19:10)
- Ca Christ in glory (Rev. 19:11-21)
- Ba 7 visions of the saints in glory
- A Closing vision.

10:3 *And he cried with a great voice, as a lion roars; and when he cried, the seven thunders uttered their voices-* The Lord is likened to a lion when earlier He has held the scroll in 5:5, confirming my hunch that it is the same scroll in view. The roaring of the Messianic lion of Judah is in final victory over those who are abusing Israel and the sons of Jacob (Gen. 49:9). Thunders have indeed been associated with judgments so far in Revelation, but voices as thunders could simply mean that His singular voice is Divine, as mighty as seven [completeness] thunders; for this is the idea of a voice as of thunder in 19:6 and Jn. 12:29.

10:4 *And when the seven thunders had sounded, I was about to write. And I heard a voice from heaven, saying: Keep secret the things which the seven thunders uttered and do not write them down-* The voices of thunders pronounced something which John heard but was forbidden from writing. We have series of seven judgments recorded in the seals, trumpets and bowls. It seems there is another possible and potentially planned series of seven judgments, all planned in Heaven, which are not written because they will not happen. There will be the repentance of the remnant so sought for, and so these judgments will not be required. As early as 2:10 [see note there] we have been introduced to the idea of potential fulfilments of prophecy; there are various possible outcomes, but not all shall happen, because humans have freewill to repent or resist, and the detailed shape of the latter day events is responsive to that. This is why no detailed chronology of events is presented, but rather the kaleidoscope of images we have in the apocalyptic genre which the Spirit chose for Revelation.

10:5 *And the angel that I saw standing upon the sea and upon the earth lifted up his right hand to heaven-* Presumably holding the scroll of judgments in His left hand; see on :2. This would mean the scroll refers to judgments upon the wicked; it is written on both sides, and I suggested on 5:1 that blessing for the faithful is on one side, and judgments for the wicked on the other.

10:6 *And swore by Him that lives forever and ever, who created the heaven and the things that are therein and the earth and the things that are therein, and the sea and the things that are therein, that there shall be no more delay-* The seventh trumpet begins with the news that there will be no more delay- the idea is again of an imposed delay / restraint being now lifted. This restraint is that noted on 9:14,15, and which is specifically mentioned in 2 Thess. 2:3. Then, "the coming one will come, and shall not tarry", i.e. will not any longer tarry / delay (Heb. 10:37). This is the delay implied

in the parable of the ten virgins, who slumber whilst the bridegroom tarries. This delay will reveal whether the last generation really love their Lord, whether they stay eager for Him despite things not going according to plan, and their interpretations of Bible prophecy not producing the Lord's return when they think it should come. "My Lord delays His coming" indeed states what is true; but the question is, how we respond to that delay. This is the answer to the cry "How long?" earlier. The answer had been that there had to be further persecution. Now, there is no more delay. The whole scene recalls that of the Angel in Daniel who likewise lifted up his hand to Heaven and swore- but that there should be a "time, times and a half" until the resolution of all things. But now, the Angel says there shall be that "time" no longer. There has been an earlier delay in order to allow the faithful to be sealed (see on 7:3). But there are no more restraints; now the final end shall come. As noted on :2, the structure of Revelation is such that we are not to think that now chapter 10 shall therefore close the whole of human history. Chapter 11 will revert to how this situation is achieved. The earth and sea where the Angel representative of Jesus is standing have all been created by God. There is no entity that can arise in the experience of God's people that has not been ultimately created by God; indeed the entire heavenly throne room which John is viewing has been created by Him.

10:7 *But in the days of the voice of the seventh angel, when he is about to sound, then is finished the mystery of God, according to the good news which He declared to His servants the prophets-* The message of the prophets was specifically concerning Israel, which is therefore the focus of the "mystery" here. RSV "the mystery of God would be fulfilled" or revealed suggests that what is now a mystery, the inability to ultimately attach meaning to event in human history, will then be made plain. And likewise our own life path will become ultimately plain. No longer will we struggle to understand significance, but for God's people, the dots will be finally joined and the ultimate picture and intention made plain- a picture of love, of salvation, of joy without end. Then, the problem of suffering and Divine justice will be finally resolved. And for now, we have the comfort that the evil in this world is not insuperable; the time and tide of human history is not aimless, a circle that keeps repeating [cp. Solzhenitsyn's history of Russia, *The Red Wheel / Circle*], with everything repeating, what goes around comes around, with our own lives likewise ever circling in some pointless movement... but rather history (and our own life) is progressing in a linear sense towards an end point, in the inevitable triumph of God and His Son and their Kingdom.

"About to sound" could suggest that the seventh Angel doesn't actually sound; therefore the seven thunders were not written down. I suggested on :4 that this is because that potential sequence of judgments don't happen. Perhaps in His grace and in response to the prayers of the faithful in the last days, the judgments are cut short and these ones therefore don't happen. See too the notes on 6:1 regarding the seventh seal.

10:8 *And the voice which I heard from heaven, I heard it again speaking with me, and saying: Go, take the book which is opened in the hand of the angel that stands upon the sea and upon the earth-* There is a parallel between the commissioning of John in 1:9,19 and his recommission in chapter 10. The open scroll given to him in chapter 10 is the same scroll which has been opened by the seals being removed in chapter 6. The *aggelon ischyron* of 5:2 is the same Angel described with the same words in 10:8; both times the Angel introduces a scroll. I suggest it is the same scroll. As the Lamb took the scroll from the hand of the Angel in 5:7,8, now John does the



same (10:9,10). Perhaps in this context there is significance in the scroll having writing on both sides, of blessing [sweet] and judgment [bitter].

It could be that this is the fulfilment of the opening statement in Rev. 1:1. The revelation was given by God to Jesus, who gave it to His Angel, who gave it to John. And it is at this point that the revelation is given to John. That 'revelation' is the book of life. It is quite simply the message of salvation.

10:9- see on Rev. 11:3.

*And I went to the angel, saying to him that he should give me the little book. And he said to me: Take it and eat it up; it shall make your belly bitter but in your mouth it shall be as sweet as honey-* As explained on :10, this was to recall Ezekiel's experience of eating the bitter judgments upon Israel, and also the sweetness of blessing for the faithful within Israel. And in practice it was to enable John to enter into something of the Lord's feelings in dispensing judgments and blessings at the last day; see on :10.

We note that although John asked to be given the book, he is still asked to "take it". All those who speak forth God's word are required to consciously make an effort to receive it. And the way he had to eat it reflects how we are to personalize and absorb the message we preach, rather than impersonally transmit truth.

10:10 *And I took the little book out of the angel's hand and ate it, and in my mouth it was sweet as honey. But when I had eaten it, my belly was made bitter-* Taking the book of life from the hand of the Angel is exactly what the Lord Jesus did. John is being asked to identify with how the Lord Jesus will actually feel at the last day. As noted on 5:1 and 10:1, I suggest that the scroll is the book of life, with blessings for the faithful written on one side and judgments for the wicked on the other. But in the actual realization of all these things, the Lord literally feels bitter-sweet, just as John did. He is not the impassive judge.

The "little book" is a *bibliaridion*, a term used in :8,9,10, and Ez. 2:9 LXX in a closely similar episode. The book in Ezekiel is "written within and without" (like that in 5.1) and carries a message of "lamentations, mourning and woe", very much the theme of this part of Revelation. Ezekiel was required to eat the roll, as John is here (10.9); but though Ezekiel was to speak its message to Israel, John must prophesy "again over many peoples, and nations, and tongues, and kings" (10.11). For each the book was "sweet as honey", and while in John's case his "belly was made bitter", in Ezekiel's the prophet went about "in bitterness".

10:11 *And they said to me: You must prophesy again about many peoples and nations and tongues and kings-* The idea is that John was assumed to be recording his message for the Jews, but it also had reference to the Gentiles. The traumas to happen in the land promised to Abraham will affect both Jew and non-Jew in that land; and this is why both the Hebrew and Greek terms for 'the destroyer' are given in chapter 9. But about can also be "to". The idea is then of a last moment intense witness to all the peoples, perhaps of the world, or within the land promised to Abraham. And this is the theme of the next visions; of witness under terrible persecution during the last days. John was typical of those persecuted preachers, seeing he himself was under tribulation for the sake of his witness of God's word in Christ, as chapter 1 has reminded us.

## REVELATION CHAPTER 11

11:1 *And there was given to me a reed like a measuring rod, and I was told: Rise and measure the temple of God and the altar, and those that worship therein-* The Apocalypse, within the apocalyptic genre, is a kaleidoscope of images. We are therefore not intended to interpret the various visions in a strictly chronological way. Nor are we to see them all referring to the same groups at the same times. In viewing a kaleidoscope, some images are more impressing or relevant for us than others. And thus the book of Revelation has been for those who have read it over the centuries. But in our last days, all the visions have their final application, culminating in the literal return of the Lord to establish the Kingdom on earth.

The idea of measuring the temple can be read as measuring to protect. Revelation speaks of the *new* Jerusalem as the ultimate reality, and therefore the *old* Jerusalem is delegitimized, or at best obscured in significance. This was also of great comfort to those who lived through the destruction of the temple in AD70. This was the end of the world for many Jews. But Jewish Christians who had grasped identity with "the *new* Jerusalem" would not be fazed by it. Likewise the preservation of the temple spoken of in Rev. 11:1,2 was to be understood as spiritual preservation of the spiritual temple, the people of God. The destruction of the literal temple would've highlighted this interpretation. Those who had grasped the spirit of Christ would not have had their faith shattered at all by the events of AD70. Whereas those who had become caught up in the spirit of Jewish nationalism would've been driven to despair as all their hopes for an immediate Kingdom of God came crashing down.

Rev. 11:1 speaks of a command to measure the temple- and immediately our minds are sent back to the temple being measured in such detail in Ez. 40:10, 21,22 etc. Is this to be read as a sign that we are about to receive another such conditional prophecy? Assuming that Revelation was given just prior to the fall of Jerusalem in AD70, we could read the ensuing prophecy in Rev. 11 as saying that although Jerusalem and the outer court would fall to the Romans, the zealots in the inner sanctuary would be preserved, and a command to repentance would be issued by two prophets. Now of course, this didn't happen; but perhaps it could've done, potentially? Consider the possibility- both here and in so many other Bible passages.

A case can even be made that the compilation of Luke's Gospel record of the Olivet prophecy, as well as sections of Revelation, were released throughout the period of Titus' encirclement of Jerusalem in the lead up to AD70. The encouragement to flee Jerusalem whilst it was still possible (Lk. 21:20,21) would have been urgent commands to be fulfilled immediately upon receipt. And then Rev. 11:1 could imply that by the time of the prophecy's release, the Roman attack on the outer court of the temple had already begun. A lot of work remains to be done in working out how this mass of Scripture could have been received by the faithful within Jerusalem in AD67-70, and read as directly relevant to them, requiring immediate response.

But whatever the first century fulfilment, we are to look for a latter day application as the main one. The measuring of the temple in judgment may imply that there will be a literal temple built in Jerusalem by the Jews in the last days. They certainly have plans for one.

11:2 *But the court which is outside the temple, do not measure it. For it has been given to the nations, and they will trample the holy city for forty-two months-* The holy city [Jerusalem] to be trampled for 42 months is clearly the equivalent of Lk.

21:24 concerning the events leading up to AD70: "Jerusalem will be trampled on by the Gentiles until the times of the Gentiles are fulfilled". The "times of the Gentiles" are therefore the 42 months. "From Spring of 67 to August of 70, the time of formal imperial engagement against Jerusalem is a period of 42 months". John "measures" the inner temple, altar and worshippers - for protection (Ez. 22:26; Zech. 2:1-5). Thus the external temple perishes but the spiritual reality- the true worshippers, the new Israel- are preserved. This is what happened in AD70.

"The holy city" is one of a series of allusions in this section to the crucifixion, for this same phrase is used about Jerusalem in the context of the crucifixion (Mt. 27:53). The prophecies of persecution in Revelation are shot through with references to the crucifixion; to encourage the people of God that in those persecutions they are in fact sharing in the sufferings of Christ, and will surely likewise share in His resurrection and eternal life. This theme will have especial reference to those who endure the final tribulation- for they are the generation who perhaps will never taste death and will move directly from sharing His crucifixion sufferings to sharing His resurrection glory and eternal life. Rev. 4:4,10; 5:6,8,14 associate the 24 elders falling down in worship with what happened when Christ died and / or ascended to Heaven; but here, that is said to happen during the time of tribulation (:16). The dead bodies lying in the streets of Jerusalem (:8) recalls Mt. 27:52. The description of Jerusalem as Sodom And Egypt [both OT descriptions of Jerusalem in apostasy] seems almost angry; exactly because the reference is to Jerusalem being the city which killed Jesus (Mt. 23:37). The dead bodies being on display (:9) is apparently what happened in Mt. 27:52- the graves in Jerusalem opened in the earthquake at the death of Christ with the corpses as it were on display, and the bodies arose out of them at His resurrection. Not suffering bodies to be put in graves (:9) is language associated with crucifixion victims, whose bodies were usually cast out from Golgotha into Gehenna. The suffering believers are thereby likened to crucifixion victims. Death for three days (:9) is the same period Jesus lay dead. A case can even be made that He was dead three and a half days rather than 72 hours. "Great fear fell upon" (:11) the persecutors of the saints just as it did upon those who witnessed the resurrection of the crucified Christ (Mt. 27:54; 28:4). Ascension to Heaven in a cloud (:12) evidently recalls that of the Lord Jesus; the earthquake of :13 recalls that of Mt. 27:54. The temple being opened in :19 clearly refers to the veil being rent at the crucifixion (Mt. 27:51). These connections aren't neatly chronological; the point is that the lives of the suffering believers were connected with the sufferings of Christ in various ways and times. Their suffering was riddled with connection and allusion to the crucifixion sufferings of Jesus, just as our lives are, as like Paul we seek to fill up what is lacking in us of the crucifixion sufferings of Jesus. The connection between the sufferings of the last days and the crucifixion sufferings of the Lord are made apparent especially in Mk. 13. "It is done" (16:17) sounds very much like "It is finished". The Olivet prophecy as recorded in Mark 13 has many allusions to the sufferings of our Lord, thereby suggesting that our sufferings during the coming tribulation will make us fellowship the cross as never before. The whole idea of darkness, earthquake, open graves, rocks shaking etc, which we read of in the Olivet and other last day prophecies is evidently the language of the crucifixion. The description of suffering before "the end" comes (Mk. 13:7,13; Mt. 24:14) invites connection with Christ's death also being described as "the end", coming as it did after a period of suffering (Mt. 26:58; Lk. 22:37; Jn. 13:1). This connection is strengthened by the way in which each record of the Olivet prophecy leads straight on into the sufferings of the Lord Jesus. Mt. 24:13 commends those who endure to the end- of the great tribulation. The same word occurs in Heb.

12:2,3 about Christ enduring the cross- we fellowship the cross during the last day tribulation. The word in Mt. 24:29 for "the tribulation" is used in Col. 1:24 about the afflictions of Christ. The tribulation will enable those who endure it to fellowship the Lord's crucifixion sufferings, that they might immediately share His resurrection life at His return. This will be especially relevant to Jews under persecution, who will have to come to repentance regarding His crucifixion:

|                   |                 |
|-------------------|-----------------|
|                   | As Christ to    |
| " They shall      | the Sanhedrin   |
| deliver you up to |                 |
| the councils...   |                 |
| beaten...         | Christ          |
|                   | buffeted        |
| rulers and        | Chief priests,  |
| kings for a       | Herod, Pilate   |
| testimony...      |                 |
| brother shall     | Judas; Peter's  |
| betray the        | denial?         |
| brother...        |                 |
| turn back to      | John Mark's     |
| take up his       | linen garment   |
| garment...        |                 |
| false Christs...  | Barabbas        |
| the sun shall     | As at the       |
| be darkened...    | crucifixion     |
| watch and         | " Watch with    |
| pray...           | me"; Gethsemane |
| at even...        | Last Supper     |
| at midnight...    | Gethsemane      |
| at the cock       | Peter's denials |
| crowing...        |                 |
| in the            | Trial and       |
| morning...        | crucifixion     |
| find you          | Disciples in    |
| sleeping"         | Gethsemane      |

The trampling of the holy city doesn't necessarily have to speak of a domination of the literal city of Jerusalem. For in Revelation, "Jerusalem" is contrasted with Rome / Babylon, the 'unholy' city. It could equally refer simply to the 'holy' people of God, as it does elsewhere. Again we have the idea of the death and apparent defeat of God's people being, in fact, their glorious victory. Just as in the death of the Lord, a kind of "magnificent defeat".

11:3 *And I will give power to My two witnesses, and they shall prophesy one thousand two hundred and sixty days, clothed in sackcloth-* Empowering witnesses is the language of the comforter in Jn. 14-16. The prophecy here has specific applications to various historical moments and a greater fulfilment in the last days, but the essence is true for all who are empowered in their witness by the gift of the Spirit. The only other NT references to two witnesses is to ordinary members of the Christian church (Mt. 18:16; 2 Cor. 13:1). All believers are witnesses, in the power of the Spirit (cp. Acts 1:8).

The context of this vision is set by 10:9, where John eats the little book. I suggested there that this is part of a recommissioning of John, which introduces the theme of witness to the Gospel under persecution which fills the subsequent visions in Revelation.

John was to "Prophecy (preach) again before many peoples, and nations, and tongues, and kings" (10:11). Such language recalls Jeremiah and the prophets (often initially unwilling also) spreading their message to nations and kings, and also the spirit of first century apostolic preaching. Both these groups did so amidst great persecution; and this is to happen in the last days. John's eating of the book also looks back to Ez. 2:8, where Ezekiel had to do this at the beginning of his preaching ministry to an apostate Israel in captivity. This may hint that this latter day preaching to all nations [within the earth / land promised to Abraham?] will especially focus upon the Jews among them, and those persecuted Jews within the land itself.

The vision of the two witnesses carries straight on, describing in more detail what 10:8-11 has summarized. The downtreading of the Holy City (literal Jerusalem) will be for 42 months. During that time, the witnesses prophecy for a parallel period of 1,260 days- both periods equivalent to three and a half years (Rev. 11:2,3). The two witnesses may either represent the Jews and the Christians, or two individual leaders of the saints who each concentrate respectively on preaching to Jews or Gentiles. The *false* prophet [for the witnesses are prophets, :6,10] is not necessarily an individual but a group of persons, perhaps headed up in one figurehead. Perhaps the two righteous witnesses speak of something similar. The language of :6 has clear reference back to Elijah and Moses- both of whom spoke the word of God [largely to an apostate Israel] during time of great persecution of God's true witnesses.

Other Scriptures describe a three-and-a-half-year period of persecution by the beast. This is matched in Rev. 11 by the three and a half year witnessing in sackcloth, with the power to bring plagues on their enemies. This would equate the witnesses with Moses and the faithful Israelites in Egypt undergoing persecution, at a time when Egypt (cp. the latter day world) was very prosperous (treasure cities etc.). The sackcloth suggests fasting and prayer- for their deliverance through the Lord's return. I have suggested elsewhere that the second coming is dependent on the intensity of our prayers. To allow the Lord's return to happen, it seems we need this tribulation to vitalize our community's prayer life. In the last days, God's faithful people will be given a mouth and wisdom which their persecutors will be unable to gainsay nor resist (Lk. 21:15). This evidently alludes to how Moses before Pharaoh was given such a 'mouth' (Ex. 4:15). Moses at that time was a type of the faithful remnant of their last days, in their witness against the world during the tribulation. Hence Rev. 11 describes their witness in terms of Moses doing miracles before Pharaoh.

Sackcloth is also a symbol of repentance and recognition of sin (Gen. 37:34; Jer. 4:8; Jonah 3:5; Mk. 2:20). Their own personal repentance and acceptance of God's gracious forgiveness was the basis of their appeal to others. And is it going too far to understand that if these "two witnesses" do indeed represent the latter day witness of true Christianity to the 'earth' / land promised to Abraham, it will be made on the basis of a genuine repentance, brought about by the experiences of the tribulation.

11:4 *These are the two olive trees and the two candlesticks, standing before the Lord of the earth-* The allusion is clearly to the visions of Zechariah. They are filled with the Spirit for their witness; see on :3.

Zech. 4 contained a vision of Joshua and Zerubbabel, likened to two olive trees which emptied their oil into the seven branched candlestick, representing the ecclesia of Judah. They represented the kingly and priestly offices. The whole 'lightstand' depended upon these two anointed ones, these providers of oil, and the fact they both in various ways failed to deliver true faith and spirituality meant that the victory over the world which the vision also prophesied could not come about; the final fulfilment had to come through the Lord Jesus, who was the ultimate Priest (cp. Joshua-Jesus) and Prince of Judah (cp. Zerubbabel). This prophecy could have been fulfilled at the restoration; but when we read in Rev. 11:4 that "These are the two olive trees and the two candlesticks", is the Lord not saying that now He has redefined and rescheduled the fulfilment of that vision in a latter day context?

The Lord of the earth / land in the Zechariah context was a reference to Israel's Angel (Michael?) who was in control of the land despite all happening within it. But the latter day lord of the land will be the anti-Christ, the fake Christ, the fake, imitation lord of the land. And before him they make their witness. The later allusions to them as it were bringing the plagues upon Egypt suggest they are as it were standing before Pharaoh as Moses did, strangely unhurt by him as Moses and Aaron were strangely preserved from being killed by him, bringing the plagues upon the persecutors of God's apostate people Israel.

11:5 *And if anyone desires to hurt them, fire proceeds out of their mouth and devours their enemies, and if anyone shall desire to hurt them, in this manner must he be killed-* These two individuals or entities are miraculously preserved as Moses was before Pharaoh, the lord of the earth in his day (see on :4).

They have power to shut heaven and bring fire upon their enemies - clearly alluding to Elijah. His bringing down fire was against people of his own Jewish race who were persecuting him (2 Kings 1:9-12), suggesting that the Elijah ministry will be bitterly opposed by many Jews, after the pattern of Jeremiah's persecution during the Babylonian invasion. The witnesses are therefore the latter day Elijah ministry, who shall come to prepare Israel before the final day of the Lord comes, witnessing against powers as well as against Israel; just as John the Baptist did in the spirit and power of Elijah, against Herod who killed him.

11:6 *These have the power to shut the heaven so that it does not rain during the days of their prophecy, and they have power over the waters to turn them into blood and to smite the earth with every plague, as often as they shall desire-* See on:3 and on :6 for the significance of the Elijah allusions. This latter day Elijah ministry will withhold rain, as Elijah did, for three and a half years, in the hope that it will lead to repentance in Israel. The plaguing of the persecutors as Moses and Aaron plagued Egypt further strengthens the impression that Israel's experience in Egypt is the prototype for the coming tribulation. The plagues brought upon Egypt were likewise in the hope that Egypt and even Pharaoh would 'know the Lord' and repent.

11:7- see on Rev. 6:10.

*And when they shall have finished their testimony, the beast that comes up out of the abyss shall make war with them and overcome them and kill them-* The same word for "witnesses" is used of how the Babylon system slays the Lord's witnesses in the last days (17:6). This parallels "the beast" here with latter day Babylon. This speaks of a final, furious bout of persecution which brings about the destruction of the beast. It is because of this latter day orgy of killing the saints that the woman riding the beast

was "drunken with the blood of the saints (the latter day true Christian community?), and (also) with the blood of the martyrs (s.w. "witnesses"- the two particular ones of Rev. 11?) of Jesus" (17:6). The witnesses 'testifying' suggests association with their prototype John, who was persecuted for his obedience to and preaching of "the word of God and of the testimony of Jesus Christ" (Rev. 1:2,9) in the last days before the Lord's 'coming' in AD70. I have suggested earlier on this chapter that John's recommissioning as a witness to all peoples in chapter 10 makes him personally representative of these latter day witnesses. John was encouraged in his tribulation by being given such a deep understanding of prophecy; and his latter day counterparts may be blessed likewise. The "souls under the altar" which we have previously considered were "slain for the word of God, and for the testimony which they held" (6:9), which cements the link between them and the apostle John's descriptions of his sufferings.

The dragon/ beast also "made war" with the seed of the woman "which keep the commandments (word) of God, and have the testimony (i.e. preaching) of Jesus" (12:17); it was because of "the word of their testimony (i.e. preaching) (that) they loved not their lives unto the death" (12:11), indicating that Rev. 12 also has reference to this last day persecution and is providing more detail about the events of chapter 11, during which the witnesses are persecuted and slain. Interestingly, the Angel says that he is a fellowservant and brother of them "that have the testimony (preaching) of Jesus" (19:10), i.e. the witnesses- as if the Angels who are with the witnesses in the tribulation are so near those they represent that they almost feel our sufferings.

We note that the beast is mentioned without introduction. The abyss from which it emerges has been mentioned, as the source of the locust invasion of Israel; which previously we have identified as the Muslim onslaught against Israel by her Islamic neighbours. The beast perhaps has no introduction because of the idea of Revelation being a kaleidoscope of images. It's not that a beast is introduced, defined and then we have progressive development of the beast theme in a chronological sense. What we have, true to the apocalyptic genre, is a kaleidoscope of images, rotating before us.

11:8 *And their dead bodies will lie in the street of the great city, which spiritually is called Sodom and Egypt, where also their Lord was crucified-* It would seem that the murder of these two witnesses takes place in Jerusalem, which is spiritual Sodom (Is. 1:10; 3:1,9; Jer. 23:14; Lam. 4:6; Ez. 16:46-56; Am. 4:11) and Egypt (Ez. 23:19-22). This point is clinched by its description as "where also our Lord was crucified" (see on Mk. 13:13). "They of the people (of Israel?) and kindreds and tongues and nations (those preached to in 10:11) shall see their dead bodies three days (literal ones?) and an half, and shall not suffer their dead bodies to be put in graves" (11:9). This seems a designed contrast to Stephen, the first martyr for preaching the Christian Gospel, whose body was also stared upon, but who was allowed to be buried. There are a number of similarities in Rev. 11 with the events in Sodom. "The God of the earth" of :4 clearly connects with "Shall not the judge of all the earth do right?" in Gen.18:25. The two Angels (cp. the two Angel-supported witnesses) were warned not to abide in the street (cp. bodies in the street) for fear of violence being done to them; the city is spiritually called Sodom. These references to Sodom and Egypt, both types of the last days, confirm that Rev. 11 also has a latter day application.

11:9 *And from among the peoples, tribes, tongues and nations do men look upon their dead bodies for three and a half days, and they will not allow their dead bodies to be laid in a tomb-* Converts are to be made from "among the peoples, tribes..." etc. as noted on chapter 5. Perhaps the death of the witnesses makes some converts. But it may be that people from among the peoples, tribes etc. of the earth / land promised to

Abraham come up to Jerusalem to gloat over the display of the dead bodies. There seem a number of points of contact in Rev. 11 with our Lord's sufferings, and this may be another one. Had it not been for Nicodemus' bold request, the Lord's body would have been thrown into Gehenna. Compare this with the bodies being unburied here, as if to imply they had been crucified. Thus in their sufferings the remnant under tribulation will really feel crucified with Christ, and therefore have great peace from knowing that if they suffer with Him, they will also reign with Him. It could be that the witnesses are literally crucified; for that is a typical punishment inflicted by jihadists, who make a big deal about display of the bodies of those they have slain.

11:10 *And they that dwell on the earth rejoice over them and make merry, and they shall send gifts to each other, because these two prophets tormented them that dwell on the earth-* The earth dwellers are those within the earth / land promised to Abraham. Their brief rejoicing at the apparent death of the witnesses corresponds to Egypt's glee that Israel had left and were trapped at the Red Sea. This rejoicing over the slaughtered saints by the nations of the beast is echoed later by the holy apostles and prophets rejoicing over the destruction of Babylon (18:20)- as if the sufferings of the saints are later brought upon their persecutors. See on 8:7.

11:11 *And after the three and a half days, the breath of life from God entered into them and they stood upon their feet; and great fear fell upon those that saw them-* The persecution period in which the dead bodies lie in the street lasts three and a half days, connecting with the Lord's death for three days; this may indicate a final persecution at the end of the three and a half years. This is followed by the resurrection of the witnesses, after a brief period of rejoicing by the world that these people whose Spirit gifts had plagued them were now no more (by all means compare this with the rejoicing of the world in the three days in which Christ lay dead). The great fear that fell upon them who saw the resurrected witnesses recalls the fear of those who saw the risen Lord (Mt. 28:4,5,8).

Whilst the primary reference of all this is to the situation within the earth / land promised to Abraham, there is reason to think that the believing community worldwide will suffer at this time too. There is a general, outline theme throughout Revelation that the righteous are gathered *after* they go through the judgments, implying we will experience them, although it would be possible, were we more spiritual, that we could be spared them (Rev. 7:9-17; 11:11,12; 14:13-16; 19:1-10). Thus although the types of Israel in Egypt, the faithful in Hezekiah's Jerusalem, Noah shut in the ark etc. suggest that the faithful will be spared the judgments, the fact is they will *need* the experience of the judgments to make them more spiritual, and therefore ultimately these types may not come true: they will only speak of what was possible. Evidently the latter day ecclesia will not be as strong as God would wish it to be.

11:12- see on 1 Thess. 4:17.

*And they heard a great voice from heaven saying to them: Come up here! And they went into heaven in the cloud, and their enemies saw them-* This surely connects with the transporting of the saints through the clouds to meet the Lord, as detailed in 1 Thess. 4:15-17. There are also links with Rev. 1:7- a shout (cp. 1 Thess. 4:16), a cloud, being seen by enemies. We know that 1:7 is concerning the second coming (see note there). There we have the picture of the Lord's persecutors seeing Him personally; some will say "Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord", but too late (see on Mt. 23:39). They will be resurrected to judgment, and see Him in glory; and the last generation of Israel's persecutors will see not only Him, but the



resurrected two witnesses with Him. The exact chronology need not worry us; for here in the Apocalypse we have a kaleidoscope of images and not a strictly chronological outline of events.

11:13 *And in that hour there was a great earthquake and the tenth part of the city fell; and there were killed in the earthquake seven thousand persons, and the rest were terrified and gave glory to the God of heaven-* It is tempting to interpret the great earthquake and repentance of a remnant in 11:13 as referring also to the Lord's coming, accompanied as it will be by a literal earthquake which affects Jerusalem when the Lord returns to the mount of Olives (Zech. 14:1-4; Acts 1:11), heralding the repentance of the Jewish remnant as described in Rom. 11. The seventh Angel then sounds, declaring that the Kingdom has come (note "are become- now- the Kingdoms of our Lord").

11:14 *The second woe is past. Behold, the third woe comes quickly-* Yet this third woe is not recorded. I suggested on 6:1; 10:4,7 that there are some judgments potentially planned which never actually happen. Perhaps because the required number of the remnant repent, or because of the power of prayer, and God's desire to hasten towards the end of His judgments so that He might save His people.

11:15 *And the seventh angel blew his trumpet and there followed great voices in heaven, and they said-* As suggested on :14 and also 6:1; 10:4,7, it seems that there are some judgments potentially planned in association with the seventh trumpet which never actually happen, as things hasten towards their close.

*The kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of our Lord and of His Christ; and he shall reign for ever and ever-* The kingdom initially in view is that of the Islamic entity which has taken control of the land promised to Abraham. That is now handed over to the Lord Jesus, who as Abraham's seed is the rightful heir to it. Satan's Kingdom has members, those he is king over [see on Lk. 11:18]. His Kingdom is the people of this world, those dominated by the fleshly mind. When the Kingdoms of this world become those of God at the second coming, this is more than a physical handover of political authority. "The earth is the Lord's, and the fullness thereof; the world, and they that dwell therein" (Ps. 24:1). The political power in the world is ultimately God's even now (Rom. 13:1-4). The idea of a handover of the Kingdoms of this world to God must therefore refer to the end of Satan's power; no longer will the world be structured around the desires of the flesh, but around the principles of God. Satan's Kingdom is not a political Kingdom, but an influence, a way of thinking, life lived according to certain principles, permeating every part of a man's thinking and behaviour. The Kingdom of God is the antithesis of Satan's Kingdom. The fact Satan's Kingdom exists now and is the antithesis of the true Kingdom is proof enough that in some sense the Kingdom of God exists in some non-political sense now, although of course this will be politically manifested at the Lord's return. God's Kingdom exists in the same sense as Satan's; as an influence, a way of thinking, life lived according to certain principles, permeating every part of a man's thinking and behaviour. This is why the Lord's parables describing the Kingdom of God refer not to the political Kingdom, but to His ways and principles as they should operate in our lives today. The Kingdom of God in this non-political sense was taken from the Jews and given to us, so that we might bring forth the fruits of the Kingdom (Mt. 21:43). The political Kingdom had already been taken from Israel (Ez. 21:27).

11:16 *And the twenty four elders, who sit before God on their thrones, fell upon their faces and worshiped God, saying-* As noted on 4:4,10; 5:8, these Angels were representative of the faithful. The whole awful program of latter day events is

ultimately to elicit the deepest praise and glory to God. And the traumas of our own lives likewise.

11:17 *We give You thanks O Lord God, the Almighty, who is and who was; because You have taken Your great power and have reigned-* God can do anything, He is omnipotent. But He chooses to limit His omnipotence in order to allow man total freewill. Therefore effectively, how far God will fulfil His purpose depends upon how far we are obedient to Him. Thus Israel limited the Holy One of Israel (Ps. 78:41). Only at the return of the Lord Jesus will God 'take to Himself His great power'- which language of itself suggests that God has chosen to limit His omnipotence for the moment. Of course, God can act quite independently of us; He has the sovereign right and ability to act as He likes, and achieve His objectives how He likes. But it seems that God chooses to limit His ability to do this. We have complete freewill, and God works with us individually in proportion as we work with Him. We have genuine choice, not only as to whether to serve God, but *how* and on what level and to what extent we serve Him, within the salvation we experience in Christ.

The faithful (see on :16) now perceive that God always was in control and in power; all their tribulations were only with His permission.

11:18 *And the nations were angry, and Your anger came, and the time of the dead to be judged, and the time to give reward to Your servants the prophets and to the saints, and to those that fear Your Name, the small and the great-* The nations will be angry, and the wrath / anger of God also will rise. When their iniquity has reached a certain level, then judgment will fall (cp. Sodom and the Amorites, Gen. 15:16). The Amorites speak of Israel's aggressive neighbours who are the beast persecuting her in the last days; and Sodom has earlier in this chapter been presented as a type of the last days.

*And to destroy those that destroy the earth-* The reference is to the "nations" within the land promised to Abraham who had destroyed that land. They will be judged as they judged Israel- a major theme of Revelation. The same word is used of how the whore of Babylon corrupted the land / earth (19:2); and these "nations" are those under her control.

11:19 *And there was opened the temple of God that is in heaven, and there was seen in His temple the ark of His covenant, and there followed lightnings, voices, thunders, an earthquake and great hail-* John was already viewing a Heavenly temple scene. The opening therefore refers to the opening of the most holy; and there is seen the ark. First century Jews were fascinated with the location of the physical ark. Here it is revealed- in heaven. There was an association of the covenant with Israel, and the ark of the covenant. The loss of the ark and its disappearance was a sign that the covenant with Israel had been suspended. But the ark was never known to have been destroyed, just as the covenant has as it were disappeared, been suspended, but not ended. And so the vision of the ark in Heaven is the sign that the covenant with Israel shall be remembered and revealed; and following from that are more judgments upon those who had once destroyed her. The lightnings, thunders, hail etc. are all the language of judgment; this is the promised destruction of those who had destroyed Israel (:18), in recognition of God's resumed covenant with Israel.

The ark over which the *shekinah* glory dwelt was as it were the throne of God; the idea is that Yahweh shall again be enthroned upon Israel. That the throne of God is represented by the ark of the covenant is shown by comparing Rev. 11:19 and 4:1-5:

| Rev. 11:19                                              | Rev. 4:1-5                                                                                               |
|---------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| "The temple of God was opened in Heaven"                | "A door was opened in Heaven"                                                                            |
| "There was seen in the temple the ark of His testament" | "A throne was set in Heaven, and one sat on the throne. . . there was a rainbow round about the throne". |
| "There were lightnings, and voices and thunderings"     | "Out of the throne proceeded lightnings and thunderings and voices"                                      |

The throne in Rev. 4 was surrounded by cherubim, as was the "throne" of the ark of the covenant.

## REVELATION CHAPTER 12

12:1 *And a great sign was seen in heaven-* We are dealing with symbols (1:1), of things to happen after John's time. There is no description here of any historical event in the garden of Eden or some rebellion in Heaven before that. The woman here is caught up to God (:5), so we are not talking about a woman in literal heaven, and the moon and stars which are her clothing show these things are symbols and not literal.

*A woman arrayed with the sun and the moon under her feet, and upon her head a crown of twelve stars-* She was who the people of Israel were intended to be, and thus she becomes our representative. The sun is a symbol for the Lord Jesus, and she is clothed with Christ, with His righteousness. This idea is used at the end of Revelation about the believers. Peter Watkins in his excellent book *Exploring The Apocalypse* sees the woman of Revelation 12 as a symbol of the church expressed in terms of Mary- for it was her who gave birth to “the man child” Jesus, who is to subdue the nations with a rod of iron (Rev. 12:5 = 2:27; 19:15). The stars around her head would, if we let Scripture interpret Scripture, refer to Israel (Gen. 37). There are many links between Revelation and John’s Gospel, and thus it may be significant that in Jn. 19:25-27 Jesus calls Mary “Woman” and then in Revelation, He uses the same title for the “woman” who bears the man child. Yet the point of Revelation 12 is surely to show us from Heaven’s point of view the huge disruption in the universe caused by the birth of Jesus that night in Bethlehem. A baby’s birth, brought about by the quiet faith and indefatigable ambition of a teenage girl, shattered the whole cosmos. This is really what happens when we perform acts of faith based on slowly developed spiritual understanding. We do things which have cosmic consequences. See on Lk. 1:28.

The significance of chapter 12 is that almost every student of Revelation's structure finds this chapter to be the very core of the book. Nils Lund's suggestion has been followed with minor amendments by most students (*Chiasmus in the New Testament: a Study in Gormgeschichte* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1942)):

- A Prologue (1:1-20)
- B Seven Epistles (2:1-3:22)
- C Seven Seals (4:1-8:1)
- D 144,000 saints & Seven Trumpets (7:1-11:19)
- E The Two Witnesses (11:1-13)
- F Woman clothed with the sun (12:1)
- G Dragon in heaven (12:4)
- H Woman flees to wilderness (12:6)
- J Satan cast out (12:12)
- H' Woman flees to wilderness (12:14)
- G' Dragon persecutes woman (12:15)
- F' Woman's seed keeps the commandments of God (12:17)
- E' The Two Beasts (13:1-18)
- D' 144,000 saints & Seven Angels (14:1-15:4)
- C' Seven Bowls (15:1,5-16:21)

B' Seven Angels: whore of Babylon vs. New Jerusalem (17:1-22:5)

A' Epilogue (22:6-21).

But Revelation is a kaleidoscope of images. In viewing a kaleidoscope, some images are more impressing or relevant for us than others. And thus the book of Revelation has been for those who have read it over the centuries. But in our last days, all the visions have their final application, culminating in the literal return of the Lord to establish the Kingdom on earth. The events spoken of here therefore have various historical applications, and one main application in the last day.

12:2 *She was with child, and was crying out with labour pains and the agony of giving birth-* This is another connection with the gospel of John, where the Lord speaks of His followers under tribulation as a woman in labour, whose release comes when they 'see' Him again (Jn. 16:21). This will ultimately be at His return, and so this language speaks of the tribulation of the church in the last days.

12:3 *And there was seen another sign in heaven: behold, a great red dragon, having seven heads and ten horns and upon his heads seven diadems-* The seven heads and ten horns of the apparently invincible dragon are in obvious contrast to the Lamb [the Lord Jesus], who has no horns but seven heads and seven spirits (Rev. 5:6). Those seven spirits are the totality of God's power. The conflict appears to be all in favour of the beast. But closer thought and reflection shows that through the cross [for "the Lamb" has obvious sacrificial associations], the Lord Jesus has all power. All the scary heads and horns of the dragon and beasts will have no power against Him. The battle has already been won. The dragon and beasts may persecute God's people, but they begin the entire conflict as born losers. Because of the cross, through which all power / Spirit in Heaven and earth has been given to the Lamb.

Alfred Norris in *The Apocalypse for Everyman* sums up the picture of the beasts presented in Revelation: "Once there was a woman in heaven about to give birth, and an evil dragon stood in front of her, intending to devour the newborn child (12.1-3). It had already done great damage in throwing down a third part of the stars (12.4), but when the baby boy was born he was snatched away from the dragon to the safety of God's throne (12.5), while the woman, too, ran away to a safe hiding place in the wilderness (12.6). The wicked dragon was beaten in a war with Michael and his angels and, with its own angels, was thrown out of heaven to the earth (12.7-9). The heavens rejoiced that the dragon had been expelled (12.10-12a), but things looked bad for the earth, for the dragon meant to continue doing evil during the short time left to it (12.12b). First it pursued the woman, but she fled out of its way to her refuge (12.13-14), and even the flood it sent after her failed to overwhelm her, because the earth itself came to her aid by swallowing up the flood (12.15-16). There were still some of her children left, though, remaining faithful to their God and Lord, so the dragon decided to make life hard for them (12.17). What it did was to stand by the seashore and conjure up out of the sea a dreadful beast to which it gave worldwide authority (13.1-2) and also healed it when it looked as though it was wounded to death (13.3); so that the earth fell down and worshipped before the dragon, and before the beast which took over its power (13.4). From the wings of the stage the dragon still caused its voice to be heard through another beast, from the earth (13.11), and helped both beasts to gather the nations together to war against God Almighty (16.13). But its designs failed, for when the beast and the false prophet (the second beast) were beaten by the Lamb it was placed under restraint in the abyss (20.2) and not allowed out for 1000 years, at the end of which it was released, and gathered the nations together against the saints (20.7). The nations were overcome, however, by fire from heaven,

and the dragon was finally removed from the scene by being destroyed in the lake of fire where its helpers, the beast and the false prophet, had been cast (20.10)".

It is obviously the same dragon throughout the Book from chapter 12 to chapter 20. The differences between the form it takes are because different aspects of its actions are being presented; again we say, that Revelation is a kaleidoscope of images. I noted on 11:7 that "the beast" is first mentioned there but without introduction. The beast perhaps has no introduction because of the idea of Revelation being a kaleidoscope of images. It's not that a beast is introduced, defined and then we have progressive development of the beast theme in a chronological sense. What we have, true to the apocalyptic genre, is a kaleidoscope of images, rotating before us.

The persecuting entity changes forms and has various aspects. It is presented in chapter 12 as a dragon; the dragon continues to exist, having given power to the beast of chapter 13. Then another beast arises, a "little horn" who also acts as the beast (Dan. 7:11). The beast is destroyed and then finally the dragon himself at the very end of Revelation. Politics and alliances within the land promised to Abraham change quickly. This is the kind of sequence we can expect; one persecuting alliance [the dragon] empowers another [the beast of Rev. 13], then another beast arises, then there is separate persecution orchestrated by the charismatic individuals presented as the little horn, the whore and the false prophet. All these entities have points of similarity with each other [e.g. the dragon and beast both have seven heads and ten horns]. But they are none the less distinct and unique. As noted many times, we are not to look for a chronological fulfilment in terms of a sequence of events. These are all kaleidoscope images of the persecution to be unleashed upon the earth / land. They merge and morph with each other, and yet re-emerge as separate entities. The dragon has seven heads and ten horns, with each head crowned; the beast from the sea has likewise seven heads and ten horns, but now it is the horns which are crowned; on the heads of the beast there are "names of blasphemy" (13:1). Their prototype in Daniel 7:20 has ten horns upon only one head.

These nuances may be significant, but they will only be recognizable when they have their fulfilment in the very last days (perhaps literally) before the Lord returns. It could be that the seven crowned heads refer to political leadership; but then they become the bearers of the names of blasphemy, as if they take on a more spiritual-religious aspect; and it is then the horns who are crowned at the time of the beast in chapter 13. The outline picture is however clear; a succession of groups of leaders and entities controlled by them (for the horns are "kings" and "kingdoms"), all summarized within one coalition of hatred against Israel; and a group of seven various "heads" of this coalition, seven mountains or nations (17:9), who exist either simultaneously or follow one another in quick succession.

It's noteworthy that the vision of Daniel 7 is presented as seven separate visions, each introduced by the rubric "I saw" (7:2,4,6,7,9,11,13). Revelation is an expansion upon Daniel's visions, and there we find seven visions which are in turn subdivided into seven visions and even some of those subdivisions are subdivided into seven visions. Admittedly, these can be defined in various ways, but some of the more obvious ones are:

7 visions:

- 1) Revelation 4 - 8:1
- 2) Revelation 8:2 - 11

- 3) Revelation 12 - 14
- 4) Revelation 15, 16
- 5) Revelation 17, 18
- 6) Revelation 19
- 7) Revelation 20

The seven visions of conflict explaining the Establishment of God's Kingdom between Rev. 11:15-13:8:

1. The woman with child: the birth of Jesus, 12:1-2
2. The great red dragon: the enemy of Peace, 12:3-6
3. The war in heaven: the Cross, 12:7-12
4. The dragon, the woman, and her children: the struggle of God's people, 12:13-17
5. The seven-headed beast from the sea, 13:1-4
6. The war against the saints: persecutions, 13:5-10
7. The beast and his mark: corruption of the emperor and the dragon's agents, 13:11-18

Then there are the Seven Visions of Zion, Rev. 14:1-20; the Seven Bowls of the Wrath of God, Rev. 15:1-16:21; the Seven Visions of the Fall of Babylon, Rev. 17:1-19:10; the Seven Visions of Recompense, Rev. 19:11-21:5.

The point is that the outline scenario of Daniel 7 is repeated in more detail in Revelation. But the primary reference remains the same- a prediction of a final time of trouble within the land promised to Abraham, which will come to term in the return of Christ to earth to establish His Kingdom upon the ruins of Israel's enemies. For this is the metanarrative of Daniel's prophecies, beginning from the empires dominating the land outlined in Daniel 2.

"Seven heads and ten horns" refers to how groups of seven and ten nations and kings surrounding Israel are associated with previous dominations of Israel (7= Dt. 7:1; Josh. 3:10; Acts 13:19; 10 = Gen. 15:18; Ps. 83; the ten surrounding nations starting with Egypt and ending with Babylon of Jer. 46-50; the ten toes of the image of Daniel 2, the ten horns of the beast of Daniel 7; the ten invading nations of Ez. 38 headed by Gog).

The similarity with the fourth beast of Daniel 7 have led many to see a fulfilment in Rome; with the seven heads referring to seven forms of government or the seven mountains, or hills, on which it is claimed Rome is built; or to seven capital cities in the Roman empire (Rome, Carthage, Aege, Antiochia, Augustodunum, Alexandria, and Constantinople). The ten horns are seen as ten European peoples who came out of the Roman empire. This may be true to a limited extent, but the events described here lead to the establishment of God's Kingdom. This didn't happen, and certainly not at the hands of Constantine as claimed. Further, the attempts to enumerate seven forms of Roman government, or ten kingdoms coming out of the broken up Roman empire, are arbitrary and seriously flawed. Far more than ten kingdoms came out of Rome; and Rome broke up over a period of time. Likewise the various forms of Government can be defined variously. It is all rather forced, and involves coming to history looking for a fulfilment of Revelation, rather than letting the symbols speak for themselves and find obvious fulfilment when the right time comes. J.B. Norris has written a helpful critique of the continuous historical approach to Roman history, which remains unanswered. He demonstrates the highly selective use of historical fact

and the cherry picking of incidents to fit into a picture required by a pre-existing commitment to the continuous historical approach. The argument that the Roman empire broke up in a very short time into ten kingdoms is particularly suspect. There were far more kingdoms than Huns, Ostrogoths, Visigoths, Franks, Vandals, Alans, Burgundians, Heruli, Saxons and Lombards. And these are the kings of the "earth"; and there is absolutely no Biblical reason for interpreting the earth / land as Western Europe. That bears all the signs of 'Western' centric bias.

The Bible is Israel centred, focused upon the earth / land promised to Abraham. Daniel 2 predicts a sequence of body parts which shall dominate that area, and then Daniel 7 gives more detail about these parts, expressing them in form of beasts, which shall come together in the last days to dominate the land and crush God's people. Revelation develops these beasts further- but the essential message is the same: it concerns the latter day domination of Israel by her enemies. There will be a final time of tribulation, resolved by the return of the Lord Jesus to earth and the establishment of His Kingdom on earth. The seven diadems will then be seen as a poor imitation of the "many diadems" on Christ's head (19:12).

So in summary my suggestion is that the seven heads and ten horns on the dragon and beast refer to a quick succession or co-existence of various peoples, leaders or entities originating from or around the land promised to Abraham, which will persecute God's people in the last days. They will all form part of the coalition of evil known as the beast or dragon, and radical Islam will be their religion. The dragon / beast is clearly an extension of the fourth beast of Daniel 7. To understand that beast would require major exposition, which you can see at <http://www.n-e-v.info/cm/dan7com.html> , and yet that in turn requires an understanding of the image of Daniel 2 which is the basis for the beasts; see on <http://www.n-e-v.info/cm/dan2com.html> , and the development of the beasts in Daniel 8, see <http://www.n-e-v.info/cm/dan8com.html>

Dan. 7:21,22 speak of how the "saints" will be persecuted by the beast, and then "the saints" will 'possess the Kingdom'. The "saints" are Israel, the same Hebrew word is used in Ex. 19:5 to describe them as a holy or saintly nation, a nation of saints, sanctified ones. If we understand the Kingdom as primarily the land promised to Abraham's seed for them to 'possess', then this makes sense. That land will be dominated and trodden down by the beast, and then the remnant of Abraham's seed will triumphantly possess it eternally; and that mountain, or Kingdom, will then grow to fill the whole planet.

The little horn devours, treads down and breaks in pieces "the earth" (Dan. 7:23); that has little meaning if applied to the whole planet. The context speaks of destruction and persecution of "the saints", God's people in His land. The reference is surely to the specific land of Israel.

The beast will "devour" the land (Dan. 7:7), just as the historical Babylon 'devoured' Jerusalem with fire (Jer. 30:16; Lam. 4:11; Ez. 15:5; 19:12; 23:25; Hos. 8:14; Am. 1:4; 2:5) and the Assyrians devoured the land (Jer. 50:17; Hos. 11:6; 13:8; Joel 1:4,19,20; 2:3,5,25). All these verses use the same word translated 'devour' in Dan. 7:7. Clearly enough, the 'devouring' of the fourth beast is a summation of all previous 'devourings' of God's land and people. Even in Old Testament times, this idea of a singular beast embodying all Israel's enemies was not unknown. For Ez. 34:28 looked forward to the day when "Neither shall the beast of the land devour them [any more]". Mal. 3:11 likewise speaks of how "the devourer" will be rebuked by God when finally Israel respond to the Elijah prophet (Mal. 3:1). This again suggests that the final devouring of Israel will be whilst the Elijah prophet is making



an ongoing appeal for their repentance and acceptance of Jesus. Once they do so, the devourer is rebuked and Jesus returns to His desperately repentant people.

12:4 *And his tail drew the third part of the stars of heaven and he did throw them to the earth; and the dragon stands before the woman that is about to give birth, so that when she gives birth he may devour her child-* A dragon waves its tail before it pounces. The decorum of the symbol may mean that this is but the prelude to a greater, final destruction which the dragon wants to achieve. The earlier visions have described how 'thirds' of the people in the land are destroyed. Here we have this described in dramatic terms; a third of the stars (referring to the sons of Jacob, Gen. 37; or possibly to their leaders) are thrown to the earth, in order to be trampled; we have just read of Jerusalem being trampled for three and a half years in 11:2. But the dragon at the same time intends to destroy the seed of the woman, the Christian believers, her newborn male child.

The attempt to destroy the newborn boy child is of course framed in terms of Pharaoh's attempt to destroy the baby boys of Israel in Egypt, and Herod's attempt to do the same to the Lord Jesus at His birth. But neither Pharaoh nor Herod achieved their aim; the baby boys of Israel, especially Moses, were somehow preserved; as was the Lord Jesus from Herod's intentions.

The coalition dominating the land promised to Abraham therefore seeks also to persecute the Christians there and not simply orthodox Jews. Is. 37:3 uses a significant figure in this context to describe how when Jerusalem was surrounded by the Assyrians, with much of the land and people desolated, something was conceived, but there appeared no strength to deliver the child. That person conceived was a repentant remnant of Judah, who were perhaps prefigured by Isaiah's children of sign, and the unusual conception of his wife in Isaiah 7 which became typical of the Lord's conception and birth of a virgin.

The intention of all the latter day trauma which Revelation describes is to bring about the repentance of a remnant. This group of genuine Christians within the land, perhaps largely Jews, will elicit the especial wrath and attention of the dragon coalition. But just as the two witnesses of chapter 11 were miraculously preserved for three and a half years, so the woman and her child are likewise.

The little horn of Daniel 8 is connected with the dragon:

|                                                                                                                     |                                                                                                                                    |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| "... it<br>cast down<br>some ... of<br>the stars to<br>the ground,<br>and stamped<br>upon them"<br>(Daniel<br>8:10) | "And his<br>tail drew the<br>third part of the<br>stars of heaven<br>and did cast<br>them to the<br>earth"<br>(Revelation<br>12:4) |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|

The dragon drew a third of the stars of heaven to the earth with his tail. If this is read literally – and Revelation 12 has to be read literally to support the Popular Interpretation – the sheer size of the dragon is immense – a third of the whole universe (or solar system at least) could be contained just on his tail. There is no way the planet earth would be big enough to contain such huge creature sprawling over it. Most of the stars of the solar system are bigger than our earth – how then could a third

of them land on earth? And remember that all this happened, or will happen, after the first century A.D., when this prophecy was given.

12:5 *And she gave birth to a son, a man child, who is to rule all the nations with a rod of iron, and her child was caught up to God and to His throne-* The "man child" is clearly referring to the Lord Jesus, who is to subdue the nations with a rod of iron (Rev. 12:5 = 2:27; 19:15). But this is a prophecy of events to happen after His birth. The entity the woman gives birth to is part of "the seed of the woman", they are "in Christ" as Paul would put it; but not the Lord Jesus personally. All that is true of Him becomes true of those in Him. We have learnt already that those who overcome shall reign with Christ on His throne, and they too "shall rule them with a rod of iron, as the vessels of the potter are broken to pieces" (2:27). Perhaps that repentant Jewish remnant at this time will be literally snatched away from persecution and be preserved. It would seem that this man child is connected with the two witnesses, who die and are resurrected, and then likewise snatched away to Heaven: "And they heard a great voice from heaven saying to them: Come up here! And they went into heaven in the cloud, and their enemies saw them" (11:12). The woman who gave birth to this remnant would then refer to the true Christian believers who were already in existence before the tribulation started. They escape, as explained in :6.

12:6 *And the woman fled into the wilderness, where she has a place prepared by God, that there they may nourish her one thousand two hundred and sixty days-* This three-and-a-half-year period is surely the same "42 months" during which Jerusalem is trampled (11:2) and the same period during which the two witnesses testify before their death (11:3). It may be objected that the man child is snatched away before this three-and-a-half-year period begins (:5). It could be that the snatching away to God occurs not immediately, and that we are reading in :5 of a situation which finally occurs (after three and a half years) and now :6 backtracks to explain how this happens. For it was Mary who fled through the wilderness to Egypt with the man child in her arms. And it would seem that she was there in Egypt with the Lord for around three and a half years. This is the same period of the Elijah ministry (Lk. 4:25). The 'problem' with the witnesses being killed after this period and the man child being snatched away before it need not unduly concern us; I have many times made the point that we have in Revelation a kaleidoscope of images, and we are not being given any neat, linear chronological outline of events. As the images rotate and merge, there are going to be points of apparent overlap and morphing of images.

The woman who gave birth to the repentant Jewish remnant, the man child, finds safety in the wilderness as did Mary and as did Israel when they fled Egyptian persecution. There they too were provide for. This may connect with the picture presented in Is. 26:20 of the faithful entering into a quiet room, until the tribulations pass over. Likewise the letters to the churches with which Revelation open feature the idea of the faithful being somehow preserved from tribulation (see on 2:10). The only other time the Greek phrase "a place prepared" occurs is also in John's writings (Jn. 14:2,3); due to the Lord's death, salvation is assured for all in tribulation. The prepared place is in God's Kingdom (Mt. 25:34). Perhaps the woman will somehow be saved or given miraculous protection during this tribulation period.

The 1,260 days is the same 42 months as we have just encountered in Rev. 11:2,3. There, the "holy city" is trampled for 42 months, and in those 1,260 days, the faithful make a prophetic witness. The idea may be that although indeed many of the component members die, they are spiritually preserved. This would be typical of how Revelation shows us how things are in secular terms [where the dominant world systems appear invincible and slay God's people]; and how they actually are in

spiritual terms, viewed from Heaven [where the death of God's people is their spiritual victory, and the victory depends upon holding on to the faith, rather than militarily, visibly defeating their enemies].

12:7 *And there was a war in heaven. Michael and his angels fought with the dragon; and the dragon and his angels retaliated-* John is as it were "in heaven", viewing things going on in the heavenly throne room. Each situation and entity on earth has representative Angels, who are God's Angels, and not themselves sinful nor rebellious; although they can represent sinful situations and actions on earth. Michael, the Angel who stands for Israel (Dan. 10:21; 12:1; Jude 9), fights with the dragon entity and his supporters. We note that Gabriel is the Angel associated with the Lord Jesus. But we read here of Michael, not Gabriel. This is not a struggle between Jesus and the devil. It speaks of a struggle between Israel and Israel's persecutors. But ultimately, those persecuting the Israelites are fighting God Himself and His Angels. The same word for "fought / retaliated" is used of how the beast which the dragon empowers appears invincible- "Who is able to make war [s.w.] against him?" (13:4). Yet he is effectively making war against God, who is at war against him (19:11); the beast in another of its manifestations makes war / fights with the Lamb (17:14). This is another manifestation of the jihadists locusts rushing to "make war" (9:7,9 s.w.). The war is not only against Israel, but against the believers; for the same word is used of the beast making war against the two witnesses (11:7). This is all part of the final battle when the kings of the land gather to fight (16:14; 19:19 s.w.).

What it doesn't mean

Angels cannot sin and that there can be no rebellion in heaven. Thus this passage – which is the only one of its kind – must be interpreted in a way that does not involve angels sinning or there being sinful angels making people sin on earth, seeing that sin comes from within us, not from outside of us (Mk. 7:20–23). Note carefully that there is no reference here to angels sinning or rebelling against God, only to a war in heaven.

That the Devil–dragon represents some kind of political power is indicated by it having "crowns upon his heads" (v. 3). Revelation 17:9,10 also comments on this dragon: "Here is the mind that hath wisdom" – i.e. don't try and understand this animal as a literal being – "The seven heads are seven mountains... these are seven kings". One of the kings continuing "a short space" perhaps connects with the Devil–dragon having "but a short time" in Revelation 12:12.

After the drama of :7–9, verse 10 says that there was "a loud voice saying in heaven, *now* is come salvation and strength, and the kingdom of our God, and the power of His Christ: for the accuser of our brethren is cast down, which accused them before our God day and night". If :7–9 occurred at the beginning of the world, before the time of Adam and Eve, how could it be said that after Satan's fall there came salvation and the kingdom of God? After Adam's sin, mankind began his sad history of slavery to sin and failure – a state hardly to be described as "salvation" and the kingdom of God. There is rejoicing that the Devil – the accuser – has been cast down to earth. Why should there be rejoicing if his coming to earth was the start of sin and disaster for man? If a fall from heaven to earth is understood figuratively rather than literally, as representing a fall from authority (as Is. 14:12; Jer. 51:53; Lam. 2:1; Mt. 11:23), much more sense can be made of all this. If all this happened before the time of Adam, or at least before the fall of man, how could the Devil have been accusing "our brethren", seeing they did not then exist? There is nothing indicating that all this happened in the Garden of Eden. A vital point is made in Revelation 1:1 and 4:1 –

that the Revelation is a prophecy of “things which must shortly come to pass”. It is not therefore a description of what happened in Eden, but a prophecy of things to happen at some time after the first century, when the Revelation was given by Jesus. Any who are truly humble to the Word will see that this argument alone precludes all attempts to refer Revelation 12 to the Garden of Eden. The question has also to be answered as to why the identity of the Devil and information about what happened in Eden should be reserved until the end of the Bible before being revealed.

In view of this and many other things in Revelation 12 (and the whole prophecy) which are just incapable of any literal fulfilment, it is not surprising that we are told first of all (Rev. 1:1) that this is a message that has been “signified” – i.e. put into sign language, or symbol. As if to emphasize this in the context of Revelation 12, Revelation 12:1 describes the subsequent action as “a great sign” (A.V. margin). In reading of what the Devil does when he is on the earth, there is no description of him causing people to sin; indeed, vs. 12–16 show that the Devil was unsuccessful in his attempts to cause trouble on earth once he arrived there. This contradicts the popular interpretation. In their eagerness to show that Rev. 12:7–9 refers to fallen angels at the beginning of the world, apologists for a personal Satan have rather overlooked the context of the passage. A woman in Heaven, in the agony of childbirth and resting her feet on the moon, is faced by a dragon, whose tail throws down a third of the stars of Heaven to earth (Rev. 12:4). She gives birth, and the child “was caught up unto God, and to his throne” (Rev. 12:5). Clearly enough the “heaven” where all this occurs isn’t the “heaven” where God lives and where His throne is. Next we read of a power struggle “in heaven”, and the dragon and his angels are “cast out” (Rev. 12:9). The dragon throws one third of the stars of Heaven to earth – are these Angels? If so, how come the dragon and not God casts them to earth? That’s quite the opposite of the scenario painted in *Paradise Lost*. How can a literalistic reading of this passage cope with the *two* episodes of Angels being cast down to earth? At the very least, care in thought and exposition is clearly lacking in the orthodox reading of this passage. The woman, who is never recorded as leaving “Heaven”, then flees “into the wilderness” (Rev. 12:6). Once the dragon is cast to the earth, then he starts persecuting the woman by hissing huge volumes of water at her (Rev. 12:13). The earth opens and swallows this water (Rev. 12:16) – even though the woman is never recorded as losing her “in heaven” status. All this is reason enough to not interpret “heaven” and “earth” in this passage in any literal manner. The appearance of the woman and dragon “in heaven” is described as a *semeion*, a “sign”, something that needs to be interpreted, rather than a literal fact (Rev. 12:1,3).

The language of ‘war’ is surely metaphor rather than literal description. What begins as a literal battle ends as a legal one, as the metaphor changes to the law court, with accusers, judge and Satan’s case rejected. If the legal language isn’t to be taken literally, why should the ‘war’ language be so literal?

#### The Chronological Problem

The woman of :1 is “clothed with the sun, and the moon under her feet, and upon her head a crown of twelve stars”. These heavenly bodies, as well as the woman, apparently suspended in heaven, cannot be literal. She could not literally be clothed with the sun, or have stars as big as the earth on her literal head.

Another sign appears in heaven in :3 – a red dragon. This is commonly taken as a literal heaven, but why should it be, seeing that the same heaven is referred to in v. 1 and that is clearly figurative? Verse 4 shows the dragon casting a third of the stars of heaven to earth. We have seen that because of the size of the stars and earth, this cannot therefore refer to literal stars or heaven. The Kingdom of God is to be

established on earth (Dan. 2:44; Mt. 5:5), which will not be possible if the earth is destroyed (which it would be) by huge stars falling onto it.

The woman in “heaven” then delivered her child, who was “caught up unto God and to his throne” (v. 5). God’s throne is in heaven. If the woman was already in heaven, why would her child have to be “caught up” to heaven? She must have been a symbol of something on earth, although in a figurative “heaven”. She then flees “into the wilderness” (v. 6). If she was in literal heaven, this means there is a wilderness in heaven. It is far more fitting for her to be in a figurative heavenly place, and then flee to a literal or figurative wilderness on the earth.

We then come to v. 7 – “there was war in heaven”. All other references to “heaven” in Revelation 12 having been figurative, it seems only consistent that this was war in a figurative heaven. This must be the case, as there can be no rebellion or sin in literal heaven (Mt. 6:10; Ps. 5:4–5; Hab. 1:13). The common view claims that wicked angels are locked up in hell; but here they are in heaven. They are not therefore literal angels.

I sometimes ask those who believe in the orthodox idea of the Devil the following question: ‘Can you give me a brief Biblical history of the Devil, according to your interpretation of Bible passages? The response is highly contradictory.

According to ‘orthodox’ reasoning, the answer has to be something like this:

a) The Devil was an angel in heaven who was thrown out into the garden of Eden. He was thrown to earth in Gen. 1.

b) He is supposed to have come to earth and married in Gen 6.

c) At the time of Job he is said to have had access to both heaven and earth.

d) By the time of Is. 14 he is thrown out of heaven onto earth.

e) In Zech. 3 he is in heaven again.

f) He is on earth in Mt. 4.

g) He is “cast out” at the time of Jesus’ death, according to the popular view of “the prince of this world” being “cast out” at that time.

h) There is a prophecy of the Devil being ‘cast out’ in Rev. 12.

i) The Devil is “chained” in Rev. 20, but he and his angels were chained in Genesis, according to the common view of Jude 6. If he was bound with ‘eternal chains’ then, how is he chained up again in Rev. 20?

From this it should be obvious that the popular view that the Devil was cast out of heaven for sinning cannot be true, seeing that he is described as still being in heaven after each occurrence of being ‘cast out’. It is vital to understand both heaven and the Devil in a figurative sense.

### Revelation 12: Deconstructing Pagan Myths

Various scholars have shown that this passage is full of allusion to contemporary pagan myths (e.g. Neil Forsyth, *Satan and the Combat Myth* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1989) chapter 13). For example, the Greeks believed that the dragon Python attempts to kill the new born son of Zeus but is stopped the escape of the child’s mother, Leto, to the island of Delos; Apollo then comes and slays the dragon. For the Egyptians, Set the red dragon hunts Isis but is then killed by her son Horus. In other myths, the dragon of darkness tries to kill the sun god but is killed by him. There are other examples of the sun god myth being alluded to in Revelation. Take the description of Jesus as having eyes as a flaming fire and feet of pure bronze (Rev. 2:18). This is said to the Thyatira ecclesia – and the god of Thyatira was Apollo, the sun god, known locally as Tyrimnos, who appeared in this very form on the city’s

coins. The point of the allusion was that actually, there is no sun god – for the Christians in Thyatira, that means Jesus.

This is in keeping with what we have seen elsewhere in the Scriptures – pagan myths are alluded to in order to deconstruct them. Surely the point of all the allusions here in Revelation 12 is to say: ‘Take your attention away from all these myths of what supposedly is going on out in the cosmos. Get real. Here on earth, you are going to be persecuted by Rome [or some other adversary]. Prepare for it in your hearts. The real enemy isn’t a dragon in the sky. It’s Rome’. Other scholars have demonstrated that Revelation 12 and 13 contain many allusions to contemporary Jewish writings – e.g. Rev. 12:9; 13:14 speak of the beast / Satan “leading astray those that dwell on the earth”, quoting from the *Apocalypse of Abraham* and *Enoch* 54.6 about the armies of Azazel / Satan who “lead astray those that dwell on the earth”. The point is that pagan Rome and the Jewish ‘Satan’ were those who were leading astray, and who would be punished in the cataclysm of AD70; and in a last days context, it is the latter day Satan / beast who will lead astray many and be destroyed by the second coming of Christ.

For 15 years Dr. David Pitt-Francis applied an exceptional mind to trying to get to grips with the book of Revelation (David Pitt-Francis, *The Most Amazing Message Ever Written* (Irchester, UK: Mark Saunders Books, 1983)). His conclusion, written up in chapter 9 of his book, was that not only does Revelation 12 not teach the existence of a personal Satan, but it actually is a parody of the whole belief in a sinful Satan figure existing in Heaven. He follows the approach that Revelation 12 alludes heavily to pagan myths of a Satan figure existing in Heaven, and that the whole idea of the chapter is to show that, given the victory of the Lord Jesus over all evil, those pagan ideas are just no longer tenable in any form. The idea of a Satan figure in Heaven has been ‘cast down’ for the serious believer in Christ: “Satan was imagined to have dominated at least a third of heaven in pre-Christian times. Babylonian, Zend and Teutonic thought assumed ‘Satan’ or his equivalent to be in possession of about a third of heaven. Jewish apostate thought (as in Enoch) also imagined a third of heaven to be in the possession of rebellious angels. The vision of a dragon occupying a third of heaven, and specifically defined as the ‘Devil and Satan’ is provided at this stage, not to indicate some literal fact, but to summarise the preconceptions about the Devil which had existed in pagan thought before the coming of Christ, and that had even crept into Judaism... It was primarily the task of Christianity to show the world that evil could have no place in heaven, that it did not occupy a place in heaven except in the imagination of mankind, and that it could be vanquished by the grace of Christ, and the Word of His testimony... The casting forth of Satan from heaven is a powerful symbol of what would happen to the human concept of evil as a result of the teaching of Christ. The woman and the dragon cannot coexist in heaven... Could there have been such a literal ‘Devil’ or even a ‘literal’ dragon, who perverted a third of the angels in heaven and cast them to the ground, as Jewish apocalyptic writers had actually believed? If we adopt this literalistic stance, we not only fall into the error of those books against which the Revelation was written but miss the main message of the chapter, that since the advent of Christianity to disprove the concept of imagined evil in heaven, no ‘Devil’ has ever had any place there”. He goes on to suggest that ‘Satan’ in post-Christian religions [e.g. Islam] has always been envisaged as a being living under the earth, in a supposed “hell”, rather than in Heaven. Whether or not we feel happy with this kind of ‘spiritualized’ interpretation of Revelation, the allusions of Revelation 12 to material in the book of Enoch about Heavenly rebellions, Enoch

being caught up to God etc., cannot be gainsaid. And I suggest that such allusions are indeed, as David Pitt-Francis suggests, in order to deconstruct these wrong ideas.

#### First century applications

Revelation is a description of events on earth from the perspective of what happens in Heaven – encouraging the early Christians that God and His Son and His Angels are in fact intensely aware of the crises going on, and actually the whole scenario is playing itself out in the court of Heaven. All powers and individuals and organizations on earth have in Heaven their Angelic representatives, and the situations are tried by God before His throne – with the result that it is those on the side of Christ who are vindicated. The language with which John's Apocalypse achieves this is shot through with allusion to earthly realities, often deconstructing the claims of pagans. Rome was the great reality of the first century world; it was appropriate for the Jewish mind of the time to understand the “serpent” / adversary figure as referring to Rome. According to the Jewish Encyclopaedia, “the Serpent is spoken of as *Harasha*’, “the Wicked One,” in Gen. R. xx., Bek. 8a (compare Targ. Yer. Gen. iii. 13); and Rome as the wicked kingdom, *Malkut ha-resha'ah* (Gen. R. lxxvi.)” (5).

Roman coins depicted the goddess Roma, THEAN ROMEN, as queen of the gods and mother of the world's saviour. John speaks of she who claims to be the queen of the earth (Rev. 18:7) – and portrays her instead as nothing but a prostitute, who is soon to be destroyed. The fact Revelation alludes to the goddess Roma in this way doesn't mean that ‘she’ actually existed in Heaven in reality. And the way John in Rev. 12 likewise alludes to myths about dragons and beasts doesn't mean they exist either. The material in Rev. 12 has some twists in it which debunk the legends – thus it is not emperor of Rome who slays the dragon, it is the victory of Christ on the cross, through His blood, which is the real means of victory against all opposition on earth. The telling paradox is that the escape for the persecuted child is through *death*, through blood, rather than through some dashing heroic victory in battle. When Jeremiah compared Babylon to a dragon gulping down Jerusalem whole, we don't for a moment think that Babylon was a literal dragon (Jer. 51:34); likewise when Ezekiel calls Pharaoh a dragon lying in a stream (Ez. 29:3). The message was that the real dragon / chaos monster was earthly powers – and God would break them. And so it is with Revelation's message, although more attention is given to the idea of those earthly powers having Angelic representatives in the court of Heaven.

The language of judgment is really common throughout the Bible. In fact we could say that legal language is disproportionately common in the Bible. The idea of a Divine, heavenly court is common. God is the judge who upholds the weak, those who are condemned by human judgment (1 Sam. 24:15; Ps. 9:4; 43:1; 140:12; Lam. 3:58; Mic. 7:9); He is even portrayed as the one appealing for justice (Ps. 74:22). If God is the only and ultimate judge, then *His* judgment is all that ultimately matters, and in this sense human ‘sentences’ or judgment from the court of human opinion are reversed by Him (Prov. 22:22,23). Yet the pain of being judged by those around us is highly significant to us mortals; and time and again, Scripture is reminding us that we should not pay deep attention to this, because God's judgment is what ultimately matters; and the Divine court is sitting in session right now, at the very same time as those around us are judging us with their meaningless human judgments. This, then, is the ultimate answer to the pain of being slandered and defamed, being misunderstood and misrepresented, or feeling that persecution by worldly powers is not noticed by God.

The traditional reading of Revelation 12 makes out that there was a rebellion in Heaven, the Devil came down to earth, and then trouble started down here. But the whole idea of Revelation's visions of 'heaven' is that we are being given snapshots of the 'throne room' of Heaven, the Divine court... which is a reflection of what is actually going on here on earth, and what will subsequently follow from this in the future. I wish to stress this point, because I think it's fundamental to understanding Revelation. Those visions aren't historical descriptions of what happened before creation, before human history. They are insights into how God right then in the first century viewed what was going on there in the Middle East on planet earth, showing us how He judged the situations and Governments and individuals involved, and what would follow from this. Thus when we read that no place was found for the opposing forces in Heaven (Rev. 12:8), we are to imagine the representative of those forces, the barrister as it were, being thrown out of court. They would simply disappear from the Heavenly court room, thrown out of court as it were, perhaps reflected by the Angel representing them leaving the court. What makes interpreting Revelation so confusing is that there are so many layers of allusion going on in the text at one and the same time. Thus Rev. 12 alludes to the surrounding myths, and yet also on multiple further layers to Old Testament themes. The vision of Rev. 12 clearly has in mind Pharaoh pursuing the escaping Israelites as a dragon pursues (Ex. 14:8), Israel like the early church carried on eagles' wings to some safety (Ex. 19:4), Pharaoh trying to destroy Israel by drowning them in the water of the Nile, God providing for His people in the desert. Again, these allusions are to a real historical situation that happened here on earth – and not to some Biblically unrecorded drama somewhere out in the cosmos.

12:8 *But he was defeated and there was no longer any place for them in heaven-* God's side are assured of victory. Literally, the dragon was 'of no power'; for all such power is vested in the Lord Jesus (s.w. 5:12; 7:12). And yet viewed from earthly perspectives, the dragon appears invincible in power (13:4). John is viewing heaven opened, and the geopolitical situation in the land in the very last days being played out before him, with Angelic actors, as it were, representing the various entities on earth. But now the dragon has no more place there; this can also be understood as meaning he had no more power, reading 'heaven' as symbolic of power. We will still read of the dragon; giving power to the beast, and then being chained in chapter 20. Again we see that the visions are not intended to be interpreted in such a way that there emerges a linear chronological progression of events. Rather are we seeing different perspectives and angles on the same ultimate realities. The dragon finally loses power- that is the point.

12:9 *And the great dragon was cast down, the old serpent, he that is called the Devil and Satan, the deceiver of the whole world. He was cast down to the earth, and his angels were cast down with him-* The conflict between God and the persecuting coalition of the last days will be the final manifestation of God's battle with sin and evil. He will finally be revealed as triumphant. Perhaps the symbology of a woman is chosen in :1 exactly so as to point up this allusion to the battle between the women and the serpent which began in Gen. 3:15. Eden is now about to be restored. This latter day entity will have deceived the world- perhaps a reference to an influence larger than over the earth / land promised to Abraham. For the coalition of evil will have deceived people worldwide to support their mania against Israel and Christians. It is hard not to see reference here to radical Islam. The same word for 'deceit' is often used in the Olivet prophecy. There would be 'deceit' associated with false prophets (and "the false prophet" is associated with the beast in Revelation- a likely reference



to some incarnation of Mohammed, some jihadist imams claiming to be God's prophets on earth). This will "deceive many", here called "the whole world" (Mt. 24:4,5,11,24), "the nations" (20:3), especially those in the corners of the land promised to Abraham (20:8). The deceit will involve claims that the Christ has come (Mt. 24:5)- perhaps a reference to some jihadist claim about the Mahdi. This deception will be given surface level credibility by false miracles performed by "the false prophet" (13:14; 19:20), which are in fact performed by magic (18:23). The deceitful coalition is cast from heaven to earth; this is figurative for a loss of power, but this entity is now pictures as angry and desperate on the earth / land promised to Abraham.

The Greek word *ballo* translated "cast out" doesn't necessarily mean to throw *down* – Greek has words for this specific idea and it's significant that they're not used here. Here are a few examples of the usage of *ballo*, showing that it really means to expel or re-place:

- A wind "arose" (Acts 27:14); a crowd "threw" dust *up* into the air (Acts 22:23); a sword is "put *up*" into a sheath (Jn. 18:11) imply the word can mean to throw *up* as well as to throw *down*.
- Men "cast" stones (Jn. 8:7,59), "strike" another man on the face (Mk. 14:65), "put" fingers in the ear (Mk. 7:33), people "lay" upon a bed (Mt. 8:6,14; 9:2; Mk. 7:30) – horizontal movement.
- We "put" bits into the mouths of horses (James 3:3) – no vertical movement there. Thomas "thrust" his hand into the Lord's side (Jn. 20:27).
- Believers were "cast" into prison (Acts 16:24,37; Rev. 2:10) – the idea of vertical movement isn't there. Likewise love "casts out" fear (1 Jn. 4:18).
- The dragon casts water out of his mouth (Rev. 12:15,16), horizontally along the ground. Here the word clearly doesn't mean to throw *down* from a height – and the same word is used in that context for the Devil being "cast out", i.e. ejected, from Heaven.
- Men "cast" dust on their own heads (Rev. 18:19).

The serpent is cast out of heaven, implying it was originally there. But the literal serpent in Eden was created by God out of the dust of the earth (Gen. 1:24–25). There is no implication that the Devil came down from heaven and got inside the serpent. The language of "cast down" and "cast out" does not require literal downwards movement – Babylon is "thrown down" in Rev. 18:21. The O.T. basis of "cast out" is in the nations / beasts being cast out from God's presence in the land of Israel. In Rev. 12 we have another woman in the wilderness, who enters the Kingdom [cp. the land] once the beast is cast out. In Dan. 7:9 the thrones of the beast / kingdoms are "cast down" before God's Kingdom is established on earth, just as the beast is cast down before the establishment of the Kingdom in Rev. 12. The idea of being cast out of Heaven was and is common in Semitic languages and even wider culture for a loss of power – thus Cicero comments about Mark Anthony: "You have hurled your colleagues down from heaven".

"That old serpent" (Rev. 12:9) is often misread to mean that the original serpent in the Garden of Eden is now a dragon in the sky. But care in thought and Biblical exposition is lacking in such a view. The orthodox understanding is that Satan sinned in Heaven, and was thrown down to earth, where he tempted Eve in the form of a serpent. But Rev. 12:9 is a prophecy of the *future*, just prior to the return of Christ to earth, saying that *then* there will be a conflict "in heaven" – which we understand to be figurative language. The orthodox interpretation does violence to the obvious chronology, and is evidently an opportunistic grabbing hold of Biblical phrases with

no attention at all to their context, and stringing them together to justify popular Christianity's adoption of Jewish and pagan myths about the Devil. In passing, note how Gen. 3:15 prophesies that God *will* put hostility between the serpent and the woman. This is not what we would expect to hear if this were indeed speaking of a pre-existent Christ and Satan. According to the orthodox understanding, the enmity between them occurred in Heaven *before* Satan supposedly came down to earth. Notice, too, that according to the Biblical record in Gen. 3:15 it is God who created this hostility, whereas the common view implies it was Satan's hatred of God which was the original enmity. We read that the dragon / serpent's "place" was not "found" in Heaven as a result of the final struggle (Rev. 12:8). The same term is to be found in Rev. 20:11, where we read that the 'Heaven and earth' had no place found for them in Heaven as a result of Christ's final sitting in judgment. Clearly, 'Heaven and earth' are figurative – used here, as so often in the Bible, to refer to a system of things. Notice how the Devil / dragon / serpent are thus paralleled with the 'Heaven and earth'. This worldly system of things in the last days, the dragon / serpent power, will be no more after the final judgment seat of Christ. We see all this prefigured in how the rejected Esau came before his father Isaac, typical of the rejection of the wicked at the final judgment, and "found no place", despite his tears and gnashing of teeth (Heb. 12:17). The rejected *people* at the final judgment will "not be able" to enter God's Kingdom then (Lk. 13:24) – and the same Greek word is used in Rev. 12:8 to describe how the serpent / Devil system of people will not "prevail". Clearly the reference of Rev. 12 is to the very last day, when Christ returns to earth in judgment. The serpent 'not prevailing' and 'finding no place' with God in 'Heaven' refers [in the light of the same terms used in other Bible passages] to what happens at the final judgment, at Christ's second coming, and it is therefore *not* descriptive of some past events in Eden. It's also noteworthy that the serpent / Devil is 'cast down' from Heaven to make "woe" for "the inhabitants of the earth and of the sea" (Rev. 12:12). This hardly sounds like the orthodox Satan of *Paradise Lost* being thrown down to earth to make trouble for just Adam and Eve. The people who inhabit "the sea" rather than the earth surely indicates that we are to understand all this literally. And it is "the serpent" who is thrown down from Heaven to the earth / sea. Orthodox thinking holds that Satan was cast down and became a serpent here on earth rather than being a serpent "in Heaven" as Rev. 12 requires. In any case, the woman in Rev. 12 is persecuted by the serpent rather than being charmed and tempted by him; and she escapes from him by fleeing into "the wilderness", which makes the serpent mad with her (Rev. 12:13–17). None of this Biblical testimony fits the orthodox interpretation of the passage – it directly contradicts it.

When we read that the Devil–dragon "deceives" people, this is defined more specifically in Rev. 19:20 as referring to deceiving people in the very last days by false miracles worked in conjunction with the "false prophet". Thus the deceit is not to be understood as a general inciting of humanity to sin in their hearts – the deceit is specified as occurring only in the last days, immediately prior to the Kingdom of God being established.

The "old serpent" may be a reference to the characteristics of the serpent whom we meet in Genesis. The serpent–Eve incident played itself out in history, and still does, in that the children of the woman [God's people] are tempted and now threatened by the powers of sin and sinful organizations. Thus Paul could say that in the same way as the serpent tempted Eve, so Jewish false teachers in the early church were tempting the true bride of Christ (2 Cor. 11:3). So it was again in the persecution of true

Christians by the Roman empire, which Rev. 12 initially refers to; so it was throughout history; and so it will be in the time of the final tribulation before the second coming of Christ. My specific suggestions as to the fulfilment of Rev. 12 in the latter day tribulation can be found in *The Last Days* Chapter 12–7.

The dragon power is associated with “the false prophet” and the doing of fake miracles (Rev. 13:14; 19:20) – this is the basis upon which the dragon / Satan / adversary of God’s people “deceives” the world (Rev. 12:9). There are multiple connections between the Lord’s Olivet prophecy and the prophecy of the book of Revelation. Almost every commentary on Revelation brings these out, and I have listed many of them in *The Last Days* Chapter 12. The Lord Jesus repeatedly warned His followers not to be “deceived” – using the same Greek word as in Rev. 12:9 about the dragon / Devil ‘deceiving’ unbelievers. But He warns time and again that the source of this deception will be from “*men*... false prophets... false Christs... false prophets” doing false miracles (Mt. 24:4,5,11,24). Jesus says nothing about some fallen–Angel ‘Satan’ being behind these men. He simply warns His followers to beware of *human* deceivers – and Rev. 12 fills out the picture by specifically painting these *men* as part of a massive *human* system called Satan, the adversary, who would have all the characteristics of the serpent in Eden, just as the adversaries of God’s people always have had. This system of opposition, in the first century context, was both Jewish and Roman – hence the dragon is called both “the Devil and Satan” in Rev. 12:9 – *diabolos* being the Greek term for the Hebrew *Satan*. They are practically interchangeable – but both terms occur here, I suggest, in order to show that the opposition to Christianity was coming from both Jewish and Gentile sources. Time and again the New Testament writers warn the Christians of both Jews and Gentiles, *men* [not demons, spirits, fallen Angels, Satan etc. – but *men*] who “seek to deceive you” (1 Jn. 2:26; 3:7; James 1:16). “Be not deceived” is a watchword of Paul (1 Cor. 6:9; 15:33; Gal. 6:7). It is the *world* which is deceived by wicked men (1 Tim. 3:13; Tit. 3:3; 1 Pet. 2:25) – just as Rev. 12:9 says that the dragon / Satan system will deceive “the whole world”. That system was thus composed of wicked *men*. In all these passages, the very same Greek word occurs which is translated “deceive” in Rev. 12:9. Again we have to ask – why did Jesus, Paul, Peter, James and John not spell out to their converts that it was really *Satan* who was tempting them and likely to deceive them? Why do they repeatedly stress that it is *men* and the human heart (Heb. 3:10; 1 Jn. 1:8) who are the deceivers? Why do we have to wait until the very last book of the Bible to be told that actually, it’s Satan who’s doing this? How can belief in a personal Satan be so crucial to many churches, when the earliest Christian converts [made before Revelation was given] had been taught nothing about any Angel falling from Heaven and being responsible for temptation? Was there one Gospel for them, but another for the 21st century church?

“The great dragon was... that old serpent” (Rev. 12:9). The dragon had “seven heads and ten horns” (v. 3), therefore it was not literally the serpent. It being called “that old serpent” shows that it had the characteristics of that serpent in Eden, in the sense of being a deceiver, as the serpent was. Thus the Devil is not literally the serpent. If it is, then the dragon is the snake. But the dragon is a political power, manifesting sin (Satan). Pharaoh is likened to a great dragon (Ez. 32:2) but we can’t reason that therefore he was a literal dragon. Similarly, “the sting of death is sin” (1 Cor. 15:56), but that does not mean that death is a literal snake. It has the characteristics of the snake, through its association with sin. How could the Devil have deceived “the whole world” (v. 9) before he was thrown out of heaven seeing that there was no one in the world before Adam?

The Greek *archaios*, translated “old” in Rev. 12:9 and Rev. 20:2, can easily be misread as meaning simply ‘the archaic / very old’ serpent. But *archaios* is a form of the Greek root *arche* – the dragon power of Rev. 12 is the arch-serpent, the archetypal serpent. It doesn’t necessarily mean that the serpent is very old. For the serpent who tempted Eve suffered from the curse which came upon all other “beasts of the field” (Gen. 3:1), and died. We see serpents today eating dust and crawling on their bellies, living and dying like any other creature. The *arche* serpent doesn’t therefore mean ‘the extremely old serpent, the animal who tempted Eve, is still actually alive’. We meet the word *arche* elsewhere in the context of meaning ‘archetype’ rather than ‘having been in existence from the beginning of Biblical history’: “The *principles* (Gk. *arche*) of Christ” (Heb. 6:1); “the first (Gk. *arche*) principles of the oracles of God” (Heb. 5:12); and quite commonly *arche* is simply translated as “magistrates”, “rulers”, “principalities” – the ordering, *arch*-principles and foundations of society (Lk. 12:11; 20:20; Rom. 8:38; 1 Cor. 15:24; Eph. 1:21; 3:10; 6:12; Col. 1:16; 2:10,15; Tit. 3:1). In line with this understanding, I think we could fairly paraphrase Rev. 12:9 as: “The great dragon, the classic, typical serpent, the thinking and behaviour of Eden’s snake played out all over again in classic role, the Gentile / Roman Devil and the Jewish Satan, an evil system adversarial to God’s true people”.

Austin Farrar coined the term “a rebirth of images” (Austin Farrar, *A Rebirth of Images* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1963)) to describe what’s going on in Revelation. Old Testament images are taken up and given a new focus; and this is what’s happened with the image of the serpent. It’s not a reference to *the same* serpent as was in Eden – but a rebirth of that image. G.B. Caird has commented on the very common error of interpretation made with Rev. 12: “Later Christian tradition, by the fallacy of misplaced concreteness, treated this as a precosmic event... quite failing to recognize that John’s imagery had an earthly referent” (G.B. Caird, *The Language and Imagery of the Bible* (London: Duckworth, 1988) p. 55). What Caird is saying, in dense theological language, is that Christian folk have over literally interpreted the reference to the serpent, assuming that Rev. 12 is talking about something happening before creation, when in fact it is referring to things happening on earth in John’s own generation.

12:10 *And I heard a great voice in heaven, saying: Now has come the salvation and the power and the kingdom of our God and the authority of His Christ. For the accuser of our brothers is cast down, who accuses them before our God day and night-* The great voice is presumably from the Angels representing the faithful. Not that the faithful personally are in Heaven, for there is no conscious survival of death. But their representative Angels are there, who look upon those persecuted by the dragon as their “brothers”. The dragon is a veritable *diabolos*, a false accuser. In Jewish thought, one can be accused before God, in the heavenly throne room, without personally being there. Within John’s writings we have a classic example in Jn. 5:45, where the same word is again used of how Moses [who was dead] accused the Jews before God. Our own thoughts accuse us to God (Rom. 2:15). The dragon entity had representation before the throne of God, falsely accusing “our brothers”. The reference would presumably be to the Jewish Christian remnant, rather than to Jewish people generally. The accusation was in the sense that the Islamists consider Jews and Christians to be especially worthy of Divine condemnation; they justify their extreme judgment against Jews and Christians on the basis that they say God has spoken

harshly against them. The Koran is full of this kind of thing. God is not unmindful of it.

There are copious links between Rev. 12 and Mt. 24. This chapter therefore has reference to the last days as well as AD70, bearing in mind the reference of the Olivet prophecy to these two periods. What proves this beyond doubt is that as soon as the dragon is cast out we are told "*Now is come salvation... the Kingdom of our God... for the accuser of our brethren is cast down*" (12:10). Neither salvation nor the Kingdom of God can fully come without the second coming. If Scripture interprets Scripture, then the dragon being cast out must refer to the events of the second coming. There is rejoicing because the believers were no longer being accused (Greek 'seized upon' or accused in a law court), implying that this will be going on until the dragon/beast is cast out by Michael, the Angel who acts for God's people in the last days (Dan. 12:1). The dragon accusing them before God sounds like Job's satan- as if the supreme intensity of suffering brought upon a materialistic, self-justifying Job to make him fit for God's full fellowship points forward to our tribulation to come. As Job was brought to say that he had heard of God by the hearing of the ear (theoretically), but now, through his sufferings, "my eye sees You" (Job 42:5), so the latter day tribulation will develop God's people.

The 'accusation' of God's people "before God" by the serpent / Devil doesn't mean he has to be literally in Heaven (Rev. 12:10). The same term is found in Jn. 5:45 where the Lord Jesus states that the long-dead Moses 'accuses' the Jews to God. Our own thoughts accuse us to God (Rom. 2:15). What all this surely means is that things done on earth, good and bad, even thoughts and feelings, are somehow represented before the throne of God, perhaps by representative Angels there, and God [to continue the figure] 'judges' those reported accusations. But this doesn't require our literal presence in Heaven to do this. The first century mind, especially those from a Jewish background, would likely have picked all this up with no problem; it is the European insistence on literalism in semantics which has led to so many of the problems in interpretation which these verses have given rise to. We have to somehow shed our slowness and hesitancy to accept that figures [e.g. of a judgment court replete with literal books, throne, accusers, witnesses] are just that- figures.

The 'coming' of salvation and the public assumption on earth of the power, authority etc. which the Lord already has in Heaven can only fully speak of the second coming. Any application to any other events are mere shadows and unworthy of much attention compared to the obvious application to the second coming.

12:11 *And they overcame him because of the blood of the Lamb, and because of the word of their testimony-* This may imply that their testimony to others is related to their victory against the dragon. The language of overcoming is applied to us all in the letters which opened Revelation. The faithful overcome by the blood of the lamb- by what is done for them- and also by the word of their preaching, as if the act of preaching and witnessing against a hostile persecuting system was what helped maintain their faith. Preaching is a spiritual exercise for the benefit of the preacher. Through their work of witnessing, the persecuted believers overcome their tribulation. Witness is therefore not because God is in need of it, but for the personal spiritual benefit of the witnesses. The testimony made by the "brothers" is that of the two witnesses in 11:7. It is the final witness amidst tribulation that is resolved by the coming of Jesus and the establishment of the Kingdom. See on Mt. 24:14. It is this fearless Christian witness which provokes the beast of chapter 11 to ascend out of the pit to make war with them; and the dragon likewise goes to make war with the woman

and the remnant at this time in chapter 12. As the two witnesses are killed at the end of their witness, so here it is during their work of witness that "they loved not their lives unto the death".

Militant Judaism appealed to the image of 'martyrdom' at the time of the Maccabees. But the word for 'martyr' is used here of how the Lord Jesus was the faithful witness unto death; to turn a conversation around to Jesus and face social death or ostracism, that is the true witness or 'martyrdom'. Not being a suicide bomber against the Romans. Our witness is our witness (Rev. 6:9; 12:11). It is us personally witnessing in our way and context. But it is the witness of Jesus (Rev. 12:17; 19:10), who was the first and ultimate witness / martyr unto death (Rev. 1:5). We are His witnesses, continuing His witness unto death (Rev. 12:17; 17:6; 19:10). Our standing up for Him, our preaching, our witness to Him, is in the Spirit of His witness-unto-death.

Judaism likewise sought to inspire followers with looking for future victory in some great Messianic battle against Rome. This was attractive to the early Jewish Christians who were the initial audience of Revelation, tempted as they were to either assimilate with the world around them, or to turn in upon themselves in internal strife (just as all believers have been tempted to over the centuries). But here we read that the people of God attain victory because of the Lord's victory on the cross, represented by His blood. This victory, therefore, is not something we are fighting for against this world. It has been attained. And we are to believe it and bask in it, and seek to share the victory and to likewise not love our lives unto death. We are to "overcome" as the letters to the churches emphasize, to also be victors, in the spirit of His victory. We love, we die, we sacrifice, because He did. He is the model martyr / witness for us. But it's always more attractive, and easier to mentally handle, to be in search for something- rather than rejoicing that we have found it. To believe there is a battle to be fought and a victory to be won by us personally- when in fact it has already been fought and won, by the One far better than us. This is a feature of human nature we must beware of. To be ever learning and seeking, but unable to come to acknowledge the Truth when we find it.

The focus is taken off immediate military conflict with Rome, onto man's spiritual need. And the Lord Jesus has won that ultimate victory, which ensures that ultimately, the Gentile world shall be subsumed beneath the Kingdom of God. But that is a future outcome. All human political device to bring it about now is at best misplaced. That is the lesson of Revelation 12. God's people will indeed "overcome"; and this clearly alludes to the promises to 'him who overcomes' which concludes each of the opening letters to the churches in Rev. 2 and 3. But the battles in those churches were not literal military conflicts. The battles were against the flesh, against loss of love and faith, distraction by secular life, slipping away to pagan or Jewish religion and thus away from Jesus. The real essential conflict is within. And those who are now paraded as 'overcomers' or 'victors' in Rev. 12:15 only overcome because of the Lord's blood- not their military prowess. Our conviction of these things means that we too shall not seek to bring about our own version of God's Kingdom in our own strength- nor by secular politics. His blood makes us overcomers, not our strength. The dragon is red, associated later with the whore who is drunk with the red blood of the saints. The Lord's blood is also red. It is red against red; remember how visual is the entire apocalyptic genre. And the Lord's 'red' wins. But only for those who are willing to see that the red dragon is not at all invincible as it seems, but is in fact a born loser in its death throes. This is a radically 'other' perception of the world, which of itself makes us mentally separate from the world itself. Most people are dominated

by the culture in which they live; the images and values of the system dominate them. Materialism, or whatever philosophy and worldview is prevalent, appears invincible. Whether or not it is billed as such, our current world system has a dominant, totalitarian ideology, based around the flesh, pride, lust, sex, power, wealth and hedonism. We are asked to adopt Heaven's perspective, to see another world, and live within it so far as we can. The Christian preacher may consider that this worldview of unbelievers is impenetrable. But the message of Revelation is that there are some who will see through it, adopting the images, culture and values of God's invisible empire and chosen King, the Lord Jesus. And those new, ultimately true images are given to us in these Revelation visions.

The whole message is that Christian involvement in secular politics is not going to bring about the Kingdom of God. The struggle has already been fought and won by the Lord on the cross. It is for us to focus upon that, win the battles within our own minds against our own flesh- and patiently wait for the visible articulation of that victory in His return to earth.

The cult of Emperor presented Caesar as the one who brought peace to the empire ['the Kingdom'] by slaying the wild dragons of non-Roman empires. But everything is reversed. It is the Lord Jesus and His people who win victory over the beasts / dragon- who in fact represent Rome.

*And they did not love their life even to death-* This is very much the language of martyrdom, which the Jewish Christians of the first century were hearing from their Jewish relatives and families. But martyrs are usually just a few distinguished, spotlighted individuals on the side of the revolutionaries. But this language of martyrdom and radical resistance-unto-death is applied to the entire community of those on the Lamb's side. It could be that one possible fulfilment of Revelation could have been in the total martyrdom of the entire Christian community at the hands of Rome; and perhaps one future possibility is likewise the genocide of the entire body of Christ until He comes to save the last surviving remnant of them. Or it could be that all Christians are to be characterized by the spirit of radical martyrdom. The final difference is simply between those who overcome / conquer / are victors- and those who are rejected. All the Lord's people are heroic martyrs and victors: "He that overcomes shall inherit all things... But the fearful, and unbelieving..." (Rev. 21:7,8). The call to be the Lord's man or woman is without doubt a call to a brave life. Not the religion of mum and dad, nor to blend in with a mere culture of Sunday churchianity. All the "great multitude" of believers "are they which came out of great tribulation" (Rev. 7:14), they all fought for freedom, and now share the sweet joy of eternal victory and glory. We are all to be witnesses / martyrs unto death. Our witness, our preaching, our standing up and living for the principles of the Lord "the faithful and true witness", this is our resistance. This is our death. Be it social death, actual death or the giving up of life slowly, bit by bit- this is our martyrdom. It is part of being a Christian to have sworn loyalty unto death, to die with Jesus as we did in baptism- and to give our lives for Him. Whether in actual violent death, or [as is more common] in a life no longer lived unto ourselves but for Him and the cause of His Kingdom. This is the radical nature of our call. Man is at best a rebel without a cause, or at least, a very good cause which stands the test of time. We are rebels for the ultimate cause, with a leader who will never disappoint nor be revealed as having feet of clay. The call of non-conformity is attractive to men, especially in youth, but the power of human conservatism and the power of conformity within society is too great and the call to non conform is soon overcome. And man slides quickly back into the mire of mediocrity. This is where the radical Christian message ought to be

particularly attractive to youth. Idealism, the image of being David against Goliath, of the outsider winning, the no-hoper, written off as a loser, coming to ultimate victory, the call to rebel... these things are very much the stuff of the Christian call, and they are repeatedly talked up here in Revelation. It is a far higher call than merely dying your hair an outlandish colour or cursing authority figures behind their backs. And chatting for a few minutes over coffee about idealism and a new world order- and then changing the topic.

*12:12 Therefore rejoice, O heavens, and you that dwell in them. Woe for the earth and for the sea! Because the Devil has gone down to you, having great anger, knowing that he has but a short time-* Those John was observing in "Heaven" could refer to the Angels. But we have just read of some of the latter day faithful being observed being snatched up to "heaven" (11:12; 12:5). Perhaps it is specifically they who are referred to. But this defeat by Divine force, just as Pharaoh experienced, provoked a final burst of wrath by the dragon entity. The earth would refer to the land promised to Abraham; and the sea perhaps to the neighbouring territories.

"Therefore he shall go forth with great fury to destroy, and utterly to make away many" (Dan. 11:44) is a commentary on Sennacherib's rage (2 Kings 19:27,28). Rabshakeh boasted immediately after the receipt of the "rumour" that Assyria would 'utterly destroy' Israel still (2 Kings 19:11). This is matched by "to destroy, and utterly to make away" in Dan. 11:44. The fury of Assyria against Jerusalem because of their recognition that they only had limited time to destroy it before having to turn their attention against the Arab rebels is the basis of the Jihadist beast of the last days going forth against God's people with "having great anger, knowing that he has but a short time" (:12,17). In the same way as "the king of Babylon heard the report" of the Medes' invasion and was troubled (Jer. 50:43), so the latter-day "king of the north", while personally present conducting the campaign against Jerusalem, will be troubled by "tidings" of this massive Muslim mutiny against him, and will therefore go ahead in a furious rage to try to exterminate every Jew left in Jerusalem (Dan. 11:44,45). Jer. 51:31,32 stresses how the report of the attack on Babylon will spread like wildfire. This relates to the beast launching a final burst of persecution against God's people, "having great anger, knowing that he has but a short time".

If the Devil was cast down in Eden, he has had the opportunity to torment man throughout his long history – which is hardly having only “a short time” in which to wreak havoc.

The idea is that in 'heaven', from God's perspective, the Lord's death has overcome the dragon. But on earth, he is fighting, and apparently winning against God's people. But he has been beaten, slain on the cross. He is a loser from the start, and his persecution of God's people is the mad flailing of the dragon in his death throes. That of course isn't how it seems. But from God's perspective, he is beaten- and this is the whole point of these visions flipping between heaven and earth, showing us the perspective of heaven on things happening on earth. We suffer and we die, the forces of this world appear far stronger. But the perspective given by the cross is that evil and sin in all its forms has been overcome and vanquished. The believers are the armies who follow the lamb (Rev. 14:1-5) and overcome the apparently far superior dragon and his followers. The believers are faithful unto death, as their Lord was; the apparent victory of the beast against them is in fact their victory over the beast. Just as they overcome the beast by the blood / death of the lamb. The paradox is that the apparent victory of the beast over them- turns out to be their victory over the



beast. As with the Lord, death becomes the symbol of victory rather than defeat, just as losing all things now is in fact eternal gain. It is only to those who dwell on earth that the beast appears omnipotent (Rev. 13:8). But Revelation gives us the perspective from Heaven. This radical re-interpretation of death and apparent loss is one of the most powerful outcomes of the cross. It has obvious comfort to believers as they face and negotiate the reality of their own death and the decline of faculty which usually precedes it. And this is the truth, the ultimately true perspective. Whereas the beast systems are repeatedly described as deceiving others (Rev. 12:9; 13:14; 18:23), compared to the followers of the Lamb who are [like their Lord] "without deceit" (Rev. 3:14; 14:5). The Jewish Christians were being called to martyrdom in the struggle against Rome. But the message is that the real martyrdom is death at the hands of the likes of Rome, death after the pattern of the Lord's death at the hands of the Romans and Jews.

Revelation comforts believers that their sufferings at the hands of systems of evil are only for "a short time" or "a little while" (Rev. 6:11; 12:12; 17:10). But this is from Heaven's perspective. For those 'on the ground' suffering persecution and death during that "short time", this would give perspective. But it would only be comforting if they accepted Heaven's perspective, as taught in Revelation. Believing in the ultimate return of Jesus and the eternity of God's Kingdom on earth... this enables us to locate our own sufferings, even if they last a lifetime, within the broader perspective of eternity. The comfort that suffering is only 'for a moment' only finds meaning if we accept the reality of the eternity ahead. In this sense, the Lord's return is "soon".

12:13 *And when the dragon saw that he was cast down to the earth, he persecuted the woman that had brought forth the man child-* The allusion is to how Pharaoh recognized he had been beaten by Divine power; and hastily sought to hunt the Israelites to death. That motif is continued by the way in which the destruction of Israel's latter day invaders is celebrated with the "Song of Moses" sung after the Red Sea deliverance (15:3). There are references to Israel and Egypt; the woman flees away from the dragon (cp. Egypt) into a wilderness, but is pursued by the dragon (12:13), who tries to use water as a means of destroying her (12:15; cp. the Red Sea), but by a miracle Israel are preserved from it. The woman is carried on eagle's wings, as Israel were out of Egypt (Ex. 19:4). The woman is "nourished" during the three and a half years, as Israel were fed with manna in the wilderness. Jesus reasons in John 6 that the manna represents the word of God. It may follow that the nourishing of the seed of the woman in the wilderness of her latter day tribulation will be through some special spiritual feeding programme designed by God. It may well be through an increased level of understanding of the Apocalypse and other prophecies of the tribulations which we will then be experiencing.

The wrath of the dragon is because the woman "had brought forth the man child". I suggested above that this refers to the successful preaching of the Gospel to the extent that some Jews repent, forming the repentant remnant which is miraculously preserved from the dragon. It is quite imaginable that exactly because of this, the dragon will so hate the woman, the true Christian church. "Persecute" is the same word used in the Olivet prophecy, of how the true disciples will be persecuted in Israel both in AD70 and especially in the last days (Lk. 21:12).

12:14 *And there was given to the woman the two wings of the great eagle, that she might fly into the wilderness to her place, where she is nourished for a time and times*

*and half a time from the presence of the serpent-* "The great eagle" is a symbol for both Babylon / Nebuchadnezzar (Dan. 7:4; Ez. 17:3,12) and Pharaoh king of Egypt (Ez. 17:7,17). It could be that in some way, some element of the persecuting coalition assists her; this would then be parallel with the earth / land helping the woman by swallowing up the flood spewed by the dragon. This repeating of the same idea through two different images is typical of what I mean by saying that Revelation is a kaleidoscope of images, ever rotating, reinforcing general impressions and themes, and yet with each image still unique. In the same way we read in :6 that the woman flees; here in :14 that idea is repeated, but with the detail that she flees by flying. Or it could be that we should read without the article, "two wings of an eagle", as if part of the cherubim vision of 7:4 [the "eagle" aspect of it] assists the woman to safety. Note the connection of Angel and eagle at 8:13. And the allusion would then be to how God brought His people to safety from Egypt "on eagle's wings" (Ex. 19:4; Dt. 32:11).

The woman is in the wilderness, in the presence of the serpent / dragon; for the dragon spits water at her (:15), and in 17:3,8 the beast arises from the wilderness with the blood of the saints. So whilst the woman as a whole is preserved, miraculously, some believers will die as a result of the dragon's mania against them there. The description of a conflict between a serpent and a woman and her seed in 12:14-16 must refer back to Gen. 3:15- from which we can conclude that there will be a short term victory for the devil/ dragon over the seed of the woman in the last days.

The nourishing or feeding for three and a half years recalls Elijah being miraculously fed for his three-and-a-half-year ministry, with ravens bringing him meat at one stage. The woman is part of the three and a half year Elijah ministry of the last days, witnessing to Israel under persecution.

12:15 *The serpent poured water like a river out of his mouth after the woman, to sweep her away with a flood-* Pharaoh has been alluded to in previous verses; here perhaps is in view his plan to trap Israel and hurl them into the waters of the Red Sea. It was God who provided a stream of water in the desert; yet here the serpent does the same. Likewise it was God who destroyed the earth by a flood; and here the serpent attempts to do just the same. This is the principle of anti-Christ, appearing as the Father or Son when in fact they were bitterly opposed to them and imitating them.

The other allusion is to the Assyrian invasion of Judah and Jerusalem being likened to a river gushing toward God's people (Is. 8:7). This is typical of the latter day Assyrian dominating the earth / land. But just as the Assyrian was unsuccessful in taking Jerusalem, so the latter day river will be swallowed up [the Greek for river and "flood" here is the same].

12:16 *And the earth helped the woman; the earth opened her mouth and swallowed up the river which the dragon poured out of his mouth-* "The earth helped the woman" might refer to some of the Islamists indirectly 'helping' the woman by turning against Babylon. See on Rev. 17:16. I suggested on :14 that the woman escapes through the wings of an eagle, and this may parallel this thought- if we understand the eagle as the symbol of the abusers. Somehow something within their own system enabled her to survive. The earth opening has been encountered in 9:2, where the bottomless pit is opened. Perhaps it is this very source of the locusts which absorbs the flood of judgment the dragon spits out against the woman. The language suggests that the dragon plays God in bringing a flood upon the woman. The Islamists justify their judgment of Jews and Christians by arguing they have Divine, even Biblical, warrant for doing so. But they are stopped in this, in that the flood is swallowed by the opening earth- itself a sign of condemnation. This is language very

similar to how the Koran describes the abating of the flood in Noah's time: "And it was said: O earth! Swallow thy water and, O sky! be cleared of clouds! And the water was made to subside" (Sura 11.44). They themselves will realize that their pogrom of destruction against "the woman" is being stopped by God.

12:17 *And the dragon grew angry with the woman, and went away to make war with the rest of her seed that keep the commandments of God and hold the testimony of Jesus*- Revelation 12 begins with the dragon trying to kill the man child born of the woman, and now at the end of the vision he seeks to kill the rest of her children. I earlier interpreted the man child as the Jewish Christian converts who repent and who are miraculously taken away from persecution. "The rest of her seed" would refer to another group of her spiritual children. They hold the testimony of Jesus in that they too witness to their new faith, in the face of the most awful opposition and persecution. He persecutes "the remnant" of the seed of the woman, just as the fourth beast of Dan. 7:7,19 downtreads "the remnant".

We need to note the parallels between Revelation 12 and 20. There we meet again "the dragon, the old serpent, which is the devil and satan" (12:9 = 20:2). The repetition of this exact phrase indicates we are being given another angle on events here in chapter 12. At the time of the establishment of God's Kingdom, the figurative "thousand years" (see notes on chapter 20), this entity persecutes the faithful; and then once the Kingdom has been established [not at the end of some 1000 year Millennial reign], he is released from his prison and makes a futile attack upon the "camp of the saints" before being finally destroyed by fire (20:9). This event is therefore spoken of here in chapter 12 as 'making war' with 'the rest of the woman's seed'. This is the final stage of the ancient conflict envisaged in Gen. 3:15 between the seed of the woman and the serpent.

Rev. 12 indicates that the dragon is unsuccessful in totally destroying the woman, and therefore turns in a brief period of fury "to make war with the remnant of her seed, which keep the commandments of God, and have the testimony of Jesus" (12:17). Here we have the same idea as in 11:7; three and a half years of witnessing amidst persecution, followed by a brief, intense period of horror, as Christ's three and a half year ministry was terminated by three and a half days of especial suffering. Notice that the dragon goes into the wilderness to persecute the woman's seed; 17:3,8 describes a beast from the wilderness, full of the blood of the saints. Thus the beast of Rev. 17 is also to be read in a latter day context.

## REVELATION CHAPTER 13

13:1 *And I stood upon the sand of the sea*- A position associated with the seed of Abraham in their land. This is the perspective from which we must view the beasts. The sea shore is on the earth / land promised to Abraham. John is viewing things from the very edge of that territory.

Another approach is to consider that this sea beast refers to an entity of nations from immediately outside the land promised to Abraham, who are distinct from the nations within the *eretz* / land promised to Abraham. The nations of Ez. 38 who invade Israel after the Lord Jesus has returned are not those within the *eretz* / land / earth. They are those in the "sea" of nations immediately surrounding the "land" promised to Abraham. The geographical areas include therefore Iran, Egypt and Turkey. Thus when we read that Togarmah comes from "the north border [AV

“quarters”]” (Ez. 38:6), this refers to the northern limit of the land / *eretz* promised to Abraham. Perhaps this is the equivalent of the "beast of the sea" of Rev. 13 which is presented as related to but separate from the "beast of the earth / land". We can look to these areas joining together under one charismatic leader, "Gog", to seek to repeat the invasion of the land and people of Israel by the latter day Assyria / Babylon. This is why although Assyria isn't mentioned, the invasion of Ez. 38 is full of allusion to the prophetic language concerning the Assyrian invasion [hooks in the jaws, etc.]. It will be a foolhardy repeat of the behaviour of the entity within the "land" / *eretz* which was destroyed by the Lord's coming. The invasion of Ez. 38 is clearly that of the "Gog" of Revelation, which occurs after the Lord's return and establishment in Jerusalem, when the people dwell securely in unwall'd villages- the language of the Kingdom. There is repeated emphasis that Elam [Persia] uses a bow and quiver (Is. 22:6; Jer. 49:35); perhaps a reference to Iranian usage of missiles against Israel. protected by a defensive shield and helmet (Ez. 38:5). Iran has developed missile technology to the point that they are a major exporter of military missiles; Iran has invested and developed missile technology [both offensive and defensive missiles] rather than an air force. This may be the latter day equivalent of the bows and quivers which feature in the prophecies about Persia. The chronological issues of the earth beast apparently coming after the sea beast need not unduly concern us. For Revelation is apocalyptic, a kaleidoscope of images, rather than a chronological prediction of events.

*And I saw a beast coming up out of the sea-* If the earth is the land promised to Abraham, from the Euphrates to the river of Egypt, then this beast arises from the sea of nations and peoples immediately surrounding it. Iran comes to mind, as does Egypt and Libya, all home to jihadist Islamists with a sworn hatred of Israel. Turkey is also in view, and we can expect her to become more deeply anti-Israel.

There is a clear parallel between the four winds which strove with each other upon the sea, and the four beasts who came up out of the sea. The impression is that these beasts all exist at the same time, and their conflict with each other leads to the final appearance of a beast which represents all of them; and this entity dominates the earth / land promised to Abraham, and God's people upon it. The appearance of this entity will therefore be brought about by massive conflict within the land promised to Abraham- and this is what we are seeing before our eyes. The only uniting issue between the powers in that area is a common hatred of Israel and desire to take Jerusalem. This will be the basis of the final beast arising. We can perhaps look to the development of four distinct power groups within the land promised to Abraham, giving rise to ten 'kings' or leaders, the horns of the beast, the ten toes of the image. The period of conflict between those groups could be very brief. We need not, therefore, think that the Lord's coming isn't near because we can't currently identify those four entities or ten leaders. What we are seeing before our eyes is the winds blowing on the sea, striving between the peoples of the land / earth promised to Abraham, leaving millions dead and the entire region in bitter division. And this, according to Daniel 7, will give rise to the emergence of the final entity of abuse, perhaps on the pattern of the entity known as the Islamic State.

We should therefore be looking for a group of four kings / kingdoms, out of which arise ten kings / kingdoms; and out of them arises one "little horn" in particular. Revelation's take on the beasts adds more detail- there are also seven heads, a false prophet acting as publicity agent for the beast, a whore riding the beast, sitting on seven hills / kings. The four beasts / kings are initially in conflict, striving with each other upon the sea, and arising from that comes the fourth beast entity, the

composite beast including elements of all the previous ones. And from that there arises the ten horns and one little horn. We should not, however, think of these situations as having to be chronological developments, i.e. first the four, then the fourth beast, then the ten horns, then the little horn. It may work out like that, but not necessarily. The precise details need not concern us ahead of time; the picture is of a series of leaders and powers involved in the domination of the land promised to Abraham. The fact is, the beasts will all exist together in the last days, just as the metals of the image will. These various entities will “arise” from the land. And this is what we see happening already- in the last few years there has been what is called the Arabic, and particularly Sunni, *sahwa*, ‘awakening’. Powers and kings have risen up out of the scrubland and desert of the *eretz*, united in their hatred of Israel, but bitterly divided against each other.

We are for sure in the stage of the winds / *ruach* / Angel controlled nations ‘striving’ with each other- the *eretz* is full of conflict as never before, not just between Israel and her neighbours, but between those neighbours. There are currently four non-Jewish nations within the *eretz*- Jordan, Syria, Lebanon and Iraq. But they exist just on paper as lines on the map; there are other significant entities within the area, e.g. Kurdistan, the Islamic State, Gaza, parts of Egypt and Turkey [depending how one defines the northern border of Israel], parts of Saudi Arabia [depending how the eastern border is defined]. In total they make ten kingdoms, but the number ten may not be literal. We would then be awaiting for the “little horn” to arise- a charismatic, antiChrist leader, or perhaps another very small entity. For the horn is called the *little* horn, and yet it is the most powerful in the very last days. However, the Hebrew and Aramaic words translated “little” can mean ‘short’ in terms of time as well as size. The idea may be that it lasts a very short time indeed, maybe literally days or hours in the very last day, and is the human representative of the beast / horns who personally challenges the Lord Jesus and is destroyed by the brightness of His coming.

The empires of Daniel 2 dominate the earth. The Hebrew *eretz* can refer either to the entire planet, or to the land- the land promised to Abraham, the land of Israel, from the Euphrates to the river of Egypt. The dominion of the four beasts is therefore over the same area. Daniel saw the beasts arising out of the great sea. This could be a reference to the laver, which is also called a 'sea' (1 Kings 7:23-26,39). This was a huge circular bowl for washing which was set upon 12 bronze oxen, representing the 12 tribes of Israel. They were arranged in four groups of three, facing north, south, east and west, in imitation of the camp of Israel in the wilderness. The beasts therefore arise out of the territory promised to the twelve tribes of Israel.

Rev. 17:15 interprets waters or seas as “peoples”. The beasts therefore arise out of the peoples who are to be found in the land of the 12 tribes of Israel. The interpretation is confirmed by the words of the Angel in Dan. 7:17, who says that the four beasts who arise out of the sea are four king[dom]s which “shall arise out of the earth / land”.

Another possibility regarding the “great sea” is that it refers to the area of Babylon's dominion. The vision of Daniel 7 clearly parallels that of Daniel 2, which was intended to explain what would happen after the Babylonians. The arena of the “great sea” was to be dominated by other kingdoms apart from Babylon. In confirmation of this, we find the word *rab* [“great”] used about the greatness of Babylon (“great Babylon”, Dan. 4:30; Joel 2:2,11). But *rab* is also translated “master” (Dan. 1:3), “lord”, “captain”, “chief” (Dan. 2:10,14,48), “master” (Dan. 4:19; 5:11). We could understand the “great sea” as the sea of nations ruled over by the master, the lord of the sea, the king of Babylon- and Daniel is seeing this vision in the first year

of Belshazzar king of Babylon (Dan. 7:1). As in the Daniel 2 vision, Daniel is explaining that the leadership of Babylon will not last, other kingdoms will arise to also dominate the sea of nations which was then under Babylon's sole control. This again pushes us towards understanding the entire vision as specifically concerning the area over which Babylon had dominion, and not the whole planet.

*Having ten horns and seven heads; and on his horns ten diadems-* The beasts of Revelation are built upon the beasts of Daniel. In the latter day application, the various beasts are perhaps pictures of various aspects of the final beast. The beast of Rev. 13:2 was "like a leopard, and his feet were as the feet of a bear, and his mouth as the mouth of a lion". Here we see the elements of the various beasts of Dan. 7 and therefore the metals of the image of Dan. 2 all incorporated into this latter day beast. It is the equivalent of the image standing complete in the last days. It has "seven heads and ten horns" (Rev. 13:1)- which is the total number of heads and horns of the four beasts of Dan. 7. In harmony with this, Hos. 13:7 describes Israel's latter day invader as a lion, bear, leopard and wild beast. All elements of the beasts are brought together in the final latter day invasion. The [singular] beast of Rev. 13:1 arose out of the sea, but the beasts of Daniel 7 all also arise out of the sea; it's as if all those beasts are epitomized in the one beast, just as the image of Daniel 2 stands complete at the time of Christ's return, incorporating all the metals / empires of history. All this is explained further in commentary on [Daniel 2](#), [Daniel 8](#) and [Daniel 9](#).

The metals of the image of Daniel 2 and the beasts of Daniel 7 all have dominion over "the earth", and this has reference is to the earth / land of Israel. This, I suggest, continues to be the focus in the visions of Revelation. When we read of various judgments being poured out upon the "earth", we are reading about the situation in the land promised to Abraham. The references to 'thirds' of the earth / land being judged is clearly alluding to the Old Testament prophetic descriptions of 'thirds' of Israel or the population of Jerusalem being judged, especially in Ezekiel and Zechariah. Indeed Rev. 1:7 opens the prophecy by making the connection between Israel and the "earth": "Those who pierced [crucified] Him and all the tribes of the earth [land] shall wail because of Him". This is quoting from Zechariah's prophecy of how all the tribes of Israel will weep in repentance because of their crucifixion of their Messiah.

The four beasts of Daniel 7 are replaced in Revelation by one composite beast, although it is presented from different aspects. This, I suggest, is because the beast of Revelation specifically is the latter day beast, which incorporates all the previous beasts.

Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi, the first self-proclaimed caliph of the Islamic State, said that Muslims should unite to capture Rome in order to "own the world". The significance of this is that the ten horn entity, the latter day radical Islamist entity, is seeking to incorporate an element of the previous metals / beast systems, i.e. Rome. This is what we would expect if the image is to stand erect in the last days. Source: McElory, Damien. ["Rome will be conquered next, says leader of 'Islamic State'"](#). *The Telegraph*. Retrieved 3 July 2014.

The beasts of Daniel represented empires, but this beastly empire in Revelation is a composite Leopard-Bear-Lion (13:2). It isn't just one of Daniel's three empires. It's all three empires rolled into one. In other words, this new empire is composed of the descendants of those earlier empires, in the same geographic location. Looking back at the history of the Middle East, we can now identify this new empire as the various powers that have controlled the Holy Land whilst the Jews were established within it.

It's surely significant that Daniel 7 is comprised of seven visions- each introduced by the statement that Daniel 'beheld'. This matches with the series of seven visions we find in Revelation. I would say that Revelation is therefore a development and expansion of the ideas presented in Daniel; the basic picture presented in Daniel will come true, but the outworking of it is developed somewhat in Revelation.

The four beasts of Daniel 7 clearly are to be connected with the four separate beasts which we encounter in the book of Revelation- the dragon of chapters 12 and 20, the sea beast of 13:1, the earth beast of 13:11 and the beast ridden by the whore in chapter 17. Note how the four 'evil' beasts of Revelation are a conscious contrast with "the four living creatures" of God's heavenly throne room (Rev. 19:4 cp. Ez. 1:5,15). Perhaps the contrast is also to demonstrate how as in Daniel, the nations on earth have their representative, controlling Angels in the court of Heaven.

Each of the beasts has some similarities with the other beasts. Three of them 'arise'; they all have horns; three of them have the same number of horns and heads; they all persecute God's people, etc. They all exist at the same time- they do not arise in chronological sequence. They are a different take on the four beasts of Daniel 7, but they have only outline similarities. The sequence of beasts / empires in Daniel 7 was a potential prophetic program, which never came to complete fulfilment. But the essence of the prophecy is repeated in Revelation, and will come true in the last days. It could be that we should not unduly sweat to understand the precise details of the beasts in Daniel 7, because this was part of a prophetic program which did not come about- I have written elsewhere about Conditional prophecy in Daniel. But the essence of the prophecy will come true in the last days, and we find it fleshed out in Revelation.

We read of "the beast" without any specification as to which beast is in view (Rev. 19:19,20; 20:4,10). This is surely because the various beasts are only manifestations of the one beast, just as the four beasts of Daniel 7 are comprehended in the fourth beast. The beasts are in a sense separate- thus the beast is put into the lake of fire before the dragon is (Rev. 20:10). But in another sense, these entities are all expressing the same reality and principles. Different aspects of the dominating entity may be destroyed at different times in different ways- hence the usage of the imagery of more than one beast.

As noted on 12:3, "seven heads and ten horns" refers to how groups of seven and ten nations and kings surrounding Israel are associated with previous dominations of Israel (7= Dt. 7:1; Josh. 3:10; Acts 13:19; 10 = Gen. 15:18; Ps. 83; the ten surrounding nations starting with Egypt and ending with Babylon of Jer. 46-50; the ten toes of the image of Daniel 2, the ten horns of the beast of Daniel 7; the ten invading nations of Ez. 38 headed by Gog). suggestion is that the seven heads and ten horns on the dragon and beast refer to a quick succession or co-existence of various peoples, leaders or entities originating from or around the land promised to Abraham, which will persecute God's people in the last days. They will all form part of the coalition of evil known as the beast or dragon, and radical Islam will be their religion.

The ten horns represent ten kings- the reference may be to individual leaders rather than to nations (Dan. 7:24). They arise out of the head of the beast, maybe implying they share the same overall ideology or thinking. That ideology would be that of hatred of Israel and a common desire to destroy her- which rather suggests Islam. That is the only appropriate ideology within the earth / land promised to Abraham which could be the candidate for the fulfilment of this prophetic requirement.

## The One Beast

|   |                                                                                    |                                   |                                      |                                                         |                                                       |
|---|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------|--------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------|
| . | Daniel 7<br><i>Called:</i><br>The beast<br><i>Also called:</i><br>The little horn* | 2 Thess. 2                        | Rev. 13                              | Rev. 17                                                 | Rev. 19                                               |
| . |                                                                                    |                                   | The beast                            | The beast                                               | The beast                                             |
| . |                                                                                    | The man of sin                    |                                      | The eighth head<br>Comes out of the deep (i.e. the sea) |                                                       |
| . | Associated with 10 horns                                                           |                                   | Comes out of the sea<br>10 horns     | Comes out of the deep (i.e. the sea)<br>10 horns        | 10 horns                                              |
| . | Emerges at end of Gentile times                                                    | End of Gentile times              | End of Gentile times                 | End of Gentile times                                    | End of Gentile times                                  |
| . |                                                                                    |                                   | Amazing recovery                     | Amazing emergence                                       |                                                       |
| . | A mouth speaking great things against the Most High                                | God-defying                       | Opens mouth in blasphemy against God | Full of names of blasphemy                              |                                                       |
| . |                                                                                    | Deceitful signs and lying wonders | Deceitful signs and lying wonders    |                                                         | Deceives them that had received the mark of the beast |



|   |                                               |                                                          |                                                                                                                                            |                                                                                                                                                                    |
|---|-----------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| . |                                               |                                                          | Giv<br>en<br>publicity<br>by the<br>beast out<br>the earth                                                                                 | Giv<br>en<br>publicity<br>by the<br>false<br>prophet<br>(i.e. the<br>beast of<br>the<br>earth)                                                                     |
| . |                                               | All<br>deceived<br>who do<br>not<br>believe<br>the truth | All<br>that<br>dwell<br>upon the<br>earth<br>worship<br>the<br>beast,<br>whose<br>names<br>are not<br>written<br>in the<br>book of<br>life | The<br>y that<br>dwell on<br>the<br>earth,<br>whose<br>names<br>are not<br>written<br>in the<br>book of<br>life,<br>wonder<br>at the<br>revival<br>of the<br>beast |
| 0 | Pers<br>ecutes<br>and<br>overcom<br>es saints | Into<br>lerant of<br>all<br>religions                    | Pers<br>ecutes<br>and<br>overcom<br>es the<br>saints                                                                                       | Pers<br>ecutes<br>the<br>saints De<br>stroys<br>the<br>whore                                                                                                       |
| 1 | Dur<br>ation of<br>3.5 years                  |                                                          | Dur<br>ation of<br>3.5 years                                                                                                               |                                                                                                                                                                    |
| 2 |                                               | The<br>son of<br>perditio<br>n                           |                                                                                                                                            | Goe<br>s to<br>perdition                                                                                                                                           |
| 3 | Dest<br>royed by<br>Christ                    | Des<br>troyed<br>by<br>Christ                            |                                                                                                                                            | Dest<br>royed by<br>Christ                                                                                                                                         |
|   |                                               |                                                          |                                                                                                                                            | Des<br>troyed<br>by<br>Christ                                                                                                                                      |

Note that the little horn is treated as the beast (Dan. 7:11).

*And upon his heads were names of blasphemy-* The beast of 17:4 was “full of blasphemous names”. Not only the heads of the Beast (13:1), but its whole body is covered with them, indicating that the entire empire sanctioned the emperors’ arrogation of divine titles; such titles could be found throughout the Roman world,

inscribed on public buildings and monuments. The blasphemy of the last days will be in that the jihadists consider that they have Divine, even Biblical warrant to execute His judgments upon Israel and the true Christian church.

As noted many times, we are not to look for a chronological fulfilment in terms of a sequence of events. These are all kaleidoscope images of the persecution to be unleashed upon the earth / land. They merge and morph with each other, and yet re-emerge as separate entities. The dragon has seven heads and ten horns, with each head crowned; the beast from the sea has likewise seven heads and ten horns, but now it is the horns which are crowned; on the heads of the beast there are "names of blasphemy" (13:1). Their prototype in Daniel 7:20 has ten horns upon only one head.

The names of the Roman emperors were to be greatly revered. The cult of emperor worship grew very strongly in the 1st century. Yet Rev. 13:2 describes the names of the leaders of the beast, which on one level represented the Roman empire in the 1st century, as "*blasphemous names*". To assign divine titles to the emperor was, to the Jewish and Christian mind, a blasphemy (Dt. 11:36; 2 Thess. 2:4). This would have made the Apocalypse an outlawed document in the first century. Consider too the clear references to the evil of the emperor worship cult later in Rev. 13: *one of its heads*. . . is set up as the very opposite of the true Christ.

13:2 *And the beast which I saw was like a leopard, his feet were as the feet of a bear, his mouth as the mouth of a lion; and the dragon gave him his power and his throne and great authority-* As noted on :1, the beast is the composite of all the beasts of Daniel 7. The dragon of chapter 12 is also the same ideology which speaks from the mouth of the earth beast in :11. The dragon may be damaged or apparently destroyed in political terms by the Lord's direct judgment, perhaps at the hands of Israeli or Western militia. But the jihadist philosophy re-emerges in another incarnation, just as has been witnessed so often in the war against various Islamic terrorist organizations.

The beast of Revelation 13 has elements of all the other beasts. And so does the fourth beast of Daniel 7. It had iron teeth and brass nails (Dan. 7:19), alluding to the brass of the third kingdom and the iron of the fourth kingdom. It had "eyes of a man" and a human eye on its horn, (Dan. 7:8,20), just as the first beast, the lion, had a human heart and stood up like a man (Dan. 7:4). The bear, the second beast, had three ribs in its mouth, representing its conquest of three other powers; the fourth beast features a little horn which conquers three other horns (Dan. 7:8). The bear also 'devoured much flesh' (Dan. 7:5); the fourth beast 'devours' the land (Dan. 7:7). The third beast, the leopard, had four heads (Dan. 7:6), rather like the fourth beast also has ten horns; and Revelation 13 explains that these are later located on seven heads. The fourth beast of Daniel 7 is therefore a composite beast; the other beasts merge into an entity which includes all of them, even though they still exist separately- for in the final Divine judgment, the fourth beast entity is destroyed, but the beasts have their dominion taken away although their lives are "prolonged for a season and time" (Dan. 7:12). This may mean that the final entity is destroyed, but the individual components of it continue to exist "for a season and time". The only other reference in Daniel to a period being "prolonged" is when the same word is used in Dan. 4:27 regarding the possibility of the king of the kingdom prolonging his life by repentance; it could be that the delay or prolonging is in order they repent. This may also explain why the first beast, representing Babylon, is pictured as having a man's heart being given to it after its wings [power] are cropped. The historical king of Babylon had a beast's heart

(Dan. 4:16), but his understanding [a human heart] returned to him on his repentance (Dan. 4:34). So this feature of the first beast may be a hit at a repentance after the pattern of Nebuchadnezzar in Daniel chapter 4.

It's apparent that the four beasts of Daniel and of Revelation (dragon, sea beast, earth beast, scarlet beast) are full of allusion to the cherubim vision seen by Ezekiel- also whilst in captivity in Babylon, just as Daniel was. The cherubim were likewise four separate living creatures [beasts] which somehow were also one. The four beasts of Daniel 7 become comprehended in the fourth beast and in the one composite beast of Revelation 13, which includes all elements of the previous beasts within it. Note that the Hebrew / Aramaic for "beast" means literally a living one- the living creature of the cherubim vision. The cherubim featured the faces of lion, ox, man and eagle (Ez. 1:10), and lion, ox and eagle feature in the descriptions of the four beasts; the 'man' element is found in that the lion has the heart of a man, and the little horn of the fourth beast has the eyes of a man. The first living creature has wings which are lifted up from the earth (Dan. 7:4)- which is precisely the language of the cherubim wings being lifted up from the earth in Ez. 1:19,21; 10:16,19. As the first beast is made to stand on its feet (Dan. 7:4), so the cherubim caused Ezekiel to stand on his feet (Ez. 2:2; 3:24). The second creature had a "side" which was "lifted up" (Dan. 7:5), as the cherubim likewise had 'sides' which were 'lifted up' (Ez. 1:8,20). The third beast had four wings as each of the living creatures / cherubim did (Dan. 7:6; Ez. 1:23). The first and fourth beasts / living creatures have feet (Dan. 7:4,7) as the cherubim do (Ez. 1:7). The description of how these living creatures / beasts will be judged by the Lord Jesus includes language also used in Ezekiel's cherubim visions- One seated upon a throne, wheels of burning fire (Dan. 7:9).

Ezekiel's vision was surely well known to Daniel and John. The connection is surely that throughout the course of human history, especially the course of Gentile domination of the land of Israel, the glory of God shone through it all, it was all going according to His purpose; and the various beasts were in fact manipulated by the living creatures of the Angel cherubim. Daniel 7 says this in different terms by opening with the statement that the four spirits / Angels of Heaven were responsible for the uprising of the four beasts (Dan. 7:2,3). Events were not just taking their course, with everything spinning out of control; but rather, God through the Angels was powerfully in control. And His glory shone through the apparent cruelty, shame and randomness of the events that appeared to be happening to His land and people.

13:3 *And I saw one of his heads as though it had a mortal wound; but its mortal wound was healed-* This significant head is to be associated with the little horn of Daniel 7 and 8. See further commentary [here](#) and [here](#).

The little horn represents the beast; the persecution of the saints by the horn is therefore also by the beast:

| The Little Horn                           | The Beast                                 |
|-------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------|
| "Diverse" (Dan.7:24) from others          | "Diverse" (Dan.7:23) from others          |
| "A mouth speaking great things" (Rev.3:5) | "A mouth speaking great things" (Dan.7:8) |

"He shall  
speak great  
words  
against the Most  
High" (Dan.7:25)

"He opened his mouth in  
blasphemy against God"  
(Rev.13:6)

"The same  
horn made war  
with the saints,  
and prevailed  
against them  
(Dan.7:21).

"Make war with the  
saints, and to overcome  
them" (Rev.13:7)

Thus Dan. 7:11 speaks as if the beast and the little horn are interchangeable: " I beheld then because of the voice of the great words which the horn spake: I beheld even till the beast was slain". Rev.13:5 says that the beast makes war with the saints (AVmg.) for 3.5 years- as does the little horn in Dan. 7. The beast was "like a leopard, and his feet were as the feet of a bear, and his mouth as the mouth of a lion" (Rev. 13:2). Again we see the elements of the various beasts of Dan. 7 and therefore the metals of the image of Dan. 2 all incorporated in this beast. It has "seven heads and ten horns" (Rev. 13:1)- which is the total number of heads and horns of the four beasts of Dan. 7. In harmony with this, Hos. 13:7 describes Israel's latter day invader as a lion, bear, leopard and wild beast. All elements of the beasts are brought together in the final latter day invasion.

One of the heads receives a deadly wound, but this is described as the beast receiving a deadly wound, thus identifying the beast with one of its particular heads (Rev. 13:3,12). The overall picture presented by the descriptions of the horns is of conflict with each other, whilst at the same time dominating the earth / land of Israel. The little horn 'subdues' [to abase / humiliate / degrade] three of the horns, and according to Rev. 17:16, the ten horns hate the whore, the individual riding the beast entity, and bitterly destroy and burn her. And the fortunes of the entire entity ebb and flow- one of the wounds has a deadly wound but revives, the beast itself has a deadly wound from a sword but revives (Rev. 13:3,12,14), the beast was, is not and yet is (Rev. 17:8), and we are beginning to see this ebb and flow of the fortunes of the entity developing in the land / earth. This is precisely the picture that has more recently unfolded in the land promised to Abraham- a series of increasingly powerful and aggressive leaders and powers, morphing together *from the perspective of Israel and God's people* into a system of abuse such as has never been seen and never will be. And yet from another viewpoint, they are bitterly divided against themselves.

The tendency is to want to clearly identify each of the ten toes / ten horns of the fourth beasts, the wings of the lion, the three ribs in the mouth of the second beast, the four wings and four heads of the third beast, the three horns who are plucked up by the little horn of the fourth beast, and then in Revelation we have seven heads found on the beast, as well as the ten horns, who in Revelation "hate the whore" and burn her; and the whore who rides the beast sits on seven hills or kings. Each of these attributes [toes, horns, wings, heads] refer to kings / kingdoms. Looking at the scenarios through half closed eyes, as it were, not sweating the details, we have the impression of a latter day entity dominating the earth / land promised to Abraham, which is comprised of a bewildering array of smaller powers and charismatic leaders who are often pitted against each other. This is exactly the position we see developing in that geographical area. We don't need to interpret the fine details ahead of time-

that is not how prophecy functions. When it all happens, then it will be clear. What we are seeing is the general picture developing- an array of aggressive powers, some strong and some weak, broadly grouped into four groups, matching the four beasts who will exist in the last days. They are all united around a desire to dominate Israel. It's not hard to imagine how they will destroy each other, which is God's preferred method of judging His people's enemies.

The changing of times and laws by the antichrist figure of Dan. 7:25 sounds like the radical Islamist desire to impose the Islamic calendar and *sharia* law in the land promised to Abraham, which they see as their caliphate; and for sure, if Israel becomes part of an Islamic state, then the keeping of the Jewish calendar will be outlawed. The implementation of *sharia* law and changing legal structures to reflect it, is a major theme in their program. It's clear that the three and a half year domination of Jerusalem and changing of the Jewish law and calendar had an initial fulfilment in the abuses of Antiochus Epiphanes, who desecrated the temple. There was a three and a half year period from the edict of Antiochus in June 168 BC to the rededication of the temple in December 165 BC. The little horn of Daniel 8 comes out of the Greek kingdom, but the horn of Daniel 7 out of the fourth kingdom. I suggest that this is because the prophecy could have been fulfilled totally at the time of Antiochus- Messiah could have come and destroyed him. But the various required preconditions weren't met, and so there was another possibility of it coming true out of the Roman kingdom [another possibility is that the four beasts and metals refer to Babylon-Media-Persia-Greece rather than Babylon-Medo Persia-Greece-Rome]. Revelation uses the same imagery to describe the antiChrist of the last days, who will incorporate some elements of the previous historical fulfilments of the little horn in men like Antiochus Epiphanes.

The entire vision of the beasts of Daniel 7 is summed up in Dan. 7:1: "*the rosh* of the words" (AV "sum of the matter"). And the *rosh* surely refers to the individual of Ezekiel 38:2 who will lead the latter day armies against Israel. The whole system of beasts is summed up in an individual *rosh* or leader, just as the metals of the image in Daniel 2 are in the form of a man with the face of Nebuchadnezzar. The little horn of Daniel 7 is actually called "the beast": "I beheld then because of the voice of the great words which the horn spake: I beheld even till the beast was slain, and his body destroyed, and given to the burning flame" (Dan. 7:11).

*And the whole earth marvelled as they followed the beast-* One feature of the presentation of the beasts is that both John and "the whole earth / land" wonder at it and at the whole riding it (Rev. 13:3; 17:6,7). This matches with the stress in Daniel 7 that the fourth beast is strikingly different from all the other beasts. The world will be in shock and awe at the entity which will suddenly develop- and we see the beginnings of that with the awe and fear inspired by the jihadists. This speaks not only of the fear inspired by the entity in its enemies on the ground, but implies a watching world onlooking in awe and fear, unable to do anything against it

Let's not get caught up with the idea that Israel shall survive and defeat the invaders in her own strength. The beast must dominate Israel. Jerusalem will be taken. Dan. 7:7,21 speaks of how the beast made war with the saints and prevailed against them- Israel- *until* the Ancient of days came; in Dan. 7:23 he devours the whole land [as a beast] and shall tread it down. The beast of Revelation is so powerful in the earth / land that "the world" wondered at it and at the whole riding it (Rev. 13:3; 17:6,7), feeling unable to make war with it. This of itself requires the demise and degrading of America, Europe and the West generally. Dan. 11:41,45 are likewise clear about the latter day King of the North: "He shall also come into the glorious land... He shall

plant the tents of his palace between the sea and the glorious holy mountain; yet he shall come to his end, and none shall help him”.

As the entire image was "terrible" (Dan. 2:31), so the fourth beast system is described with the same word (Dan. 7:7). As the image appeared “excellent” (Dan. 2:31), so the strength of the fourth beast was ‘excellent’ (s.w. Dan. 7:7). Dan. 7:7 emphasizes that this final beast is altogether more aggressive than any previous beast / dominator of the land: "Dreadful, terrible, strong exceedingly... it was different from all the beasts that were before it". The original word translated “dreadful” suggests whoever sees it slinks away in fear- its strength and advantage over others is “exceeding”. This is the same awe we find in Rev. 13, where the world looks on at the beast, marvelling at this entity and feeling that nobody can even begin to make war with him. This speaks of an entity that is more aggressive and fear-inspiring than the aggressive Babylonians, Assyrians or abusive Nazis. It implies too the eclipse of the West as the dominant world power block and power broker. The current Islamic jihadist movement may develop into an entity which fits this bill- a reign of terror involving cutting off children's heads and parading their actions on videos, live crucifixion of any who don't agree with them, but with a stranglehold advantage over any critics... The same radical difference between this final beast and all previous ones is brought out by the way in which John, after all he had earlier seen, was in shock at the way the beast drank the blood of the saints, i.e. the people of God, Israel in their land (Rev. 17:6). The whole world likewise is in shock horror at this beast (Rev. 13:3; 17:8). Dan. 12:1 puts it this way: "There shall be a time of trouble such as never was" for God's people, and they will be saved from it by the standing up of Jesus for His people, the resurrection of the dead and the destruction of the "king of the north". The "time of Jacob's trouble" from which he shall be saved (Jer. 30:7) must be understood in the context of how the phrase "time of trouble" is used in the Bible to describe times of Israel's invasion and suffering at the hands of their neighbours (Is. 33:2; Jer. 2:27,28; 8:15; 11:12,14; 14:8,19; Ez. 7:7). "There shall be a time of trouble such as never was" therefore suggests a time of abuse of Israel such as has never been seen. And this includes the Nazi holocaust, the death camps of Europe, the Babylonian and Assyrian atrocities... It's purely wishful thinking to hope that the IDF and Israel's military technology will stave this off. It will not. Jerusalem is to be taken and the women raped (Zech. 14:2). The beast is to dominate the earth / land of Israel.

13:4 *And they worshiped the dragon, because he gave his authority to the beast-* The dragon may be politically off the scene, but the jihadist philosophy continues. Or it may be that we are simply seeing in these visions different aspects of the same entity, in a kaleidoscope of images wherein some of the images overlap; and the connection between dragon and beast would then simply be that overlap, as it were.

*And they worshiped the beast, saying: Who is like to the beast? And who is able to war with him?-* This will be the world's reaction to the jihadist beast of the last days. They worship him because they feel he is invincible, and have not paid attention to the continued reminders in Revelation that all power, authority and strength is not with human empires but with the Lord Jesus. Seeing that the West has nuclear weapons, this could imply that the beast either deprives them of their weapons (a Muslim dominated and more politically powerful UN or EU could achieve this), or that a new paradigm of weapons, worse than nuclear, are possessed by the beast and used to hold the rest of the world to ransom.

The language is based upon the prototype of Goliath the Philistine / Palestinian, who likewise had a mouth speaking great things against Israel and Israel's God. That

similarity is continued by the description of the small, finally repentant remnant of Jews who overthrow the beast as being like David (Zech. 12:8). This is not to say that there will not initially be opposition to the beast- the horn recovers amazingly from a "deadly wound" which could likely refer to some form of Western operation against this entity (Rev. 13:3). Likewise the beast was, is not, and yet will be [Rev. 17:8- i.e. it will be revived after apparent destruction]. But the final picture is of the beast having free reign in the earth / land promised to Abraham. We must look, therefore, to Zion being forsaken of all her lovers, America particularly pulling out of supporting Israel. We already can see the beginnings of such a situation developing. The West will either collapse, perhaps financially, and become impotent; or will come to a policy position which refuses to support Israel nor get involved in on the ground operations within the land promised to Abraham. Their impotence is however described in terms of their 'worshipping' the beast and *therefore* fearing to make war with it (Rev. 13:4). The Greek for 'worship' can mean to cower or fawn before a person; the West may be forced to this position by Islamic elements within their own nations, by an oil and energy embargo, or something similar. Another option is that the 'world' spoken of in Rev. 13 is specifically the world around Israel; but in our days of a global village, that would still require that the West is left impotent to intervene. It has been their background support of Israel which has kept the current situation in balance so far. But Rev. 9:14 speaks of the hordes of enemies being bound at the Euphrates River, and then being released by Angelic action. This restraint which is released could well refer to an Angelically-orchestrated removal of the West's restraining power. With no such power broker in the region, the forces of Islamic jihad will without doubt burst forth over the Euphrates, the boundary of the land promised to Abraham, and surge towards Israel.

However we interpret the beast and its horns, the point has to be accepted that it is radically different to any entity or empire which has ever dominated the earth / land of Israel before. It was "terrifying and dreadful and exceedingly strong... it devoured and broke in pieces and stamped what was left with its feet. It was different from all the beasts that were before it" (Dan. 7:7). It is this same beast which led John in Revelation to be staggered and amazed. For such an entity to dominate Israel in the last days, the current geopolitical situation must change. The West will be powerless to stop it. The historical support of Israel by the West, and their continual involvement on the ground in the Middle East to avert catastrophe and protect their interests there... will end. This could be because of their financial collapse, or an oil / energy stranglehold over them, or the uprise of domestic forces allied with Islam which leave them powerless to get involved; or maybe they genuinely turn against Israel.

Or perhaps the beast entity is in possession of military technology, just as Goliath was, which leads to the sense that nobody can make war with this beast: "Who is like unto the beast? Who is able to make war with him?" (Rev. 13:4). And if 'all' that is required for peace is to let these guys have their way with Israel... well, that will be a price which will seem cheap compared to the unleashing of nuclear, germ, chemical or some other kind of technology against the West. "Who is like unto the beast?" suggests that it is felt that nobody is comparable with the beast in order to make war with it; there is a superiority of military ability which is perceived which results in recognizing that this entity cannot be challenged. The language is very much of David and Goliath. The current dependency of Israel upon military technology to maintain the upper edge over their enemies must therefore come to an end. All those scenarios are well on the way to development. Nuclear technology is already in the hands of Iran, and can spread easily to irresponsible hands. It would also be typical of Russian

foreign policy to spite the West by arming the West's enemies with such technology. Without the West as the power broker in the Middle East, such an entity will surely arise. The release of the restrained horsemen on the banks of the Euphrates may refer to this restraining influence being removed (Rev. 9,16). The growth of the IS shows the potential for it, if nothing else. So the very prediction of such an entity arising in the land promised to Abraham has some radical implications for the West.

Judah's invasion by the Babylonians is clearly a type of the latter day invasion by the Islamic jihadist entity or state. The Biblical record emphasizes Judah's sense of betrayal, in that her lovers and friends [i.e. other nations] had not come to her aid as they had promised and as she had hoped (Lamentations is full of such language). This has its counterpart today, in that Israel depends upon the West to be the power broker deflecting any major strike against them by the Islamic powers around them. But that factor will be removed, the promises and undertakings will not come true- because the Biblical picture is of a huge state in power over Israel without opposition.

If we are looking for a power or ideology within the land promised to Abraham which focuses upon the destruction of Israel, then we do not have far to look. Radical Islam explicitly encourages Muslims to attack Israel and force Jews to either convert to Islam or be killed: Consider these passages from the Hadith: "You will fight against the Jews and you will kill them until even a stone would say: Come here, Muslim, there is a Jew (hiding himself behind me); kill him" (Book 41.6981). Book 19.4366 likewise: "I will expel the Jews and Christians from Arabia and will not leave any but Muslim". The 'Arabia' here is often interpreted as the Arabian Peninsula, but that was probably not in Mohammed's perceptual geography. By 'Arabia' he meant 'the lands where the Arabs live', and that area includes Israel, inhabited as it is by several million Palestinian Arabs.

13:5 *And there was given to him a mouth speaking great things and blasphemies*- The suggested allusion is to David overcoming the Palestinian Goliath, who all else feared to make war with as he spoke his blasphemy against God and Israel- exactly the language of Rev. 13:4-8. Then shall come to pass the word of Zech. 12:8: "He that is feeble among them [s.w. Dan. 11:41 about how many in the land of Israel will be overthrown or made feeble] in that day shall be as David".

The idea of being given a mouth is taken from the Olivet prophecy; in the last days of AD70 and the final last days, the witnessing believers will likewise be given a mouth (Lk. 21:15). They will be empowered to speak against this evil system. All the mouth and authority of this system will be given it from above, just as was the case with the Lord's sufferings at the hands of the Roman and Jewish systems.

*And there was given to him authority to continue for forty two months*- The point of Revelation is that all authority and power in their utter totality is with the Father and Son. The persecution of God's people, both in the last days and historically, has been allowed and even empowered by them. The idea that the dragon empowered the sea beast is only true from an earthly perspective, and is not at all Heaven's view. And the purpose of Revelation is to help us perceive that. Historically, this might refer to periods like Nero's persecution (Nov. 64 - June 68). But the 42 months is the time, times and a half, the 1260 days, the three and a half years of the Elijah ministry, the period of witness by the two witnesses and the hiding of the infant Jesus in Egypt.

13:6 *And he opened his mouth to blaspheme against God, to blaspheme His Name and His tabernacle, even those that dwell in the heaven*- The 42 months of the Jihadist beast's prolonged persecution of Israel is also aimed specifically at God's "tabernacle, and them that dwell in heaven" (Rev. 13:5,6), i.e. the temple (1 Kings 8:30 cp. 2 Sam.



15:25; Heb. 7:26; 2 Chron. 30:27; Ps. 20:2; 11:4). The figurative 'temple' is therefore the faithful of the last days (1 Cor. 3:16; 2 Cor. 6:16; Eph. 2:21). The earthly temple in Jerusalem has been judged and marked out for destruction in chapter 11. God's tabernacle is in the hearts of the believing Christians of the last days. John is seeing a vision of the heavenly throne room, where all on earth has Angelic representation. In this sense those who are in heaven can be blasphemed and persecuted on earth.

13:7 *And it was given to him to make war with the saints and to overcome them, and there was given to him authority over every tribe and people and tongue and nation-* The concept of the court of Heaven is a major key to understanding the book of Revelation. Events on earth are described in terms of their connection with the Angelic system in Heaven which has arranged them. "The accuser of our brethren" being cast out of Heaven (Rev. 12:10) would therefore refer to how in the court of Heaven, an Angel represents the system who accused the brethren on earth. This isn't to say that the Angel representing the accuser is sinful. "It was given unto" the beast to have power to persecute the saints, just as the Lord had perceived that His persecutors only had the power that was "given" unto them [thereby associating the saints' final time of trial in the last days with the Lord's sufferings]. But the power was "given" by the Angels in the court of Heaven, empowering people on earth to carry out what they permit.

The overcoming of the saints [a term appropriate to both natural Israel and the true Christians of the last days] is spoken of in the murder of the two witnesses in chapter 11. They did not love their lives unto death (12:11); these are the "saints" who are overcome by the beast in Dan. 7:25. Many will be slain, although some will be miraculously preserved by being snatched away, or even literally up into the sky (see on 11:12 and 12:5).

The tribes, peoples etc. who give him authority are primarily those in the area of his provenance over the earth / land promised to Abraham, upon whom Babylon sits (17:15). But it is out of these very tribes, peoples etc. that some will convert to Christ, and they are singled out for especial notice and praise because of this (5:9); for it is they to whom the Gospel is preached in the very last days (14:6).

13:8 *And all that dwell on the earth shall worship him, every one whose name has not been written in the book of life of the Lamb that has been slain from the foundation of the world-* All inhabitants of the land promised to Abraham worship this entity; with the sole exception of those who shall be saved eternally, the true Christians in that area. This means that on the territory of what is today Syria, Israel, Iraq etc. there will emerge true Christian converts. Jihadists insist upon conversion to their form of Islam on pain of death. Hence the totality of support for them in this area.

13:9 *If anyone has an ear, let him hear-* The inhabitants of the earth / land consider the beast invincible and permanent, and therefore they worship him (see on :4). They have not paid attention to the continued reminders in Revelation that all power, authority and strength is not with human empires but with the Lord Jesus. This is the reason for this appeal, to 'hear' the words of this prophecy and to not assume that the beast is ultimately powerful, permanent nor invincible.

13:10 *If anyone is for captivity, into captivity he goes. If anyone shall kill with the sword, with the sword must he be killed. Here is the patience and the faith of the saints-* This speaks of the final desolation of Israel by the beast in terms of 'leading into captivity', associated with the beast having power over "all kindreds, tongues and

nations" in the earth / land promised to Abraham. The remaining Jews will be taken into captivity in those areas; and the attitude of the Islamist jihadists, ever seeking as they are to incarnate Israel's historical enemies, is such that this scenario is now quite imaginable.

To resist his captivity and killing with the sword is "the patience and faith of the saints" (Rev. 13:7,10). The beast leading saints into captivity and death sounds like ghettos and concentration camps- our persecution may well be through our having to suffer along with natural Israel. Those who openly proclaim themselves to be spiritual Israel will be treated the same as the Jews. For this reason, the distinctively Jewish aspect of our hope should be appreciated by us now in this our time of spiritual preparation. The mad intensity of the beast's persecution of the saints in the last days has not yet been seen by us.

Goliath was the Arab "champion" (1 Sam. 17:51), using the Hebrew word 'Gibbor'. This connects with the description of Messiah as 'El-Gibbor' in Is. 9:6, and shows that the latter day Arab powers may well be headed up by one charismatic individual, who sets himself up as a pseudo-Messiah. The Hebrew word used for "champion" in 1 Sam. 17:4 literally means 'the man who goes between the two camps', again pointing forward to the mediatorial office of the true Messiah. The root meaning of 'Goliath' is 'to lead and to go into captivity', which fits in with his wager that the Philistines would go into Jewish captivity if they killed him, and vice versa. This may be the basis of Rev. 13:10 concerning the little horn and mouth of the beast: "He that leadeth into captivity shall go into captivity" (AV). This power having "a mouth speaking great things and blasphemies" (Rev. 13:5) certainly corresponds with Goliath's loud-mouthed blasphemy. "He opened his mouth in blasphemy against God, to blaspheme His name, and His tabernacle, and them that dwell in heaven. And it was given unto him to make war with the saints, and to overcome them" (Rev. 13:6,7) is Goliath exactly (cp. his blasphemy of the Angels in 1 Sam. 17:26). "All that dwell upon the earth shall worship him" (Rev. 13:8) recalls Goliath's charisma, indicated by the Philistines fleeing once they saw that he was dead. "He that killeth with the sword must be killed with the sword" (Rev. 13:10) nicely concludes this set of allusions- Goliath was killed with his own sword. These parallels indicate that Goliath is a prototype of the latter day 'mouth' or personal figurehead of the 'beast'. Note in passing how Gen. 12:3 may have hinted at this figure right at the start of God's purpose with Israel: "Him that curseth thee will I curse" (RV). The method of persecution will be by leading into captivity and killing with the sword (13:10)- the house churches of the latter day "earth" herded into cattle trucks and hauled away to mini prison camps, sharing the sufferings of natural Israel? Once again, the account of the beast here is underpinned with hints of our Lord's sufferings (13:10 = Mt. 26:52; 'he that leads into captivity' recalls Jesus being led away by Judas and the soldiers; 13:7 cp. the disciples being 'overcome' in Gethsemane).

13:11 *And I saw another beast coming up out of the earth. He had two horns like a lamb, and he spoke as a dragon-* The beast of :1 arose from the sea, the area adjoining the earth / land promised to Abraham. This one specifically arises from within the land promised to Abraham. The beast of 13:1 was empowered by the dragon, and this next beast also speaks as the dragon. The same teaching or philosophy is being taught. But he has horns like a lamb. Lambs, newborn sheep, don't have horns. Goats do. So the idea is that this beast has two horns, perhaps two leaders or entities associated with it, which claim to be Christian, or perhaps claim to be as Jesus. Islam also believes in a return of Jesus, so perhaps these are false

prophets, false Christs within the radical Islamist system, who claim to be the returned Jesus.

It's worth mentioning that the Koran teaches that the final punishment of the Jews will involve faithful Muslims becoming as a beast of the earth to Israel: "And when the time for the fulfilment of our word against them will come, we shall bring forth for them a beast from the earth who will speak to them because people did not believe in our Sign" (Sura 27.82). Perhaps Mohammad was again getting his Bible references garbled (note how the Koran assumes Haman and Pharaoh lived at the same time, Sura 28:6); perhaps he actually had in mind "the beast arising from the earth" of Rev. 13:11 which has a mouth speaking great things against Israel. Radical Islamists seek to fulfil the Koran as literally as possible; but because it contains so many fragments of Bible prophecies, they are effectively striving to fulfil latter day Bible prophecy!

The beast of the earth must look back to the common phrase "beast of the earth" in Genesis (e.g. Gen. 1:25). The serpent is an epitome of the bestial desires found in the beasts, and is thus the prototype 'beast' of later prophecies. The serpent being the greatest of the beasts (Gen. 3:1,14) points to the latter-day beast being supreme over the other nations. The most basic principle behind the symbolism of the beast is found in Gen. 1:28, where man is told to "have dominion over" (Heb. 'to break to powder', cp. Dan. 2:35) the beasts. This was to teach him the need to dominate the bestial instincts of the flesh. Thus the beasts are set up as representative of the flesh. It is therefore understandable that the devil (sin), the beast and the serpent are linked in Rev. 12:9, and that Prov. 28:15 parallels "a wicked ruler" with a wild bear or lion; the beast epitomizes the sinful person who controls it.

As the serpent deceived Adam and Eve, so the beast will deceive the Jews and weak Christian believers of the last days. The serpent/beast in its first century Jewish manifestation is described as seducing the saints through the subtle reasoning of the Judaizers (2 Cor. 11:3). These people used many "fair speeches" (Rom. 16:18 cp. Jude 15), suggesting that their prototype, the serpent, persuaded Eve to eat the fruit after a lengthy series of discussions, albeit unrecorded. "Yea, hath God said..." (Gen. 3:1 AV) implies the continuation of an unrecorded conversation. The beast's agents of the last days will likewise use the tactic of extended public speeches using superficially deep arguments. Their political arm will be doing the same to destroy the morale of natural Israel, after the pattern of Rabshakeh's speeches to the Jews during the Assyrian invasion. Being an apostate Jew he may possibly have a latter-day equivalent in a Jewish leader, who deserts to the Arab cause, urging Israel to capitulate. Likewise there may be a specific "man of sin" who similarly tempts spiritual Israel. The description of him in 2 Thess. 2:3 is framed in terms of Judas - implying that he will be an apostate Christian?

The judgment of the serpent was by the voice of God (cp. Christ, the word) walking through the garden, summoning the sinful parties to judgment. This easily looks forward to Christ's second coming, and the judgment by Him in His role as the word made flesh (Rev. 19:13; Gen. 3:8). The beast has always been associated with a pseudo-spirituality, an aping of true God manifestation; the four beasts of Dan. 7 and Revelation (dragon, sea beast, earth beast and scarlet beast) are a pseudo-cherubim. There is a connection between the beasts of God manifestation and the cherubim in Rev. 4:7; indeed, the Hebrew word for 'beast' seems to be the equivalent of the phrase "living creature" used in Revelation concerning the cherubim. The beast and beasts therefore represent systems which falsely claim that they are the vehicle of God manifestation. This most clearly fits the claims of jihadist Islam. With all this in

mind, it must be significant that Is. 14:29 speaks of Assyria as a "cockatrice" born out of "the serpent's root", i.e. she was the seed of the serpent. "His fruit shall be a fiery flying serpent" is the language of Isa. 6:2 concerning the seraphim. Thus the Assyrian seed of the serpent is associated with a pseudo-seraphim, and a false God manifestation. The Assyrian invasion is the prototype of the traumas of the last days in Israel.

Dt. 32:24 connects the 'beasts' of the surrounding nations with the Genesis serpent: "I will also send the teeth of beasts upon them, with the poison of serpents of the dust" (cp. Gen. 3:14). There is also a connection between the serpent and beasts in Is. 30:6. "The teeth of beasts" coming down upon Israel will be finally fulfilled in the jihadist desolation prophesied in Joel 1:6,7, where the Assyrians of the future (Joel 1:15) are described as having Israel between their "cheek teeth" tearing the bark off the Israeli vine and fig (cp. Is. 9:12 concerning the Philistines / Palestinians).

Israel being the sheep of God's pasture is a common Bible figure. Whenever their shepherds were negligent over a prolonged period, the figure was extended to describe the 'wild beasts' of the surrounding nations invading the land and mauling the flock. Hos. 13:6-8 is typical of those passages which speak in these terms. Verses 7 and 8 liken these nations to the lion, leopard and bear, all of which are nations mentioned in Dan. 7, which are constituents of the huge system of Arab domination described in Dan. 2. These three beast nations are all part of one "wild beast", as the nations of the image in Dan. 2 are all part of the same latter-day confederacy headed by 'Babylon': "I will be unto them as a lion: as a leopard... as a bear... *the* wild beast". Likewise Is. 56:9,10; Jer. 30:16 and Ez. 34:5 feature the beasts of Babylon and the surrounding nations as preying on the flock of Israel due to their sleepy shepherds. After Israel's spiritual awakening *they* will become like a beast among the 'sheep' of the jihadist nations (Mic. 5:8), continuing the theme of the Jews doing to the Arabs as they did to them. It is possible that Dt. 28:26 also refers to the beasts of the surrounding nations: "Thy carcase shall be meat... unto the beasts of the earth, and no man shall fray them away" (AV). This alludes to the fowls being frayed away while the covenant was made to Abraham. Thus while Israel abode in the covenant, the neighbouring nations surrounding them were kept away. Similarly Ez. 34:25 associates the making of the covenant with Israel in the last days, with the "evil beasts" leaving the land. Time and again Israel's neighbouring enemies are likened to "wild beasts". The list of references is impressive: Hos. 2:12; Ez. 5:17; 14:15; Ps. 80:13; Jer. 7:33; 15:3; 16:4; 19:7; Dt. 7:22. Job's Sabeen invaders are called "the beasts of the earth... the beasts of the field" (Job 5:22,23). It is possible that "beasts" in these passages can be read as an intensive plural - i.e. 'the great beast', which symbolizes all of Israel's various enemies. This equivalence of the multitude of these enemies with a singular beast is seen in Ez. 34:28, which parallels "the heathen" (enemies of Israel) with "the beast of the land" (singular). Rev. 17 similarly exhibits *the* (singular) beast as comprising a number of nations (heads/horns).

Ps. 74:19 RV asks God not to deliver His people "unto the wild beast". This is one of the Asaph Psalms, written in the context of the restoration. The 'beast' threatening to destroy Judah then was a confederacy of her surrounding neighbours. Ps. 73:13,14 likens these enemies to a many headed dragon. Another such Psalm, Ps. 83, asks for protection against a confederacy of 10 such nations. In all this we have a remarkable type of the last days after the pattern of Daniel and Revelation-a beast with 10 horns, seeking to devour the recently returned people of God from off their land.

There is repeatedly the theme that Israel's enemies are confederated together under

one confederacy which has one leader. Ps. 118 can be shown to be relevant to Hezekiah at the time of the Assyrian invasion (see George Booker, *Psalms Studies*). He speaks of how "all nations compassed me about", i.e. the surrounding Arab nations confederate with Assyria. And yet Hezekiah speaks about them as if they are really headed up by one individual: "Thou [you singular] didst thrust sore at me" (Ps. 118:13). The beast is to punish people by beheading them (Rev. 20:4)- and it's only Islam at the moment which legally practices beheading as a form of execution.

The symbology of the beast was particularly used concerning Babylon. Nebuchadnezzar, Babylon's king, was given a beast's heart and lived with them (Dan. 4:16) to show his personification of the beast. "The beasts of the field, i.e. the surrounding nations, were given into his control (Dan. 2:38), thus they constituted part of the beast of Babylon, " the noisome beast" of Ez. 14:21. Babylon's army is likened to "beasts" in Jer. 34:20,21. As God gave power to Assyria and Babylon to achieve His will (Is. 10), so He will to the latter-day beast (Rev. 13:5,7). The description of the beast leading people into captivity (Rev. 13:10) shows another connection with Assyria/Babylon, whose trains of captives were well known. The beast causing men to worship it (Rev. 13:12) recalls Nebuchadnezzar's decree concerning the statue on the plain of Dura (Dan. 3:1,5). The historical "beast of the field" was associated with the wilderness (Is. 43:20), as the beast of Rev. 17:3 is a wilderness power.

13:12 *He exercises all the authority of the first beast in his sight. He makes the earth and those who dwell therein to worship the first beast, whose wound had been healed-* The earth beast demands worship for the wounded and healed sea beast, and to "the image of the beast". The beasts may destroy themselves by infighting, or by temporary victories against them by Israel and the West. But they continue reincarnating, repeating the ideology of the dragon system of chapter 12. The beast is identified with its notable wounded horn. Just as the dragon loses power but somehow continues in influence, so the sea beast is down but not out; for the earth beast operates "in his sight" or presence. This could refer to a very fast sequence of Islamist entities dominating the land in the last days. Or it could be that again we have a kaleidoscope of images, and the images revealing different aspects of the beasts overlap with each other as they rotate. All Daniel's four beasts must exist in the last days, just as the four beasts of Revelation co-exist with each other (dragon, sea and earth beasts and scarlet beast).

Those who dwell in the earth / land are forced to worship the first beast. The idea of forced worship fits exactly with the jihadist way of enforcing conversion to their brand of Islam.

Babylon and the beast with which it is associated is said to have power over the nations of whole earth / land (Dan. 7:23; Rev. 13:12). This is referring back to the way in which historical Babylon was praised by the whole earth / land (Jer. 51:41), and had an army which included men from "the whole earth", the territory promised to Abraham (Jer. 34:1). As Babylon of the last days will influence all nations of the earth with her wine, so Babylon of old is spoken of in the same way (Jer. 51:7 cp. Rev. 17:2,4). Thus several prophecies speak of how Babylon's fall had effects on the whole earth (e.g. Jer. 50:46); and latter day Babylon likewise (Rev. 18:9,10). If we are correct in interpreting "Babylon" as a radical Islamic power of the last days, based on the prototype of historical Babylon, then we must look for a nation like Iran or Iraq to gather together the surrounding powers for an assault on Israel, and to somehow bring the whole world under the control of this confederacy. An Muslim-dominated UN [or Muslim-fearful] or other global political power could bring this about. "The Charter

of Allah" makes it clear that Islam aims for world domination, within which "co-existence is possible with other religions, but only on Islamic terms and under Islamic domination". Thus the control of the other peoples within the earth / land, and even of the rest of the world may not be as difficult in practice as it may seem; if, for example, the Pope makes some suitable deference to Islam on behalf of all 'Christians', such a situation would come into existence.

13:13 *And he does great signs, that he should even make fire to come down out of heaven upon the earth in the sight of men-* The beast makes fire come down from heaven, just as Elijah did. The inference is that the latter day miracles of the Elijah ministry will be matched, to some degree, by the false claims of the beast. The miracles performed at Israel's deliverance from Egypt were likewise mimicked by the persecutors of God's people. The beast acquires a puppet beast (or "publicity agent" in the words of Peter Watkins) who does "great wonders" (miracles) which deceive many (13:13,14; 19:20). These miracles must be impressive, seeing that they result in *all* that dwell on the earth / land, except the faithful, receiving the mark, of the beast. It is hard to make this prophecy of such impressive false miracles have a significant fulfilment in the past. Miracles of the credibility described here have not been seen since the first century. Again, remember that the Olivet prophecy describes false miracles being done in the last days, which almost convince the very elect. They must therefore really be something very impressive.

13:14 *And he deceives those that dwell on the earth by reason of the signs which were given to him to do in the sight of the beast, saying to those that dwell on the earth, that they should make an image of the beast who was wounded by the sword but lived-* "The sight / presence" of the beast refers to the first, sea beast; see on :12.

The two beasts of Rev. 13 appear to effectively operate as one, just as the beast is identified with its horn which is mortally wounded and yet revives (the same language is used of the beast- Rev. 13:3 cp. 12,14). It seems that the beast has publicity agents- another beast which appears to be a lamb but speaks as the dragon. Perhaps the idea is that a religious entity like the false Christian / Catholic / Orthodox Church seeks to get people to worship the Islamic beast under colour of some compromise. There will be apparent miracles which encourage people to believe these entities have credibility. Rev. 13:14,15 speaks of an image being made to the beast and the image speaking. It was common in the first century to claim that statues could speak; the Simon Magus of Acts 8:9 is recorded in extra-Biblical history as being able to do this (see G.E. Ladd, *A Commentary on the Revelation of John* p. 184). God will 'allow' this to happen, in line with His way of deceiving the deceivers and confirming them in the way they wish to go. The bringing to life of an image recalls the way that God created Adam and then gave him the breath of life. The claim will be that resurrection and new life are in the power of the new entity and its leader; perhaps there will be a claim to be the resurrected Mahdi figure of Islam or something similar. And God will "allow" this, or give real power to make it appear that these miracles have really happened.

Perhaps all those living in the earth / land will be forced to make or have some image to the beast, some physical item which demonstrates their allegiance; perhaps worn as a necklace or ring. This would then have the mark of the beast upon it; see on :16-18 where we suggest this is the seal of Mohammed.

The beast of the earth in Rev. 13:11-18 seems to have some first century application to the cult of emperor worship which became so popular throughout the Roman empire: it speaks in the voice of the dragon (:11), from whom it receives its power; and like the first Beast, it attempts to mimic the Lamb (:12, 13). It seems to be

a personification of an Antichrist embodied in the pagan priesthood, which endeavoured to draw all men to the cult of the emperor. In these thoughts we see just how radical was the Apocalypse in its first century context. "The image to the beast" (13:13) would refer to representations of the divinized Roman emperors. "The wound of the sword" (13:13) is possibly an allusion to the mortal wound Nero inflicted upon himself in ad 68. Nero was perceived to live again in the persecutor Domitian (Tertullian, *Apol.* 5). Note how it is "the beast" who appears to have died or been wounded and then revives (17:8)- and yet these are references to what happened to Nero. The symbolism correctly perceives how the empire was incarnated in one man, the emperor.

13:15 *And he was permitted to give breath to the image of the beast, so that the image of the beast should speak, and cause to have killed as many as would not worship the image of the beast-* I suggested on :14 that each person dwelling in the earth / land will be forced to make this image to the beast. He is "permitted", by God, to make these images of the beast appear to have real life. This will then be the great example of God confirming people in their misbelief, by allowing these images to have some kind of apparent life and power. Any who would not worship it would then be killed. 13:10 has said that he who kills [s.w.] with the sword shall be killed with the sword; and this will come true at the Lord's return (19:21). So the killing is by the sword or dagger / knife, which is typical of how jihadists kill those who refuse to convert and obey them.

The beasts of Revelation seem to be described in terms of the Kingdom of God, and the descriptions link within Revelation to the descriptions of God's Kingdom. The point is being made that these beasts, both over time and in the last days, are fake Kingdoms of God.

| Beasts                                                                                                     | The Kingdom Of God                       |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------|
| The dragon has Angels<br>(Rev. 12:9)                                                                       | As Christ                                |
| He figuratively comes<br>from heaven to earth (12:10)                                                      | "                                        |
| Speaks of us day and<br>night before God's throne<br>(12:10)                                               | "                                        |
| Has a name in his<br>forehead (13:2)                                                                       | "                                        |
| Given power, throne and<br>authority (13:13)                                                               | "                                        |
| Does great miracles and<br>signs (13:13)                                                                   | "                                        |
| Faithful followers have<br>mark in their hands and<br>foreheads (13:17; 20:4) and<br>are " sealed" (13:16) | Ez. 9:4; Rev. 7:3                        |
| All the world worships<br>the beast (13:12)                                                                | All the world will<br>worship God (15:4) |
| Followers as numerous<br>as sand on the sea shore<br>(20:8)                                                | As the seed of Abraham                   |

Their followers have one mind (17:3), and are world-wide

How it should be amongst us

The woman clothed with a blood red robe and a cup (17:4)

Cp. the sacrificial office of Christ

The beast is, was and will be (17:8-11); an allusion to the Yahweh Name

God is, will and will be (16:5)

The beast systems, as Babylon and Assyria before them, were false Kingdoms of God. The beast has the power to give *pneuma* to the image / body of the first beast (Rev. 13:15)- an evident mimicry of God's creation of Adam. They appear to offer, here and now, the things of the Kingdom, and the fleshly-minded are persuaded by them. This is all playing out the drama of Eden again; the serpent offered equality with God, the wisdom of God, when it was actually the wisdom of the serpent. Adam and Eve grasped for what was offered, unlike the Lord Jesus, who refused to grasp at equality with God (Phil. 2 is full of allusion to the events of Gen. 3). What happened in Eden is in essence the epitome, the prototype of all temptation and sin (1 Jn. 2:16 = Gen. 3:6). Every one of our temptations has an element of this; we are tempted to grasp for what looks like the Kingdom here and now. Pentecostals are an evident example of this; they think they can obtain the full healing and physical ecstasy of the future Kingdom here and now. And on a more common level, there are many of us who reach out for the supposed fulfilment of hobbies, the supposed peace and 'security' of a nice home and bank balance, when these things are actually a false fulfilment, peace and security, the peace and security of Satan's Kingdom which is a counterfeit of the spiritual fulfilment, peace and security of Christ's Kingdom. A very evident example of this is found in Rabshakeh's offer to the inhabitants of Jerusalem: 'If you reject Yahweh as your God, the King of Assyria will give you a Kingdom where you will "eat every one of his vine, and every one of his fig tree" ' (Is. 36:16); in saying this, Rabshakeh was quoting the very words of Mic. 4:4 concerning the Kingdom of God. The Jews were faced with the choice of God's Kingdom, or Satan's Kingdom, couched as it was in terms of God's Kingdom. Likewise, the world around us isn't passive. It is actively seeking to deceive. There is a tension between us and this world, including the apostate 'Christian' world, which is vital to recognize if we are to share the salvation of God's Kingdom and avoid the condemnation of Satan's Kingdom. There can be no half way position.

Those who will refuse to worship the beast will be killed (Rev. 13:15); but those (responsible) who try to avoid this death will themselves be *tortured* to death by the Lamb, because they worshipped the beast and did not openly testify to their faith (14:9-11; 16:2). See on Mt. 3:11.

13:16 *And he causes all, the small and the great and the rich and the poor and the free and the bondservant, to be given a mark on their right hand, or upon their forehead-* The beast system will insist that all people receive the mark in their foreheads (Rev. 13:15,16; 14:11). This was an allusion to the way slaves were branded with a mark of ownership. And so in the very last days it will intensely cost to have the stigmata, the marks / brand, of being true servants of Jesus. It will cost and hurt to really believe His words, that we cannot serve two masters. This is why those who are slaves of others are pictured here as all becoming slaves of this beastly coalition.



We either receive the mark of the beast and ultimately face torture and the wine of God's wrath; or we refuse it and face Babylon's wrath (Rev. 13:16,17; 14:9,10). Now is the time for self-examination.

13:17 *So that no one should be able to buy or to sell, unless he has the mark, the name of the beast or the number of his name-* This is very much the language of how those excluded from the synagogues were treated for accepting Jesus as Christ (Jn. 9:22). The figure of 666 (:18) is only found in the Bible concerning Solomon's Israelite kingdom. This of course was but an incipient fulfilment of the final terrorizing of Jews and Christians by the jihadist entity. Likewise it has been shown that in Nero's time it was forbidden for Christians to use Imperial coinage, with its images of Caesar as Lord. It was in this sense impossible to buy or sell unless one was willing to accept the mark of the beast- exactly as in Rev. 13:17. The next verse goes on to identify the number of the beast / man as being 666. And yet this is the sum of the Hebrew letters in 'Neron Caesar'! Whatever other application these verses may be seen to have to Catholic persecution, there can be little doubt that their first century context applies to the persecution of the early converts. Later, Domitian demanded that he be worshipped as Lord and God, "Dominus et deus noster" (Suetonius, *Domitiani Vita*, 13.4). John records how Thomas called the Lord Jesus "my lord and my God", in active opposition to this kind of thinking (although Domitian came after Thomas). One couldn't worship Caesar and the Lord Jesus. The Lord Himself had foreseen this when He warned that His followers couldn't serve two masters. Domitian demanded to be called 'Master', but this was impossible for the Christian. Indeed, much of Revelation seems taken up with this theme of the first century refusal to worship the Caesars and deified Roman empire on pain of persecution (Rev. 13:4; 14:9,11; 16:2; 19:20). "Following the Neronian persecution, being a Christian was tantamount to being part of a criminal conspiracy, and Christians (unlike other religious groups) were punished simply for being Christians (Tacitus *Annals* 15.44.5; Pliny *Letters* 10.96.2-3). Their crime was an unwillingness to worship any God but their own, an exclusiveness the Greeks labelled "atheism." The refusal to sacrifice to pagan gods and on behalf of deified emperors was perceived as a threat to the harmonious relationship between people and the gods" (J.L. Mays, Editor, *Harper's Bible Commentary*, (New York: Harper and Row, 1988). Although in many parts of the 21st century world the tension between the believer and the beast is not articulated so starkly, the essential realities of the conflict remain, and must be felt by us.

13:18 *Here is wisdom. He that has understanding, let him count the number of the beast. For it is the number of a man; and his number is six hundred and sixty six-* The first beast, representing Babylon, had "the heart of a man" (Dan. 7:4). It was the embodiment of an individual person- Nebuchadnezzar. The latter day Babylon likewise will be centred around a person- the antiChrist figure of the last days, who in turn will profess to be the incarnation or embodiment of the false prophet Mohammed. Nebuchadnezzar in his madness became as a beast- with a body like a beast, hair like an eagle, and nails like those of a beast (Dan. 4:33). This language is all used about the beasts in the later prophetic parts of Daniel's prophecy. They had features of eagles (Dan. 7:4), bodies of beasts (Dan. 7:11), and remarkable nails or claws (Dan. 7:19). Nebuchadnezzar became like such a beast because the latter day beast would be the embodiment of him, just as the image of Daniel 2 had the face of Nebuchadnezzar and was in the form of a man. The beast is epitomized by a man- "the number of the beast... is the number of a man" (Rev. 13:18).

The little horn takes a stand against the Prince of princes and then is destroyed "but not by human power" (Dan. 8:25), i.e. he will be destroyed by the stone [Jesus] cut out without human hands. This is just the language of 2 Thess. 2, of how the Antichrist will be destroyed by the Lord's sudden return. Micah and Isaiah call this individual "the Assyrian" (Is. 10:5; 14:25). We have shown elsewhere that the description of Lucifer being thrown out of heaven can be read as describing the fall of a future King of Babylon in the last days. The most comfortable understanding of antiChrist as being an Assyrian / Babylonian is that he will be an Assyrian / Babylonian, and ruler of those areas. A leader of Iraq would ideally suit this. And their leadership shows every sign of the aggression, megalomania and anti-Semitism which will characterize the antiChrist. Note too that Gog is the chief prince of Meshech and Tubal- areas identified by some as being in present Iran / Iraq. The number of the beast is the number of a man (Rev. 13:18); he becomes personally identified with the system that persecutes the saints and Israel in the last days.

The black flags carried by the jihadists have a roughly drawn circle with a brief summary of the Muslim creed: 'There is none other God than Allah and Mohammed is His messenger'. The circle is roughly drawn because it is a replica of Mohammed's seal which he attached to his decrees and communications. To receive the mark of the beast may well refer to receiving such a stamp or carrying such an insignia, perhaps literally on the forehead. Because pictures of jihadist fighters show them with this symbol on their foreheads. The seal of Muhammad was held to have magic qualities, and the loss of the seal amounted to the loss of the caliphate and the loss of unity among Muslims. Now, the Islamists are popularizing the seal again, announcing a caliphate and urging Muslim unity- a unity which will ultimately be focused against Israel. The false prophet and beast are Biblically associated with false miracles, so something to look for would be the claims of false miracles or magic, as was once associated with the seal- see Muhammad Zafrulla Khan, *Muhammad: Seal of the Prophets*, Routledge & Kegan Paul, London, 1980 (chapter 12). The jihadist flag has a name, just as the British flag is called 'the Union Jack', the Canadian flag 'the maple leaf', the French flag is called the tricolour and the American flag 'the stars and stripes'. It is called The Black Banner or Black Standard, also known as *rāyat al-`uqāb* "the banner of the eagle". The final enemies of Israel are described as coming upon her "as swift as the eagle flies" (Dt. 28:49). Babylon is spoken of as an eagle in Jer. 48:40; Dan. 7:4; Hab. 1:8 and Ez. 17:3,12, as is Assyria (Hos. 8:1) and as are the Ammonites (Jer. 49:16) and Edom (Obadiah 4). The Islamists flying the banner of the eagle therefore associates them with being a reincarnation of Israel's historical enemies.

The mark of the beast is to be worn on the hand, yet the Greek word for "hand" is the same as for "arm". Jihadist fighters are wearing this symbol, the seal of Mohammed, on rings and armbands- and we can expect this to become what they demand of their subject peoples too. We could expect the coinage and other symbols of any such beast entity to include it too, so that literally one could not buy or sell without it, in the earth / land under their control. The mark of the beast in the forehead is clearly intended to be understood as the inverse of the "seal of God" which is in the forehead of the believers (Rev. 9:4). The word *sphragis* used there definitely means a seal, and it is matched by the "mark" of the beast. That mark can be understood, therefore, also as a seal- and what more likely than the seal of Mohammed? It may be that signet rings are used to stamp documents, or it forms part of an insignia without which no business can be done in the land- e.g. on the coins and gold of the earth / land under their domination. The Koran itself speaks of how true Muslims will have

the mark of Mohammad on their foreheads as a sign that they worship: “Muhammad is the messenger of Allah. And those with him are hard against the disbelievers and merciful among themselves. Thou [O Muhammad] seest them bowing and falling prostrate [in worship], seeking bounty from Allah and [His] acceptance. The mark of them is on their foreheads from the traces of prostration” (Surah 48.29). In Revelation 14:9,11, having the mark of the beast is connected with worshipping him. The Islamic jihadist movement set to take over Israel is a highly religious movement, seeking to strictly obey the Koran. They are highly conscious of these verses.

The Biblical data concerning the mark of the beast suggests that this will be used by "the beast" and will be enforced upon those who "dwell upon the earth" (Rev. 13:14,17). "The earth" Biblically refers to either the whole planet, or the land- the land promised to Abraham, from the Nile to the Euphrates. This promised land is the focus of the Bible. The beast of Revelation is another take on the beast of Daniel 7, which in turn is an amplification of the fourth empire of the image of Daniel 2. The empires or kings of Daniel 2 all refer to those entities who reigned over "the whole earth / land"- of Israel, as discussed further in my exposition of Daniel 2. The same earth / land is in view here in Revelation. The latter day Islamic entity can therefore be expected to gain control over that territory and to enforce the acceptance of Islam there. The mark is specifically the mark of a man (Rev. 13:18)- and that man is clearly Mohammed, seeing that the ensign of the jihadists is the seal of Mohammed. And according to some usages of gematria [whereby each letter in the Hebrew or Arabic alphabet has a numerical value], Mohammed in Greek, Mahomet, (Μαομετις) has a value of 666:

|            |       |         |    |         |     |      |       |
|------------|-------|---------|----|---------|-----|------|-------|
| Mu         | Alpha | Omicron | Mu | Epsilon | Tau | Iota | Sigma |
| 40         | 1     | 70      | 40 | 5       | 300 | 10   | 200   |
| TOTAL: 666 |       |         |    |         |     |      |       |

Don't dismiss gematria too quickly. The Bible itself uses it here in Rev. 13:18. There, the number 666 is not written as it would normally have been, as a number, but rather as three Greek letters, *chi xi stigma*; which between them add up to 666 by gematria. So it would seem that we are being invited to work out the riddle through the use of gematria. There are some connections in form between the letters of the Greek and Arabic alphabets, just as there are between the letters of the Cyrillic and Latin alphabets (e.g. 'R' in the Latin alphabet is the inverse of 'я' in the Cyrillic). When those three Greek letters are turned on their side, they read exactly as the Arabic letters which spell *Bis'm Allah*- "In the name of Allah", which is the credo of Islam and the jihadists. This appears to be another connection between Islam and the mark of the beast.

We note too from Rev. 13:14 that the beast system does apparent 'miracles'; and the seal of Mohammed was historically supposed to be able to perform miracles. We could expect such false claims to be made within the territory dominated by the latter day Islamists also. The Islamic State has already demonstrated how they dealt with areas they conquered- all economic life was controlled by them and people were forced into submission to the new system. Nobody will be able to buy and sell in the territory of the earth / land promised to Abraham without displaying the mark of loyalty to the jihadists- the seal of Mohammed.

The book of Revelation, like all Bible prophecy, will have particular and acute relevance to those who live in the very last days before Christ comes. There is a particular blessing repeated for those who refuse to accept the mark of the beast. That brave and tiny minority will be comprised of those Jews who refuse to convert, and

instead convert to Jesus Christ in their desperation. And for them, the book of Revelation holds out particular blessing (Rev. 14:9-11; 15:2; 20:4).

The little horn of Daniel 7 is the beast of Revelation 13:

| Daniel 7                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       | Revelation 13                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| "... a<br>mouth speaking<br>great things"<br>(verse 8) "And<br>he shall speak<br>great words<br>against the<br>most High ..."<br>(verse 25)<br>"I beheld, and<br>the same horn<br>made war with<br>the saints, and<br>prevailed<br>against them"<br>(verse 21) | "And there was<br>given unto him a<br>mouth speaking great<br>things and<br>blasphemies . . . And<br>he opened his mouth<br>in blasphemy against<br>God, to blaspheme his<br>name, and his<br>tabernacle, and them<br>that dwell in heaven"<br>(verses 5,6) "And it<br>was given unto him to<br>make war with the<br>saints, and to<br>overcome them"<br>(verse 7) |

Notice that the little horn of Daniel 7 is actually called "the beast": "I beheld then because of the voice of the great words which the horn spake: I beheld even till the beast was slain, and his body destroyed, and given to the burning flame" (Dan. 7:11).

The little horn is also to be connected with the "King of the north" of Daniel 11, which is based upon Antiochus and the leaders of the northern part of the Greek empire, from Syria. The fact the current jihadist leadership has emerged from Syria is maybe significant in this context:

|    | Daniel 7                                                        | Daniel 8                                               | Daniel 11                                                       |
|----|-----------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------|
| 1. | The little horn                                                 | The little<br>horn                                     | "The<br>king"                                                   |
| 2. | At the end<br>of the times<br>of the<br>Gentiles                | At the<br>end<br>of the<br>times<br>of the<br>Gentiles | At the<br>end<br>of the<br>times<br>of the<br>Gentiles          |
| 3. | Very<br>aggressive                                              | Very<br>aggressive                                     | Very<br>aggressive                                              |
| 4. | "A look more<br>stout than his<br>fellows"                      | Magnifies<br>himself                                   | Magnifies<br>himself                                            |
| 5. | A mouth<br>speaking<br>great things<br>against<br>the Most High |                                                        | Speaks<br>marvellous<br>things<br>against the<br>God of<br>gods |

- |    |                                                 |                                             |
|----|-------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------|
| 6. | Makes war<br>against the saints<br>and prevails | Destroys<br>the holy<br>people              |
| 7. | Destroyed by<br>the<br>Ancient of<br>days       | Destroyed<br>by the<br>Prince of<br>princes |

The first beast, representing Babylon, had "the heart of a man" (Dan. 7:4). It was the embodiment of an individual person- Nebuchadnezzar. The latter day Babylon likewise will be centred around a person- the antiChrist figure of the last days, who in turn will profess to be the incarnation or embodiment of the false prophet Mohammed. Nebuchadnezzar in his madness became as a beast- with a body like a beast, hair like an eagle, and nails like those of a beast (Dan. 4:33). This language is all used about the beasts in the later prophetic parts of Daniel's prophecy. They had features of eagles (Dan. 7:4), bodies of beasts (Dan. 7:11), and remarkable nails or claws (Dan. 7:19). Nebuchadnezzar became like such a beast because the latter day beast would be the embodiment of him, just as the image of Daniel 2 had the face of Nebuchadnezzar and was in the form of a man. The beast is epitomized by a man- "the number of the beast...is the number of a man" (Rev. 13:18).

## REVELATION CHAPTER 14

14:1- see on 2 Tim. 4:17.

*And I looked, and beheld the Lamb standing on mount Zion, and with him one hundred and forty four thousand, each having his name and the name of his Father written on their foreheads-* See on :3. There is an important difference between the 144,000 in chapter 7 and those in chapter 14. Chapter 7 concerns the *sealing* of the faithful Israelite believers as the latter day tribulation in the land begins. They are marked as God's people, marked for protection, as were the Israelites whose houses were covered by the blood of the Passover lamb, and as repentant Jews were marked on the forehead in Ezekiel 9. In Revelation 14 these redeemed Israelites are *harvested*. They are united to each other and to the Lord Jesus Christ at His return. They are called firstfruits, hinting at the great ingathering later in the same chapter. It seems this group of saints are resurrected before the great multitude from all nations; or perhaps they refer to the Jewish converts within Israel who are snatched away from persecution (11:12; 12:5). This would be another application of the principle, "to the Jew first, and also to the Gentile" (Rom. 2:10). Again, there is an allusion to the events of the Lord's death here; for the graves were opened and Jewish believers who had recently died were resurrected and appeared as witnesses against the system who had crucified their Lord.

The Lamb comes to be on Mt. Zion with the believers in that they are snatched away there and judged there; see on 11:12; 12:5. John maybe has the reverse image of Judas and Peter standing with the Lord's enemies in mind when he writes that the redeemed shall stand with Jesus on Mount Zion facing the hostile world.

The Name- i.e. God's character- has been engraved in their foreheads, in distinction to the name of the beast being upon the foreheads of his followers at the end of chapter 13. In 14:11 the name of the beast has to be merely 'received'- a rather passive verb, perhaps reflecting how the beast forces token conversion and worship. We either 'receive' the beast's name, or have God's name slowly engraved. We can't have a forehead / mind / underlying heartbeat which has both names. See 14:9 note. "His *Father's Name*" is used rather than simply 'God's Name', to show how we have God's Name placed upon us because of His revelation in the Lamb, His Son.

14:2 *And I heard a voice from heaven, as the voice of many waters, and as the voice of a great thunder; and the voice which I heard was as the voice of harpers playing their harps-* They are the Heavenly antithesis to the harpers within the Babylon-beast system (Rev. 18:22), just as the 144,000 sealed with the Lord's Name on their foreheads are the antithesis to those at the end of the preceding chapter 13 who have the beast's mark of 666 in their foreheads. Perhaps the harpers refer to the Angels John was beholding in the heavenly vision of the throne room? But in what sense are the harpers different from the four beasts and the 144,000 [believers] of :3? Or was God's one voice somehow like the voice of many harpers, unity in diversity? Or is it that the believers are each represented by an Angel before God, and so the voice and harping of the Angels is that of their charges on earth, those whom they represent? This is the option I prefer.

John often 'flits' between earth and Heaven in his visions, because he is demonstrating how situations and people on earth have their representatives in Heaven amongst the Angels who are before God's throne in the Heavenly court room. Here, John sees the 144,000 on Mount Zion, on earth. But he then hears a crowd in Heaven singing the song which only the 144,000 can learn. The voices in Heaven are those of their representative Angels; the singing of victory songs in Heaven with harps is likewise performed by Angels in Rev. 5:8,11,12. The 144,000 are "without fault before the throne of God" (14:5) because their representative Angels stand there before the throne acceptable to God (14:3). The Lamb, the Lord Jesus, is now *standing* on earth, on Mount Zion in Jerusalem, rather than *sitting* at the Father's right hand in Heaven. This surely speaks of the time of His return to earth. Psalm 2:6-12 anticipates the Messiah as being enthroned on Mount Zion; then will be fulfilled Is. 24:23 "The Lord of Hosts will reign on Mount Zion".

14:3 *And they sung as it were a new song before the throne, and before the four living creatures and the elders-* Here we have the situation on earth merging with the situation John is beholding in Heaven. There's a frequent connection made between the Angels and the redeemed at the Lord's return, for He returns from Heaven with the Angels. It will be so appropriate for the believers to be united with their guardian Angels at this time. We shall stand before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy (Jude 24). Rev. 14:3 paints the picture of the righteous singing before the throne of judgment. In Him, in that day, will be fulfilled Zeph. 3:17: "The Lord thy God in the midst of thee... He will save, He will rejoice over thee with joy; he will rest in his love, he will joy over thee with singing. I will gather them that are sorrowful (us) for the solemn assembly", when the Lord will keep Passover with us again.

*And no one could learn the song-* This implies there will be those who try to repeat the song, seek to enter the life eternal, but cannot. Eternal life, salvation, redemption, is likened to an eternally sung song.

*Save the hundred and forty four thousand, they that had been purchased out of the earth-* The 144,000 refers therefore to those who had been redeemed from the earth / land promised to Abraham during the last day tribulation. The idea of purchased "out of" may refer to how some of these latter day Jewish converts are apparently taken out of the earth / land to some safe place (see on 11:12; 12:5). Perhaps there will be a literal 144,000 who repent and convert to Christ, and seeing they did so in the face of the worst tribulation, they are worthy of special mention.

14:4 *These are they that were not defiled with women, for they are virgins-* The "women" are the prostitute women associated with the Babylon system. The contrast is with Babylon the whore who rides the beast system. We have not yet encountered her in Revelation; but as I have stressed so often, we do not have here a linear, chronological timeline being presented. Rather do images rotate and merge, as is typical of the apocalyptic genre.

The faithful Jewish remnant within the land will have resisted pressure to convert to Islam. Such Muslim pressure upon Jews living in the land to convert to Islam is easily imaginable. For the Koran teaches Moslems that they have a special duty to bring Jews to Islam: "O children of Israel!... Believe in what I have sent down to you (this Qu'ran), confirming that which is with you, the Taurat [Torah]... and mix not truth with falsehood" (Surah 2:40-42). Indeed, much of the lengthy second Surah of the Koran is full of such demands for "the children of Israel" to submit to Islam. The reason given is that the Jews supposedly "conceal the truth while they know it" because the Torah supposedly supports Islam, although Muslims claim the Jews

changed the original (Surah 2.146); and also that Mohammed was sent to the Jews but they rejected Him (Surah 2.151).

*These are they that follow the Lamb wherever he goes-* Alluding to Mk. 15:41, the women who followed Jesus around Galilee in the days of popularity and mass adulation, followed Him also to the rejection and loneliness of the cross. To follow "whithersoever" is a challenge. Mk. 15:40,41 makes the point that the women who followed the Lord in fair weather times in Galilee also followed Him to the darkness of the cross: "There were also women beholding from afar: among whom were both Mary Magdalene, and Mary the mother of James the little and of Joses, and Salome; who, when he was in Galilee, followed him and ministered unto him". Mt. 13:55 makes it apparent that Mary the mother of James and Joses is clearly enough Mary the mother of Jesus- for He had brothers of those names. She had followed Him to Cana, and now, she faithfully followed Him to the cross. But Rev. 14:4 alludes to all this by saying that all the redeemed follow the Lamb wherever He goes. Thus Mary and the ministering women, following even to the cross, become typical of us all. Not only following the Lord in popularity, but also in the real and radical demands of His cross.

*These were purchased from among men to be the firstfruits to God and to the Lamb-* The promise of greater harvest is perhaps implied in the subsequent presentation of the Gospel we meet here. At the time of the Lord's return, many others will be converted, far greater in number than those redeemed in this dispensation? Surely "firstfruits" implies that.

14:5 *And in their mouth was found no lie. They are without blemish-* The very language used about the Lord Jesus in 1 Pet. 2:22. His personality and character, down to His way of speaking, are imputed to us. Only by imputed righteousness can it be said that a person has no guile (Ps. 32:2). Guile / deceit / dishonesty is seen as the epitome of sin, and to be without guile is the height of righteousness. To be honest about who we are, not seeking to impress, being straightforward, who we are matching what we say- this, rather than dramatic works, is the height of righteousness. "Found" implies a process of searching- at the judgment? "Blessed is the man... in whose spirit is no guile" (Ps. 32:2) is picked up in Rev. 14:5: "In their mouth was found no guile: for they are without fault before the throne of God". The picture of forgiven David in Ps. 32 is what we will each be like after acceptance "before the throne of God". Yet David's experience can also be ours here and now; in those moments of true contrition, we surely are experiencing salvation in prospect.

The reference is to Zeph. 3:13 concerning the repentant remnant of Israel. 'Guile' is an allusion to Jacob- this is the true Israel purged of Jacob's negative side. This confirms my suggestion that primarily the 144,000 refer to a group of Jewish Christians redeemed from the earth / land of Israel as a result of their righteous response to the tribulation which comes upon them and their land. It is of course the Lord Jesus who has no guile in His mouth (Is. 53:9)- they are counted as "in Christ" because by faith and baptism they have become in Him, as a result of the Elijah ministry of the last days. We should be beginning that work now.

"Without blemish" is the language of spotless sacrifice in the LXX (Ex. 29:1; Lev. 1:3; 4:3; 5:15; Ez. 43:22,23). As in Col. 1:22 and Jude 24, the faithful are presented faultless before God's throne- only by the Lord's righteousness being counted to them.

14:6- see on Dan. 4:17.



*And I saw another angel flying in mid heaven, having eternal good news to proclaim to those that dwell on the earth, and to every nation and tribe and tongue and people-* Rev. 14:6 describes the great latter fulfilment of the great preaching commission in terms of an Angel flying in Heaven with the Gospel of the Kingdom to be preached to all nations and languages. Surely the implication is that the latter day preachers of the Gospel are walking on earth in league with an Angelic system above them, empowering and enabling them. See on Gal. 5:25. Rev. 14:6 appears to draw a distinction between “them that dwell on the earth” and the more general inhabitants of the world: “every nation, kindred, tongue and people”.

An Angel may be given a mission to preach somewhere, and success may be arranged by Him in prospect, but it is for us to put the work into practical effect, without which the converts will not be produced, despite the Angels preparatory work, although of course ultimately this is all foreknown by God Himself. Thus we read in Rev. 14:6 of an Angel being sent "having the everlasting Gospel to preach unto them that dwell on the earth (same word as 'land'- i.e. the land of Israel), and to every nation, kindred and tongue and people "(i.e. the whole world as well). However, this actual work of preaching to the Jews and to the world will be done by the saints; thus they will work out in practice what was achieved by the Angel in God's plan. In this context it is worth considering how the great commission as recorded in Mt. 28:18,19 is set in the context of other references in Matthew to world-wide preaching. We are to go into all the world and make disciples of all nations; and yet it is the Angels who will gather the harvest from “the world” (Mt. 13:38), Angels who will “repay” us for our work at the last day (Mt. 16:27), Angels who gather the elect from “the four winds” (Mt. 24:31) and gather [converts from] “all nations” to judgment (Mt. 25:32). The implication surely is that in our preaching work, the Angels are with us and will gather in the converts which we have made.

The whole scene in 14:6-9 makes more sense if we imagine the nations presently living in the land promised to Abraham, confederated against Israel under Babylon, now having the Gospel preached to them. They are told *not* to confederate under Babylon. The ‘earth dwellers’ in the OT (especially in Joshua) invariably refer to the nations dwelling in the land, not the whole planet. Yet Babylon will reign over “the kings of the earth” (17:18), another phrase so often used in the OT of the nations dwelling in the land. So it would seem that generally they will reject the warning given to them to keep separate from her. Yet Revelation ends with: “the kings of the earth do bring their glory and honour into it”. The kings of the land, once confederate with Babylon, will in the very end come to Zion and accept her rather than Babylon as their capital.

This witness to the nations, tribes etc. living in the earth / land promised to Abraham is also a witness to the entire planet. For the world's attention will be riveted upon what is going on there. But this need not necessarily have to follow chronologically from the 144,000 appearing on Mount Zion. It may be explaining how it came about, that those 144,000 are there; for I have suggested that this group refers to the largely Jewish converts made during the tribulation period, those who responded to the witness made by the "woman" of 12:1 (see note there), whose preaching to them was represented by the Angel flying through the heavenly throne room which John is beholding.

*14:7 He said with a great voice: Fear God and give Him glory! For the hour of His*

*judgment comes, and worship Him that made the heaven and the earth and sea and fountains of waters-* Conversion is a call to worship our creator, not merely assent to a set of theology. In the latter day context, the call is to worship *God* rather than the beast, who demands total worship (13:12,15). This is a last minute appeal: "For the hour of His judgment is come". Like many Old Testament prophets, is this a last minute appeal for repentance in order to avert Israel and the world's final judgment? Perhaps it will succeed, explaining why some potential judgments like the seven thunders do not come (see on 10:4). "When your judgments are in the earth, the inhabitants of the world will learn righteousness" (Is. 26:9); for "the Lord is known by the judgment which he executes" (Ps. 9:16). Israel's condemnation was to be "an instruction" unto the surrounding nations (Ez. 5:14,15). And Israel herself will know that "I am the LORD" in their final condemnation, as Ezekiel so often prophesied. This clearly associates God's judgment with a learning process. "When the scorner is punished, the simple is made wise" (Prov. 21:11). Thus the nations are intended to learn from the experience of Israel's condemnation (Hos. 2:10). The repentance of Egypt will be because "the Lord shall smite Egypt... and they shall return to the Lord" (Is. 19:18-22).

Heaven, earth, sea and waters have all featured in the descriptions of the judgments which have so far fallen upon the earth / land promised to Abraham. The world is bidden accept that the God who brought such turmoil upon them was also their creator.

14:8- see on Rev. 16:12.

*And another, a second angel, followed, saying: Fallen! Fallen is Babylon the great, that has made all the nations to drink of the wine of the anger of her fornication-* The word "fallen" occurs many times in Revelation. Believers either fall before the Lord, or fall in condemnation. We must fall and be broken- one way or the other (Mt. 21:44). Making others sin is the ultimate sin. To make just one brother stumble means we should be thrown into the sea with a millstone around our necks (Mk. 9:42). And Babylon has made multitudes stumble. Just as "the beast" is introduced in 11:7 without introduction, so "Babylon" is spoken of here as if we know all about her; although she is only spoken of in detail chapter 17. Revelation is a kaleidoscope of images. It's not that Babylon or a beast is introduced, defined and then we have progressive development of the theme in a chronological sense. What we have, true to the apocalyptic genre, is a kaleidoscope of images, rotating before us.

In 18:4 we have the same cry, "Babylon is fallen!" and there is then an appeal to come out from her- to leave the beast system which has been dominating the earth / land. This appeal is repeated here when 14:9 warns that those who receive her mark will be destroyed. This is therefore the equivalent to the urgent appeal in :6 to respond to the Gospel. Babylon has fallen from heaven's perspective, but the fact people are asked to separate from her suggests that on earth, she appears still standing.

The Old Testament source passages teach the same; it is a man on a watchtower who perceives from afar that Babylon has fallen (Is. 21:8-10); and Isaiah's first hearers were hearing this *before* Babylon fell. Likewise Jer. 51:8 suggests that at the time of the cry that "Babylon is fallen!", she could still repent and avert her judgment: "Babylon is suddenly fallen and destroyed: wail for her; take her balm for her pain, if so be she may be healed". And the context speaks of her *impending* fall and destruction as if it is yet future: "I will send to Babylon strangers who shall winnow her; and they shall empty her land: for in the day of trouble they shall be against her around... They shall fall down slain in the land of the Chaldeans" (Jer. 51:2,4).

Drinking a cup of wine is a double symbol. It's either "the cup of blessing" or the cup of condemnation. Hence the breaking of bread service leads us to a T-intersection, we take the cup either to our eternal blessing or eternal condemnation. And we can't flunk the choice. God's judgment of her is because of her fornication. Babylon caused the nations around her to drink her wine of fornication, making them "mad" (Jer. 51:7; Rev. 14:8). Wine being a symbol of teaching, this must point to 'Babylon' spreading the idea of Islamic fundamentalism to the nations around Israel (as "the nations" seem to normally refer to), making them "mad" in their hatred of Israel. Iran and Iraq, geographical Babylon/Assyria, are already noted for this. As Sennacherib relied heavily on propaganda and religious rhetoric, so Nebuchadnezzar and his latter-day equivalent will do even more so. Jer. 51:55 speaks of Babylon as "the great voice", referring to her religious propaganda. This will be quite complex, carrying with it all the power and persuasion of a pseudo-intellectuality: "Your wisdom and your knowledge, it has perverted you" (Is. 47:10).

14:9 *And another angel, a third, followed them, saying with a great voice: If anyone worships the beast and his image and receives the mark on his forehead, or upon his hand-* As noted on :8, this is an appeal not to continue part of the Babylon system, to be one of the brave who refuse to have the mark of the beast upon them (see on 13:17). This is particularly an appeal to those dominated by the beast, within the territory of her dominion, which is the earth / land promised to Abraham. The mark on the forehead alludes to how prostitutes had their name on their foreheads (Jer. 3:3). By using Babylon as a prostitute, they themselves became as prostitutes. The warning is to come out of the beast / Babylon whore system, or refuse to submit to it even on pain of death.

Daniel's friends' refusal to obey the command to worship Babylon's King is alluded to, which prophesy how the saints of the last days will be tested just as Daniel was, with a like miraculous deliverance. Daniel's representative role is most clearly shown in the figurative death, resurrection and judgment which he receives in Dan. 10. In this Daniel is acting out the experience of each of the approved. The comforting "Fear not Daniel" (Dan. 10:12,19) slots in to many other instances of Angels saying these words to frightened men. This makes it appropriate to speculate that the latter day believers will hear the same words from the Angel who comes to gather them (and cp. Is. 35:4, which gives the same "fear not" message to the generation which sees the second coming).

14:10 *He also shall drink of the wine of the anger of God, which is prepared unmixed in the cup of His anger; and he shall be tormented with fire and sulphur in the presence of the holy angels, and in the presence of the Lamb-* The wine of Babylon's fornication is matched by the wine of God's anger. I will be "without mixture", maybe implying that some who are condemned drink wine mixed with water, i.e. are condemned with a lesser condemnation. To drink wine without any dilution at all was unusual in the first century. It would've been very bitter. But those who are told Babylon has fallen and yet still take her whore's mark into their foreheads with Angels flying overhead appealing for repentance- will be punished most severely. The grades of condemnation inversely reflect the grades of acceptance, one star differing from another in glory, one over five cities, another over two.

The sulphur is to recall the destruction of Sodom. Sodom is equated with Babylon. Those who refused to leave or who turned back [Lot's wife] represent those in the last days who will refuse the Angelic call to leave the Babylon system.

This destruction will be "in the presence of" the Lamb and the Angels. He will be back on earth to judge this system, bringing His angels with Him. The Angels John had seen in vision in heaven would come to earth, to the very situations they had as it were acted out in the heavenly throne room. The other Biblical information about condemnation suggests that the rejected will be taken quickly out of the Lord's presence. He takes no pleasure in their destruction. So maybe we have here a snapshot of their agony in His presence as they perceive their final rejection before they are cast out of His presence. The rejected will be punished in the Lord's presence, and then cast out of His presence (2 Thess. 1:9) into outer darkness. This suggests two stages of condemnation: the slinking away, within the Lord's presence, and then being cast out into outer darkness (perhaps literal darkness?). The rejected are handed over to the judge who then casts them into prison or fire. The branches are cast forth, and then (stage two) cast into the fire (Jn. 15:6). There are verses which speak of the rejected being slain before Christ, cut in sunder (i.e. slain with the sword) (Is. 63:1-6; Mt. 24:51; Lk. 19:27). This presumably suggests that some will be punished quite soon after their rejection (e.g. the unwilling Jewish 'subjects' of Christ's Kingdom, Lk. 19:27), whilst others will be punished and yet expelled from the Lord's presence to suffer the agony of existing without any relationship with the Lord they once loved. Again, Lk. 19:27 has an example of both. Surely these are the "many stripes" of Lk. 12:47,48, compared to the "few stripes" of immediate death. Likewise the degree of punishment for individual Israelites in the wilderness was surely reflected in how long they were kept alive until they were finally wasted away by the Lord's hand. Some of the nations / political systems of the world are immediately destroyed at the Lord's coming, whilst others have their suffering period extended for a season and time (Dan. 7:12). The rejected amongst the people of God will in some ways share the condemnation of the world which they loved. It may be that there will be different geographical areas of punishment; some are cast into fire, others into outer darkness, into prison (Mt. 5:25)... or are these simply saying that there will be different kinds of punishment? Or are they different figures for the same thing?

14:11 *And the smoke of their torment*- The allusion is to how Abraham saw the smoke of Sodom's destruction from a distance. They themselves are consumed, but the smoke, the memorial of their condemnation, will eternally remain. Smoke is a memorial to destruction- the individuals are totally and permanently destroyed, but the memorial of that remains. We will remember the rejected, in some sense, for eternity.

*Goes up for ever and ever*- This going on throughout the 'aion of the aions' would suggest that there will always be the reminder of the condemnation of sinners. How this will be achieved in practice is hard to envisage. But in some way, there will always be a reminder of the rejection and judgment of the unworthy of this present dispensation. This will serve as a powerful reminder to the mortals of any future age or dispensation; it may well be something which we use to remind them of the seriousness of sin.

*And they have no rest day and night, they that worship the beast and his image and whoever receives the mark of his name*- They are the antithesis of the worshippers of God, who have no rest day nor night in worshipping Him (Rev. 4:8). But this doesn't mean they consciously exist, for the Bible is clear that death is unconsciousness. As noted about *the smoke*, it is the memorial of their destruction which remains, and the "rest" in view is that which they could have experienced. For the same word is used of the "rest" which the Lord Jesus promised to those who believe in Him ("I will give you rest", Mt. 11:28); and although a different Greek

word is used, the idea is the same in the descriptions of the Kingdom of God as a "rest" *for the people of God* (Heb. 4:9,10). But these are not the people of God. The way they missed this eternal rest will be eternally remembered. Another possibility is that "They have no rest day nor night" has a different reference to "the smoke" ascending up "for ever and ever". It may refer to the awful moments, days, months, maybe years, the rejected have to exist after their rejection. Their rejection means that simply existing is mental torment.

This situation will be ongoing "day and night". In the new Jerusalem, there will be no night (Rev. 22:5)- but they will be outside of it, where day and night still exist. This is another illustration of the way that the Kingdom of God starts as a little stone at the return of the Lord Jesus, and spreads to fill the earth.

14:12 *Here is the patience of the saints, they that keep the commandments of God and the faith of Jesus-* Keeping the commandments and having the Faith in Christ are paralleled. To have the commandments is to keep them (Jn. 14:21 Gk.)- a true understanding leads to obedience in practice. Perhaps the emphasis is on the idea of 'keeping'; for under the beast's domination, the Christians within the territory dominated by it will be sore pressed to renounce their faith.

14:13- see on Rom. 14:8,9.

*And I heard the voice from heaven saying: Write: Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord from this time forward. Yes, says the Spirit, that they may rest from their labours. For their works follow them-* "Yes, says the Spirit" may refer to a Spirit-Angel (Ps. 104:4; Heb. 1:7) who was the "voice from Heaven", gasping as it were at the wonder of how those who die in the Lord will be saved. Their works "follow" them, literally 'walk alongside with them'. Actions are important, even if we are saved by faith. For faith without works is dead. We come to judgment with our works, our lives, standing next to us. Those who do not worship the beast or have his mark will be killed (13:15,16; 14:11 cp. Dan. 3:6); in this context we are told by a special announcement from Heaven "Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord from henceforth" (14:13)- as if there will be a special blessing for those who die in the tribulation. This is why the 144,000, representing those converted at this time, are singled out for such special attention and blessing. "Them that had gotten the victory over the beast... his image... his mark... sing the song of Moses" (15:2,3)- implying that their persecution by the beast was like being in Egypt, and their deliverance therefore gave rise to a new song of Moses. Their "works" which followed them may simply refer to their enduring in their faith in Christ and refusal of the beast's mark; for in John's Gospel, the work of God is to believe in His Son (Jn. 6:29).

14:14 *And I looked and beheld a white cloud, and on the cloud I saw one sitting like a Son of Man, having on his head a golden crown and in his hand a sharp sickle-* The white cloud may be representing Angels, or the faithful believers (Heb. 12:1), or simply a reference to how the Lord ascended in a cloud and will return likewise (Acts 1:11). He is now King, crowned, but on account of His humanity as "Son of Man", He is well qualified to judge men. He has intimate personal experience of what it is to be human, and can judge humans appropriately. His sickle is sharpened- He is about to harvest.

14:15 *And another angel came out from the temple, crying with a great voice to him that sat on the cloud: Send forth your sickle and reap. For the hour to reap comes. For the harvest of the earth is ripe-* The Lord Jesus reaps the harvest of the earth, what has been brought forth in spiritual fruit in the territory of the earth / land dominated by the beast. This is another explanation of how came about the opening scene of the 144,000 in :1. His emphasis is upon harvesting the good harvest; the

second reaping of :18-20 is of the wicked. In the parable of Mt. 13:30, both the wheat and the tares are "gathered", but to separate places.

The allusion is clearly to the judging of the inhabitants of the land of Israel once "the iniquity of the Amorites [was] full" (Gen. 15:16). And they refer to the non-Israelite inhabitants of the land promised to Abraham. The "earth" here is 'the land'- of Israel. There is to be a spiritual harvest of repentant Jews now accepting Christ. This is the 144,000 of :1 (see note there). The harvest is (Gk.) over-ripe. The second coming will be delayed; wickedness and spirituality will be ripe for judgment but it will be delayed [to allow yet more to repent, such is the Lord's grace?].

Both the cross and the final judgment (Rev. 14:7,15) are described in John's writings as 'the hour coming'; the parallel language indicates that he presents the cross as the essence of the judgment. Is. 53 speaks of the Lord as being "bruised" upon the cross. But Is. 42:4 had earlier used this language about Christ, saying that He would be bruised with the result that he would "set judgment in the earth" (RVmg.). His bruising thus set forth judgment to all. There was a *sedile* or seat affixed to the cross, on which the victim sat in order to get temporary relief. Thus some accounts of crucifixion describe the victim as mounting the cross as one would mount a horse. This would make the cross capable of interpretation as some kind of seat or throne. And significantly, there are men on the right hand and left of the Lord, one rejected, the other gloriously accepted. See on Jn. 19:13.

14:16 *And he that sat on the cloud cast his sickle upon the earth and the earth was reaped-* "He that sat..." is the Lord Jesus in 4:3; 5:7. Now His throne is a cloud-of glory, seeing the time for His open glorification has come. The sickle is literally a gathering hook, designed to harvest fruit. It is the fruit of the Spirit which has been developed throughout the tribulation which is His primary interest. "Reaped" is a form of the word for "summer"- literally, 'reaping time'. It is spiritual fruit on the fig tree, the repentance of a remnant in Israel, which means 'summer' or reaping time has come (s.w. Mt. 24:32). In the Olivet prophecy, this is the final and most certain sign that of His return (Mk. 13:28; Lk. 21:30). All the possible sequences of events hinge around this- the repentance of a remnant within Israel. This remnant is the 144,000 (see on :1), which is why they are given such parade importance in Revelation. This is why we read of the 'reaping' of the earth, whereas the next harvesting is not spoken of in those terms; rather is it a gathering of bad crops to destruction.

14:17- see on Heb. 9:23.

*Another angel came out from the temple which is in heaven, he also having a sharp sickle-* See on :16. This is a gathering unto condemnation. John has been beholding the temple scene in heaven. But now Angels actually come out of it and go to earth in reality to perform things. We note that this Angel comes out of "The temple which is in Heaven" and another coming out of the altar. Does this imply that the one from the altar is responding to the death of God's people on that altar as sacrifices? Or is the altar in view the incense altar, suggesting that this action of judgment is in response to human prayer offered there?

14:18 *And another angel came out from the altar, he that has power over fire, and he called with a great voice to him that had the sharp sickle, saying: Send forth your sharp sickle and gather the clusters of the vine of the earth. For her grapes are fully ripe-* Notice the Angelic cooperation. One Angel calls to another, informing that the time has come for the action which that Angel had been prepared to. This recalls the mutual function between the two Angels of Passover night; one hovering over the doors with blood on them, so that the destroyer Angel did not go there. See on :17. Perhaps the picture here is of an Angel coming out of the incense altar, and triggered

by the incense of our prayers, asking another Angel to do something dramatic on earth. This is how powerful prayer is, especially in the last days. And it would explain why the exact chronology and nature of events in the last days is to some degree open- because the more prayer, the quicker things will happen. The more the unjust judge was nagged [cp. prayer], the more he responded.

The idea of gathering bad fruit and dead branches from the vine and throwing them into the fire is alluding back to the Gospel of John and the Lord's description of the rejected being branches broken off from the true vine, because of their lack of spiritual fruit (Jn. 15:2). Thus it would appear that there is one Angel responsible for co-ordinating the punishment of the rejected, which he does with fire just outside Jerusalem. This suggests that the rejected will be punished by literal fire in the locality of the historical Gehenna. The judgment is of the wild vine of the earth. The people in view would therefore be apostate Israel, those who collaborated with the Islamic beast; and also of the beast itself, in that jihadist Islam presents themselves as the true vine, the true Israel of God, with the Jews and Christians as the rejected Israel of God.

14:19 *And the angel cast his sickle into the earth and gathered the vintage of the earth, and cast it into the winepress, the great winepress of the anger of God-* The harvesting of the vine of the earth / land is different from the general judgment of all men and the Gentile world. The vine of the land may refer to specific judgment upon Israel- hence the reference to 1600 furlongs of judgment in 14:20, which was thought to be the length of the land of Israel.

This passage is quoting from Is. 63:1-6, where the treading of the winepress "without the city" (:20) is clearly with reference to the Lord's crucifixion "without the gate" (Heb. 13:12). As He said, in His death, there was the judgment of the [Jewish] world. Our response to the cross is a foretaste of our response to the judgment experience. The essential reason why the people of the earth / land will be trampled there is because they had not accepted the judgment of the cross of Christ.

14:20 *And the winepress was trodden outside of the city; and there came out blood from the winepress, even to the bridles of the horses, as far as a sixteen hundred stadia-* See on :19. Trampled in the winepress "outside the city", i.e. where Jesus was crucified (Jn. 19:20; Heb. 13:11-13) is as if to show that these judgments on Israel came because of what they had done to Jesus, and their refusal of the judgment of His cross. 1600 stadia was reckoned to be the length of the land. The Itenerarum of Antonius of Piacenza says the length of Palestine was 1664 stadia. It could be that the idea of the land becoming awash with blood, the whole length of it, could refer to the final conflagration there. It will be the Lord's judgment of the wild and fruitless vine, but will effectively be brought about by people themselves turning upon each other. And this has often been how God has preferred to have judgment executed throughout history, allowing men to judge themselves by their own actions and with their own swords, rather than by destroying them by bolts of Divine wrath rained down upon them.

"The horses" are not defined. They could be the horses with the Lord Jesus (19:14), but they are "white and clean", and trampling in blood seems an inappropriate clash of symbolism and figure. The other "horses" are those of the jihadist dominators of the land of chapter 6 and 9:17. "The horses" suggests there is indeed reference to some other horses mentioned in Revelation. So the idea would be, as noted above, that the fruitless or wild vine is trampled to destruction by the beast supporters destroying themselves and trampling upon each other. This kind of crazed

hatred within the camp of Israel's enemies has been often noted; and it is the horns who hate the whore who become so incensed against her that they figuratively eat her, performing cannibalism against her (17:16).

## REVELATION CHAPTER 15

15:1- see on Rev. 19:11.

*And I saw another sign in heaven, great and marvellous. Seven angels having seven illnesses which are the last woe, for in them is finished the anger of God-* Revelation 15 is a short introduction to the vials, and features a picture of a victorious, rejoicing multitude standing on a sea of glass, having gotten the victory over the beast. The vials in chapter 16 explain how this situation came about. One assumes that these seven plagues or illnesses are the seven vials. They may be part of the "plagues" with which the two witnesses smote their opponents "as often as they wished" (11:6; s.w. "illnesses"). In which case we note that they only smote them seven times. The same word for "plagues" (s.w. "illnesses" here) is used in the vials (16:9,21); these are the plagues brought upon Babylon "in one day" (18:4,8). They come, therefore, in quick succession, or even all at the same time; for the fall of Babylon is presented as surprisingly fast and quick. the seven vials / bowls cannot therefore very well refer to events over an extended period of history in the past, as insisted by the continuous historical school.

The purpose of these seven last plagues is not punishment or bloodletting for the sake of it. They are in order to complete the necessary wrath of God, and to usher in the glorious Kingdom situation of :2. This is why in 21:9 it is mentioned that it was the Angel who carried the seven last plagues who was the one who also showed John the vision of the glorified bride. Those plagues were necessary for her final development and exhibition.

15:2 *And I saw as it were a sea of glass mingled with fire, and those that had conquered the beast and his image and the number of his name, standing by the sea of glass, having harps of God-* The sea has been whipped up by winds and by the emergence of the sea beast from it (see on 13:1). Now all is calm, and those "in Christ" can stand on stormy water, just as He did. But the sea water is strangely mixed with fire. This blessed peace could come about only through the fire of Divine judgment. Those paraded upon or by that sea are those who had overcome the beast and the command to make an image to him and have his name upon them. These again refer to the specific group of Christian converts who endure the tribulation, loving not their lives unto death; the 144,000 of 14:1 (see note there). They are now the harpers, as opposed to the harpers of Babylon (18:22). John himself had earlier stood by the sea observing the sea beast emerge (13:1); now, those who endured the beast without losing their faith, and even came to Christian faith during his domination, stand in that same place as John, who himself had undergone tribulation from the Roman and Jewish beast of his day.

15:3 *And they sang the song of Moses, the servant of God, and the song of the Lamb, singing: Great and marvellous are your works, O Lord God, the Almighty. Righteous and true are Your ways, You King of the ages-* The saints will sing "The Song of Moses", which Ex. 15 records was sung after the triumph at the Red Sea. This indicates that Israel in Egypt prior to that represents the saints, just before the Lord's coming. Rev. 15:2-4 is all in the context of the Exodus: "I saw as it were a sea of glass mingled with fire (cp. the calm Red Sea after it had returned over the



Egyptians): and them that had gotten the victory (God was victorious at the Red Sea, Ex. 15:1) over the beast (Egypt is the prototype beast, Is. 51:9; Ez. 29:3) ... having the harps of God (cp. Miriam's timbrels) ... they sing the song of Moses... Who shall not fear You (cp. Ex. 15:14-16) ... all nations shall come and worship before You; for Your judgments are made manifest”, referring to how the local nations of Canaan, the earth / land promised to Abraham, were subdued as a result of the Red Sea victory (see Ex. 15:15). There must therefore be a latter day equivalent of the Red Sea deliverance of the faithful.

15:4 *Who shall not fear, O Lord, and glorify Your Name? For You only are holy. For all the nations shall come and worship before You. For Your righteous acts have been revealed-* "Who shall not...?" suggests that others now surely must agree to glorify the Lord's Name. The events outlined in Revelation so far have involved the complete destruction of all people in the earth / land promised to Abraham apart from the faithful. So this appeal is to the rest of planet earth. All those nations will therefore come and worship at Jerusalem because of the events in the land promised to Abraham which have unfolded before their eyes, exactly in accord with the prophecies of Revelation.

God's judgments are in all the earth right now (Ps. 105:7). God judged nations in order that men might *know* Him as Yahweh (e.g. Ez. 25:11; 28:22; 30:19). Yahweh is exalted in His judging of men (Is. 5:16). His judgments make His Name / character manifest. This harder side of God converts men, and will convert them at the final judgment. God judged nations [often terribly] in order that men might *know* Him as Yahweh (e.g. Ez. 25:11; 28:22; 30:19). Yahweh is exalted in His judging of men (Is. 5:16). His judgments make His Name / character manifest. A number of OT passages (e.g. Is. 25:3) hint that a remnant of Israel's latter day enemies will actually repent and accept Yahweh's Truth- *after* their experience of His judgments. God is to be feared and worshipped because of the hour of His judgment (Rev. 14:7); but even later, "when Your judgments are in the earth, the inhabitants of the world will learn righteousness" (Is. 26:9).

15:5 *And after these things I saw the temple of the tabernacle of the testimony in heaven opened-* At the end of the saints' latter day tribulation, the Most Holy is opened, just as it was on Christ's death; as if His hanging on the cross is parallel to the saints' tribulation. The Angels comment "It is done" when the saints are finally delivered (16:17), as our Lord could say "It is finished" at the end of His sufferings. The great earthquake which is then described (16:18) matches the earthquakes at Christ's death and resurrection. See on Mk. 13:13.

In Isaiah 6:1-4 we have a vision of "the Lord high and lifted up", enthroned in the temple, with an earthquake, the temple filled with smoke, the doorposts that held up the veil being shaken (with the implication that the veil falls; 6:4). The Lord "high and lifted up" (6:1) is a phrase that occurs later in Isaiah (52:13), concerning the crucified Lord, lifted up and exalted "very high" by the cross. John 12:37-41 tells us that Isaiah 6 is a vision of the Lord Jesus in glory; and in this passage John quotes both Isaiah 6 and 53 together, reflecting their connection and application to the same event, namely the Lord's crucifixion. So it is established that Is. 6 is a vision of the crucified Lord Jesus, high and lifted up in glory in God's sight, whilst covered in blood and spittle, with no beauty that man should desire Him. Now Rev. 15:5-8, building on this passage, has the veil being removed, the Most Holy opened, and the temple filled with smoke. This sends the mind straight to the rending of the temple veil at the crucifixion and the earthquake (Mt. 27:51). Now the work of the cross comes to its ultimate term.

Now all those who suffered with the Lord during the tribulation will likewise find heaven opened, the way into the holiest made manifest before their eyes.

15:6 *And there came out from the temple the seven angels that had the seven illnesses, dressed with precious linen, pure and bright and golden sashes around their chests-* The vials are poured out by angels "clothed in pure and white linen, and having their breasts girded with golden girdles" (15:6). This description is similar to that of the One like the Son of man of chapter 1- the Lord Jesus Christ. It could therefore be appropriately applied to those who have identified themselves with the Lord, that is to say, the saints. Rev. 19:8 says that fine linen is "the righteousness of the saints". These are perhaps the latter believers of whom we read in 11:5,6: "If any man will hurt them, fire proceeds out of their mouth, and devours their enemies"; and "these have power to shut heaven, that it rain not in the days of their prophecy: and have power over waters to turn them to blood, and to smite the earth with all plagues [s.w. "illnesses"], as often as they will". Their power "to smite the earth with all plagues" is exactly what happens in the vials, which are full of allusion to the plagues on Egypt. The Angels may therefore represent the believers, whose guardians they are- and it is those latter day believers who pour out the vials of the wrath of God, the seven last plagues.

Given all the allusions to Egypt, we wonder why there are seven plagues and not ten. Perhaps this is to suggest that potentially possible judgments will not happen; perhaps because of the prayers of the saints at the time, or the required repentance of Israel happening, or God's mercy in cutting short the days. See on 10:4.

15:7 *And one of the four living creatures gave to the seven angels seven golden bowls full of the anger of God, who lives for ever and ever-* The idea may be that God's eternity is the backdrop to His judgments. They are temporal, but the God of love is eternal. His judgments are not the flash in a pan, red hot anger of an offended deity. They have been long planned and refined. Yet He does have wrath, for that is all part and parcel of being "love" itself. Verse 1 has spoken of the wrath of God being filled up or finished; and here the bowls are filled with His anger. The image of bowls helps therefore to get the idea over- that His wrath has now ended, in its fullness it has been poured out. And His people shall now bask only in His love.

15:8 *And the temple was filled with smoke from the glory of God and from His power, and no one was able to enter into the temple, until the seven plagues of the seven angels should be finished-* As noted throughout chapter 14, there is an amazing theme in Revelation of last minute appeals being made to people throughout the closing judgments. Such is the desire of the Father and Son for human salvation. But now, although the way into the holiest is open, into direct personal with God, it is open only to the redeemed. The seven vials must be poured out, and during that time, repentance will be impossible for those upon whom they are poured. The rest of the Gentile world must watch, and then on reflection, come to repentance and acceptance of the Lord. Nobody new can come into fellowship with God whilst the seven bowls / vials are poured out; there is no appeal for repentance in the pouring out of the vials, for it is too late. This totally writes off the continuous historical attempts to apply the vials to events in European history stretching over the last few centuries. For people could as it were enter into the temple in that period.

## REVELATION CHAPTER 16

16:1 *And I heard a great voice out of the temple, saying to the seven angels: Go and pour out the seven bowls of the anger of God into the earth-* Rev. 15 has presented the scene of God's people victorious, described in terms of the Red Sea having returned to its place, and the people singing "the song of Moses". But that was achieved by the pouring out of the plagues upon Egypt, and now in Rev. 16 we are shown how that position of triumph was achieved. The bowls are all allusive to the plagues upon Egypt. It has often been observed that Revelation, along with much Bible prophecy, presents the concluding vision and then goes on to explain how that came about. That is so, but for the persecuted first audience of the visions, the idea was surely that they [along with us] are to focus upon the end point- and how that point is reached is incidental to the wonder of the end point. And that is of great comfort to those who are living through the judgments and sufferings which lead up to that end point.

The usage of "bowls" is to connect with the earlier vision of the golden bowls containing incense, which represents the prayers of the saints (Rev. 5:8). The idea is that prayer has direct result in God pouring out judgments on earth. See on :2.

The Old Testament basis for bowls used for pouring out is in the bowls for pouring out found on the table of shewbread (Ex. 25:29; Num. 4:7). But they were not for pouring out liquid, but for the frankincense which was to be placed upon the shewbread and burnt, in order to turn the bread into a memorial before God (Lev. 24:7). The LXX calls these bowls "incense cups". The pouring out of the seven last bowls of judgment is therefore portrayed in terms of incense / prayer; because it is the prayer of the faithful, especially in the last days, which brings forth these judgments which herald the coming of the Kingdom. Our prayers trigger action by Angels in Heaven which result in major events on earth. That is the sublime power of prayer.

Alfred Norris wisely observed in *The Apocalypse for Everyman*: "But if Trumpets are warnings, Vials or Bowls are outpourings. We have gone beyond mere disclosure, and again beyond the sounding of the alarm, and have reached the point where there is no return, nothing provisional: the end has come. God is pouring out His final judgements on the world, and there can be no turning back. There are a number of parallels in the Old Testament, where the verb *shaphak* is used in just such a way of the ultimate emptying out of God's irreversible judgements on His own or other people (see Psalm 69:24; 79:6; Isaiah 42:25; Jeremiah 10:25; Lamentations 2:4; 4:11; Ezekiel 7:8; 9:8, etc.; Hosea 5:10; Zephaniah 3:8)". This is why in between the trumpets of warning and the final vials, there is a final desperate appeal through the preaching of the Gospel (Rev. 10:11; 11:3,6; 14:6,7). But after that, the temple is closed and no man can enter it (15:5-8). Revelation stresses God's creative power- He is the creator of heaven, earth, sea and rivers. In the vials, we see a reversal of His creative activity.

16:2- see on Rev. 8:7; Rev. 13:17.

*Harmful and painful sores came upon the people who bore the mark of the beast and worshiped its image-* This is after they have been appealed to, to rid themselves of this mark (see on 14:9). There is no opportunity now for repentance (see on 15:8). The sores recall the growths that appeared on the Philistines / Palestinians who captured the ark (1 Sam. 5:6). The destruction of Dagon in that passage perhaps looks forward to the image of the beast. Those who bear the mark of the beast are within the

territory of the beast- which is exactly where the Philistines were. "Harmful" translates a Greek word which in all of its 50 other occurrences means "evil" in a moral sense (e.g. 2:2). Their punishment was appropriate to their own evil. We wonder therefore if their usage of nuclear weaponry against Israel backfires upon them, and they themselves suffer the tumours associated with nuclear fallout.

I noted on :2 that these judgments come as a result of the prayers of the persecuted believers. The allusion of this first bowl is to the boils that broke out upon the Egyptians (Ex. 9:8-12). They were caused by Moses tossing ashes up into the air; whereas the boils of Rev. 16:2 come from a bowl being poured out upon earth. The ashes tossed into the air perhaps also represent prayer, rather similar to the incense which was in the bowl in Rev. 5:8. The ashes represent human prayer, the words of mere dust and ashes, a term Abraham used about himself when praying to God ("I have taken it on myself to speak to the Lord, who am but dust and ashes", Gen. 18:27). So the equivalent of that symbolic offering of prayer was the pouring out of the bowl of judgment with boils in it. These associations would have been more immediately grasped by an illiterate audience, with their far greater visual sensitivity than we have as literate people.

But boils were one of the curses for breaking the covenant (Dt. 28:27,35). Likewise Is. 1:6; 3:17: "From the sole of the foot even to the head there is no soundness in it: wounds, welts, and open sores... therefore the Lord brings sores on the crown of the head of the women of Zion". We can assume that those Jews within the land receive these curses as a result of having impenitently broken the covenant. And yet boils were also the judgment upon Egypt. See also on :11. So we have here an example of where the unfaithful amongst God's people are "condemned with the world" (1 Cor. 11:32). We are to examine ourselves at the breaking of bread and perceive that we drink the cup or bowl of either blessing or condemnation. For "bowl" here in Rev. 16 is really a 'cup', continuing the frequent OT idea of the judgments of God being a cup of wrath.

It's also significant that extreme, visible skin disease such as boils made a person an outcast from society. We recall how the beggar in the parable had "sores" (Lk. 16:20,21). Those who sided with the beast in order to keep "in" with society are now placed outside of society, in the terrible aloneness of condemnation.

16:3 *And the second poured out his bowl into the sea; and it became like the blood of a dead man, and every living thing died, even the things that were in the sea-* The allusion is to the turning of the Nile into blood so that all the fish died (Ex. 7:14-25). But this is far more intense- the whole sea becomes blood, not just a river; and absolutely everything in it dies, not just the fish. This is Divine judgment on earth such as has never been seen before. That is the simple message. And yet the plagues on Egypt were each designed to elicit repentance, and that is the case here too.

Notice how the blood is what kills the life. When blood is the symbol of life, in the Hebrew Bible; and there is salvation and life eternal through the blood of Jesus. Again we see how there is a complete inversion of values, and the Christian worldview is antithetical to that of the surrounding world system. There can be no compromise. Drinking this blood brings death; drinking the Lord's blood gives life, and His people thereby drink springs of living water (Rev. 7:17; 22:14).

I suggested on 13:1 that the earth / land referring to the territory promised to Abraham, the "sea" refers to the areas immediately surrounding that territory- areas we now know as Iran, Egypt and Turkey. The allusion is to how the waters of Egypt were turned into blood (Ex. 7:17)- not simply as punishment in itself, but as an appeal to let Israel go, to stop persecuting the Hebrews. Which admirably fits the latter day

scenario we have suggested. The blood of a dead man is not liquid, but congealed. The picture is of mass death in these areas which gave birth to the sea beast of 13:1. Previously, a third part of the sea had become blood (8:8). But this failed to elicit repentance, and so now the other two thirds become blood too. The sea appearing blood red may allude to how a "part" of Israel were to be burned as if sea burned by fire (Am. 7:4); what had been done to Israel in 8:8 is now done to their persecutors from the neighbouring nations.

16:4 *And the third poured out his bowl into the rivers and the fountains of the waters, and they became blood-* This is referring to judgments within the earth / land promised to Abraham; the surrounding sea has already been judged in :3. Again the allusion is to the judgments upon water sources which was part of the plagues upon Egypt in Ex. 7:19. That plague is alluded to in another judgment upon Egypt found in Ez. 32:6, where Egypt is told that she shall be covered with her own blood to the extent that her rivers will run with her own blood. And that prophecy goes on to state that her sun, moon and stars shall be extinguished, causing darkness (Ez. 32:7,8)- ideas to be developed here in :8,10. It is unclear when this prophecy of Ezekiel had its fulfilment. The initial context is of Israel trusting in Egypt for help against the Assyrian. And latter day Israel may likewise look to Egypt for help against the latter day Assyrian. But Egypt too, part of the "sea", the territory immediately bordering the "land" promised to Abraham, is to be destroyed. Water turning in the blood of death may refer to some form of literal turning of water into the source of death- perhaps some form of biological warfare against Israel ends up affecting all within the land promised to Abraham. This is how God typically prefers to operate- allowing wicked men to be destroyed by the backfiring of their own devices, rather than by bolts of direct Divine judgment.

16:5 *And I heard the angel of the waters saying: Righteous are You, who is and who was, You Holy One, because You did thus judge-* Revelation abounds with examples of Angels talking and co-operating with each other in order to execute God's purpose; just as the Passover Angel hovered over the doors of the Israelites to as it were stop the destroyer Angel from killing the firstborns there. Gen. 1:26 "Let us make man..." is another example of Angelic cooperation. Here we have an Angel praising God on reflecting upon the wisdom of what has been done. The judgments of the Holy One are effected in practice by a specific Angel. This is the kind of thing we shall do throughout eternity. There is a recognition by the Angel that the awful judgments performed on earth at this point are a reflection of God's holiness and not of any evil or caprice ("You Holy One").

That a specific Angel controls "the waters" in an area is also implied by the way flood waters are described as praising God (Ps. 42:8; 148:7), water trembling at God's presence (Ps. 77:17; Hab. 3:10), and the deep waters mourning (Ez. 31:15). How else can waters sensibly be personified as having such feelings, unless these figures of speech are in fact based upon the real existence of a personal "Angel of the waters"? We note that there is also an Angel controlling the four winds (Rev. 7:1,2) and another with power over fire (Rev. 14:18). Clearly we are to understand that the entire cosmos is split up under the control of specific Angels; and we to some extent will take over from the Angels. For the "world to come" is for us to take over and not for Angels. This delegation of specific responsibilities to God's people is a strong theme in the Bible. Each member of the household is given specific tasks to do, there were good works intended for us from the foundation of the world, another parable speaks of being given five or two cities to rule over, we shall be king-priests (Rev. 5:10), and the priests had specific responsibilities. It is seen now in the body of Christ, where

each has a unique role as members of that body. All this provides a window onto what eternity will be like.

16:6 *For they poured out the blood of the saints and the prophets, and blood have You given them to drink. They are worthy-* As the blood of the "saints and prophets" was poured out, so the Angel had poured out a bowl of judgment. The "saints" may refer to Israel as well as Christian believers, those trodden down by the beast (Dan. 7:25). The "prophets" could refer to those killed by the beast system for their latter day preaching; for 'prophecy' is strictly just a speaking forth of God's word, and not necessarily a transmitting of new material by Divine inspiration. But perhaps the murder of the two witnesses is in view, who faithfully prophesied throughout the three-and-a-half-year tribulation before being killed (see on 11:3). The pouring out of blood is the language of sacrifice upon an altar; perhaps literally the saints and Christian preachers will be killed and sacrificed by the jihadists. Which would explain why an angel from the heavenly altar now speaks (:7).

16:7 *And I heard another angel out of the altar saying: Yes, O Lord God the Almighty, true and righteous are Your judgments-* As noted on :6, the jihadists may pour out the blood of their victims literally on altars, as if in sacrifice. Which is why now the angel associated with the heavenly altar agrees that the judgment of these people is in truth and righteousness. It is not the expression of the wrath of some capricious God; the judgment is appropriate and a reflection of righteousness rather than of evil intent.

The justice of Divine judgment is emphasized repeatedly; and that all God's people will recognize and appreciate His justice. This is distasteful to modern man, who prefers to think that consequences for sin can and ought to be cleverly gotten around. Those who borrowed more than they could repay... should just be shown debt forgiveness. Those who become mentally and physically ill as a result of abusive choices... should just be healed by medical science. Disobedience is to be endlessly justified by obsessive consideration of background factors. *Why* someone misbehaves has become all important, eclipsing the misbehaviour and consequences thereof. The death penalty is seen as totally unacceptable as a consequence for sin- when it is in fact the penalty God has given [although I personally disagree with man administering that penalty on his own judgment]. Successful life is seen as all about getting around the consequences for sin. But all this cannot ultimately be the case. Sin is serious, and brings death. Once we allow ourselves to be convicted of sin, then the struggles over Divine justice become less. Judgment for sin is then acceptable by us. There is a God, whose judgments will ultimately be done in this earth. And His children, who see things from His perspective, will join the Angels in glorifying Him for how He has judged.

16:8 *And the fourth poured out his bowl upon the sun; and it was given to it to scorch men with fire-* As noted on :4, the judgment of the sun is mentioned in Ez. 32:7,8 as part of the plagues upon latter day Egypt, whereby her water is turned to blood and darkness comes upon her as a result of judgment upon her sun. But before that happens, the sun becomes very hot and scorches those upon the earth / land; or perhaps this specifically happens to latter day Egypt. The language of scorching may suggest nuclear holocaust; if the attempts to destroy the state of Israel by nuclear weaponry backfire, or the weapons are turned against each other due to internal conflict, then such a scenario is imaginable. And it would be appropriate to the way that God prefers to let men judge themselves rather than judging by His direct bolts of judgment. The "sun" might refer to some particular leader within the beast's political leadership, which are often described as the sun, moon and stars of a nation or

coalition. And this is just how they are used in Ez. 32:7,8 which is the source passage for these bowls of judgment. Again we note that "it was given to it..." to scorch men. All power is of God, the cataclysms of these very last days will not at all mean that earth has come adrift from God and evil has found its own momentum and power. All is and will be under His direct supervision and control.

16:9 *And men were scorched with great heat*- The scorching is a plague, an illness. As noted on :8, this seems the language of nuclear holocaust. In their time of destruction, they will realize that all this is from God. But the tragedy of the rejected is that they will perceive God's hand, "know Yahweh" by His judgments, but all too late. See on 1:7. Now is the time for repentance; the rejected will be brought to the point of recognizing God and His Son, but all tragically too late. Being scorched with great heat from the sun is the language only used elsewhere of the suffering of the faithful latter day remnant in Israel at the hands of the beast (7:16). What the beast members did to God's people shall now be done to them. Scorching by the sun is the idea used in the parable of the sower concerning those believers who stumble because the sun of tribulation and persecution scorches them (Mt. 13:6,21). This will have particular reference to the tribulation. Some will fall away because of it; but by doing so, they experience their final judgment. The condemnation process will therefore be a giving of people what they have themselves decided in this life. And those who scorch others and make them stumble shall themselves be scorched at the last day.

*And they cursed the Name of God who has the power over these plagues*- It is the beast who is characterized by blasphemy (Rev. 13:1,5,6; 17:3). They preferred to follow the mindset of the world around them, rather than repent.

*And they did not repent and give Him glory*- This continues the allusions to the plagues on Egypt, in that Pharaoh is described as not repenting and therefore not giving God glory. In Rev. 14:7, the appeal has been made to repent and give glory to God ("Fear God and give Him glory! For the hour of His judgment comes, and worship Him that made the heaven and the earth"). The purpose of the bowls of judgment was to elicit repentance, and as with the plagues on Egypt, they could be cut short at any time if people repented. We note that glory is given to God by repentance; hence Achan was asked to give God glory by repenting ("give glory to Yahweh the God of Israel, and make confession to Him. Tell me now what you have done!", Josh. 7:19). The frequent appeals to nations to give glory to God are likewise appeals for repentance (e.g. Ps. 96:7). This is the true beauty of holiness: "Ascribe to Yahweh the glory due to His name. Bring an offering, and come before Him. Worship Yahweh in the beauty of holiness" (1 Chron. 16:29). A man standing at a tram stop repenting of a sin of three months ago as he recalls it... this is the beauty of holiness. Thus Judah were to give glory to God lest judgment come- i.e. they were to repent (Jer. 13:16; Mal. 2:2).

Admittedly the scorching by the sun is not featured in the recorded plagues on Egypt, although all the other bowls do allude to them. But we note that On or Heliopolis was 'sun city' and the allusion may be to a plague upon that city which is not recorded in Exodus. This may also be alluded to in Jer. 50:13 LXX. The idea may simply be that the latter day judgments are based upon those plagues, but are not exactly identical (thus there are seven of them, whereas there were ten plagues on Egypt; and the order bears no resemblance apart from the seventh bowl and seventh plague both including hail). Although we note that Israel were unaffected by seven of the ten plagues, and here we have seven plagues; perhaps suggesting that the faithful in Israel likewise will be preserved from these plagues.

16:10 *And the fifth poured out his bowl upon the throne of the beast, and his kingdom was darkened; and they gnawed their tongues for pain because of the pain-* This continues the allusions to the plagues on Egypt; in this case, to the plague of darkness (Ex. 10:21-29). That plague was specifically aimed at Pharaoh, who considered himself the incarnation of Ra, the sun god. Likewise this plague of darkness is specifically against the "throne of the beast", the leadership, the latter day Pharaoh / Antichrist. Just as God had a remarkable desire for Pharaoh personally to repent, so He even desires that Pharaoh's latter day equivalent repents. When we likely would have just assumed that such a person is not worthy of our evangelical attention. Such is God's desire that literally all men repent.

As noted on :4, the judgment of the sun is mentioned in Ez. 32:7,8 as part of the plagues upon latter day Egypt, whereby her water is turned to blood and darkness comes upon her as a result of judgment upon her sun. The beast has a throne and Kingdom, just as the Lord has; the beast is an anti-Christ, a fake Messiah with a fake Kingdom of God on earth. "The throne of the beast" could refer to his capital city. His "kingdom" refers to his people, those recognizing him as their king; for it is they, as persons rather than just an abstract entity, who gnaw tongues for pain. His capital city or centre of rulership could be in Jerusalem, or part thereof. The gnawing of tongues recalls the Lord's pictures of condemnation as a gnashing of teeth. The faithful are comforted that they shall no longer experience "pain" (21:4 s.w.), suggesting that the pain these beast worshippers now experience is the pain they inflicted upon the Lord's followers in the tribulation.

16:11 *They cursed the God of heaven because of their pains and their sores, and they did not repent of their deeds-* As noted on :9, they recognize all too late that there is indeed a "God of heaven", a phrase often used at the time of Israel's exile in Babylon and whilst under Babylonian dominion. Their "sores" could refer to the result of nuclear radiation, brought upon them by the backfiring of their own devices against Israel; see on :2.

The language here of unbearable pain, sores and darkness is all taken from the description of the curses that would come upon God's people for breaking the covenant (Dt. 28:28,29: "Yahweh will strike you with madness, blindness and astonishment of heart. You shall grope at noonday, as the blind gropes in darkness"). As noted on :2, we have here an example of where the unfaithful amongst God's people are "condemned with the world" (1 Cor. 11:32).

16:12 *And the sixth poured out his bowl upon the great river, the Euphrates, and the water of it dried up, so that the way might be made ready for the kings that come from the east-* See on 9:14,15,16 16:12 and Jn. 3:32 and 9:14,15,16 for the significance of the Euphrates. I have demonstrated so far that all the bowls allude to the exodus of Israel from Egypt, and the plagues which enabled this. The drying up of "the great river" does indeed refer to Euphrates and the fall of Babylon, but this in turn is based upon the drying up of the Red Sea for God's people to leave Egypt. The implication is that they are under persecution but are released by judgment upon the world system which is oppressing them. Just as Israel were released from Egypt, and Judah were released from Babylon, so God's people will be released in the last days. But in both those historical precedents, there is ample evidence that many of them preferred to remain where they were, or to return there. And so it will be in the last day. The foolish virgins don't respond immediately.



The sixth trumpet in Rev. 9:14 and the sixth vial in Rev. 16:12,13 both refer to the Euphrates and are therefore referring to the same events. We needn't get too fazed by issues of chronological sequence in fulfilment. The trumpets and vials aren't necessarily events which follow each other chronologically. This is the assumption of a Greek-Latin mindset; but in the Hebrew thought which underpins the New Testament, events can be described without attention to sequence. The Old Testament prophecies therefore often appear to 'jump around' in fulfilment, with no clear sequence in mind. Each vial or trumpet can be a description of events which happen around the time of the Lord's coming, but not necessarily in sequence chronologically. The 'continuous historic' school of interpretation is driven by this insistence upon chronological sequence, but this results in seeking unrealistic fulfilments of the earlier phases of the sequence. These suggested fulfilments often do not hold true to actual history, and are out of context with the main thrust of the prophecies, which concern the situation in the land of Israel in the last days. The masses of aggressive horsemen in Rev. 9 are the "kings of the east" of Rev. 16:12- rulers who come from the East of Israel. This would easily refer to the way in which the jihadist coalition and many of its fighters originated in Iran and Afghanistan, East of the Euphrates, and then are released and allowed to march towards Israel. The allusion is to how God allowed Cyrus to dry up [or divert] the Euphrates, and Babylon fell as the Medes and Persians under Cyrus approached from the East. The kings of the East are therefore not believers, but the unbelieving enemies of Israel. I have elsewhere pointed out that the jihadists see themselves as warriors coming from the East to destroy Israel, as one of their own Hadith states: "The final battle will be waged by Muslim faithful coming on the backs of horses... carrying black banners. They will stand on the East side of the Jordan River and will wage war that the earth has never seen before... The black flags will come from the East, led by mighty men, with long hair and beards". These "kings of the east" who are released from the Euphrates are matched in Rev. 9:17-19 by John's description in first century language of the most terrifying technology and aggression of the hordes of horsemen who will be released upon Israel from the Euphrates: "They wore breastplates the colour of fire and of sapphire and of sulphur, and the heads of the horses were like lions' heads, and fire and smoke and sulphur came out of their mouths. By these three plagues a third of mankind was killed, by the fire and smoke and sulphur coming out of their mouths. For the power of the horses is in their mouths and in their tails, for their tails are like serpents with heads, and by means of them they wound". The killing of a third of those in the earth / land surely connects with the prediction of Zech. 13:8 that when Jerusalem briefly falls, two thirds of the Jews will be killed. Presumably the other third are killed by other methods- there is repeated teaching in Rev. 8 of how the 'thirds' of those in the land will suffer in the final tribulation.

Dan. 11:40 speaks of the latter day "king of the north" coming with horsemen and entering into the *eretz*, the land, like a restrained mighty river that is now gushing and overflowing its banks. This is absolutely the picture of Revelation 16: hordes of horsemen surging from the Euphrates river towards Israel. For the "king of the north" [historically this was Babylon or Assyria] to enter into the *eretz*, the land promised to Abraham, he would have to cross the boundary of that land at the Euphrates anyway. He firstly enters the general *eretz* and then enters specifically the *eretz* of glory (Dan. 11:41)- the land inhabited by the Jews. This is described in Ez. 20:6 using the same Hebrew words- "a land... flowing with milk and honey, which is the glory of all the *eretz*". The land flowing with milk and honey hardly referred to the entire land promised to Abraham up to the Euphrates, much of which is barren desert. The glory

of the *eretz* was and is Canaan. We can see the process starting- the Islamists are taking over the wider *eretz*, and will then proceed to focus upon entering into the glory of the *eretz*, the current territory of Israel.

The allusion to the drying up of the Euphrates by Cyrus to bring about the fall of Babylon and the return of the exiles. Babylon fell- but the exiles generally didn't return as God intended. The fall of latter day Babylon is mentioned three times in Revelation (Rev. 14:8; 16:17-19; 17:16,17); and it's hard to work out *when* this happens; Rev. 16:17-19 places the fall of Babylon *after* Armageddon and Christ's return, whilst Rev. 17:16,17 places it *before* Armageddon. I see no contradiction here; it's just that the timing of the actual fall of Babylon and return of Christ are events which depend on various preconditions which may or may not be fulfilled by human freewill decisions. Such considerations may explain why it remains unclear whether Christ returns at the time of the 6th, or 7th vial. The language of both vials has application to His return, and yet some of it seems to speak of *before* His return. Perhaps it's beyond the technique of Biblical exposition to reconcile this language- it may simply be that the actual coming of Christ is dependent upon various conditional factors, and the inspired language of predictive prophecy is therefore appropriately ambiguous. Or take the way Revelation consistently speaks of "the beast" as if there is only one- and yet we read of three beasts, from the sea, the land and the abyss (Rev. 13,17). Is it really that the beast changes form over time- or are there three possible manifestations of "the beast" dependent upon various possible factors in human response? This approach would explain why Revelation is so hard to interpret if we insist on forcing all the events and pictures presented into a strictly progressive chronological sequence.

Another take on this problem is that Revelation is a kaleidoscope of images, some of them overlapping; there is no attempt to give a chronological timeline of events, but rather rotating images, some of which overlap at the edges with each other, giving different angles and takes on the same events.

The drying up of the Euphrates in Rev. 16:12 is parallel with the four Angels being released in 9:14. Angels can represent nations, as we find in Daniel- in that each nation has a representative Angel in the court of Heaven. The Euphrates is literally drying up- water flows are at their lowest ever in recorded history, and it may be that the predicted water crisis in the Tigris-Euphrates ecoregion is what drives the peoples of that area to look westwards towards Israel, and to seek to resolve their problems by a united *jihad* against Israel. The problem of water is acute in the region: "There are thousands of new "water refugees" in Southern Iraq: people displaced by the changes to their natural environment. "Many villages are depopulated because of that. It has a terrible economic impact upon the population"" (Bakhtiar Amin, Human Rights Minister of Iraq from 2004 to 2005, as quoted at <http://thoughtfulwander.blogspot.co.uk/2014/07/marsh-arabs.html>). Historically, the literal drying up, or diversion, of the Euphrates was what led to the fall of Babylon. It may well be that we are intended to make this connection when we read in Rev. 16:12 of the drying up of the Euphrates. The logical deduction is: 'So Babylon is about to fall'. And the fall of Babylon is spoken of in Revelation as coming about at the return of Christ to earth.

But it may not be simply that the Euphrates dries up of its own accord. Now that the key dams could easily fall into the hands of the Islamists, it could be that they like Saddam Hussein before them, dry up the river in order to exert their power over others. And this will bring about the required fulfilment of the prophecy. We recall

how the King of Assyria, another prototype of the latter day invader of Israel, boasted that he had dried up rivers and manipulated water sources, and therefore Jerusalem too would fall into his hands: "I have digged and drunk strange waters, and with the sole of my feet will I dry up all the rivers" (2 Kings 19:24).

16:13 *And I saw coming out of the mouth of the dragon, and out of the mouth of the beast, and out of the mouth of the false prophet, three unclean spirits, that looked like frogs*- I have demonstrated so far that all the bowls allude to the exodus of Israel from Egypt, and the plagues which enabled this. The connection here is clearly with the plague of frogs, the last plague which Pharaoh's magicians were able to fraudulently mimic by their false miracles (Ex. 8:1-15). And that is a theme here.

The drying up of the Euphrates leads to unclean spirits like frogs going out to deceive the nations and gather them to Armageddon. No particularly convincing explanation of the figure of frogs has yet been come up with. The suggestion that it refers to the spirit of the French revolution is desperate; the passage clearly demands a latter day fulfilment, and it would be hard to demonstrate that liberty, equality and fraternity came from dragon, beast and false prophet. It would be impossible to argue that e.g. the spirit of liberty came from the dragon, equality from the beast, etc. The idea is surely that as a frog jumps, so the spirit or teaching / influence of these entities spreads in leaps and bounds. But the appropriacy of the symbol becomes apparent when we realize that the Euphrates is fed by tributaries which feed into the Euphrates through vast marshes. The marshes around the Euphrates are so vast that they have given rise to the description of the locals there as 'the marsh Arabs'. Saddam Hussein drained some of these marsh areas and cut off water to others in his attempt to persecute the very groups which later fought against him and radicalized into the Islamic State. In a literal sense, the hordes pouring forth against Israel are the result of the Euphrates being literally dried up. Wikipedia claims that "According to the United Nations Environmental Program and the AMAR Charitable Foundation, between 84% and 90% of the marshes have been destroyed since the 1970s. In 1994, 60 percent of the wetlands were destroyed by Hussein's regime – drained to permit military access and greater political control of the native Marsh Arabs... After the 1991 Gulf War, Shia Muslims in southern Iraq rebelled against Saddam Hussein who in turned crushed the rebellion and further accelerated the draining of the Central and Hammar marshes in order to evict Shias that have taken refuge in the marshes"

[[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tigris%E2%80%93Euphrates\\_river\\_system](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tigris%E2%80%93Euphrates_river_system) and [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mesopotamian\\_Marshes](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mesopotamian_Marshes) accessed 12.08.2014].

These huge marshlands are full of frogs! The drying up of the Euphrates would be bad news for the frogs, who will have to leap and bound further afield in desperation. And so the idea seems to be that the Angel dries up the Euphrates, the hordes burst forth over that border towards the earth / land promised to Abraham; and the teaching of *jihad* against Israel, anti-Semitism in its final term, is spread by leaps and bounds out of the Euphrates basin, leading people from throughout the region and indeed the whole world, to come up against Israel. We note that there are even jihadist fighters from as far away as Australia fighting for the Islamists at the moment. Joel 3:9 speaks of huge multitudes of people being 'awoken' and going up to Jerusalem. The postmodern daze in which many people now live has created a desire for reality, for action, for escape from the virtual world into something truly exciting and passionate. And this is why well-heeled young white Australians are getting caught up in Islamic extremism and heading off to fight for them. Young unemployed males are now seeing the opportunity to play their violent online games in reality... they are awaking from the postmodernist haze of indifference. But sadly to the wrong reality.

This awakening is likely to continue and become ever more attractive, likely fuelled by the media's hatred of Israel and desire to portray her as a situation needing radical resolution.

"The beast" has "the false prophet" with him as a kind of associated act (Rev. 19:20; 20:10), the scarlet beast has a whore riding it, the sea beast has a horn which becomes its representative, the earth beast has an image of the beast. These associated acts indicate that each of these entities has an individual controlling them- and this is the antichrist figure. The dragon is described as having "his angels" with him during the fight against Michael and His Angels- which suggests he is to be seen as representative of a person. We note that the dragon was used in the Old Testament not as a symbol of Egypt, but specifically as a symbol of the individual Pharaoh of Egypt (Ez. 29:3); and likewise the dragon is used as the symbol of Nebuchadnezzar personally (Jer. 51:34).

"The false prophet" is given no introduction; he is introduced just as is the beast (see on 11:7). This may be because we have here in Revelation a kaleidoscope of images, according to the genre of apocalyptic. It is tempting to apply this term to the false prophet Mohammad. But perhaps there will arise an individual who claims to be a Divinely inspired Islamic prophet, the Mahdi. The dragon is still around, giving ideological support even if he has been politically destroyed in chapter 12, thrown out of political heaven as it were. And "the beast" suggests that the sea and earth beasts of chapter 13 are effectively one. The unclean spirits coming from their mouths are their teachings, beckoning people worldwide to come to the land promised to Abraham and fight against God's people. In the uprise of the Islamic State we saw for the first time this kind of thing happening on a global level. Babylon is the hold of these unclean spirits (18:2). Yet in the Gospels, to say a man had an unclean spirit or demon was to say he was mad. There will be a spirit of madness, extreme fanaticism, emanating from these three sources of propaganda.

16:14 *For they are spirits of demons, who work signs*- I suggested on :13 that the reference is to propaganda spread worldwide by three separate jihadist agencies, which stir up a frenzy, a mania, which John understood as the Gospel records do in terms of demon possession, a way of expressing madness. They work signs, false miracles, as noted on 13:13 and :14. So far, chapter 16 has been full of allusion to the plagues upon Egypt; and Egypt therefore becomes a prototype of the beast system. Some of the plagues upon Egypt were countered by false miracles from Pharaoh's magicians, pointing forward to the false miracles which will be claimed by the beast system of the last days.

*These go to the kings of the whole world, to gather them together to the war of the great day of God the Almighty*- The "whole world" could refer to the world of the land promised to Abraham and its environs. But given the power of communication media today, there may well be a global reference. Radical Islam may pressurize the whole world system to give at least token support to their battle. The "war" or (Gk.) battle is that for which the jihadist locusts of 9:7,9 are prepared- by the propaganda from the three sources of :13. This is the final battle against the Jews and Christians in the land spoken of in 11:7; 12:17 and 13:7, a kind of "final solution". But it is effectively a gathering together to battle against the returned Lord Jesus (19:19; 20:8). The same word for war / battle is used in all these references.

The previous invasions of Israel by her neighbour typify those of the future, and they also mention this 'gathering together': Sisera's forces did this (Jud. 4:13), as did those of Ammon (Jud. 10:19; 1 Chron. 19:7), the Amorites (Jud. 11:20), the Arab

powers with Assyria in Hezekiah's time (Mic. 4:11), Gog's forces (Ez. 38:7), the Arab-Canaanite tribes (Gen. 34:30) and especially the Philistines (Jud. 16:33; 1 Sam. 13:5,11; 17:1; 25:1; 28:1; 29:1; 2 Sam. 23:11). This is quite some emphasis. Thus while we can expect to see greater potential Arab unity developing around the Israel issue and perhaps a common allegiance to a charismatic 'Nebuchadnezzar' figure for a brief period, their complete meeting of minds will not be until the final push against Jerusalem.

We need not be concerned that this appears to happen after all the judgments upon the beast system which we have read of earlier in this chapter. Revelation is a kaleidoscope of images; it is simply not chronological. We are now being given to understand *how* the situation came about whereby the beast system is so permanently judged and destroyed, as explained in the preceding verses.

16:15- see on 1 Jn. 2:28.

*Behold, I am coming like a thief! Blessed is the one who stays awake, keeping his garments on, that he may not go about naked and be seen exposed!* - This is a call to those Christians who have not come out and testified under the beast's domination, thinking they can hide under the garments of nominal acceptance of the beast. They must keep their white garments around them. The paradox is that they will then be exposed as naked; they are apparently clothed, but not in the distinctive white garments of Christ, which publicize their position to all. His thief life coming is an idea used elsewhere about His coming being like this to those within His household who are unprepared. Clearly there will be true believers living under the domination of the latter day beast within its territory, the land promised to Abraham. This is a sober thought. Their numbers at this time are small, but perhaps the witness of the Elijah ministry and various gospel proclamations mentioned throughout the tribulation prophecies will result in many converts.

1 Tim. 5:24,25 implies a 'going through' of the good and bad works of men, with the added implication that it is done in the presence of others. Thus they will "see his shame" (Rev. 16:15). "All that behold" the unfinished spiritual building of the wicked "will mock him" (Lk. 14:29); and the accepted will praise each other for their humility in taking the lowest seat in ecclesial life (Lk. 14:10). The rejected will awake to "the reproach and abhorrence of the age" (Dan. 12:2 Dr. Thomas' translation)- as if they will be reproached by some. "When the wicked are cut off, [the righteous] shall see it" (Ps. 37:34). The 12 disciples will judge the tribes of Israel (Mt. 19:28). At judgment day, the children of the Jews who criticized Jesus would judge them- "they shall be your judges" rather than Jesus Himself (Lk. 11:19). "The wise shall inherit glory; but shame shall be the promotion of fools" (Prov. 3:35) is looking ahead to the judgment. But "shame" must be in the eyes of someone; therefore the rejection of the wicked will be in the eyes of those who once knew them in the ecclesia. The men of Nineveh will condemn first century Israel (Mt. 12:41); the folly of the rejected will be made manifest unto all men (2 Tim. 3:9). This is not so as to simply humiliate the rejected. It is so that the faithful *learn* something too. This was all foreshadowed in the way that Israel experienced their judgments in the sight of the nations, so that God's principles would be taught even to the Gentile world (Ez. 5:8,15). Indeed, the idea of God executing judgment on His people *in the sight* of others is quite common (e.g. Ez. 5:8; 16:41). But we can learn the principles of God's judgments right now, from His word.

A read through Rev. 16:13-16 makes it evident that the 6th vial concerns the

gathering of the nations to Armageddon; but right in the middle of this section we read: "Behold, I come as a thief. Blessed is he that watcheth, and keepeth his garments, lest he walk naked"- clearly relevant to the saints. It's as if the punishment of the unworthy believers and that of the nations is to be connected. The collapsing of time at the judgment would enable this to actually happen- the events used to punish the world could fall upon the rejected from the judgment seat. These unfortunate individuals will be threshed, as will the world be (Mt. 3:12; Rev. 16:16). This is foreshadowed by the way apostate Israel were treated like the surrounding Gentile world in the time of their judgments (Jer. 4:7). Thus in the 'judgment day' of AD70, the 'rejected' Jews were sent back into Egypt as slaves. "They shall return to Egypt" had been God's earlier prophesy (Hos. 8:13; 9:3). Their condemnation was expressed in terms of an undoing of the redemption from the world which they once experienced.

16:16 *And they gathered them together into the place which is called in Hebrew Har-magedon-* Perhaps this is explaining how the earlier judgment upon the throne / seat of the beast happens (:10).

"Megiddo" and the descriptions of Sisera *gathering* his chariots and God *drawing* them into battle (Jud. 5:19) must link with the nations being *gathered* to Armageddon (Rev. 16:16). If this connection is valid, then "the kings of the earth (land - of Israel?) and of the whole world" which are gathered (Rev. 16:14) would primarily refer to the kings of the Islamic world within and around the earth / land promised to Abraham, Sisera of the latter days.

Rev. 16:14-16 and Rev. 19:19 appear to be based upon the ideas of the 'gathering together' of Israel's local enemies outlined in the commentary on Rev. 16:14, and also upon [Zech. 12:3](#). "The kings of the earth" can be interpreted as in Zech. 12:3;" of the whole world" may refer to the world in relation to Israel (as in Dan. 2), or possibly to the fact that all nations literally will be incited to attack Israel, kidded by the beast that some "final solution" to the Middle Eastern problem is necessary. 'Armageddon' meaning 'the valley of Megiddo', takes us back to Zech. 12:9,11: "I will seek to destroy all the nations that come against Jerusalem... in that day shall there be a great mourning in Jerusalem, as... in the valley of Megiddon". The conclusion from this is that although a minority within Israel have repented before their victory in the valley of Jehoshaphat (the same area in terms of prophecy), according to the typology of 2 Chron. 20 and other passages, their full realization of the enormity of their sin of crucifying Jesus only comes home to them on seeing His complete rout of their enemies. Thus their returning to Jerusalem with joy (2 Chron. 20:27) will be preceded by, or mixed with, tears of pent-up emotional release. The similarity of the 'gather together' language has led us to associate the following:-

- The gathering together of Israel's Arab enemies against her at various times
- The gathering of the Arab nations into a valley near Jerusalem (2 Chron. 20:16, A.V. mg.) for destruction in Hezekiah's time
- Joel's prophecy of all nations being gathered into the "valley of Jehoshaphat" (3:2)
- The gathering together of the Arab nations into the 'valley of Megiddo' (Rev. 16:16) to fight Israel in the last days.

It could be objected that the valley of Megiddo is in the North of Israel whilst that of Jehoshaphat is in the South, near Jerusalem. However, the other similarities of language and context are so great as to suggest that they must refer to the same place.

It may be that Megiddo having been the scene of many previous Arab battles in Israel's history, it is being used symbolically in Rev. 16:16 rather than as a literal geographical reference. Back in Rev. 16, the sixth vial has described how the nations will be gathered to their place of judgment in Armageddon. The seventh vial then records the destruction of Babylon, who receives "the cup of the wine of the fierceness of his wrath" in the form of huge hailstones (Rev. 16:19,21). This equates the nations who are gathered to Armageddon with Babylon, which heads up the coalition elsewhere known as the beast. The cup of the wrath of God alludes to Zech. 12:2,3, where the peoples from the jihadist nations also are "gathered together" and have burdened themselves with Jerusalem are made to drink "a cup of trembling" by reason of doing so. The punishment with giant hailstones recalls how Israel's enemies were destroyed in the time of Joshua/Jesus (Josh. 20:11). This confirms our interpretation of 'Babylon' as having a Middle Eastern context.

The unclean spirits or teachings released from the beast and his publicity agents gather the nations together to Armageddon. "Armageddon" (Rev. 16:16) is from the Hebrew *har-magedon*. *Har* means 'mountain'. The assumption has been made that *magedon* is the same as 'Megiddo'; but the problem is, Megiddo is a plain and there is no mountain there. Also, the word *magedon* would be spelt slightly differently if it were simply the place name Megiddo. The suggestion has been made and well argued that *magedon* is a form of the Hebrew *mo'ed*, and would literally mean "the mount of assembly / gathering"- the title of Jerusalem in Is. 14:13 [see Meredith Kline, 'Har Magedon', *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 39/2 (June 1996) pp. 207-222, available online. He explains the presence of the 'g' on the basis that the Hebrew consonant *ayin* is often represented by the Greek *gamma*]. Rev. 16 says that all nations are gathered to Armageddon, but elsewhere we read of all nations being gathered to Jerusalem. The two localities are surely identical, quite apart from the linguistic arguments. We can expect, therefore, far more focus specifically upon Jerusalem. For this is to be the centre to which all are gathered. This makes perfect sense if we see *magedon* as a Greek rendering of the Hebrew *mo'ed*- the nations are gathered to the mount of gathering. The king of Babylon / Assyria so wished to come to the "mount of assembly / gathering" (Is. 14:13), and it was that desire, and executing it, which was effectively his gathering to judgment. And so it will be with the Islamist obsession with Jerusalem- their gathering there will effectively be their gathering to judgment. Associating Armageddon with Jerusalem would more naturally fit with the upcoming description of "the great city", Jerusalem, being judged by an earthquake (:19).

16:17- see on Rev. 15:2.

*And the seventh poured out his bowl upon the air*- This could be purely symbolic, as if absolutely everything will now be affected, and there will now be a complete takeover of power above the earth. But this is perhaps another allusion to the plagues upon Egypt; for Moses sprinkled handfuls of ashes into the air which turned into a dust cloud in all the air, bringing forth sores and boils (Ex. 9:8,9). Perhaps literally the air will be full of thunder, lightning and death, as stated on :18.

*And there came forth a great voice out of the temple, from the throne, saying: It is done!* - Now finally all is finished. But the Lord made a similar pronouncement from the cross. It is only John who records Him saying then: "It is finished" (Jn. 19:30). The second coming will be our meeting with the Lord who died for us. To come before Him then will be in essence the same as coming before His cross. Rev. 16 describes the events of the second coming, and yet it is full of allusion back to the

cross: "it is done", the temple of heaven opened (16:17); an earthquake (16:18), a cup of wine (16:19). The believers undergoing the final tribulation will have fellowshiped the Lord's crucifixion sufferings, that they might know His resurrection life once they are over.

16:18 *And there were lightnings and voices and thunders, and there was a great earthquake, such as has never occurred since men came upon the earth, so great an earthquake, so mighty-* The lightning and thunder may be literal, and the result of the bowl poured into the air (see on :17). The Lord likens His second coming to lightning (Mt. 24:27; Zech. 9:14). The earthquake would be that associated with the second coming, when the Lord sets foot upon the mount of Olives in Zechariah 14.

16:19 *And the great city was divided into three parts, and the cities of the nations fell, and Babylon the great was remembered in the sight of God, to give to her the cup of the wine of the fierceness of His anger-* The allusion is to the earthquake of Zech. 14 at the point of the Lord's return. This makes the great city Jerusalem, and yet the great city is mystical "Babylon" in 17:18. The fall of Jerusalem in AD70 was but a small fulfilment of what is envisaged here; although we note that Jerusalem at that time was divided into three opposing camps by internal strife- John, Simon and Elazar (*Wars* 5.1.1,4). The division of the Jews and Jerusalem in particular into three parts for judgment is all Old Testament language (Ez. 5:2,12; Zech. 13:8,9). We are thereby encouraged to see Jerusalem as the great city which is judged. And yet it is paralleled with the fall of Babylon. The latter day Babylon entity will have made Jerusalem its capital, and this shall fall. This earthquake is that of 11:13, where after the tribulation of the believers and Jews in the land for three and a half years, "the tenth part of the city fell"; and clearly the city in view is Jerusalem, the "great city... where also our Lord was crucified" (11:8). Perhaps the tenth part of the city destroyed by the earthquake refers to the encampment of "Babylon", perhaps a mosque complex built on the temple mount. For the abomination which will bring about the desolation of the temple mount will be placed there (Dan. 12:11; Mt. 24:15), and this surely refers to something like a mosque complex or other visual symbol of jihadist Islam. The language of Babylon and the whore has some first century application to the Judaist 'satan' which was enthroned in Jerusalem until AD70, and the language used in chapters 17 and 18 is often allusive to Old Testament prophecies about Israel as the whore. In the latter day application to the "Babylon" entity, this all still is appropriate, in that "Babylon" will make her throne on the temple mount, in Jerusalem.

Perhaps the three parts refers to how three different subdivisions of the beast entity are enthroned in Jerusalem; for the call to come and fight there comes forth from three different entities, each with essentially the same message (:13).

The subdivision of the final invader into three groups will recall the original Assyrian battle plan whereby the Assyrian army was split up under three leaders, Tartan, Rabsharis and Rabshakeh. Previous invasions had this feature too:

- "The spoilers of the Philistines / Palestinians (raided Israel) in three companies" (1 Sam. 13:17).
- The Israelites fought their Ammonite enemies "in three companies", perhaps because there were three groups of Ammonites (1 Sam. 11:11).
- The account of Gideon's victory over Midian, a clear type of the latter-day invaders, has a triple emphasis on Israel attacking them in "three companies" (Jud. 7:16,20,22) - perhaps for the same reason.
- The Chaldeans (Babylonians/Assyrians) attacked Job, symbolic of faithless Israel, in three bands (Job 1:17). The book of Job has many other links with the



Assyrian invasion.

16:20 *And every island fled away and the mountains were not found-* On 13:1 I suggested that the earth / land is the territory promised to Abraham, and the "sea" refers to the nations immediately bordering that land; areas we now know as Turkey, Egypt and Iran. The "isles of the Gentiles", islands within that "sea", would therefore refer to the nations of the world; mountains likewise refer to nations. But they flee away, retreating from the scene in the land, having been urged to come and get involved in the "final solution" of the Jewish / Jerusalem / Middle East problem.

The nations in this confederacy will turn against 'Babylon' in the ultimate 'time of the end'; through them God's judgment against her is administered. Babylon "gathereth unto him all nations", but "shall not all these take up a parable against him, and a taunting proverb against him, and say, Woe to him... shall they not rise up suddenly (and) bite thee... and thou shalt be for booties unto them?" (Hab. 2:5-8 AV). First of all the islands (nations) flee away from Babylon (Rev. 16:20), the birds and animals scatter from under the big tree as it starts to totter. But fleeing away suggests they are not all caught up in her judgment; the same word is used in Mt. 3:7 of fleeing from the wrath to come in repentance. This is in response to the Lord's command to flee [s.w.] Jerusalem (Mt. 24:16).

16:21 *And great hailstones, each about the weight of a talent, came down out of heaven upon men, and men blasphemed God because of the plague of the hail. For the plague was so severe-* There may have been a limited fulfilment in the catapults throwing stones of this size upon Jerusalem in AD70; Josephus records them as being a white colour, similar to hail, and weighing about a talent. But this all speaks of the final judgment of God against Israel's enemies in Jerusalem; again the allusion is to the plagues on Egypt for their abuse of the Hebrews, this time to the plague of hail. And again as noted on :9 and :11, these people recognize that all this is from God, they come to know "that I am Yahweh", but all too late. The Hadith speaks of extreme rain as a judgment to come upon the land in the last days: "Then Allah would send rain which no house of clay or (the tent of) camels' hairs would keep out and it would wash away the earth" (Book 41.7015). It is a feature of Divine judgment that the thing men greatly fear comes upon them. The jihadist beast will find itself the victim of the very features of Divine condemnation which their own writings say will come upon the condemned.

I have demonstrated so far that all the bowls allude to the exodus of Israel from Egypt, and the plagues which enabled this. Here the reference is to the plague of hail (Ex. 9:13-35). This was the seventh plague, and is alluded to here in the seventh bowl. Hail is also the judgment used against Gog (Ez. 38:19-22). And we think of how the Canaanite opposition to Israel was destroyed by hail (Josh. 10:11). Again we are led to understand these judgments as coming within the land of Israel, against Israel's latter day abusers who are located there.

## REVELATION CHAPTER 17

17:1 *And there came one of the seven angels that had the seven bowls and spoke with me, saying: Come here, I will show you the judgment of the great prostitute that sits upon many waters-* Babylon is another form of the beast which arose out of the sea (13:1). The same Angel which had just poured out the final judgment upon

Babylon at the end of chapter 16 now gives more detail about this "Babylon" entity. The waters represent nations and peoples; but I suggested on 13:1 that if the earth refers to the land promised to Abraham, then the sea would be the territories immediately adjacent to it- areas we now know as Egypt, Iran and Turkey. But "Babylon" has influence upon many such waters. Historically, Babylon's "sea", i.e. the nations local to Israel whom she had power over, dried up from her- i.e. she no longer controlled them (Jer. 51:36; Rev. 17:1,15), "the sea" (those same peoples which were once her power base) will then come up against Babylon to destroy it (Jer. 51:42). This all looks forward to such support for the beast system of the last day. There may be a difference between the whore and the beast she rides; or within the genre of apocalyptic, we could simply take her as symbolic and representative of it. It could be that "Babylon" the whore speaks of some charismatic individual who will control the beast system- the personal anti-Christ which so many scriptures hint at, the chief prince of Ezekiel 38, the king of the north of Daniel 11, the man of sin of 2 Thess. 2 etc. This individual sits upon "many waters" (= peoples, :15), upon the beast (:3), upon the seven heads of the beast (:9). The beast is therefore a coalition of peoples, with seven heads- perhaps a succession of leaders, or seven leading elements all contemporary with each other. But upon all these, the whore sits; she is supported by them. She "sits" as a queen over them (18:7).

Daniel's fourth beast with the ten horns equates with the legs or iron and ten toes of the image of Daniel 2. This entity will be in existence at the time of Christ's return, because it is to be destroyed by His coming. And we have that same picture in Revelation. Historically, the legs of iron represent Rome, but the beast is not a historical entity, it exists in the last days. So although there are parallels and outline similarities between the metals of the image and the beasts, this is not to say that they are all one and the same. The final beast has elements of all the previous beasts, it is a composite entity including all the elements of the previous systems which have dominated the land and people of Israel. Just as the image stands complete in the last days, so the final beast stands complete. The whore sits on many waters, representing various languages and peoples; and yet she sits upon the beast (Rev. 17:1,3,15). The latter day beast is therefore not one nation but an amalgam of peoples.

17:2 *With whom the kings of the earth committed fornication, and they that dwell on the earth were made drunk with the wine of her fornication-* The imagery of being drunk on her wine / teaching is similar to the idea noted on 16:13,14 of the propaganda from the beast system making men crazed and fanatically obsessed. This clearly fits the results of Islamic extremism. The kings of the earth / land suggests that there will be a fast sequence of different rulers over the latter day territory of the earth / land promised to Abraham; or maybe a group of such leaders who exist all at the same time. They along with those dwelling in the "earth" will be radicalized with the fanaticism of her teaching. This is exactly the picture of Islamic extremism.

17:3- see on Rev. 12:14.

*And he carried me away in the Spirit into a wilderness-* The wilderness is where the woman has fled in 12:14; but the dragon has chased her there, she is before "the face" of the serpent / dragon / devil, in his presence, but miraculously preserved from him. The same word is used of how the Lord likewise confronted "the devil" in the wilderness, and overcame. That struggle will be reflected in the struggle of the Lord's people against the devil / dragon / beast in the last days. There is a difference in Revelation between the dragon and the beast, but the beast gives power to the dragon. Perhaps we are to see them as a sequence of entities which dominate the earth / land

of the last days, or simply different takes on the same entity, true to the apocalyptic genre.

*And I saw a woman sitting upon a scarlet coloured beast-* This is the fourth of the four beasts we meet in Revelation; the dragon, the sea beast, earth beast and now this scarlet beast. They are different but similar, perhaps incarnations of each other which arise in quick succession in the earth / land promised to Abraham, or different images of the same reality, which only appear separate from each other because Revelation is a kaleidoscope of revolving images. The four beasts of Daniel 7 are the four metals of the image of Daniel 2; and they all co-exist in the last days. Likewise the four beasts of Revelation co-exist, or are different angles on the same entity.

Israel's neighbours confederated with Babylon in their invasion of Israel. Jeremiah describes this in beast language: "I have given all these lands into the hand of Nebuchadnezzar... the beasts of the field have I given him... to serve him... to serve him... all nations (around Israel) shall serve him" (Jer. 27:5-7; 28:14). Ps. 79:1,2, a passage whose links with Rev. 11 give it a clear latter-day application, speaks of the beasts of the surrounding Arab nations being confederate with Babylon. As the horns hate the Babylon/whore and turn against her to destroy her (Rev. 17:16), so the beast nations once confederate with Babylon will come and lie down in her (Jer. 50:39; Is. 13:21). Beasts lying down in a ruined city is representative of nations dominating another one (Zeph. 2:14,15). Note that the beast is "scarlet coloured" (Rev. 17:3). Whilst this may have had reference in its time to imperial Rome, let's note that "The Canaanites... derived their name from the purple dye which was produced there and used for making an expensive cloth" (R.E. Clements, *Exodus* (Cambridge: C.U.P., 1972) p. 21). In the light of all this, it is difficult to read the latter day beasts of Revelation as referring to anything other than a conglomeration of Canaanite powers under the leadership of a revived Babylon, between them constituting the most powerful system of opposition to God's people which there has ever been.

Is. 13:14,15 shows the connection of Israel's neighbours with Babylon; people of these areas are urged to "flee every one into his own land (because) every one that is... joined unto (Babylon), shall fall by the sword" in the day of Babylon's judgment. This sounds like a hint that the Arab peoples will be given the opportunity to repent and avoid God's judgments. Their previously being "joined unto" Babylon is the language of marriage/intercourse, showing the brief intensity of their association (remember Babylon is called a whore in Rev. 17:5). The intensity of their joining together is shown by the fact that Babylon is spoken of as the 'hire of the north', although "the north" can refer to other neighbouring powers apart from Babylon (Jer. 1:14,15; 25:9; 46:24). Passages where "the north country" is Babylon include Jer.

3:18; 6:22; 10:22; 16:15; 23:8; 31:8; 46:10. The conclusion to be drawn from this is that these powers became part of 'the king of the north' for the purposes of Israel and Jerusalem's invasion and judgment. Jer. 51:20-23 speaks of Babylon as an individual controlling others, i.e. the other neighbouring jihadist nations - e.g. a rider of a horse, a shepherd over a flock, a ploughman over his oxen. This paves the way for Babylon being the whore who rides the beast (Rev. 17:3). In similar vein Is. 49:26 speaks of Israel's enemies being fed "with their own flesh", whilst Babylon's flesh will be eaten by the powers confederate with her (Rev. 17:16). This shows their close association.

The woman sits upon the beast; she sits as a queen (18:7), whereas the Lord is repeatedly presented in Revelation as sitting enthroned as a King (4:2,3,9 etc.). He is the real power, and not her. The seals of chapter 6 have presented Israel's jihadist

invaders as seated upon horses; now there is a charismatic antiChrist individual seated upon a beast, far more powerful. She sits upon seven mountains (:9), headquartered in Jerusalem, the city of seven hills. As explained on 16:19, latter day Babylon makes her capital in Jerusalem; and we note the shift in jihadist theology away from Mecca towards Jerusalem as the key city in their theology. And from there she sits upon all the nations and peoples of the land promised to Abraham (:15).

*Full of names of blasphemy, having seven heads and ten horns-* The beast was "full of blasphemous names". Not only the heads of the Beast (13:1), but its whole body is covered with them, indicating that the entire empire sanctioned the emperors' arrogation of divine titles; such titles could be found throughout the Roman world, inscribed on public buildings and monuments. The golden cup which the whore has (cp. 18:6; Jer. 51:7) has contents which would have been understood as idolatrous cults and the vices of Rome-all in sharp contrast with its outward beauty and the splendour of the woman. These prophecies were therefore in direct and open criticism of the Roman empire which surrounded the early ecclesia. And yet we can also interpret the whore in line with the Old Testament presentations of apostate Jerusalem and Israel as a whore (Ez. 23, Hosea etc.). The Lord has earlier stated that He considered the Jewish satan / opposition to the Christians as being blasphemy (2:9).

In the latter day application, the beast system is full of blasphemy in that it persecutes God's people (13:6). Jihadist theology insists that the Jews and Christians are not the people of God and therefore should be persecuted and killed, claiming they are acting as God in judging His people. That is blasphemy indeed. The seven heads and ten horns (as noted on 13:1) could refer to how this beast is the composite summary of all the previous beasts of Daniel's visions; perhaps there will be seven leaders, or a succession of such leaders; and a coalition of ten groups who comprise the strength of the composite beast. But the seven heads are here understood as seven mountains (:9). Mountains can refer to nations or peoples. But a literal application would point to Jerusalem, well known at the time as the city of seven hills or mountains. The claim that Rome was such a city might have been relevant to those living under Nero's persecution; but there are many cities famed for being built on seven hills, not least Istanbul / Constantinople, and even my beloved Vilnius. I made a strong case on 16:19 that Babylon is headquartered in Jerusalem; and this is a city of seven hills, and was recognized as such in John's time. But within that city, wherever it is geographically, there may be seven heads / mountains / spheres of control or leaders.

*17:4 And the woman was arrayed in purple and scarlet, and decked with gold and precious stone and pearls, having in her hand a golden cup full of abominations, even the unclean things of her fornication-* The materials listed here were all associated with the tabernacle, and we can understand how for first century Christians under Jewish persecution this would have encouraged them. The Judaist system, with all its wealth, based in Jerusalem, was nothing but a whore in God's eyes.

Whilst the purple may have had reference in its time to imperial Rome, let's note that "The Canaanites... derived their name from the purple dye which was produced there and used for making an expensive cloth" (R.E. Clements, *Exodus* (Cambridge: C.U.P., 1972) p. 21).

Babylon is given a cup of condemnation to drink (16:19); but here she is pictured holding such a cup and passing it to others in order to make them drunk as she is. The wine would refer to her teaching, whipping up those who drink it into a rage of anti-Jewish and anti-Christian madness. This is clearly appropriate to the effect of jihadist propaganda. Babylon is therefore living out her own condemnation; the cup of wine

she offers to others is that of her and their condemnation. Babylon *is* a cup, so closely identified is she with her teachings and condemnation; and she has made all the nations of the earth / land promised to Abraham drunk with her madness against Israel, both natural and spiritual (Jer. 51:7). The teaching / wine she gives is not only propaganda; it is an invitation to fornicate with her, to closely and intimately associate with her personally.

We can observe that the description of the beast in Rev. 17 is very un-Islamic- in fact, the very opposite. The beast is ridden by a prostitute who is drunk- both abominations to radical Islam. The woman has a golden cup- drinking from golden cups is specifically forbidden to Moslems by the Quran. The cup is full of idolatry- and Sunni Islam particularly is passionately against any idolatry or worship of anything apart from God. An image is set up to the beast and worshipped- also abomination for Moslems. The false prophet does miracles- whereas Moslems claim that Mohammed did no miracles and the Quran itself is the one supreme miracle of Islam. The gaudy decoration of the beast and whore of Rev. 17 is far from the sobriety of jihadist Islam. Why the apparent contradictions? The similarities with what Islam is *not* are so pronounced that a point is surely being made. The beast of Revelation is how God views the jihadist entities and radical Islam. From His perspective, they are the very and exact opposite of all they are claiming. And as has often been observed, the supposed 'religion of peace' is responsible for huge destruction and mass murder. Another possibility is that the more opulent descriptions of the beast actually match well with the Islamic conception of Paradise- as defined, e.g., in the *Encyclopaedia of Islam* (Article 'Jannah'): "One day in paradise is considered equal to a thousand years on earth. Palaces are made from bricks of gold, silver, pearls, among other things. Traditions also note the presence of horses and camels of "dazzling whiteness", along with other creatures. Large trees are described, mountains made of musk, between which rivers flow in valleys of pearl and ruby". It may be that the jihadists seek to portray their caliphate as paradise come on earth.

The image is clearly presented as an idol- this is how the word translated "image" is usually used in the Old Testament. The chief deity of Babylon was Marduk who was considered to be the "god of gold". Herodotus described the image of Marduk as a golden statue seated upon a golden throne before a golden table and a golden altar. Pliny also notes that the robes of Marduk's priests were interlaced with gold. The word used for the breaking in pieces of the image (Dan. 2:34) is that used frequently about the breaking in pieces of idols (Ex. 32:20; Dt. 9:21; 2 Kings 23:6,15; 2 Chron. 34:4). The sequence of metals (gold, silver, brass and iron) is found again in Dan. 5:4,23 in describing the materials used by the Babylonian kings for their idols. It's as if they wanted to show that actually all the metals of the image were comprehended within their empire- and they would last for ever. The latter day entity will be distinctly religious, too. The jihadists are passionately against any idols or memorials, hence their destruction of any Shia shrines they take control of. But in a turn of irony which can only be Divine, their religious system is of itself an idol, which is to be destroyed by the Lord's second coming. The entity represented by the image of Daniel 2, which I suggest refers to an Islamic state established in the land promised to Abraham, is destroyed by the return of Christ as of a stone cut out without hands. But the Kaaba stone, the black stone of Mecca which is the central point of the grand mosque in Mecca towards which Moslems pray, is believed by Moslems to have been cut out without human hands and to have come to earth from Heaven, and will reappear at judgment day. And yet this stone, which serves as the focal point of Islam,

will be shown to be but a parody of the ultimately true stone cut without hands, the Lord Jesus, who will return from Heaven as the stone to smash the image.

17:5 *And upon her forehead a name written of a mystery: Babylon the great, mother of prostitutes and of earth's abominations*- The allusion is to how prostitutes had such names on their foreheads; but this name is that given her by God. The "abominations" of the earth / land were spawned by her. She will set the abomination which will bring about the desolation of the temple mount right there on the temple mount in Jerusalem (Dan. 12:11; Mt. 24:15), and this surely refers to something like a mosque complex or other visual symbol of jihadist Islam. The plural "abominations" may be an intensive plural referring to the one great abomination- that which brings her to desolation. In this context we must read 21:27 which says that there shall be no more abomination allowed in Jerusalem, the holy city of God. For the Islamist abomination there is to be utterly destroyed. The limited AD70 fulfilment was in the icons of Roman gods being placed there by the legionaries. Again, the location for her abomination is Jerusalem. She is clearly set up on the pattern of Jezebel, a woman from what is now Lebanon, who persecuted the Elijah ministry of her day, just as this latter day individual will do according to chapter 11. Radical Islam claims to be against all kind of prostitution and immorality, but the point is that in reality that abusive system is itself a prostitute.

See on 1 Cor. 9:27 for a Jewish / Roman interpretation of "Babylon". The images and applications unite together is that Babylon is enthroned in Jerusalem at the last day, and the fall of Jerusalem is thereby that of Babylon; see on 16:19. There are other similarities with the apostate Jewish system:

|                                              |                                                                                        |
|----------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Double unto her double                       | Jer. 16:18; Is. 40:2                                                                   |
| Sound of the millstone no longer heard...    | Jer. 25:10                                                                             |
| In her was found the blood of the prophets   | Jer. 2:34; Lk. 11:50 [the blood of all the prophets was required of Jerusalem in AD70] |
| Great whore 17:1                             | Ez. 16,23; Jer. 2,3; Hos. 1-4                                                          |
| Arrayed in purple and scarlet                | Ez. 28:5,6,8- a priest, cp. Jer. 4:30                                                  |
| Precious stones                              | The High Priest's breastplate                                                          |
| Golden cup full of abominations              | Ez. 23:25, 32-34 cp. Mt. 23:28                                                         |
| Upon her forehead a name written             | A parody of 'Yahweh' written on the High Priestly mitre                                |
| Mother of harlots                            | Ez. 16:44-52                                                                           |
| Drunk with the blood of the martyrs of Jesus | The first century martyrs                                                              |
| Burnt with fire                              | The punishment for harlotry cp. Ez. 16:37-41                                           |

|                                                         |                                                                                                                               |
|---------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| The habitation of demons                                | Mt. 12:43-45                                                                                                                  |
| Come out of her my people                               | Implies they were already within her, as God's people. Ref. To Lk. 21:20,21 and the need for the Christians to leave Judaism. |
| Her plagues...death, mourning and famine                | Jer. 18:21                                                                                                                    |
| 18:12,13 the things traded in                           | All used in the temple worship cp. 2 Chron. 2:4,7,8.                                                                          |
| Rejoice over her thou heaven...for God hath avenged you | Dt. 32:43 LXX re. Israel                                                                                                      |
| A great millstone cast into the sea                     | As happened to Judaism / the temple mount as a result of faith in Christ (Mt. 21:21; 18:6)                                    |
| Harpers harping                                         | In the temple                                                                                                                 |
| A candle                                                | The menorah                                                                                                                   |
| In her was found the blood of the prophets              | A prophet didn't perish outside Jerusalem (Lk. 13:33).                                                                        |
| Babylon is "the great city"                             | Which in Rev. 11:8 is where Jesus was crucified, i.e. Jerusalem.                                                              |
| Babylon divided into three parts for judgement          | As Jerusalem was (Ez. 5:1-4; Zech. 14:1-4).                                                                                   |

17:6 *And I saw the woman drunk with the blood of the saints and with the blood of the martyrs of Jesus. And when I saw her, I wondered with a great wonder-* Hab. 2:16 describes how Babylon is punished at the Lord's return because of her drunkenness. Rev. 17:6 defines this as being "with the blood of the saints, and with the blood of the martyrs of Jesus", as if to imply that it is the Babylon/ beast's mad, drunken persecution of the saints in the last days that results in the Lord's return in judgment. The "saints" may refer to natural Israel as in Dan. 7:25 and the "martyrs of Jesus" to the witnesses for Him who are killed by the beast, as in chapter 11. Drunkenness is a process; the wine refers to the teaching of Babylon, but it is here the blood of Israel, natural and spiritual. There is the development of a progressive blood lust, the teaching is to kill Israel, and this is exactly the teaching of Jihadism. Once blood is tasted, it becomes the more addictive. Note how after all he has already seen, John marvels at this awful system he now sees portrayed. Although :7 could suggest that the marvelling is a reference to incomprehension.

17:7 *But the angel said to me: Why do you marvel? I will tell you the mystery of the woman, and of the beast with seven heads and ten horns that carries her-* John himself wrote: "Marvel not if the world hate you" (1 Jn. 3:13). Perhaps this is why he is gently rebuked for marvelling [s.w.] when he now sees the real dimensions of the world's hatred for the believers; for it is those who then dwell on the earth / land who

will "marvel" whereas the Lord's people, armed with the book of Revelation, will not (:8). John "wondered with great admiration" at the scarlet beast (:6), just as the world had wondered after the sea beast (Rev. 13:3). And yet we can read John's "marvel" or wonder more positively. The fear or awe of the Lord, our wonder at Him, is the beginning of wisdom. Wonder isn't a kind of intellectual resignation, giving up on the study of God and retreating into numb feelings. Quite the opposite. True wonder leads to a more earnest seeking after wisdom. The Angel told John that John had 'wondered' in amazement at the visions so that God could now reveal the mystery to him (:6,7). In our wonder we sense we are at the beginning of things of infinite significance, we feel we are starting to grasp something ultimate. And we wish to go further. We will glory in the understanding and knowledge of God which that wonder stimulates us to search out (Jer. 9:22,23)

17:8 *The beast you saw was and is not, and is about to come up*- The allusion is to the Yahweh Name, He who was, is and is to come. The Name of blasphemy on Babylon is therefore a take on His holy Name. Babylon will think: "I am, and there is none else beside me" (Is. 47:8). She appropriates to herself the Name ["I am"] and characteristics of Yahweh; this is her blasphemy.

*Out of the abyss, and to go into destruction*- This beast which arises out of the bottomless pit is therefore connected with the same beast from the bottomless pit as in Rev. 11:7. The three beasts [sea beast of 13:1, earth beast of 13:11 and now this scarlet beast] are all in the spirit and power of the dragon of chapter 12. I suggest the visions may be revealing different aspects of the same entity; or we may have the idea that the beasts will each be judged by God, or damaged by Israeli or Western attacks upon them, but regroup and reform into another incarnation of the same Jihadist principles. This kind of thing is quite imaginable given the geopolitics of the earth / land promised to Abraham.

*And they that dwell on the earth shall wonder, they whose name has not been written in the book of life from the foundation of the world, when they behold the beast, how that he was and is not, and shall come*- As noted on :7, those armed with the book of Revelation will not "wonder" at the beast as they will understand it. Perhaps only that generation will fully understand what we read here; because the purpose of prophecy is so that when it fulfils, then we perceive the meaning of the original prophecy. The idea is not that prophecy enables us to work out a timeline of events ahead of time. 13:3,12 explain that the world [here called the earth dwellers, those within the earth / land] shall wonder after the beast because it recovers from a deadly wound; a wound which led to death. Here we read that the beast was, is not [the deadly wound], and yet has revived. That deadly wound is upon one of the heads (13:3), which is identified with the beast; just as the little horn of Daniel 7 and 8 is spoken of as the whole beast. That little horn takes a stand against the Prince of princes and then is destroyed "but not by human power" (Dan. 8:25), i.e. he will be destroyed by the stone [Jesus] cut out without human hands. So the deadly wound could refer to Western or Israeli victory against the beast, but it likely is the result of direct Divine intervention and judgment.

Like the Lamb, who was killed and then raised up (5:6), the Beast seems to disappear and then return to life. This passage may be a reference to some definite event, such as the murder of Caesar and the healing of the empire under Augustus, the legend of *Nero redivivus*, whereby Nero was believed to have returned from the dead. The marvellous cure of the Beast excites admiration and leads to the adoration of the dragon and the Beast (17:8). This is an allusion to the rapid progress of the emperor cult and to the ready acceptance of the immoral example of the emperors. Thus



Caesar is set up as the very antithesis of the one true Lord and Master, Jesus. The latter day application is likewise to a specific individual, the equivalent of Nero in the very last days.

17:9 *Here is the mind that has wisdom. The seven heads are the seven mountains on which the woman sits*- As discussed on :3, the city with seven hills may have in its time referred to Rome, and also to Jerusalem, the seat of the Jewish satan which so persecuted the early church before AD70. But the latter day reference is to the "great city" where Babylon shall be enthroned; and I have argued on 16:19 that this is literal Jerusalem. But the seven mountains may refer also to a system of seven supporting elements within the beast system which are to be found within the beast headquarters in Jerusalem.

17:10 *And they are seven kings. The five are fallen, the one is, the other is yet to come; and when he comes, he must continue a little while*- The seven mountains refer to seven leaders within the beast system, headquartered in Jerusalem, the city of seven hills. They may refer to a sequence of seven kings, or to a group of seven rulers gathered within Jerusalem. But they are photographed, as it were, at the point of the sixth king. The one yet to come provides the connection with how the beast was, is not, and yet is to come. The deadly wounded head will revive in the form of a seventh head. He continues "a little while", the same Greek used in 12:12 for how the dethroned devil / dragon furiously persecutes God's people, knowing that he has but "a little while". His dethronement would correlate with the head receiving a deadly wound in 13:12, the beast 'not being' due to Divine judgment, and then reviving. The judgment and yet revival of Babylon is for a reason; and I suggest that the God who in judgment always remembers mercy does it this way because He seeks even Babylon's repentance. And that is why in the midst of the prophecies of Babylon's judgment, we read that God "would have healed Babylon", of her "deadly wound", but she would not; she refuses the ointment offered (Jer. 51:8,9).

A pre-AD70 date for Revelation has been well argued by J.A.T. Robinson, H.A. Whittaker and Paul Wyls. John would've been pretty old if it was indeed given in AD96 as claimed by some. The many connections between Revelation and the Olivet prophecy and 2 Peter 3 all suggest that it too is a prophecy of AD70. The historical connections are too great to ignore, and seem of little value if the book is simply alluding at a later date to what happened in AD70. Rev. 17:10 speaks of the leadership of the Roman empire, speaking of "five that are fallen"- clearly referring to:

1. Julius Caesar the first Roman Emperor (44 BC-26 BC).
2. Augustus (27 BC – AD 14).
3. Tiberius (AD 14 – 37).
4. Gaius (AD 37 – 41).
5. Claudius (AD 41 – 51)

The leader who "is" would therefore refer to Nero (AD54-68), and the context of persecution would then be that of his reign. The sixth, Nero, was alive when John was given the Revelation; and the seventh was Galba who reigned only 7 months (June 68 - Jan 69). This order of the Caesars is that taken from standard works: Suetonius (*Lives of the Twelve Caesars*); Dio Cassius (*Roman History* 5); Josephus (*Antiquities* 19.1.11 cp. 18.2.2; 18.6.10). The beast's war with the saints for 42 months (13:5-7) would then refer to the Neronian persecution. Note how 13:12,14 interchanges the head with the whole beast. Mosheim confirms this: "The dreadful persecution which took place by order of this tyrant, commenced at Rome about the middle of November in the year of our Lord 64... this dreadful persecution ceased but with the death of

Nero... in the year 68 [June], when he put an end to his own life" L. von Mosheim, *Historical Commentaries* vol. 1, tr. Robert Vidal (NY: Converse, 1854) pp 138,139. In the same way as the first century believers could not have accurately predicted how all this would come about, but would have been wonderfully encouraged as they saw it all happening, and perceived then the interpretation- so we will see the Revelation come true, rather than be able to predict its precise fulfilment, in our final "last days".

The problem with the application to Roman Caesars is that the five kings "fall", the same word soon to be used about the fall of Babylon (18:2). The word doesn't mean to die, but to fall from power to destruction. The idea is that five kings will be killed, either together or in quick succession. Any application to the deaths of a succession of Roman Caesars is only a very shadowy fulfilment of the clearer, fuller reality which will be seen in the last days.

17:11 *And the beast that was and is not, is himself also an eighth, and is of the seven; and he goes into destruction-* We have noted several times the identity between the horns and the beast. The 'seventh which is the eighth' may mean that the final incarnation of the beast is in its seventh horn' as the horns were, are and shall be (:10), so with the beast itself. The apparent confusion between seventh and eighth in Hebrew thought is found in Lk. 9:28, where "an eight days" means seven days, a week. The idea may be that he is the seventh, and even the eighth, reckoning inclusively, because after this 'seventh' there shall be no 'eighth' to follow. Going away into destruction is the same idea as in Mt. 25:46, where the rejected one-time believers "go away into everlasting punishment". Their destruction will be along with the beast; those who in their deepest heart identify with the world shall share the world's judgment.

17:12 *And the ten horns you saw are ten kings who have received no kingdom as yet, but they receive authority as kings with the beast, for one hour-* These ten kings would correspond with the ten toes of Daniel's image which stand upon the earth / land promised to Abraham just before the "little stone" of the returning Lord Jesus destroys them; the ten nations of the latter day confederacies of Psalm 83 and Ez. 38, the ten Canaanite nations which had to be driven out of the land / earth. The focus here is on the leadership; these ten kings may be located in Jerusalem along with the beast. Their actual possession of power over the land is very brief- just "one hour". And it is in "one hour" that Babylon is destroyed (18:10,17,19).

Radical Islam has a lot to say about the land promised to Abraham- what the Bible prophecies refer to as the *eretz* or land / earth. The Islamic State and al-Nusra Front speak much about it; their definition of the Levant or Sham is pretty much that of the land promised to Abraham. 'Nusra' is an acronym standing for the Front for the Defence of the Levant. They claim to be fighting to prepare the way for the coming of the Mahdi to establish God's Kingdom worldwide; they call the land promised to Abraham "Land of *Malahim*," or "epic battles", and they expect there to be the *al-Malhamah al-Kubra*, the "Great Battle of the last hour", at Jerusalem. This is what the Bible calls Armageddon. When the true Jesus appears in Jerusalem, all nations in the earth / land will be gathered together to battle at Jerusalem. And the jihadist theology is preparing them for this. They consciously speak of their caliphate as being extended over the land promised to Abraham, and they are urging people to leave their native lands as Abraham left his, and journey to live in the caliphate, comprised as they wish it to be, of the territory promised to Abraham. They call their caliph or leader 'Caliph Ibrahim / Abraham', and urge migration or *hijrah* to the land promised to him. The pieces are all falling into place to fulfil the Biblical pictures of the last days. Jihadist theology makes much of 'signs of the times', leading up to the coming of the Mahdi and the final battle against the antiChrist. These 'signs of the times' they look for are

often the same signs which are to be found in the Bible, e.g. the re-establishment of Israel as a nation before Armageddon. So as they apparently come true, Islamists are the more convinced that antiChrist [who they call *Dajjal* and understand to be a Jew] is about to appear in Jerusalem, and they must fight him in the last great battle, in order to enable the Mahdi to return. Who they consider to be the antichrist will in fact be the true Christ. They will rush to fight Him, believing Him to be the antichrist they are expecting. Their destruction by Him will presage the establishment of God's *true* Kingdom on earth, the revived and restored kingdom of Israel. This would explain why many Biblical terms used about the very last days are also found in Jihadist theology. They speak of the events of the very last days before the Mahdi returns as being "the hour"; and yet Revelation speaks of how the kings of the earth / land will have power for "one hour" and be destroyed likewise in "one hour" (Rev. 17:12; 18:10,17,19). These similarities are unsurprising because Mohammed clearly plagiarized the Bible and Judaism for his teachings.

17:13 *These are of one mind; and they give their power and authority to the beast-* Their "one mind" is another point of connection and contrast with the believers, who are of "one mind" with each other and their Lord, giving Him all power and authority in their lives. This is very much the language of John's other writings, and 4:11 and 5:12 speak of how believers will have given power and authority to Him. The beast is a veritable antiChrist, a fake Kingdom of God. Their unity is based upon their common acceptance of the Jihadist doctrine of destruction of Israel and Christianity within the earth / land. When that is achieved, they then start to squabble amongst themselves, just as the iron and clay elements of the 10 toes of Daniel 2 do not otherwise get along with each other.

17:14 *These shall war against the Lamb, and the Lamb shall overcome them, for he is Lord of lords and King of kings, and they that are with him, called and chosen and faithful, these also shall overcome-* Overcoming is a major theme of the opening letters of Revelation. Those who overcame in their lives will now have been resurrected and will along with the Lord now overcome this final manifestation of sin. The "war" or (Gk.) battle is that for which the jihadist locusts of 9:7,9 are prepared- by the propaganda from the three sources of 16:13. This is the final battle against the Jews and Christians in the land spoken of in 11:7; 12:17 and 13:7, a kind of "final solution". But it is effectively a gathering together to battle against the returned Lord Jesus (19:19; 20:8). The same word for war / battle is used in all these references.

17:15 *And he said to me: The waters which you saw, where the prostitute sits, are peoples and crowds and nations and tongues-* Babylon "sits" upon the kings of the earth / land; these are the ones she makes drunk with her teaching. The peoples and nations therefore primarily refer to those within the land promised to Abraham and the "sea", the 'waters' immediately surrounding that land, over which the beat has dominion. It is out of these very peoples that there will arise some genuine Christian converts during the tribulation; see on 5:9; 7:9; 11:9 and 14:6.

17:16 *And the ten horns which you saw: they and the beast, these shall hate the prostitute and shall make her desolate and naked-* According to the prototype of the Old Testament invasions of Israel, their enemies turn against each other. We are to expect this in the last days, so that, e.g., Ethiopia will turn against Assyria as happened historically at the time of the Assyrian attack upon Jerusalem. This may be part of the process whereby the horns "hate the whore" of Babylon/Assyria during the final stage of their persecution of God's people (Rev. 17:16 cp. Hab. 2:8). Nah. 3:9 points out that the real strength of Assyria against Israel was on account of the support

she received from the smaller surrounding powers. Likewise the 'Romans' who destroyed the temple in AD70 were largely Arab and Persian mercenaries. Similarly no one nation presently has any likelihood of dominating the Middle East in terms of military power. Iran and Iraq (geographical 'Assyria') will need the assistance of the other surrounding nations to realistically invade Israel. "*Tidings* out of the east and out of the north shall trouble him" (Dan. 11:44) uses the same word translated "rumour" in 2 Kings 19:7, concerning the 'rumour' Sennacherib heard of his Ethiopian allies turning against him. These 'tidings' can be interpreted in a last-days context as referring to news reaching 'Assyria' of her smaller allies turning against her - the horns hating the whore.

Historical Babylon was not destroyed simply by "the Medes" but by her own former allies turning against her. In the same way as God puts this idea into the hearts of the ten kings (:17), so Jer. 50:9 says of Babylon's destruction: "I will stir up and cause to come up against Babylon a company of great nations from the north country". Babylon has just been pictured as sitting upon many waters, the nations within the land promised to Abraham (:15). But these waters are to be dried up from her, and those very waters come upon her in destruction. Thus Jer. 50:38,42: "A drought is on her waters, and they shall be dried up... The sea has come up on Babylon; she is covered with the multitude of its waves". The nations who destroy her were from the borders of the earth / land promised to Abraham: "Many kings shall be stirred up from the uttermost parts of the earth (Jer. 50:41). These are the ten kings of Rev. 17 who hate the whore and destroy her, the "nations" of "all the earth / land" whom Babylon had made drunk (Jer. 51:7). Her destroyers are likened to locusts (Jer. 51:14), a figure for the jihadist invaders in Rev. 9 who were once supportive of her. There is large emphasis in Jer. 51 that these destroyers of Babylon will have been "prepared" by God, raised up by Him; just as we read in :17 that God puts this idea into their hearts: "*Prepare* the nations against her, call together against her the kingdoms of Ararat, Minni, and Ashkenaz... *Prepare* against her the nations" (Jer. 51:27,28).

*And shall eat her flesh and shall burn her completely with fire*- Eating the flesh of a victim is a Hebraism for total hatred. But within John's thought, the connection is with his record of the Lord's teaching that His followers are to eat His flesh (Jn. 6). The idea may be that although they hate her, yet they are participants in her, as we are in the Lord, and they shall therefore not be saved on account of this but rather judged. Judgment by fire is very much the language of Divine judgment, but we see here how this judgment will actually be brought about by the infighting within the beast system. Under the law, prostitutes were to be burnt to death. So the idea seems to be that indeed Babylon refers to a charismatic individual who leads or rides the beast. As Babylon burnt Jerusalem with fire, so she must be burnt (Jer. 21:10; 51:58).

The animals and birds were even under Babylon's control according to Dan. 2:38. But it is the beasts and birds of the sky who later are prophesied as feasting upon Babylon (Rev. 19:17). This is the equivalent of the horns on the beast hating the whore of Babylon who rides it; the destruction of the Babylon system will ultimately be more by Muslim infighting than direct bolts of destruction from God. Indeed, this was historically God's preferred method of destroying Israel's invaders in Old Testament times.

*17:17 For God did put it in their hearts to do his mind and to be of one mind, and to give their kingdom to the beast, until the words of God should be accomplished-*

We see here clear evidence that God can act directly upon the hearts of people to make them be of one mind and do His mind. How much more is He willing to do so through the gift of the Spirit to His own people who wish to do His will. We noted on :16 that the nations under Babylon turn against her because God gives them a mind to do so- just as He initially gave them a mind to be supportive of her. We note that they gave their kingdoms to the beast, but the beast does not give them a kingdom until the final "one hour", which is the "one hour" of their destruction; see on :12. Perhaps it is an argument about power sharing and reward, how to carve up the earth / land promised to Abraham, which leads to their bitter hatred of Babylon.

God will make the various nations under Babylon's rule to "agree" (Rev. 17:17)- there will be an unprecedented unity amongst those nations located within the land promised to Abraham. Pan-Arabism will triumph in the end. This union will lead to economic prosperity for the region (Rev. 18:3)- easy to imagine, given the huge oil wealth of these areas. Babylon will become a fake Kingdom of God; hence she is described in terms elsewhere applied to the people and land of Israel (Rev. 18:22,23). Babylon is arrayed in fine linen (Rev. 18:16) as a pseudo-bride of Christ.

The final "day of the Lord" will contain elements of all the previous 'days' of God's manifestation in the affairs of men. It will be the time when "the words of God are fulfilled" (Rev. 17:17), when "all is fulfilled" (Lk. 21:22,32) - presumably referring to the prophetic word. It is therefore fitting that there are many Old Testament historical backgrounds to the prophecies which relate to the Lord's return; those events were types of the final last day. See on Mt. 24:15. The last days will be the time when *every* prophecy has its ultimate fulfilment (Lk. 21:22; Rev. 17:17); the ultimate climax of prophecy. Therefore we are justified in seeing every prophecy concerning Israel and her neighbours as having at least some latter day application.

17:18- see on Rev. 14:6-9.

*And the woman whom you saw is the great city which reigns over the kings of the earth-* "Which reigns" returns us to the immediate reality which John is watching, and the reality of the moment experienced by God's people under Gentile domination at all times. That great city is now reigning; but we have just seen how she shall come to an end. As noted on 16:19, the "great city" in its latter day sense is Babylon enthroned in Jerusalem.

As in Hezekiah's time the Assyrians likened captivity in their land to the wonders of being in God's Kingdom, so too Babylon is likewise depicted as a fake Kingdom of God. All the nations flowed together unto her (Jer. 51:44), as they will to the true Kingdom of God (Is. 2:2). She is called "that great city, which *reigns* (Gk. '*basilia*') over the kings of the earth" (17:18). 'Basilia' is normally used about God's Kingdom. When Jesus described His Kingdom as a tree "greater than all herbs" with "great branches; so that the fowls of the air may lodge under the shadow of it" (Mk.4:32), He was actually quoting from the description of the kingdom of Babylon in Dan. 4. By doing so, He was pointing out that Nebuchadnezzar's kingdom, legendary as it might be, was but a fake replica of His.

When the mountains flee in Rev. 16:10, Babylon loses the support base of the coalition she leads. These kings are described in Rev. 17:18 as the kings of the land- that promised to Abraham. And within the boundaries of that land we find seven such nations- Palestine, Egypt, Lebanon, Syria, Jordan, Iraq and Iran. The appeal in Rev. 14:6-8 and Rev. 18:4 for Christian believers to "come out of her" would imply that there are believers within those nations and that there will be a major witness made to her- and it is surely highly significant that there has been a great growth in

conversions in those areas in recent times! This is a sure sign that we are approaching the time of the end. Sadly Rev. 18:24 implies that believers will be murdered in these areas in the final tribulation- and already the persecution and murder of Christian converts is in full swing there. The description of Babylon sitting upon various peoples, nations and tongues is to be connected with the same use of the phrase in Rev. 5:9 and 7:9 to describe the world from which Christian believers are drawn out. And significantly, the same phrase is very commonly used in Daniel to describe the area ruled over by historical Babylon (Dan. 3:4,29; 4:1; 5:19; 6:25; 7:14).

Issue number 3 of the Islamic State magazine *Dabiq* frequently talks of the call to follow Ibrahim [Abraham] in making *hijrah* [migration] to the land promised to him: “Islam in the end of times will be more manifest in Shām... So the best of the people on the earth in the end of times will be those who keep to the land of Ibrāhīm’s hijrah, which is Shām” [Majmū’ul-Fatāwā]. Ibn Taymiyyah (rahimahullāh) also said, “So he informed that the best of the people on the earth are those who keep to the land of Ibrāhīm’s hijrah, in contrast to those who pass through it or leave it. The land that Ibrāhīm made hijrah to is Shām... the land of Ibrāhīm’s hijrah... And the land of Ibrāhīm’s hijrah, has been made for us equal to the land of our Prophet’s hijrah. The best people on earth will be those who keep to the land of Ibrāhīm’s hijrah”. Note how the theology of these jihadists effectively replaces the land of Saudi Arabia and the city of Mecca with that of the Levant, the territory promised to Abraham; and Mecca is replaced in their focus by Jerusalem. With Saudi Arabia now supporting the Western coalition against the jihadists, such a shift in emphasis isn’t surprising. But it means that all is being prepared for the last days- for the Bible prophecies focus upon the domination of the land of Israel and Jerusalem in particular. It’s significant that the Caliph of the Islamic State Caliphate is referred to by his followers as Caliph Ibrahim / Abraham; the idea is that the faithful will follow him in migrating from their homelands to the land promised to him- which is the very same *eretz* which is the focus of the Bible’s latter day prophecies, and which is to be dominated by an antiChrist figure and his beast.

## REVELATION CHAPTER 18

18:1 *After these things I saw another angel coming down out of heaven, having great authority; and the earth was lit with his glory-* Perhaps representing the Lord Jesus. The scene of the land lightened with glory recalls Ez. 43:2, a prophecy of how the Kingdom could have been established at the return from exile. The essence of that prophecy will be fulfilled at the Lord's return, although it seems not the details. The visions of Revelation are not chronological; here we revert to how the destruction of Babylon spoken of in chapter 17 comes about, and the implications for believers. John indeed sees "another angel", but this is not to say that the Angel represents someone different to what Angels represented.

18:2 *And he cried with a mighty voice, saying: Fallen! Fallen is Babylon the great, and has become a habitation of demons, a refuge of every unclean spirit, and a refuge of every unclean and hateful bird-* The Babylon section in Revelation is full of allusion to the Old Testament. "Babylon" can be understood as referring to Judaism, to Israel, to the oppressors of God's people under the Roman Empire, and to a latter day Babylon which is the capital of the beast system, and which I suggest refers to radical Islam dominating the earth / land promised to Abraham. The commentary

seeks to bring out these various applications. Babylon has not yet "fallen" because those within her are urged to come out from within her (:4); her fall is announced in order that she might repent, according to Jer. 51:8: "Babylon is suddenly fallen and destroyed: wail for her; take her balm for her pain, if so be she may be healed". But from God's perspective, she had already fallen. The later call to quit Babylon (:4) is made because she refuses this amazingly gracious invitation to repent: "We would have healed Babylon, but she is not healed: [therefore] forsake her" (Jer. 51:9). Earlier the cup was to be given to her but not diluted (Rev. 14:10); now it is to be double filled (:6). This increase in the judgments upon Babylon is because she repeatedly ignored repeated offers of healing and forgiveness. A tenth part of the city falls first (Rev. 11:13) before Babylon completely falls (18:4). She is given the chance of repentance, but instead goes into denial about her loss and real status. This is the idea behind her insistence that she has not been widowed, and is a queen- when she has fallen from power. Yet the very fact these were offered at the last moment, even at 12:01 and not 11:59, reflects the desperate Divine desire for human repentance. Even of His worst enemies. His same passion to save is ever directed toward us too. "Great Babylon" refers specifically to the city of Babylon, which I suggested on 16:19 refers to Jerusalem as the capital of the beast, and place of leadership of the woman known as Babylon, the charismatic leader of the beast system, antiChrist.

There is the assumption by many that all the O.T. prophecies about 'Babylon' were fulfilled in the overrunning of Babylon by the Medes. However, there are many details of those prophecies which didn't have a total fulfilment. It could be argued from this that there must be a literal rebuilding of Babylon and the complete fulfilment of the judgment prophecies against her. However, there are plenty of connections between Babylon and Jerusalem (see on 16:19), and this is the "great city" which shall be judged, where also our Lord was crucified.

The Old Testament judgments upon Babylon were that she would become inhabited by wild, unclean animals: "Therefore the wild animals of the desert with the wolves shall dwell there, and the ostriches shall dwell therein... a dwelling place for jackals" (Jer. 50:39; 51:37). These animals were thought to be connected with unclean spirits and demons. Because Babylon had become a cage and "hold" [AV] or prison for demons and unclean spirits and birds, so she would be punished by being inhabited by wild animals thought to be demon possessed. The Greek terms translated "refuge" in NEV carry the ideas of a prison and cage. Babylon will not let its people out once they are in; and that is what has happened in many cities overrun by the jihadists. A similar idea is used of how the latter day antiChrist, Gog, the chief prince, will be a "guard" [s.w. "prison"] to a group of ten nations who seek to attack and desolate Israel (Ez. 38:7). This is just what Babylon does.

18:3- see on Rev. 17:18.

*For by the wine of the anger of her fornication all the nations are fallen-* The "anger" in view is surely the anger of the judgment wrath of God against her "fornication". The "all nations" are the kings of the earth / land associated with the Babylon confederacy have already at this point begun to drink of that cup which was given to Babylon earlier. Their identity with her (for "he that is joined to a harlot is one flesh" with her) means that Babylon's "fall" is their fall.

Note that being given a cup of wine to drink is a double symbol- of condemnation and also "the cup of blessing". Hence at the breaking of bread we are to review the two possible outcomes of our being given that cup- blessing or condemnation.

*For the kings of the earth had committed fornication with her, and the merchants of the earth grew rich by the power of her greed-* The "all nations" are here defined as the kings of the earth / land promised to Abraham. Not every nation on planet earth will be part of 'Babylon'. They grew rich by her prostitution [for Babylon is a whore] presumably in that wealth was given to her for her services, and her greed and love of opulence means that the commercial sector within the earth / land becomes rich. We are therefore to imagine this latter day entity as being immensely wealthy. Such a situation would probably require the financial collapse of the West and some Middle Eastern Islamic entity becoming fantastically wealthy as a result.

The first century applications would refer to the extreme wealth of the Jewish system based in Jerusalem. The Pharisees "were covetous" (Lk. 16:14), as Babylon was greedy. And Rome likewise. It would have seemed that Rome was invincible, economically and politically unshakeable, admired by the whole world. And yet it was to be brought down by Divine judgment.

18:4 *And I heard another voice from heaven, saying: Come out of her My people-* A final appeal to those living within the territory of this latter day entity. According to previous teaching in Revelation, this group would likely be Israeli Christians, Jews who have turned to Christ in the very last days. They would be under great pressure from the Islamic state governing them to convert to Islam, and they are being urged not to. "Come out" would therefore refer to a spiritual separation, as geographically they would have no place to run to. However it could be that those who respond to this call to "come out" will have a miraculous way of literal exit opened to them, perhaps by the Lord snatching away those who in their hearts say "Yes" to this invitation. This would be the moment of 1 Thess. 4, where those who are alive at the Lord's coming are literally snatched away to meet Him at His coming.

The first century application would be to the Christians fleeing out of the surrounded Jerusalem, in accordance with the Lord's command to flee to the mountains (Mt. 24:16). This would further suggest that the "Babylon" in view here in Jerusalem. See on 16:19.

*Lest you take part in her sins, and partake of her plagues-* Here "sins" is put for 'judgment for sins'. Sin is its own judgment. We cannot sin and psychologically assume that in the future, somehow that sin will not be judged. Sin is its judgment right now. Lot's witness completed, he was told to leave Sodom "lest you be consumed in the iniquity of the city" (Gen. 19:15- alluded to here in Rev. 18:4). Babylon is directly equated with Sodom in Is. 13:19 and Jer. 50:40. Babylon geographically and culturally represents the jihadist neighbours of Israel in our last days- and therefore it is not surprising that related neighbouring nations like Edom, Moab and Ammon are also paralleled with Sodom (Jer. 49:18; Zeph. 2:9). This continues a long-standing Biblical theme that the curses on apostate Israel are the same as those on her enemies- thus Sodom is representative of both Jews and the beast coalition. Jerusalem is the city which is spiritually called Sodom (11:8). The language of Sodom is clearly applied to Jerusalem in the Old Testament (Dt. 29:23; 32:32; Is. 1:10; 3:9; Jer. 23:14). Latter day Babylon is to be punished as Sodom (Is. 13:19; Jer. 50:40). And so we can understand why at this point in Revelation, the judgment of Babylon is framed in terms of Sodom, because Babylon is to be enthroned in Jerusalem (see on 16:19). And will meet a similar destruction.

|                     |                 |
|---------------------|-----------------|
| Babylon (in Rev.)   | Sodom           |
| "I will shew unto   | Cp. God         |
| you the judgment of | showing Abraham |



the great whore"  
(Babylon); 17:2

The beast  
supporting Babylon  
"was and is not and  
shall ascend"; 17:8

"Her sins have  
reached unto  
Heaven, God has  
remembered her  
iniquities"; 18:5

"She has glorified  
herself, and  
lived deliciously"; 18:7

"Utterly burned  
with fire"; 18:8

"Her plagues...  
death... and famine";  
18:8

"The great city...  
great Babylon"; 16:19

"There fell upon  
men a great hail  
out of heaven"  
(16:21)

"They shall see  
the smoke of her  
burning, standing afar  
off for the fear of her  
torment" (18:9,10)

Merchants  
suffered  
through Babylon's fall  
(18:11-19)

the judgment of  
Sodom.

Sodom and  
surrounding cities  
were strong, then  
overrun by  
Abraham, then  
revived.

"The cry of  
Sodom... is great  
because their sin is  
very grievous ...the  
cry of it is come  
unto me" (Gen.  
18:20,21)

"Pride...  
fullness of bread"  
(Ez. 16:49)

'Sodom' =  
'burning'.

"He overthrew  
all the inhabitants  
of the cities, and  
that which grew  
upon the ground"  
(cp. "famine"; Gen.  
19:25).

The city of  
Sodom.

"The Lord  
rained upon  
Sodom... brimstone  
and fire from the  
Lord out of heaven"  
(Gen. 19:24).

Abraham  
standing far away  
and seeing the  
smoke of  
Sodom's burning  
indicates that the  
surrounding kings  
did likewise (Gen.  
19:28).

Sodom was a  
trading centre (Lk.  
17:28)

"...a great  
millstone cast into the  
sea ...thus with  
violence shall...  
Babylon.. be found no  
more at all" (18:21)

"Her smoke rose  
up" (19:3)

Sodom now  
appears to be  
submerged in the  
Dead Sea, to be  
found no more.

"Sodom... the  
land of the plain...  
the smoke of the  
country went  
up" (19:28)

As the Jews were called to leave literal Babylon (Zech. 2:6,7) and Lot was called out of Sodom, so Jews and true believers will be encouraged to come out from Babylon of the last days. The prosperity of Sodom and Babylon made God's people disinclined to leave them. And the opulence of Babylon, and the way she is as a cage (see on :2), will make it all the more difficult for the latter day believers to come out of the Babylon system.

And so the apostate amongst God's people will share in Babylon's judgment. And for all of us, if we are not separate from this world now, we will not be separated from them when the judgments fall. Those who don't come out from Babylon will share her judgments. There are strong parallels between Babylon and Jerusalem; and they are deeper than simply because the beast / Babylon will capture Jerusalem and enthrone themselves there. Jerusalem is judged as Babylon because in spiritual essence, they were no different. Zion lost her children and also her husband whilst still a young woman (Is. 49:21; 54:6), just as Babylon would (Is. 47:9). Each street of Jerusalem was named after an idol, just as was the case in Babylon (Jer. 11:13)- and thus Jerusalem shared Babylon's judgment. Apostate Israel were always treated like the surrounding Gentile world in the time of their judgments (Jer. 4:7). Israel worshipped the Babylonian gods, and so they were sent along with Bel their idol to Babylon, where their hearts were. And so they were "Condemned with the world...". Likewise in the 'judgment day' of AD70, the 'rejected' Jews were sent back into Egypt as slaves. Their condemnation was expressed in terms of an undoing of the redemption from the world which they once experienced.

18:5 *For her sins have reached even to heaven, and God has remembered her iniquities-* The language of the Amalekites, the tower of Babel and Sodom. All these are used as historical foretastes of the last days, and they all involve who are now the Islamic peoples of the Middle East. Jerusalem will become the capital of the beast within the earth / land. Perhaps they will seek to build some mosque complex there, the abomination that brings desolation to the temple mount, just as the tower of Babel was built. But like the Amalekites, who were also dwellers in the earth / land promised to Abraham, this gross iniquity will reach a measure beyond which God will dramatically intervene. They were allowed to dwell in the earth / land until a point when their sin was "full" and then God would drive them out of the land and let Israel dwell there again once their tribulation ended (Gen. 15:16).

18:6 *Give to her even as she gave, and repay her double according to her deeds. In the cup in which she mixed, mix for her a double portion-* This appears a stronger judgment than for historical Babylon: "As she has done, do unto her" (Jer. 50:15). This is to be doubled. Earlier the cup was to be given to her but not diluted

(14:10); now it is to be double filled. This increase in the judgments upon Babylon is because she repeatedly ignored repeated offers of healing and forgiveness. As noted on 17:4, the cup of fornication Babylon drunk and offered to others was in fact the cup of her condemnation. She was quite literally drinking condemnation to herself, just as the rejected within the household do (1 Cor. 11:29). If we enquire to whom this command is addressed, we return to the address to "My people" of :4, who are asked to not only come out of Babylon, but to participate in judging her. The prophecies about the fall of Babylon in Jer. 50 and 51 repeatedly state that it is a revived, repentant Judah which shall judge Babylon. This has yet to be fulfilled, as they were disobedient to God's intended program for them at the time of the restoration.

And yet as explained on 17:16, the destruction of Babylon is at the hands of her ten kings.

It would appear from this that there must be two stages in Babylon's judgment: -

- 1) The jihadist armies attacking her in Jerusalem. They are themselves largely destroyed whilst doing this.
- 2) The saints and Jews complete the judgment, possibly directing some of the repentant Islamist peoples, giving some of the spoils to them.

18:7 *As she glorified herself and lived in luxury, so give her a like measure of torment and mourning, since in her heart she says: I sit as a queen, I am no widow, and mourning I shall never see-* The image of "luxury" continues the allusions to Sodom in :5 and :9. This all suggests that the latter day Babylon will achieve a striking level of opulence. It's debatable whether Israel's Islamic neighbours have reached such a state at the present time.

The chief sin of all pagan empires consists in their assertion that their power and their authority derive exclusively from themselves, that they are their own masters, recognizing no superior law. Old Testament prophecies about the sudden destruction of literal Babylon are the basis for the words of Revelation about latter day Babylon. Yet they were never literally fulfilled to completion. They will come finally true in the judgments upon the Babylon system of the beast. Consider:

|                                                                                                                                                                                                 |                                                                                                                                                                    |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| “You who are given to pleasures, that dwells carelessly, that says in your heart, I am, and none else beside me: I shall not sit a widow, neither shall I know the loss of children” (Is. 47:8) | “How much she has glorified herself, and lived deliciously... for she has said in her heart, I sit a queen, and am no widow, and shall see no sorrow” (Rev. 18:7). |
| “But these two things shall come to you in a moment in one day, the loss of children, and widowhood” (Is. 47:9)                                                                                 | “Therefore shall her plagues come in one day, death and mourning” (Rev. 18:8)                                                                                      |
| “Let now the astrologers, the stargazers, the monthly prognosticators, stand up” (Is. 47:13)                                                                                                    | “For by your sorceries...” (Rev. 18:23)                                                                                                                            |

Therefore we conclude that the Babylon of Revelation is presented as the reincarnation of the Babylon of Jeremiah and Isaiah, literal Babylon, which awaits her full punishment. This conclusion is strengthened once it is appreciated how the harlot Babylon of Rev. 17, loud, gaudy, decked with jewellery and painted face, is replete

with reference to Semiramis, the goddess / mother of Nimrod, and one of the patron gods of literal Babylon.

Her refusal to accept she is a widow speaks of someone in denial. The dragon is cast down from 'heaven' by direct Divine intervention in chapter 12, and yet goes into the wilderness to furiously persecute the woman. It seems there will be direct judgment from God against Babylon, in order to appeal for her to repent, in the spirit of "take balm for her pain, if so be she may be healed" (Jer. 51:8). Truly God does not willingly afflict, but in judgment remembers mercy, and His ultimate aim of achieving His glory. Thus a tenth part of the city falls first (11:13) before Babylon completely falls (18:4). She is given the chance of repentance, but instead goes into denial about her loss and real status. This is the idea behind her insistence that she has not been widowed, and is a queen- when she has fallen from power.

18:8 *Therefore in one day shall her plagues come, death and mourning and famine-* The Philistines, clearly typical of Israel's present Arab neighbours, will also die from severe famine in the last days (Is. 14:30). This may well be due to the weaponry used to inflict this upon Israel being used by the Islamists against themselves. Babylon's famine coming "in one day" would suggest something along these lines - how else can a famine be suddenly created in a day? Famine coming in a day also speaks of modern 'just in time' supply networks and transport, which once interrupted can bring an area to food bankruptcy very suddenly. Earlier than our own age, this would have been impossible. But we can also understand this strange language of famine in a day by proposing that the meaning of time is collapsed around the Lord's return. This would enable all the latter day prophecies to come true, but not in real time as we know it. Babylon is to be punished with famine in one day; yet famine is a process (Rev. 18:8). In one day her judgments come, and yet also in one hour (18:10). Surely the lesson is that time is compressed. The events around Christ's return were prefigured by those at the time of Joshua's conquest of the land. Some of the records of his campaigns require a huge amount to have been achieved by his soldiers within around 36 hours. The comment that so much was achieved "at one time" (Josh. 10:42) may hint at a compression of time to enable it. "The sun stood still" may well be intended to teach that the meaning of time was collapsed by God, rather than that the sun literally stood still (Josh. 10:12,13). And the sun standing still over Gibeon is mentioned in Is. 28:21 as typical of the time when Yahweh will do "His strange work, and bring to pass his act, his strange act" in the last days. The same may be true when the shadow went back for Hezekiah. The movement of the planets need not have been altered; the meaning of time was simply suspended. Rev. 8:12, also speaking of the last days, says that "the day shone not for a third part of it, and the night likewise". Could this mean that one day and one night last only two thirds of their usual length, whilst the judgments of the fourth Angel are poured out upon the land? I would suggest that the Lord had in mind the suspension of time when he asked that "the hour might pass from him" in Gethsemane (Mk. 14:35); rather than asking to escape the cross in this request, he was perhaps asking for it all to happen in only a moment of real time.

*And she shall be completely burned with fire. For strong is the Lord God who judges her-* This is the judgment for whores. Babylon is literal Jerusalem where she is enthroned (see on 16:19). The punishment by fire in Jerusalem would then make good sense of the Lord's idea that Gehenna- the always burning fire near Jerusalem- is to be used to destroy all God's enemies of all ages. They will share in the condemnation of the world they so loved in their lives. The burning was Sodom's judgment; and we have seen on :4 that Babylon is Sodom is Jerusalem.

18:9 *And the kings of the earth, who committed fornication and lived wantonly with her, shall weep and wail over her, when they look upon the smoke of her burning-* Alluding to Abraham watching the smoke of Sodom's burning (see on :5 and :7). These kings of the land are those who also played a part in her judgment, who hated the whore (see on 17:16). But their hearts are still with her, lamenting with the grief of those who wistfully keep thinking of what could have been. But as noted on :10, the reference may not be to the actual "kings", the horns of the beast; but to the commercial leaders of the surrounding world who are associated with the princes of the earth (:23).

Is. 34 describes the judgments of "all nations" around Israel, notably "upon Idumea", in language which is clearly alluded to in the later prophecies of Babylon's doom in Revelation (Is. 34:9,10 = Rev. 14:11; 17:16; 18:9; v.11=Is. 14:23). Indeed, all God's prophecies against Israel's enemies have marked points of contact with each other. Thus the prophecies against Tyre in Is. 23 are shot through with links with those against Babylon in Revelation; and "as at the report (prophecy) concerning Egypt, so shall they be sorely pained at the report of Tyre"(Is. 23:5). Is. 14:3 says that Babylon treated Israel like the Egyptians did; they too gave them "sorrow... fear, and... hard bondage wherein (Israel) wast made to serve". Because of these similarities in how they treated and will treat God's people, their judgments will be similar. Yet a number of these nations, notably Egypt and Tyre, are described as being judged and destroyed by Babylon (e.g. Ez. 26:7). However, there is good reason to think that Babylon's own judgment will be at the hands of nations like these, who come under her umbrella during their invasion of Israel. The resolution of this apparent contradiction lies in the prophecies concerning the Islamist powers destroying each other in the final conflict, thus fulfilling all these prophecies concerning their judging of each other.

18:10 *Standing far away for the fear of her torment, saying: Woe, woe, the great city! Babylon, the strong city! For in one hour does your judgment come-* Their deep grief stands in contradistinction from the Heavenly rejoicing at Babylon's fall (:20). They are her sympathizers and are not brought to repentance by her fall. They fear that her torment shall come upon them. They retreat from her, just as the animals and birds scuttle away from under the falling tree of Babylon. They praise Babylon's strength and glory after she has fallen. They are not themselves in Babylon, but have benefitted from her through commerce, as the rest of the chapter makes clear. They would therefore refer to the commercial leaders of the 'sea' around the 'earth'; the Gentile nations who became enriched by Babylon's wealth and demand for delicacies. Surely Western commercial leaders are within this group. They are stunned by how quickly the whole system fell apart, in one hour. Her "torment" however has been going on throughout the three and a half years of the tribulation; for the two witnesses tormented those who dwelt in the land (11:10 s.w.), leading to such rejoicing when they are killed at the end of the tribulation. That torment was a foretaste of the final torment of condemnation spoken of so often (14:10; 20:10 etc.). Again we can perceive that the torment was in order to give Babylon and the beast a chance of repentance by showing them ahead of time what Divine judgment would look like for them unless they repented.

The destruction of the city is a sudden thing. The phrase "in one hour" occurs three times in Rev. 18. This destruction is like that of Sodom and Gomorrah- in a moment, by Divine intervention through fire, sulphur etc. This is not how Rome came to an end, indeed Rome as a city did not really come to an end; and literal Babylon

was not physically destroyed “in one hour” in 536 BC. The predicted fall of Babylon must therefore be in our last days, referring to the destruction in a moment of the city which has become the capital of the beast- Jerusalem.

18:11 *Standing far away for the fear of her torment, saying: Woe, woe, the great city! Babylon, the strong city! For in one hour does your judgment come-* See on :10. Their fear of sharing in her torment is a major theme.

The apostate religious system called "Babylon" in Revelation is evidently presented in the language of Solomon - at the time his kingdom was apparently flourishing:

|                                                  |                        |
|--------------------------------------------------|------------------------|
| 1 Kings                                          | Revelation             |
| 10:14                                            | 13:17,18               |
| 10:23                                            | 18:11,12,15            |
| 11:1,2                                           | 17:1,2                 |
| 10:22                                            | 18:17,19               |
| 10:23                                            | 18:3,17                |
| 10:21,22                                         | 18:12                  |
| 10:11                                            | 18:12                  |
| 10:22                                            | 18:12                  |
| 10:10,25                                         | 18:13                  |
| 10:23                                            | 18:3,9                 |
| 10:28                                            | 18:12                  |
| 9:22                                             | 18:13                  |
| 11:1,5 (Solomon influenced by Zidonian idolatry) | 2:20 cp. 1 Kings 16:31 |
| 2 Chron. 9:15 (666)                              | 13:18                  |

This serves to cement the connection between Babylon and Jerusalem, especially the Jerusalem temple. In the first century, it was Judaism which was the great satan / adversary and devil / false accuser of the Christians. The temptation was always to give in to the Judaist campaign and return to Judaism. Paul, Peter and John are full of this theme in their letters. But here that system is described in the worst possible terms.

18:12 *Merchandise of gold and silver and precious stone and pearls and fine linen and purple and silk and scarlet and all kinds of scented wood, and every vessel of ivory and every vessel made of most precious wood and of brass and iron and marble-* These are the materials associated with Solomon's kingdom and temple, and the materials of the tabernacle and temple cult. We see too a reference to how the High Priest Caiaphas was dressed, also with "purple" (Lk. 16:19), likewise in vain appearance. It was the religious clothing of Israel in Ez. 16:10. Throughout these descriptions we see allusions to the Jewish high priesthood. The whole verse clearly alludes to the glory of Tyre in Ez. 27. These various layers of allusion serve to build up the overall picture- an appearance of Judaistic religiosity which is thoroughly carnal and pagan. Judaism was indeed the first century Babylon; see on :11.

The latter day Babylon will therefore seek to quickly build a kingdom and worship system which apes that of Israel and the temple cult- hence the gross blasphemy and abomination on the temple mount which calls for desolation.

18:13 *And cinnamon and spice and incense and ointment and frankincense and wine and oil and fine flour and wheat and cattle and sheep and horses and chariots and slaves and the souls of men-* As noted on :12, all these things are associated with Solomon's temple and Kingdom, and the materials of the tabernacle and temple cult. It would have been a great comfort to those under pressure from the Jewish satan in

the first century to see God's perspective on that evil system. The latter day application is to an Islamist paradise, more exotic than the citadels of the Gulf states, established in Jerusalem, with distinct religious overtones. And all to be destroyed even quicker than it was established.

Slaves in the first century were seen as mere bodies owned by their masters or mistresses. Hence Rev. 18:13 describes slaves as *somata*, bodies. They were seen as both the economic and sexual property of those who owned them. It seems Paul had this in mind when he spoke of how we have one master, Christ, and our bodies are indeed not our own- but they are His, to be used according to His wishes. For many slaves, this would've meant running the risk of death or flogging. And yet despite this radical demand, Christianity spread rapidly amongst the huge slave population of the first century world.

"Slaves and souls of men" is last in the list, as if to give especial emphasis to how "Babylon" was built upon slavery. 'Slaves and souls [bodies] of men' is saying the same thing two or three times over. Slaves were indeed treated as "bodies", and their bodies were inspected in the slave markets as if they were animals. But the point is doubly emphasized- because "bodies" clearly implies they were "men", but "bodies of men" labours the point. So we could even say the point is laboured three times. The power and wealth of Rome was built upon the back of slavery. And a large proportion of first century Christians were slaves. They would have found this greatly comforting. The "soul" of Babylon longed for wealth and luxury; but at the expense of the "souls" of the slaves.

Because the initial audience of Revelation were largely Christian slaves, we find many allusions to slavery throughout the book. Believers were "purchased" by the blood of the Lord- the very term used of slaves being purchased and thus transferred from one master to another. This is a well known theme of the NT letters- we were purchased by the Lord and are therefore His slaves. Even if they were slaves of men, they were the Lord's slaves, and their service to earthly masters was actually performed unto Him. This explains why Revelation speaks so much of Jesus as the real Lord and Master, to whom His people are obedient (Rev. 4:8,11; 6:10; 12:17; 14:12). Obedience is stressed, not because works can save, but because 'obedience' to earthly masters was such a major construct in the life of a slave. The point being, that their obedience was to their true Master, the Lord Jesus, who is Lord of all human lords. The background of slavery likewise helps us better understand the idea of being branded with a seal on the forehead (Rev. 7:3; 14:1). This spoke of how they were permanently owned by the Master whose seal or branding they bore. But a slave was only branded in this way if they had been disobedient or had tried to run away, and had consequently been permanently committed to their Master's usage for all time, until death. Very few slaves were branded upon their foreheads with their master's name. The idea may therefore be that all the Lord's slaves have in fact been disobedient, but they recognize that, and eagerly take His seal or branding upon them, and are now permanently His until death.

18:14 *And the fruits which your soul lusted after are gone from you, and all things that were dainty and sumptuous are lost to you, never to be found again!* - The prophecy has multiple applications; to Jerusalem of the first century; to Rome; and to the restored Babylon of the last days. The reference is to Israel lusting after the fruits of Egypt, and Adam and Eve lusting for the forbidden fruit in Eden. Their sin will be enshrined and manifested in this final system of evil and lust as never before- all under the guise of the strictest possible interpretation of Islam. Just as Judaism did the

same in Jerusalem in the first century, under the front of careful obedience to the Law of Moses.

18:15 *The merchants of these things who were made rich by her shall stand far away, for the fear of her torment, weeping and mourning-* This category are not consumed in her judgments; they have come out of her in response to flee Babylon lest they partake in "her torment", just as Lot's wife did; and yet they are equally on her side, with her in spirit, just as materialistic, as Lot's wife was. Or, as suggested on :10, these merchants are those outside of the earth / land, the likes of Western European businessmen, who became wealthy by serving the huge demand for luxury goods which arises from the dominance of the beast. Perhaps the words of lament are as it were put in their mouths, so we realize the nature of Babylon's existence. In fact in Revelation we know little about the apocalyptic Babylon until we read the laments over her after she is destroyed. They are clearly not believers nor are they fully repentant; for their weeping over her fall contrasts with Heaven's rejoicing at it (:20).

We need to note that the same word for "made rich" is used in the opening letters for how there are some in the church of the last days who are likewise "made rich" and thereby turn away from Christ (3:17). Even true Christians will be caught up in the attraction of making quick bucks for the sake of a nominal acceptance of the beast system.

18:16 - see on Rev. 17:18.

*Saying: Woe, woe, the great city! She that was dressed in fine linen and purple and scarlet and decked with gold and precious stone and pearl!-* "Fine linen" would be very relevant to the application of 'Babylon' to apostate Judaism in the first century, with the precious stones referring to the High Priestly breastplate. The items in which Babylon trades are therefore presented in terms of the opulence of Solomon's Israelitish Kingdom. Appearance of spirituality can be deeply obnoxious to God; Isaiah had predicted that He saw Jerusalem as Sodom, the virgin of Israel as a whore (Is. 1:9). And that language is definitely used here. An appearance of spirituality is no guarantee of acceptance with God; it may actually be obnoxious to Him.

The image of fine linen and wealth recalls to our minds images of wealthy sheikhs walking around Islamic citadels in the Gulf states. But the entity briefly created by Babylon in Jerusalem will outstrip them all. The white linen of jihadist religious leaders is an image mixed here with that of obscene wealth, and a pretension to the Jewish high priesthood. The precious stones, scarlet etc. are all associated with the tabernacle system. This is also a false system of worship. The picture exactly fits Islamist supremacy. We note the revival of gold and precious stones as effective currency in the areas now under the control of Islamic fundamentalists in the area around Israel.

And yet pearls refer to the true believers (21:21). The believers are dressed in white linen, symbolizing righteousness (19:8). The suggestion therefore is that Babylon is quasi-religious and appears highly moral, when actually it is morally delinquent. This is exactly what we see in Jihadist Islamism. There is clear reference to the Jewish priesthood, and the description also connects with the white clothing of Islamic religious leaders. But they are a fake kingdom of God, their leaders are fake saints, and their leader is the anti-Christ.

18:17 *For in an hour so many great riches are laid waste. And every shipmaster and everyone that sails anywhere, and mariners, and as many as gain their living at sea, stood far away-* Despite having seen direct Divine intervention, throughout the three and a half years of "torment" upon the earth dwellers from the miracles of the



two witnesses (11:9,10), and now Babylon's final destruction, these commercial people are so materialistic that they do not repent. All they can think about is how much they have lost, and how tragic it is that such material wealth is now "laid waste". This is the power of materialism. It has destroyed so much faith in so many people, and we are to therefore be the more aware of its insidious power.

18:18 *And cried out as they looked upon the smoke of her burning, saying: What city is like the great city?*- They are connected with faithful Abraham observing Sodom's burning; but although the great city is no more, they speak in the present tense as though it is still existing. This is a reflection of their grief at how much has been lost, both to them and in general terms. This is how stubbornly materialistic they are.

18:19 *And they cast dust on their heads and cried, weeping and mourning, saying: Woe, woe, the great city, wherein all that had their ships in the sea were made rich by reason of her expense! For in one hour she is made desolate*- This casting of dust on the head is sometimes (as with the Ninevites), but not always, associated with repentance. It may be significant that there is no apparent record of the destruction of these merchants. Are we to hope that they repented? Perhaps the idea is that they have the possibility to do so. As noted earlier, their observing of the smoke of Babylon's judgment connects them with faithful Abraham, watching the judgment of Sodom. The vagueness as to whether this refers to repentance or not is perhaps because this is yet unknown- for these people have freewill, and shall make their own decision regarding repentance after Babylon's judgment. But their weeping contrasts with the rejoicing of the believers (:20). Their particular weeping for their now redundant fleets of ships speaks of how their economies were tied in to servicing Babylon with luxury goods; and now that was suddenly, in an hour, no more. Their whole economic structure was useless. And despite all the evidence of Divine involvement and all the evidence of His visible involvement in this earth again, they could only see the immediate and the material, what was right before their eyes. And tragically that is how the majority of people are today.

18:20- see on Jn. 7:24.

*Rejoice over her, you heaven, and you saints, and you apostles, and you prophets. For God has judged your judgment on her*- All the surrounding nations did to Israel shall be done to them. This explains the links between the seals [the judgments on Israel at the hands of their neighbours in the last days] and the trumpets and vials, which speak of similar judgments coming upon Israel's enemies within the land / earth promised to Abraham. The saints may be Israel (Dan. 7:25); the prophets would be the two witnesses of chapter 11. The "heaven" would refer to the Heavenly, Angelic representatives of those who were killed and tormented by the beast during her three and a half year domination of the earth / land; for John had seen them in his visions of the heavenly throne room, and now he sees them rejoicing. What the beast did during his brief domination is now done to him. So the saints and Christians in view are particularly those who endured that.

We can consider the AV here to be correct: "Rejoice over her, thou heaven, and ye holy apostles and prophets; for God hath avenged you on her". "On [ek] her" is the same Greek phrase as in :4, "come out of [ek] her". The idea could therefore be that the watching faithful rejoice that God has avenged those who came out of her [Babylon]. "For God has avenged you who came out of her" would be a fair translation. "Rejoice *over* her" could simply mean that those in 'heaven' stand *epi* or simply above Babylon, watching things play out. This implies that some will in fact

come out of Babylon, and this accounts for all the statements to the effect that although the time for judgment has truly come, there are still repeated efforts to elicit repentance even after the time of opportunity has closed. *And some respond.* The rejoicing in Heaven can then more comfortably connect with the Lord's teaching throughout Lk. 15, where rejoicing in Heaven is associated with repentance. Their joy is therefore not simply at judgment of Babylon, but that some had come out of her. And this would explain why the rejoicing 'heavens' address specifically those who came out of Babylon: "For God has avenged *you* who came out of her". Continually, we see that God is a Saviour and like His Son, takes no pleasure in the death of the wicked but rejoices to save His people, however small a minority they may be.

18:21 *And a strong angel took up a stone, as it were a great millstone, and cast it into the sea, saying: Thus with a mighty fall shall Babylon, the great city, be cast down, and shall never be found again-* Jeremiah's prophecies about Babylon had been cast into the Euphrates tied to a stone (Jer. 51:63). But this is the fate of Babylon. There is a parallel between the word of prophecy, and Babylon; so sure is it of fulfilment.

The same judgment is for those who make little ones stumble (Mt. 18:6). Such behaviour is the same as Babylon's obvious apostasy. The Lord taught that the believer who makes his brother stumble should have a millstone hung around his neck and be cast into the sea (Lk. 17:2). This is exactly Babylon's judgment (Rev. 18:21). The unloving in the ecclesia will be treated like the unloving world whose spirit they share. The rejected will weep and gnash their teeth (Mt. 25:30)- and be sent back into the Babylon-world, where they are also weeping and angry (Rev. 18:15,19). As the tree of Babylon will be cut down, so will the rejected be (Dan. 4:14,23 = Mt. 7:19). As Babylon is burnt with fire (Rev. 18:8), and indeed the whole 'world' too (2 Pet. 3:10), so will the rejected be (Mt. 13:40 etc.). It seems the rejected saints will share the judgements of Satan, the beast, the antiChrist. Thus Babylon has a millstone tied around her neck and she is thrown into the sea (Rev. 18:21), just as the judgement of the rejected saints is described (Mt. 18:6). They will be ground to powder by the stone of Christ (Mt. 21:44), just as he will fall on the nations of the Babylon confederacy and grind them to powder (Dan. 2:34). The Lord will appoint his unwatchful servant a place of condemnation "with the unbelievers" (Lk. 12:46). This is understandable once we appreciate the idea that there are only two Kingdoms, God's and Satan's. The unworthy were effectively in Satan's Kingdom, therefore they will suffer the judgement that is prepared for it. Therefore we *must* separate from Babylon, Satan's Kingdom, or else we will receive her judgements (Rev. 18:4). Likewise the condemnation of the apostate in Israel is very often described in the language of the judgements on the surrounding kingdoms (e.g. Joel 1:5,10-12 = Is. 16:10; Ez. 16:37-39 = Rev. 17:16; Jer. 16:9 = Rev. 18:23; Jer. 49:4 = Jer. 31:22; Jer. 51:27 = Joel 1:4; 2:1; Jer. 50:13 = 19:8). The cup of judgement that Israel will drink will be given to the Arab nations who have afflicted her (Is. 51:23). This is all the principle of Rev. 18:6; as the latter day Babylon does to natural and spiritual Israel, so it will be done to her. Apostate Israel are often described as if they are their neighbours- they share the same judgements, because they have effectively sold their birthright. Israel "sat... as the Arabian in the wilderness" (Jer. 3:2). Judah would be punished along with Egypt, Moab and Ammon, the circumcised with the uncircumcised (Jer. 9:25,26). Thus Rom. 9:8 describes faithless Israel as "the children of the flesh", with allusion to Arab Ishmael; and Gal. 4:23 likewise. The early chapters of Romans reason that both Jew and Gentile receive the same judgment, because both have sinned. The judgements on the nations are all described in similar language, whatever time or place they were in.

Thus Babylon's judgement in Rev. 18 is based on the judgement of Egypt as recorded in Ez. 32:4-10, and Egypt's judgement of Ez. 29:4 is that of Gog in Ez. 38:4. The whole description of Egypt's judgments in Ez. 29 is also full of links with those in store for Israel. *They* will cry unto Yahweh in their affliction (Is. 19:20), just as Israel did when Egypt persecuted them (Ex. 2:23; 14:10). There are so many examples of this. Surely the point is that fundamentally, all the nations of the world, in whatever time and place, are all fundamentally the same Kingdom of Satan, and will suffer the same destruction by the Kingdom of God. Likewise the Kingdom of God to which we belong is not limited by time or geography.

When God described Nineveh as a "great city", the very fact of its size elicited a desire to spare it. And of course we meet the same phrase in Revelation, where a condemned Babylon is described as a "great city". This was not God gleefully preparing to destroy a huge city. He surely had Nineveh in mind when He inspired those words. This was, and will be, a God whose very heart is touched by the tragedy of sinners having to be punished, and who is open to a change of purpose if they will repent. Thus the latter day appeal to "Come out of her!", whether we understand 'Babylon' as false religion, the Moslem world, the world of sinners or whoever, is rooted in God's spirit of passionate love towards Nineveh. As Jonah "cried" against Nineveh, so God 'cries' against Babylon (Rev. 18:2). We who make that appeal in these last days should be reflecting here on earth the mind of God in Heaven; not merely pronouncing doom and gloom against 'Babylon', but warning them of God's stated intentions towards them *with a heart that bleeds for them and seeks their repentance*.

The writer of Psalm 137, sitting angry and frustrated by a Babylonian riverside, with his guitar hanging on a willow branch, being jeered ("tormented" Ps. 137:3 RVmg.) by the victorious Babylonian soldiers who had led him away captive... he felt *so* angry with them. Especially when they tried to make him sing one of the temple songs ("sing us one of the songs of Zion"). And, as a bitter man does, his mind went from one hurt to another. He remembered how when Babylon had invaded, the Edomites hadn't helped their Hebrew brethren (Obadiah 11,12). They had egged on the Babylonian soldiers in ripping down the temple, shouting [in a chorus?] "Raze it, raze it, even to the foundation". And so in anger and bitterness this Jew prays with tears, as he remembered Zion, "O daughter of Babylon... happy shall he be, that rewardeth thee as thou hast served us. Happy shall he be that taketh and dasheth thy little ones against the rock" (:8,9 RV). God read those angry words as a prayer, and in some sense they will have their fulfilment. For these words are picked up in Rev. 18:8,21 and applied to what will finally happen to Babylon. Her spiritual children will be dashed against the rock of Christ, the stone of Daniel 2:44, at His return. He will dash in pieces the Babylon-led people that oppose Him.

18:22 *And the voice of harpers and minstrels and flute players and trumpeters shall never be heard again in you, and no craftsman of whatever craft shall ever be found again in you, and the voice of a mill shall never be heard again in you-* An allusion to Solomon's temple, confirming the religious nature of 'Babylon'. This fits the first century application to Judaism, and to a latter day application to Jihadist Islam, which claims to be the true Judaism. Craftsmen and creative people of all sorts will have been brought to Babylon, enthroned in Jerusalem, both to build it and continue servicing it. Mills were operated by slaves; those Jews and Christians being abused by this latter day Egypt / Babylon. But that shall be no more.

18:23 *The light of a lamp shall never shine again in you, and the voice of the bridegroom and of the bride shall never be heard again in you-* The Old Testament basis for this is not simply the judgments upon Babylon, but also those upon Jerusalem at the hand of Babylon (Jer. 7:34; 16:9). For latter day Babylon shall be built in Jerusalem; see on 16:19. So it is appropriate also that what Babylon did to Jerusalem shall be done to her. This all suggests that Babylon shall desolate and judge Jerusalem in the latter days and then in turn be judged for doing so. Jerusalem will fall to her enemies, as Zech. 14 and the Lord's Olivet Prophecy clearly require.

The contrast is with how the Lord Himself will be the eternal light of Jerusalem, the city of God (22:5; Is. 60:19,20). A new Jerusalem shall come down from God out of Heaven to replace the burnt ruins of the Babylon system there.

*For your merchants were the princes of the earth; and with your sorcery were all the nations deceived-* All the princes of the earth / land were influenced by her wine, making them drunk with a fanaticism against Israel and true Christians. This radical jihadist propaganda was accepted by the merchants because it made them wealthy by serving the demands of Babylon. We can therefore see the West accepting her sorcery to some extent, for purely economic motives. Although the ten horns / kings of the land are to be destroyed, they are here associated with the "merchants", those not within Babylon itself, but serving her.

18:24 *And in her was found the blood of prophets, and of saints, and of all that have been slain upon the earth-* No one religious system is guilty for the blood of every martyr over time. The more sensible reference is to the blood of the believers slain in the earth / land promised to Abraham, during the latter day tribulation. "The nations" in view are those within the earth / land of Babylon's dominion: "At the noise of the taking of Babylon the earth trembles, and the cry is heard among the nations" (Jer. 50:46). The nations in view are those of the earth / land. The deaths of all Jews and true Christians in the earth / land during the tribulation is the direct responsibility of the Babylon system.

The reference is also to Judaism and Jerusalem, in whom was found the blood of the faithful (Jer. 2:34). In the first century context, it is Jerusalem-based Judaism which is in view. But in the last days, it is Babylon-Jerusalem, in that the whore of Babylon and her beast makes its blasphemous capital in Jerusalem.

## REVELATION CHAPTER 19

19:1 *After these things I heard what seemed to be a great voice of a great crowd in heaven, saying: Hallelujah! Salvation and glory and power, belong to our God-* John is seeing the Angelic representatives of the believers in his vision of the heavenly throne room. This is the same "great crowd" of 7:9 (s.w.), those who had endured the tribulation of the beast's domination. But the lives of believers are hid with Christ in God; the Lord is in the bosom of the Father. Therefore those 'in Heaven' don't refer to the departed souls of believers, but rather to the believers who are in heavenly places in Christ. This is a common NT theme. By contrast, the earth dwellers of Revelation are those who suffer the latter day judgments. The believers are here spoken of as praising God because the literal articulation of salvation in

Christ is now clearly about to be revealed. It could be that the whole metaphor of believers 'in Heaven' is used in Revelation because it is their guardian Angels who are in view, who represent them before God, individually and as collectives, of ecclesias and groups throughout history at particular points and circumstances.

19:2 *For true and righteous are His judgments-* The awful loss of life and gross destruction is recognized by them as not only necessary but righteous. For we have noted how often the Babylon system was given the chance to repent.

*For He has judged the great prostitute, she that corrupted the earth with her fornication, and He has avenged the blood of His servants shed by her-* It's hard to imagine any single entity corrupting literally the whole planet, right into the jungles of Amazonia and onto every island of the Pacific. The more natural interpretation is that the earth refers to the land, a more limited area of the planet's surface- the land promised to Abraham. The behaviours of the whore are either throughout all history, or at a more limited period of time. That period of time is more naturally, within the context of Revelation, the last days. The kings of the earth / land who were influenced by the whore would then refer to the kings of the land area promised to Abraham, influenced by the wine of her jihadist teaching.

"He has avenged the blood of His servants" shows that the cry of those persecuted in the last days within the land of Abraham (Rev. 6:10) has now been answered.

19:3 *And a second time they said: Hallelujah! And her smoke goes up for ever and ever-* The impression is of a sacrifice being offered, although the allusion is to the rising smoke of Sodom. Even in the destruction of the wicked, God is glorified. His judgments are a way of glorifying the principles of His Name, and not the lashing out of an offended Deity. The "great crowd" are as it were watching this, and thus are to be connected with faithful Abraham watching the smoke of Sodom arising.

19:4 *And the twenty four elders and the four living creatures fell down and worshiped God that sits on the throne, saying: Amen. Hallelujah!*- See on :1. The Angels join in with the same praise which their human charges are also making. Thus believers and Angels are presented in parallel. For the Angels in Heaven represent believers on earth. It is in this sense, in a practical, mechanical sense, if you like, that truly, man is not alone, but God is with us. But now at this juncture, Angels and believers are united together in praise by the resurrection.

19:5 *And a voice came from the throne, saying: Give praise to our God all you His servants, you that fear Him, the small and the great-* We have just read of the elders, living creatures and the "great crowd in heaven" doing just this. This appears therefore to be an appeal to others, on earth, to do what the Angels of Heaven are doing. This is a theme of Revelation- that those who believe are in league with the Heavenly Angels, who are fellow servants with them. Or it could be that again, Revelation is simply not chronological, but a kaleidoscope of images. We would then have explained here in :5 how the situation in :1 [praising God] came about.

19:6- see on Rev. 6:9.

*And I heard what seemed to be the voice of a great crowd, and as the voice of many waters, and as the voice of mighty thunders, saying: Hallelujah! For the Lord our God, the Almighty, reigns-* This is surely the crowd of :1, referring to the believers. But their voice is mixed with the voice of waters and thunders, the voice of God, which speaks of the intensest manifestation of God through the Angels. Again the impression is given of believers and Angels united, their sounds and voices

mingling together as they see the end coming which they both so earnestly desire. God of course reigns now, so their praise that "He reigns!" is therefore a re-statement of what they already believed in their mortal lives, but with so much more power and insight. And this will be so true of much of our talking and praising in the Kingdom age.

"The almighty", AV "omnipotent", is the Greek *pantokrator*, a term used within the imperial cult for the utter omnipotence of the Caesars. We see here another swipe at the imperial cult, which would have made the book of Revelation forbidden literature. And we reflect that it was first given to John on Patmos, exiled there for his resistance to that very cult.

19:7 *Let us rejoice and be exceedingly glad, and let us give the glory to Him. For the marriage of the Lamb comes, and his wife has made herself ready-* The collapse of time around the Lord's return means that it is unwise and impossible to construct chronologies of events around His coming. But the decorum of the symbol here means that the judgment of God's enemies slightly precedes the marriage of the Lamb; His wife is now described as putting on her wedding clothes (:8), and the invitation of guests (:9). But some texts read "Has come".

If this voice includes that of those who endured the beast's domination and abuse during the tribulation (see on :1), how can they refer to the Lamb's wife as if this is an entity separate from themselves? Perhaps they now behold the resurrection of all the faithful from history, and realize that the bride has now been fully assembled. Or again, we should just not let such chronological issues disturb us; for this is apocalyptic, a merger of various images, and not a timeline of events.

We note that the bride makes *herself* ready, but with the gift of fine linen clothes of imputed righteousness (:8). Her part in all this is to believe in the imputation of His righteousness and white garments to us in Christ. The word for "prepared" is so often used of how the Father and Son have prepared our place in the Kingdom for us (Mt. 20:23; 25:34 "the Kingdom prepared for you"; Lk. 1:17 "to prepare a people for the Lord"; Jn. 14:2,3 "to prepare a place for you"; 1 Cor. 2:9 "What God has prepared for those who love Him"; Heb. 11:16 "God has prepared for them a city"). The work of preparation is done by Him; all we have to do is say yes to it. All our righteous acts are as filthy rags. But having said "yes" to His grace, we respond by doing good works; and it is that response which makes us beautified in the Lord's eyes. And yet the fine lined which "is the righteous acts of the saints" (:8) is itself "given to her", just as the wedding garment was given to the guest in the parable.

19:8 *And it was given to her that she should dress herself in fine linen, bright and pure. For the fine linen is the righteous acts of the saints-* In contrast with how Babylon likewise was dressed in "fine linen" (see on 18:16). The suggestion therefore is that Babylon is quasi-religious and appears highly moral, when actually it is morally delinquent. This is exactly what we see in Jihadist Islamism. There is clear reference to the Jewish priesthood, and the description also connects with the white clothing of Islamic religious leaders. The fine linen is given to her- it speaks of imputed righteousness (see on :7). The "righteous acts" of the saints will be publicly arrayed before all (Rev. 19:8)- by none other than the Lord. All their good 'acts' will be revealed to all. And yet that righteousness is what they are clothed with by Christ- perhaps suggesting that their good deeds will be presented in a heightened form, as imputed righteousness, which would explain why the righteous will be shocked that the Lord could speak so highly of them ("When saw we thee...?"). But the work of God, the action He requires, is to believe in His imputation of righteousness (Jn. 6:29).

19:9 *And he said to me: Write, Blessed are they that are invited to the marriage supper of the Lamb-* See on :7. There seems a difference in category between those destroyed by judgments, the Lamb's wife, and the invited guests. Presumably the guests are those who are not believers but are not destroyed in the judgments; and these are now invited to participate in the Lamb's wedding. And who amongst those who survive Armageddon would not attend? This may speak of the conversion of the remaining population of planet earth. Another option is to see the guests and the bride as the same- but they are spoken of separately in order to bring out different aspects of the typology. Perhaps we are to see the wonder of grace- that the guests, the homeless and marginalized attracted by a free meal, are transformed by the kaleidoscope of images into the bride herself. No wonder John falls down in :10, overcome by the vast grace of the picture. The Bible was written largely for illiterate people, who are very visual. The images are not always to be interpreted separately- e.g. the guests represent X, the bride represents Y, and the Lamb's wife represents Z. Rather are the images developed and re-birthed, they merge and transform in a kaleidoscope of images. And so I suggest the guests become the bride herself. The bridesmaids of the 'wise and foolish virgins' parable are asked to be the bride. That whole parable leaves begging the question: 'And where is the bride?'. The answer may be that the bridesmaids become the bride.

And images are also subverted- the image of a wedding banquet for the son of a powerful person immediately suggests that the guests are also wealthy. But in fact they are the homeless. And likewise guests with tears on their cheeks is a subversion of the wedding banquet image. It was [and is] these subversions of images which have such power with the illiterate, and it often takes the literate a long time to correctly interpret the text exactly because they are missing the issue of imagery being subverted.

The blessedness of those invited is allusive to the parable of the great supper in Lk. 14:15-24. Invited guests typically brought a present with them when they attended. But the element of unreality in the parable is that those who were finally the guests had nothing to bring, and were invited by grace alone. Likewise the prophecy of the Messianic banquet in Is. 25:6-9 has some elements of unreality to it. Not only is the quality of the wine twice emphasized, but it is a banquet which involves the destruction of death, and the host wiping away tears from the eyes of the guests: "In this mountain Yahweh of Armies will make to all peoples a feast of fat things, a feast of choice wines, of fat things full of marrow, of well refined choice wines. He will destroy in this mountain the surface of the covering that covers all peoples, and the veil that is spread over all nations. He has swallowed up death forever! The Lord Yahweh will wipe away tears from off all faces. He will take the reproach of His people away from off all the earth, for Yahweh has spoken it". The "all peoples" who are invited are the same "all peoples" who have death ended for them. The language of God Himself wiping away tears from all faces is used in Revelation about the situation at the Lord's return. A marriage supper is supposed to be an event of unalloyed joy; but at this supper, the guests come with tears, the tears of post traumatic shock rather than of sorrow, and are comforted over the meal. In one sense, "many shall come from east and west, and recline at the table with Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, in the kingdom" (Mt. 8:11). But that reclining will be after having had tears wiped from our eyes. The imagery of a wedding feast is of extreme joy- for a few hours. It is perhaps the image of the happiest point in a person's life cycle. Even childbirth is not the same image of unalloyed joy. But the entire Kingdom of God is

symbolized by the wedding feast. This will be an eternal joy, not a cusp of emotion which then fades away. "Everlasting joy shall be upon their heads".

These things are all prefigured in the breaking of bread meeting. The Lord clearly saw the breaking of bread meeting as a foretaste of that future supper: "Take this and share it among yourselves; for I say to you, I will not drink of the fruit of the vine from now on until the kingdom of God comes" (Lk. 22:16-18). All types of people, all wired differently, every personality type, from every ethnic group, are breaking bread at one table- from Heaven's perspective. And woe to those who seek to break up that wedding banquet by a closed table policy which turns the Lord's table into a political weapon. The same Greek word is used for the marriage "supper" as for "the Lord's supper" (1 Cor. 11:20). John uses the word in his account of the first breaking of bread as a "supper" (Jn. 13:2,4).

The Messianic banquet will be in full view of the rejected, as was the style of banquets in those days: "There will be weeping and gnashing of teeth there when you see Abraham and Isaac and Jacob and all the prophets in the kingdom of God, but yourselves being cast out. And they will come from east and west, and from north and south, and will recline at the table in the kingdom of God" (Lk. 13:28,29). To see this banquet as observers but to be cast out of it... this will be unbearably painful for the rejected, to the point that they gnash their teeth in anger against themselves for having rejected their own part in that table. At the very least, we should be eager to participate at the breaking of bread; for it represents our eagerness to be at the marriage supper of the Lamb. We are guaranteed a place at the Messianic banquet- it is not an eternal unknown for us. We have been invited, and are now living out our acceptance of the invitation by breaking bread now: "Just as My Father has granted Me a kingdom, I grant you that you may eat and drink at My table in My kingdom" (Lk. 22:29). According to the parable of the wedding feast, those left outside the Kingdom's feast will be there because they allowed the cares of this life to lead them to refuse the invitation to actually attend it, despite having given an in-principle agreement that they want to be there. Or those beggars who considered the invitation to not be relevant to them because they were too dirty, sinful and marginalized. They couldn't believe that His grace was as good as it sounds- that they, the marginalized, who could bring no gift to the banquet, were really being invited just as they were.

*And he said to me: These are the true words of God-* This recalls how in Jn. 19:35 John struggles to get over the utter truth of the words. This is all so wonderfully true.

19:10 *And I fell down before his feet to worship him, and he said to me: You must not do that! I am a fellow-servant with you, and with your brothers that hold the testimony of Jesus. Worship God! For the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy-* The Angels are right now serving the same Lord we do; our work for Him is done in invisible partnership with them. The preaching or testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy, says Rev. 19:10. I understand this to mean that our testimony to Jesus is in the spirit of the Old Testament prophets. For Rev. 22:6 associates the God of the holy prophets [a phrase referring to the Old Testament prophets in Lk. 1:70 and Acts 3:32] with the same God who is with us in our witnessing to Christ. And Rev. 18:20 speaks of those prophets rejoicing in the last day together with all preachers of the Gospel. This is why incidents from the lives and teaching of the Old Testament prophets are repeatedly alluded to in the New Testament and applied to all of us. James 5:10 puts it bluntly- the prophets are to be taken by us as our examples. Jeremiah was warned: "Be not dismayed of *them*, lest I dismay *you*" (Jer. 1:17 RV). This is alluded to by the



Lord when He tells us that if we are ashamed of Him and His words, then He will be ashamed of us (Lk. 9:26). The connection surely indicates that the Old Testament prophets and the spirit of their commissioning is intended to apply to us today in our fulfilling of the great commission. Thus the prophets become our pattern for witness; they are our “brethren the prophets” (Rev.22:9). And so an understanding of them becomes programmatic for our witness today. Our audience, the world in which we live, is in essence that in which the prophets lived. Isaiah was up against the attitude that “Let us eat and drink; for tomorrow we shall die” (Is. 22:13)- and Paul quotes that passage as relevant for all Christians who hold the hope of resurrection amidst a world that does not (1 Cor. 15:32).

The Angel had made prophecies, and John felt that this was something so wonderful that it separated him from the Angel. But John like us was bearing “the testimony of Jesus” (Rev. 1:9). The same essential spirit which was in the prophets is in all those who in *their* spirit or attitude bear the witness of Jesus. Hence the prophesying Angel encourages John not to worship him, but rather to recognize that he is John’s “fellow servant, and of thy brethren the prophets, and of them which keep the sayings of this book”, i.e. all believers (Rev. 22:9). And again, this was radical stuff for the initial audience of the Apocalypse. They were being told that they had the prophets as their brethren, and on account of their spirit / attitude of bearing the testimony of Jesus, the same spirit which was in the prophets was in them. The very act of bearing witness to Jesus in our spirit / disposition is in fact to have the same spirit in us which was in the prophets and was the basis of their prophetic witness. This makes the prophets our “brethren”, not distant white faced ‘saints’. See on Mt. 8:22.

19:11 *And I saw the heaven open*- This introduces the seven final visions. One of the keys to understanding Revelation is to realize that it is structured as a series of visions based around the number seven. It must also be understood that as with many Old Testament prophecies, the book of Revelation is not strictly chronological in its fulfilment. Sometimes we read something which is actually the final picture, and then we read how this situation came about. At other times, we find a series of visions give us as it were 'snapshots' of different aspects of the same process. The seven final visions are introduced by the rubric "And I saw...". It is my suggestion that they each show different aspects of the process of setting up the Kingdom. All references are to Revelation unless otherwise stated. The thoughtful student of the final chapters of Revelation will realize that there are difficulties in 'fitting in' the usual view of the Millennium as a thousand year reign with the information presented there. The suggestion is made in these notes on chapter 20 that the "thousand years" simply means 'a very long time', and refers to eternity. This solves the problem that a rebellion at the end of the 'Millennium' would contradict Is. 9:7; 60:18; Jer. 3:17 and other passages which teach that "they shall learn war no more" after the Kingdom is established. The wrath of God is finished when the seven *last* plagues are poured out (Rev. 15:1 RV), at the Lord's return, i.e. at the *beginning* of the 'Millennium'. At the coming of Christ, the powers represented by the dragon and beast are defeated and chained up. The dead are raised and judged. The rejected join the dragon in the 'bottomless pit', an area on the borders of the land of promise, i.e. the initial geographical extent of the Kingdom. Here they are restrained, but once the Kingdom is established, perhaps after a period of 7 years or so, they 'attack' the land of Israel, where the Kingdom of God has been established. They are then destroyed. The Kingdom then continues eternally. The descriptions of a judgment seat in these final

chapters are all related to the same judgment seat, i.e. that when Christ returns. The OT prophecies of a 'Millennium' with mortal people in it either apply to the setting up period of the Kingdom, or they are to be read in a more figurative way.

*And beheld a white horse, and he that sat thereon was called Faithful and True-* A clear reference to the Lord Jesus, who will now bring about the true, faithful fulfilment of God's promises (Rev. 3:14). He was "the faithful witness / martyr" (Rev. 1:5) in that He suffered at the hands of a beast system, and can thus especially identify with those believers slain by the beast in the final tribulation. John has been allowed a peek into the heavenly throne room. But now heaven itself opens, and the Lord Jesus emerges from there to return to earth.

*And in righteousness he judges and makes war-* The same presentation of the Lord Jesus as both a warrior and a bridegroom are found in Ps. 45:3-6. There He is pictured as going forth to make war in all His glory for the sake of "truth, humility and righteousness" (Ps. 45:4). There is a powerful juxtaposition of ideas here- He goes forth in glory on behalf of humility. It is the humble believers who will have been persecuted and slain, and now the Lord of humility goes forth in all His glory for their sakes.

19:12 *And his eyes are a flame of fire, and upon his head are many diadems-* The seemingly invincible beast with his seven diadems now seems so puny compared to the Lord.

*And he has a name written which no one knows but him-* We likewise will have a unique name known / appreciated only by us (2:17). No-one can enter into the Lord's personal sense of resurrection and reward; there will always be an unreachable, untouchable element in Him throughout eternity. Surely this makes our relationship with Him the more appealing.

19:13- see on Heb. 12:24.

*And he is dressed in a garment sprinkled with blood-* This alludes to Joseph's blood drenched coat and Is. 63:2; the basis upon which the Lord executes judgment is that He died for us, and His garments were literally blood sprinkled at the crucifixion. He Himself said that His qualification as judge is because He is "son of man".

*And his name is called The Word of God-* John reminds us of this title for the Lord because in His actions at the time of judgment and establishment of the Kingdom on earth, He will be the full manifestation of God's word, a word which shall then come to its final climax. Note that "the word [*logos*] of God" is a title of the Lord Jesus. So many misunderstand Jn. 1:1-3 by failing to realize this. That word is God, etc.; but it is a *title* of the Lord, His "Name", rather than he Himself personally.

19:14- see on Mt. 24:28.

*And the armies which are in heaven followed him upon white horses-* Remember that the Lord returns to earth with the Angels, and not alone. However the armies in Heaven also refer to the faithful, who are presented as with God, their lives hid with Christ in Him who is in the bosom of the Father. John has seen them represented by Angels in his visions of the heavenly court room.

*Clothed in fine linen, white and pure-* In contradistinction to the white clothes of the jihadist sheikhs of 18:16, whose white linen was not pure but mixed with all the trappings of materialism.

19:15 *And out of his mouth proceeds a sharp sword, that with it he should strike down the nations; and he shall rule them with a rod of iron-* The language of the Lord Jesus at His return (Ps. 2:9); and yet it has already been quoted in Revelation about

how we shall do the same (2:27). See on 12:5. All that is true of the Lord Jesus personally shall be true of us who are in and with Him.

*And He treads the winepress of the fierceness of the anger of God-* Anyone doing this would have red clothes, spattered with red grape juice. The connection is with His appearance at the crucifixion; see on :13. The cross was "the judgment of this world", and now that judgment is articulated. He judges because He went through the tribulation of the cross.

19:16 *And he has on his garment and on his thigh a name written-* A reference to His sword, through which He has become Lord of all human lords and kings (Ps. 45:3)? The allusion is to the way in which names were inscribed on the hilts of swords. His thigh is therefore put for the sword which is on His thigh. For He is presented here as a horseman.

*King of kings and Lord of lords-* As with many aspects of teaching and language, it is often difficult for us to appreciate how radically revolutionary they were in the first century context; and in essence they should lose none of their radicalness with us. David Bosch observes: "Christians confessed Jesus as Lord of all lords- the most revolutionary political demonstration imaginable in the Roman Empire". Philip Yancey likewise: "As the church spread throughout the Roman empire, its followers took up the slogan "Christ is Lord", a direct affront to Roman authorities who required all citizens to take the oath 'Caesar [the state] is Lord'". It hurt, it cost, to recognize Him as Lord. And so it should with us. Men and women died for this; and we likewise give our lives in response to that very same knowledge. There is a tendency, which the Lord Himself brought to our attention, of calling Him Lord but not doing what He says. To know Him as Lord in truth is axiomatically to be obedient to Him (Lk. 6:46). The reality of the Lordship of Jesus is used in Revelation (19:12, 16) to encourage the brethren to continue fearless in their witness despite persecution. Jesus is Lord of the kings of the earth; He has control over the world; therefore, no human power can harm us without His express permission and purpose. The exhortation of Ps. 110 is powerful: because Jesus is now seated at the Father's right hand, His people offer themselves as freewill offerings in this, the day of His power. They are arrayed in "holy attire" because *He* has been made the Priest after the order of Melchizedek- they share in the work which His exaltation has enabled (Ps. 110:1,3,4 RVmg.).

19:17 *And I saw an angel standing in the sun; and he cried with a loud voice, saying-* The Angel represents someone or some body of persons standing within the sun of the Lord Jesus, the sun of righteousness which has now arisen. The appeal is made on His behalf by some others- maybe us, or natural Israel, appealing to the nations who have survived Armageddon.

*To all the birds that fly in mid heaven-* I have suggested on :9 that the guests invited to the marriage are not the same as the Lamb's wife, and these guests refer to the unbelievers in the world who are not destroyed in the judgments upon the world. They are here described as in mid heaven, between earth and heaven. The "earth" dwellers are judged; those "in Heaven" are the believers, their lives hid with Christ in Him who is in the bosom of the Father. Those in between these groups would then appropriately refer to unbelievers who have not heard the Gospel and who are spared the latter day judgments upon the earth. But now they are invited to take their place at the Lord's table.

*Come, be gathered together-* I have suggested above that the birds could refer to the Gentile nations now invited to the marriage supper as guests. But birds of prey

being gathered together is the language of Ez. 39:17-20, where they are invited to assist in the destruction of the ten nations led by Gog who come up against Israel.

*To the great supper of God-* This Messianic banquet is prefigured in the breaking of bread. We should invite unbelievers there, just as unbelievers are invited to the ultimate banquet (see on :9 and :17). To exclude people from it is serious indeed. It is a means of witness and invitation to participation.

19:18 *Eat the flesh of kings, and the flesh of captains, and the flesh of mighty men, and the flesh of horses and of those that sit thereon, and the flesh of all men, both free and bondservant and small and great-* "Small and great" is the same language used about those who accepted the mark of the latter day beast in Rev. 13:16. The allusion is clearly to the similar scene in Ez. 39, where the victims in view are the Islamic host of Israel's neighbours led by "Gog". These are the same group who are pictured in Revelation as the kings of the land promised to Abraham, who come forth to dominate God's people and land in the last days. The emphasis upon "flesh" suggests this is to be viewed as a sacrifice- the great sacrifice which Yahweh has in the Muslim territories of "Edom" (Is. 34:6). The connection with the marriage supper of the lamb (:9) is perhaps in that the believers have their supper, as the Lamb's wife, and those who are not judged to destruction are invited to theirs as wedding guests but not as the bride; or it could be that these are in fact aspects of the same supper. The Messianic banquet is therefore an open table to those not yet believers, in order for them to come to faith. The Lord's table should be used in the same way today, for it is a foretaste of the Messianic banquet of the last day.

The kings refer to the kings of the earth / land who have given their allegiance to the beast / Babylon. Those invited to eat their flesh are clearly a different category to those who have been slain, and I suggest they refer to the unbelievers left on planet earth who have not yet sided with Christ and yet are not part of the Babylon system.

19:19 *And I saw the beast and the kings of the earth and their armies gathered together to make war against him that sat upon the horse, and against his army-* We have already had several visions of the total destruction of the beast; this may be another one, going back to explain how the blessed situation spoken of earlier in this chapter has been achieved. Or it could be that Babylon has been destroyed, but the beast apparently still exists; just as the dragon loses power in chapter 12 but re-emerges in the form of the other beasts. It could be that her capital city is destroyed but the wider system still exists. Or it could be that such a reading is still too much within space-time constructs, and it seems these dimensions will be somewhat collapsed in the events around the Lord's coming, making chronological sequences of events worthless to predict.

The horns on the beast are "the kings of the earth", but these kings and the beast arise out of the earth and the sea [the nations around the earth]; and in line with Daniel 7, this is the land promised to Abraham. The connection with 2 Chron. 20 and the other references to Israel's neighbouring enemies 'gathering together' invites us to see the beast as a primarily Arab organization. If there is a detailed allusion here to the 2 Chron. 20 scenario, Jehoshaphat (against whom the opposing kings initially gathered together) would represent Jesus, and Jehoshaphat's army would tally with the resurrected saints. In this case, the final onslaught will be after the return of Jesus. We saw this in chapters 11 and 12; the dragon is cast out of political power, but with just a short time left, goes forth to make war with the woman. In passing, note the differentiation between the leaders in this conflict and their armies: "The kings of the

earth, and their armies... him that sat on the horse (Jesus) and against his army". This would suggest a specific hatred of the Lord Jesus which is separate from, although in addition to, their antipathy towards Israel and the Christian believers. It may also be possible to see in the separation between "the kings of the earth, and their armies" a certain degree of coercion, or difference of motivation, between leaders and people.

Christ goes out to make war (:11), and the Beast and his armies go out to make war against Him- head on conflict. We have gone back in time, as it were, to have another vision of the final conflict, although this has been presented in various ways in earlier visions. This is war with Christ- He is already crowned, 19:12. Likewise the invasion of Ez. 38/9 is after Christ's return, when Israel dwell safely, and we have the Psalm 2 scenario of the Lord enthroned in Jerusalem being attacked by armies. Perhaps the revived beast wants to recapture Babylon-Jerusalem from Him after it has been destroyed (see on 16:19). In this case, we see the limited value of visible miracles; they will have seen plenty of them, but are so blinded by materialism that they wish to still defy the Divine and attempt to recapture Jerusalem.

The beast, the kings of the earth and their armies 'gather together' to fight against Christ. This may be the gathering of 16:13,14; they are gathered together by the power of the false miracles despite all the evidence of true miracles before their eyes. Thus v. 20 mentions how "the false prophet that wrought miracles before [the beast]" is captured with the beast- the scene of 16:14.

19:20- see on :19 and Rev. 13:17.

*And the beast was captured, and with it the false prophet, who in its presence had done the signs by which he deceived those who had received the mark of the beast and those who worshiped its image. These two were thrown alive into the lake of fire that burns with sulphur-* There are many connections between Revelation and John's Gospel. These miracles are imitations of the miracles of Christ, for which John uses the same phrase (Jn. 2:11,18; 3:2; 4:54; 6:2,14,30; 7:31; 9:16; 10:41; 11:47; 12:18,37; 20:30). Thus the false prophet is an anti-Christ, a fake Christ with fake power and fake validation. Despite the presence of Divine miracles at the time, as there have been for three and a half years from the two witnesses of chapter 11, people believe what they want to believe. Visible miracles are not conclusive nor bound to elicit true faith; as our Pentecostal friends need to take note.

The destruction of the beast by fire is Babylon's destruction too by the same method; it is that spoken of in Dan. 7:11; Is. 30:30,33. The beast and false prophet are cast into the lake of fire. This is the lake of 20:14,15; 21:8- where the unworthy one time believers are thrown. Thus the punishment of the rejected and that of the world is the same; and therefore there must be a separation *now*, lest we be "condemned with the world" (1 Cor. 11:29). "Burning with brimstone" / sulphur recalls Sodom- where the unworthy believers shared the same fate as the 'world' around them. Lot's wife was turned into salt, as was the surrounding country (Lk. 17:29). "The lake of fire" will be in the presence of Christ (14:10)- not underground. "Cast alive" suggests torture; cp. 14:10 "tormented". Others are simply killed outright by Christ's word of command (20:21). This would suggest that even among the irresponsible there are degrees of punishment. Casting into a pit and fire as punishment compares with Babylon's persecution of Daniel and his friends. What Babylon does to others shall be done to it. Note too how the Assyrian is described in Is. 30:31-33 as being thrown into a lake of fire- just as the future beast will be (Rev. 19:20). See on 2 Thess. 2:8.

19:21 *Slain by the sword that came from the mouth of him who was sitting on the horse-* The Lord's destructive power will involve words of command rather than He

literally, personally slaying the wicked. We need not therefore imagine us personally killing the members of the beast system. And we have noted several times that their destruction is largely at the hands of each other. Even the coming down of fire and sulphur may be due to their own nuclear weaponry backfiring upon them. The "all men" whose flesh is to be eaten by those in mid-heaven, the Gentile world, are the remaining followers of the beast and false prophet. This eating by fowls is equated with burning in the lake of fire, or Gehenna (Rev. 19:20,21). Several passages in Jeremiah associate the mauling of carcasses by fowls with destruction in Gehenna. This creates the image of the beast being ravaged by the 'fowls' of either natural Israel (as they represented in David's speech to Goliath) or the nations once confederate with 'Babylon', as they seem to represent in Daniel.

## REVELATION CHAPTER 20

20:1 *I saw an angel coming down out of heaven, having the key of the abyss, and a great chain in his hand-* If Scripture interprets Scripture, then this has to have connection with the Angel who descends and opens the bottomless pit in Revelation 9. This Angel unleashes locusts who bring terrible destruction upon the earth / land for five months, and the Angel morphs into a leader called Abaddon. The Angel may therefore refer to a literal Angel of Heaven who represents an individual upon earth; for all upon earth, good and bad, have Angelic representation in the court of Heaven. The same scene is before us here in chapter 20; an Angel binds and then releases the dragon for "a little time" (20:3), the "five months" of Rev. 9. In my notes on Revelation 9, I have tried to demonstrate that the situation envisaged there suggests an Islamic outpouring of fury upon the earth / land in the very last days. Revelation is not strictly chronological; it is apocalyptic, not a chronological timeline progressing from beginning to end. Our European, linear thinking minds yearn for such tidy chronological progression and we tend to seek to force prophecy into such a structure. But we are dealing with Hebrew, Semitic thought- and moreover, the apocalyptic genre. The various visions refer back to each other, explaining in more detail how the various earlier pictures are arrived at. The events of Revelation 9 refer clearly enough to the events of the last days, at the Lord's second coming; and not to events at the end of a Millennium.

20:2 *And he laid hold of the dragon, the old serpent, which is the Devil and Satan-* This description is found only in Rev. 12:9, where this entity is cast out of 'Heaven', i.e. a place of power and rulership, at the time of the establishment of God's Kingdom on earth at Christ's second coming (Rev. 12:10). This is precisely the picture here- that when the thousand years [the Kingdom] is established [AV "fulfilled"], then the dragon is bound and then released for a short time. At the time of the second coming of Christ, this dragon / serpent / evil / satan entity has "but a short time" (Rev. 12:12). This is the "little time" which the dragon is released for in 20:3. Revelation 12 has left us with the dragon deposed from power but about to get madly furious for a little time. Now Revelation 20 is explaining the details; that final mad fury of the dragon is in fact precisely under Angelic control. And that will be a great comfort to those who live through that period of the dragon's madness; things are not at all out of control, he has been bound and now briefly released by the Angels of Heaven. If we ask *why* it has to be this way- perhaps we are to conclude that the releasing was in order to give

the dragon an opportunity to repent. Because throughout Revelation, we encounter this amazing hallmark of Divine activity with even the most desperately evil of men and systems: He wishes to give them every chance of repentance. But in this case, the dragon abuses it, and meets his rightful end in total destruction.

*And bound him-* The chaining of the devil/ dragon/ serpent in 20:2 probably refers more to the binding of the manifestation of sin in the political devil/ dragon/ beast/ serpent of 12:7 than to abstract sin. Revelation is a message from the Lord Jesus. He had earlier spoken of binding and burning the sons of the Devil at His return (Mt. 13:38,39). He uses the same words here- the Devil will be bound and burned. But that binding and burning envisaged in Mt. 13 clearly speaks of events at His return, and not at the end of a Millennium. The Lord uses the same figure of 'binding' to describe how the condemned *people* at the final judgment will be 'bound hand and foot' by the Angels and then destroyed (Mt. 22:13)- at His return, not at the end of a Millennium. Notice that Satan's deceit of the nations and all of his powers were totally in control of God (Rev. 20:2,3,7). Satan is not a free agent to act as he wishes, without regard for God. Rev. 20:1-3 is surely based upon Is. 24:21,22, which prophesied that the kings of the earth / land will be gathered together, imprisoned in a pit and punished. It is these very human "kings of the earth" who are described in the more figurative language of Revelation as "Satan". Isaiah 24 is talking about the time of the Lord's return to earth, and not any scene at the end of a Millennium.

The idea of shutting up in the abyss is taken from Is. 24:22,23: "And it shall come to pass in that day, that the Lord shall punish the host of the high ones that are on high, and the kings of the earth upon the earth. And they shall be gathered together, as prisoners are gathered in the pit, and shall be shut up in the prison, and after many days, they shall be visited. Then the moon shall be confounded, and the sun ashamed, when the Lord of Hosts shall reign in mount Zion and in Jerusalem, and before his ancients gloriously." The context refers to the events of the Lord's coming, and not 1,000 years after it.

*For a thousand years-* Most numbers in Revelation are symbolic, so it seems unwise to think that this number is literal. I have earlier, elsewhere argued for a literal Millennium, but closer reflection on Revelation 20 has led me to question that view. Because the allusions to other parts of Revelation and other Scripture all speak of these events happening at the Lord's return to earth, not to anything at the end of a 1,000 year period. Further, the Bible was written *for* us and not directly *to* us; it was written *to* its primary audience and in their language. The Jewish audience first receiving this message would have understood the "thousand years" as a reference to the eternal Kingdom of God on earth, and not to a limited Millennial reign of Messiah for 1,000 years. See too my comments on :5 *The first resurrection*, which happens when the "thousand years" are "ended", or as the Greek better means, 'established'. This is a stubborn problem of interpretation for those who hold the traditional Millennial reign view. The figure of 1,000 may be connected with the size of the Most Holy Place, 10 x 10 x 10 cubits, which is alluded to in the description of the new Jerusalem: "The length and the breadth and the height of it are equal" (21:16).

I suggest that here again we have an example of Scripture alluding to contemporary incorrect ideas and deconstructing them. The Jews until about 150 B.C. believed that Messiah would return and establish His Kingdom on earth. But influenced by their humiliation under the Romans, they came to believe that the world was too evil for

Messiah to return to, and that it required a 1000 year period of purification by the Jews before Messiah could return. Slavonic Enoch 22–23, which has been dated at around 50 A.D., stated this specifically. Revelation was therefore written with this idea current in the surrounding Jewish world. I suggest that this incorrect view is being alluded to and deconstructed, by stating that Messiah will come at the *beginning* of the 1000 years and ‘purify’ the earth forcibly by figuratively ‘chaining’ Satan. Thus Messiah is to come and purify the earth Himself, rather than the Jews having to purify the earth for 1000 years before Messiah could come.

The following difficulties with the classical view of a Millennial reign are taken from Harry Whittaker:

- (a) The prophecies of lasting peace in the kingdom of Christ are quite explicit: “they shall learn war no more”.
- (b) Also, there is to be lasting godliness: “At that time they shall call Jerusalem the throne of the Lord, and all the nations shall be gathered unto it, to the name of the Lord, to Jerusalem: neither shall they walk any more after the imagination of their evil heart” (Jeremiah 3: 17). “Violence shall no more be heard in thy land, wasting nor destruction within thy borders” (Isaiah 60:18). “Of the increase of his government and peace there shall be no end” (Isaiah 9:7).
- (c) Rebellion against immortals is so palpably silly. By comparison modern nuclear armament, which every Bible reader can see to be a lunatic policy, has calm reason on its side. For, armed with the big bombs, there is always a thin chance that you will devastate the other half of the world before it does the same to you. But for nations, who have had a thousand years’ experience of divine power and immortality, to calculate that their puny strength can win against God presupposes a mental deterioration to kindergarten level during the millennium.
- (d) The practical problem insists on obtruding itself - where will these rebel nations get their weapons from? Swords will have all been turned into ploughshares.
- (e) “He must reign until he hath put all enemies under his feet” (1 Corinthians 15: 25). The words imply a steady progress towards complete godliness. The idea of a great boil-up of rebellion at the end is surely most difficult to reconcile with this.
- (f) A massive rebellion at the end of a thousand years would stamp the reign of Christ as a failure. To think that the end of all his efforts in teaching, guidance, personal influence and benign rule (to say nothing of the immortal aid of men like Moses and Paul) is to be “We will not have this man to reign over us” - this is just incredible to any who settle down to consider it seriously. Jesus accomplished his work as Prophet, Sacrifice and High Priest perfectly. Can anyone be happy that his work as king is to end in failure? - for can a long, long reign which ends in turbulent rebellion be reckoned as a success?
- (g) A rebellion such as is described in Revelation 20 does not arise in five minutes. Even a triviality like the Suez episode in 1957 called for weeks of detailed organization, which could not be kept secret from the rest of the world. Nevertheless one is asked to believe that Christ and his immortals will know nothing at all of this mighty Gog-Magog uprising until it bursts upon the world. The only alternative seems to be that, knowing all that is being secretly concocted, they will pretend to ignore it, so that the rebels may be lured to their own destruction. Would any reader be happy about the morality of such a proceeding?
- (h) It is sometimes postulated that if the visible authority of Christ were to be withdrawn for a time, then - human nature being what it is - rebellion would be almost certain to ensue within a short while. But does Scripture speak of any such withdrawal of the Messiah’s authority? This seems to have been invented specially to cope with a



big difficulty. On the other hand, Isaiah is explicit that “thy sun shall no more go down, neither shall thy moon withdraw itself: for the Lord shall be thine everlasting light” (60:20).

(i) The coincidence of the names Gog and Magog in Revelation 20 with that of the leader of the great confederacy of Ezekiel 38 does not seem to have been given its proper weight. With any other Bible problem such a coincidence would shout for the two to be equated with each other. Then may it not be said that any interpretation which does line up these two prophecies as having the same fulfilment has a much stronger claim to acceptance than one which severs all connection between them and instead inserts a gap of a thousand years? or is “Interpret Scripture by Scripture” to stand as a sound principle everywhere except in Revelation 20?

(j) Revelation 15:1 R.V. The Vials are described as “the seven plagues which are the last, for in them is finished the wrath of God.” The logical conclusion from these words is that the judgement of the Gog-Magog rebellion takes place before the outpouring of the Vials is concluded.

(k) Has the difficulty ever been properly faced that this amazing rising against all that is good and beneficent is spoken of in Scripture in one place only? Are Christadelphians to copy Mormons, “Jehovah’s Witnesses” and such, in their disreputable habit of confidently basing major beliefs on one passage of Scripture? Have we, the people of the Book, not yet learned the elementary lesson of mistrust in our own powers of Bible interpretation? We believe what we believe about our “First Principles” not because of one text of Scripture but because of the massive over-all testimony of many passages. Shall we then go back on this thoroughly sound attitude here, and this, concerning verses in the Book of Revelation, of all places, the book about the interpretation of which there is less room for dogmatism than any other in the Bible?

To these I would add the fact that 21:4 says that death shall be no more. The passage in Rev. 21 is full of reference to descriptions of the establishment of the Kingdom at Christ's return, when the bride meets the bridegroom (21:2). If death itself ends when the bride and groom meet at the Lord's return, then this settles the issue. There will be no more concept of death after that. It cannot be that there will be no more death if a mortal population still exists. Death is ended by death being thrown into the lake of fire here in chapter 20. This is the same as death being no more.

As to what Revelation 20:4 does not mean, in terms of those who wrest it to support the idea of a cosmic satan literally existing; see my comments in *The Real Devil*.

20:3 *And threw him into the abyss*- The same word as in Lk. 8:31,33, where the demons ask Christ not to send them into the abyss; the parallel record says that they asked not to be sent out of the land of Israel (Mk. 5:10). Also Rom. 10:7 uses the abyss as a term for the lands beyond Israel (it is referring to Dt. 30:13). The beast that comes out of the abyss comes out of the sea (11:7; 13:1). It seems that the geographical area outside Israel from where the beast comes (i.e. the Arab world?) is where it is returned to for punishment. I have suggested in commentary on chapter 9 that the abyss may refer to a distinct geographical area in or on the edge of the earth / land promised to Abraham.

*And shut it*- The same word is used of how the door is shut around the faithful believers with whom Christ rejoices at His return (Mt. 25:10). There is a brief, appropriate period of intimacy between Christ and His people, during which the

dragon cannot do anything.

*And sealed it over him-* The same word is used about how the final seven thunders of calamity upon the earth / land are "sealed" (Rev. 10:4). This seems to refer to a brief period in between the Lord's return and when He resumes dealing with the dragon system.

*That he should deceive the nations no more, until the thousand years should be finished-* Loosed a little season once eternity (the "1000 years") is established. The same word translated "finished" is translated to accomplish; to establish, build up (Lk. 22:37; Gal. 5:16; James 2:8; LXX: Ruth 3:18; Is. 55:11; Dan. 4:30). Consider the usage of the word elsewhere:

- Luke 22:37: "This that is written must yet be accomplished in me."
- Galatians 5:16: "Walk ye in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfil the lust of the flesh."
- James 2:8: "If ye fulfil the royal law ... Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself, ye shall do well."
- Romans 2:27: "And shall not uncircumcision which is by nature, if it fulfil the law, judge thee who ... dost transgress the law?"
- Ruth 3:18: "the man (Boaz) will not be in rest until he have finished (i.e. accomplished, achieved) the thing this day."
- Isaiah 55:11: "My word ... shall not return unto me void, but it shall accomplish that which I please."
- Daniel 4:30: "Is not this great Babylon, that I have built".

*After this he must be released for a little time-* Gk. "loosed" (AV), which connects with the theme throughout Revelation of the loosing of the seals and various judgments which are required before the scroll of the book of life is fully unsealed / loosed (Rev. 5:5; 9:14,15). This loosing is required for the scroll of life to be fully opened; it refers to the time of the Lord's return and not the end of a Millennium after His return.

The Lord spoke in parables so that Israel would be deceived and therefore would not come to salvation (Mk. 4:12; Lk. 8:10 cp. Acts 28:26). This fact is hard to get around for those who feel God isn't responsible for deception. Isaiah spoke likewise (Is. 6:9,10; 29:10,11). The Angels will work in such a way as to allow the world to be deceived at this time (Rev. 20:3,8).

The "little time" is that of 6:11 and 12:12- the time of persecution just before the Lord's return at the end of the three and a half year tribulation.

20:4 *I saw thrones, and seated on them were those to whom the authority to judge was committed-* Surely this must be connected with the promise made to the disciples in identical language- about their reigning at the beginning of God's Kingdom on earth (Mt. 19:28; Lk. 22:30), at "the regeneration", when the Son of Man likewise takes His throne in glory in Jerusalem, "in my Kingdom".

*Also I saw the souls of those who had been beheaded for the testimony of Jesus and for the word of God, and who had not worshiped the beast or its image, and had not received its mark on their foreheads or their hands-* This is replete with reference to earlier descriptions in Revelation of those persecuted and slain during the great tribulation just prior to the Lord's return.

*They came to life*- The group in view, the disciples and those who perished during the great tribulation, are resurrected separately. We have seen this implied in notes on 11:12 and 12:5.

20:4 *Then I saw thrones*- Saints sitting on thrones is Dan. 7:22; the throne of the beast is cast down, and judgment thrones given to the faithful.

*And seated on them were those to whom the authority to judge was committed*- "And judgement was given unto them" (AV). This is Dan. 7:22: "And judgement was given to the saints of the most High; and the time came that the saints possessed the kingdom". This is clearly at the start of the Kingdom, at Christ's return, when the beast enemy of Israel is destroyed. This would also be the time of Ps. 122:5-8: "For there (in Jerusalem) are set thrones of judgement, the thrones of the house of David ... Peace be within your walls, and prosperity within your palaces. For my brothers and companions' sakes, I will now say, Peace be within you".

*Also I saw the souls of those who had been beheaded for the testimony of Jesus and for the word of God, and who 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 for a thousand years*- The jihadist State will be a strictly religious entity, keen to take the predictions and commands of the Koran and Hadith as literally as possible. Their crucifixions of their enemies are in strict obedience to passages like Sura 5:36: "The only reward of those who make war upon Allah and His messenger and strive after corruption in the land will be that they will be killed or crucified... Such will be their degradation in the world, and in the Hereafter theirs will be an awful doom". And the jihadists likewise are careful to obey the commands to behead enemies: "When you encounter the unbelievers on the battlefield, strike off their heads until you have crushed them completely; then bind the prisoners tightly," (Sura 47). The UK *Daily Mail* reported of ISIS: "They lined the streets with the decapitated heads of police and soldiers". Beheading is now a well-known method used by the jihadists, popularized by their videos of beheading Western hostages. We note that it is the fate of those who do not worship the beast or accept his mark in Rev. 20:4. Apologists claim that the Koran doesn't support these beheadings; but it does. *Sura* 8:12 says that beheading can be used in order to psychologically terrify the non-Moslems: "I will cast dread into the hearts of the unbelievers. Strike off their heads, then, and strike off all of their fingertips". *Sura* 47:3 is similar: "When you encounter the unbelievers on the battlefield, strike off their heads". Beheading is justified in some of the hadith on the basis that Muhammad ordered the beheading of 700 Jews in Medina for allegedly plotting against him. It is therefore to be used specifically against God's people. Until recently, it seemed impossible that such a method of death would be literally used- but it is now becoming known worldwide that it is indeed being practiced and gloried in within the entity that is taking over the land promised to Abraham. It must be noted that Islam is the only major world religion today that legitimizes beheadings.

Rev. 20:4 says that there will be a special blessing for those who were beheaded for the sake of Jesus, and this involved them in not worshipping the beast or receiving his mark. The short term fulfilment of this was in the beast as the Roman empire. But the Roman Empire only beheaded *citizens* (e.g. Paul); non-citizens were killed in other ways, e.g. by crucifixion, throwing to wild beasts. Mentioning beheading was therefore purposeful. The text could more easily have said 'martyred' or 'killed'. The blessing in view, in the first century application, was therefore particularly for Roman citizens who refused to accept the faith of their own empire, for the sake of Christ.

The climax of all Bible prophecy, however, is not in history; it is in the literal coming of Christ to earth. In the last days, therefore, Rev. 20:4 must have its final and ultimate fulfilment. But the incipient fulfilment in the days of Rome guides us towards understanding that final fulfilment. I suggest therefore that this class of latter day martyrs refers specifically to those who are citizens within the area controlled by the latter day entity known as the beast. Those who do not submit to its rulership will be beheaded. And we are already seeing that happening in the area, with roads lined with heads. And we see the jihadists forcing Christians and Yezidis to convert to Islam, or to face the sword- quite literally, in beheading. They stated themselves in July 2014: "We offer them three choices: Islam; the *dhimma* contract—involving payment of *jizya*; if they refuse this they will have nothing but the sword". The blessing of Rev. 20:4 is for those who endure this for the sake of Christ and witnessing His word in Christ to them. "The word of God" refers to the preaching of the word; the word is designed by its very nature to be preached.

It could be that it is those who perished during the tribulation who now sit on thrones of judgment to judge those who persecuted them, some of whom died during the tribulation, but are now raised to face judgment and the second death.

*20:5 The rest of the dead did not come to life until the thousand years were ended-*

This could refer to the rest of the believers throughout history; or, as suggested on :4 and :13, to the members of the beast system who died during the tribulation who are now raised to be judged by those whom they slew. We must note that all of Revelation is specifically about events in the earth / land promised to Abraham, and much of it is specifically about those who live and die during the three and a half year tribulation there.

They are raised when the Kingdom, "the thousand years", is 'established' or as the word is translated misleadingly, in most versions, "ended". The Kingdom is "ended" in the sense that it is established. I have shown on :3 above that this Greek word certainly bears the translation "established" or "set up". When the Kingdom is established, the dead are raised; and there will be a period in which the Lord is with them, whilst the dragon is restrained in the abyss.

*This is the first resurrection-* The resurrection of the dead, specifically those killed during the tribulation, is when the thousand years are established ["ended"] is the first resurrection. This is a decided difficulty for those holding the traditional view that there are two resurrections, one at the start and one at the end of the Millennium. For here it is stated clearly that the first resurrection is when the 1,000 years are "ended". I suggest there is little option but to recognize that "ended" is an unhelpful translation, and the sense is rather "established, set up" rather than "ended". The text never speaks of a 'second resurrection'. *Protos*, "first", admittedly *sometimes* implies the first of a series, but it can also mean 'the one big and essential thing'; as in "seek *first* the Kingdom". It could even be argued that the usage of *protos* suggests there is no other resurrection to be thought of at all! The only other Bible verse which speaks of two resurrections is in Jn. 5:29, where the Lord speaks of a resurrection to life- perhaps the "first resurrection"; and a resurrection *at that same time* of the unworthy "to death", spoken of here in Revelation as "the second death".

*20:6 Blessed and holy is he that has part in the first resurrection. Over these the second death has no power-* The "second death" could refer to those who die in this life responsible to God, having not responded to Him; are resurrected and judged at Christ's return; and then are punished with death, the second death they will have

experienced. But the specific reference here is to the members of the beast system who die during the tribulation and are raised to judgment by those whom they killed, judging on the Lord's behalf. The "first resurrection" is that which happens when the 1,000 years are "ended" or, as I suggest it should be translated, "established". The promise not to be hurt by the second death is made to believers of our age (Rev. 2:11)- it occurs at the judgment when Christ returns, not at the end of a Millennium. The second death is symbolized as a lake of fire, into which the dragon is also cast and thus destroyed permanently (Rev. 20:14; 21:8). This second death will in fact be the destruction of death itself, as there shall be no more death after death itself is destroyed (20:14). Yet the second death is threatened to those of this age who do not respond to the Gospel after hearing it (Rev. 2:11). This second death will happen at Christ's return, for that is when we shall be judged, and not at the end of a 1,000 year period. The rejected go away into figurative fire and destruction- at the Lord's return. Not at some point 1,000 years after that.

But we should consider the possibility that "the second death" is alluding to how that term is used in the Jewish targum on Is. 65:5,6,15, remembering the text of Isaiah 65 is often alluded to in the final chapters of Revelation. There, "the second death" is Gehenna- which the Lord uses as a picture of condemnation at His return.

*20:7 And when the thousand years are finished, Satan shall be released from his prison-* He was "captured" (19:20) and imprisoned, just as Babylon had been a cage or hold / prison for others (see on 18:2). Again, "finished" should be translated "established". Satan is released from the abyss as outlined in Revelation 9- which clearly refers to the events of the second coming. See on 20:1 and 20:2.

This overall sequence of judgment on the kings of the earth, gathering them into a pit, shutting them up, then their revival and final destruction and then the unchallenged, eternal reign of Christ is the same sequence as in Is. 24:20-23. Very significantly, Psalm 2 has a similar picture, of Christ ruling amidst his enemies, "the kings of the earth / land" (cp. Rev. 19:19), who then decide to cast away the cords with which Christ has bound them (Ps. 2:3). This is exactly the scene of Rev. 20; the enchained remnants of the first invasion, along with the rejected saints, being loosed from their chains and surrounding Jerusalem. Interestingly, Psalm 2 describes them throwing off their chains, whilst Rev. 20 says that their chains of condemnation are loosed. Presumably this means that they try a rebellion against the Lord Jesus which he 'lets' succeed. The language of Rev. 19:15-18 combines allusions to both Psalm 2 and also Ezekiel 38- as if to imply that they both prophecy of the same invasion, i.e. that after Christ has returned.

*20:8 And shall come to deceive the nations which are in the four corners of the earth, Gog and Magog-* The similarities with Ez. 38/9 are so strong; an unsuccessful invasion of God's land when His people are in "peace and safety" (a phrase elsewhere used about the Kingdom), and destruction by fire. According to the usual view of Rev. 20, this similarity means absolutely nothing. This cannot be correct exposition. There must be a connection; surely this must refer to the same invasion? It would be the scenario of Psalm 2, where the nations of the land come against the Lord and His people in Jerusalem, after the type of the Assyrians surrounding Hezekiah in Jerusalem. Gog in Ezekiel 38 refers to an individual, not a nation. Is this man Gog to lead an attack against Jerusalem at the beginning *and* end of a 1,000 year reign?

"Shall come to" should be as AV: "Shall go out"- implying the bottomless pit is a geographical area? Satan deceives the "nations"; but 21:1 says that when the Kingdom

is established, there will be no more sea, no more nations. Therefore this must be appropriate to the beginning of the Kingdom. During the setting up period, the nations come up to worship Christ, as often prophesied in the O.T.; however, they are described as entering into the city (21:24-27), i.e. attaining immortality through their faith and obedience. The dragon "will come out to deceive the nations which are at the four corners of the earth/ land" (RSV). The Gog / Magog invasion comes from those dwelling in the "isles" (Ez. 39:6); but this Greek phrase often means Gentile areas on the borders of the land (Is. 41:5; Jer. 47:4; and "the isles" in Ezekiel refer to lands bordering the land of promise). Abraham was from the sides of the land of Israel (Is. 41:8,9), the margins of the land of promise- from where the final invasion will come. There is triple emphasis on his deception (:3,8,10). He continues the work of the false prophet, after the false prophet is put into the lake of fire. The dragon carries on his work; the false prophet is Babylon (19:20), who also deceived (18:23). The bottomless pit, where the rebellion comes from, is therefore at the borders of the land. The Kingdom of God is fundamentally based upon the land of Israel.

The dragon was a deceiver back in 12:9, and still is, as Jezebel in the early church deceived (2:20). The dragon of chapter 12 is cast down at Christ's return; the description of the dragon being cast into the pit is an amplification of this. When the dragon is thrown down in chapter 12, he persecutes those of the land (natural Israel?) and the sea (the nations?) for "a short time" (12:12)- the "little season" of 20:3? The dragon is cast out of heaven in 12:9- meaning that he is thrown out of the 'heavens' of the land of Israel (or the temple specifically), into the earth / world.

| Rev. 12                                                                                                                                                           | Rev. 20                                        | Comment                                                                                                                                                         |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| The dragon persecutes the woman for 3½ years                                                                                                                      |                                                | The tribulation before Christ's coming                                                                                                                          |
| Thrown out of the temple / land of Israel (heaven) to the earth / rest of the world                                                                               | Dragon cast to the abyss                       | Christ comes to throw the man of sin out of his place in 'heaven' (2 Thess. 2)                                                                                  |
| There for a while until he realizes he has a short time                                                                                                           | Chained                                        | Setting up of the Kingdom                                                                                                                                       |
| Makes war with the saints for another 3½ years, replicating the holocaust, also involving suffering for the sea (nations) and the land-dwellers (natural Israel?) | Makes war with the saints; aims for Jerusalem. | Rebellion; the invasion of Ez. 38 and maybe Joel 3; the desire for the temple in Joel 3 would then be another similarity between the rebellion and the invasion |

|           |                                                                                                            |
|-----------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
|           | prior to Christ's return.                                                                                  |
| Destroyed | The Ez.                                                                                                    |
| by fire   | 38/39 invasion is destroyed in two stages; five sixths are destroyed first, then the final sixth- by fire. |

*To gather them together to the war. The number of them is as the sand of the sea-* They are gathered to "*the battle*" (RV)- the final battle which the OT prophets so often mention. They are a false seed of Abraham, as the sand of the sea. Jihadists claim to be the true seed of Abraham, and Jews and Christians are the false seed.

20:9 *And they went over the breadth of the earth and surrounded the camp of the saints, and the beloved city, and fire came down out of heaven and devoured them-* They compass Jerusalem- s.w. Lk. 21:20. As they did during the invasion of the earth / land promised to Abraham prior to Christ's coming, so they will do in this re-enactment of it. The rejected saints and defeated jihadist armies will make the rebellion of 20:9. This will connect with the rebellion of Korah and his company of rejects against the encampment of God and His faithful people- which was also destroyed by fire. The lake of fire / bottomless pit / second death all seem to be parallel. This final, futile attack is spoken of briefly in 12:17; see note there about the parallels between Revelation 12 and 20. This is the scenario of Psalm 2, where the Lord is enthroned in Zion and then attacked; and of Ezekiel 38, where Gog comes down in an unsuccessful invasion against an Israel already enjoying the Kingdom conditions of dwelling without bars and gates and at peace.

20:10 *And the Devil that deceived them was thrown into the lake of fire and sulphur, where are also the beast and the false prophet, and they shall be tormented day and night forever and ever-* The dragon is in the abyss and deceives the nations which are there. The devil will deceive during the rebellion as it did in the period of the tribulation before the Lord's return (12:9; 13:14; 18:23; 19:20). The devil is cast into the lake of fire and brimstone, where the beast and false prophet already *are*. This suggests that their punishment lasts until the Kingdom is established, and until the "little season" of the rebellion is finished; the "short time" of desperate persecution of the woman after the dragon has been cast out of heaven / power in 12:12. Thus it would seem that the punishment of the wicked and rebels is to exist for some time into the Kingdom age. A number of passages tend to agree with this. The righteous will go forth from the borders of the promised land and look at their carcasses (Is. 66). The rejected saints go to the same place (20:15), condemned with the world (1 Cor. 11). The devil and beast will be cast to the lake of fire (Rev. 19:20; 20:10), as will all the rejected (Rev. 20:15); they will go to the same place. As Satan is bound (Rev. 20:2), so will the rejected be (Mt. 13:30; 22:13). This will be the antitype of Zedekiah being bound in condemnation (Jer. 52:11).

The beast and false prophet have a specific destruction promised them- the lake of fire which is the second death (:14). If death is their destruction, then they cannot be consciously tormented for ever. "Torment" translates a Greek word which simply

means "pain", and does not of itself imply eternal torment. Their destruction will be in "the lake of fire", which is a specific geographic location upon earth, probably Gehenna just outside the Jerusalem which they have tried to recapture. But all the earth shall be filled with God's glory throughout the Kingdom's eternity, so it is inconceivable that this is a literal description. The "forever and ever" translates *aion* which can mean a period of limited duration, an 'age' which has an end. That age would then refer to the age in existence until the Kingdom of God is fully established on earth. God has no pleasure in the death of the wicked and so He will not be tormenting people for ever; note that the word "hell" doesn't occur here. "Day and night" invites comparison with the fact that there shall be no night in the Kingdom of God (Rev. 22:5); perhaps this is mentioned as if to say: 'Their torment will indeed be painful and constant, every day and night of the old age / *aion*, until the Kingdom of God is fully established on earth and there shall be no more night'.

20:11- see on Heb. 2:3.

*And I saw a great white throne and him that sat upon it, from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away, and there was found no place for them-* 20:11 is amplified / repeated in 21:1. This is about the judgment at the second coming, not the end of the 'Millennium'. Earth and heaven fleeing away (cp. 6:14) refers to the passing of the old human system. "There was no place found for them" alludes to Dan. 2:35 about the beast system being destroyed at Christ's second coming, not the end of the 'Millennium'. This is surely the new heaven and earth of 21:1; that of Is. 65:17 and 2 Pet. 3:13, which will be established at Christ's return.

The fleeing away refers to how along with the beast's remnants, the rejected believers will slink away from the Lord's presence (1 Jn. 2:24 Gk.). The whole heaven and earth of this present world will likewise flee away from the face of the enthroned Christ (Rev. 20:11; Is. 2:21). Fleeing away is a characteristic of both the unworthy and also the world which they loved. In some sense the world will come before the judgment seat of Christ to be rejected (Dan. 7:9-14).

The great white throne judgment must refer to a judgment at the end of the 1,000 years if we follow the classical Millennial reign view. But Harry Whittaker points out some of the serious problems with this:

1. The earlier visions in this set of seven certainly concern events at the beginning of the Millennium. It would be strange if this series is so broken up that a gap of a thousand years is to be read between the fulfilment of some and of the rest.

2. 20:11: "I saw ... him that sat on the throne, from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away." The heaven and earth, which flee away, must be the old human order (compare Revelation 6:14). Is there much point in such a description if this judgement takes place a thousand years after the earth and heaven fled away?

3. "...and there was no place found for them" is a phrase quarried out of Nebuchadnezzar's dream (Daniel 2:35). Again the words suggest the work of Messiah in destroying the kingdoms of men. There is little relevance to the end of Messiah's kingdom.

4. 21:1: "And I saw a new heaven and a new earth." Isaiah 65:17 and 2 Peter 3:13 are equally emphatic that this is the setting up of the kingdom of Christ.

5. The allusions in ch. 21: 2, 9 to "the bride, the Lamb's wife" are difficult to harmonize with a time when all are redeemed. It is impossible to believe that the Bride waits a thousand years for union with her Lord. This new Jerusalem is "prepared as a bride adorned for her husband". The symbolism requires reference to "the marriage supper of the Lamb" at the time of his coming. The context of



Revelation 19:7-9 puts this conclusion beyond argument.

6. 20:12: "and the books were opened: and another book ... which is the book of life." These are unmistakable allusions to Daniel 7:10 and 12:1. Would anyone argue for an application of these passages to the end of the Millennium?

7. 21:3: "Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and he will dwell with them, and they shall be his people, and God himself shall be with them, and be their God." This is a very slightly modified quotation of Ezekiel 37:26b, 27, the time of reference of which is again unmistakable.

8. The description of the New Jerusalem includes this: "the kings of the earth do bring their glory and honour unto it ... they shall bring the glory and honour of the nations into it" (21: 24, 26). Will there be "nations" and "kings of the earth" when Christ's reign has been concluded?

9. The same passage has a long series of undeniable allusions to Isaiah 60: "The city had no need of the sun, neither of the moon, to shine in it: for the glory of God did lighten it ... And the gates of it shall not be shut at all by day: for there shall be no night there" - these are two examples but the whole of ch. 21 :22-27 should be studied. Again, the question has an easy answer: What epoch does Isaiah's prophecy describe? Then what does Revelation 21: 22-27 refer to?

10. A similar argument can be based on Isaiah 65. Without direct quotation, no less than eight points of contact can be traced between the second half of that chapter and the first eight verses of Revelation 21. So it is reasonable to assume that the two Scriptures are about the same thing. What is Isaiah 65 about?

11. Ch. 22:2: "And the leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations." So at the time spoken of there will be nations to be healed!

*20:12 And I saw the dead, the great and the small, standing before the throne; and books were opened, and another book was opened, which is the book of life; and the dead were judged out of the things which were written in the books, according to their works-* The opening of the books is that of Dan. 7:10; 12:1, which concern the start of the Kingdom age, not the end of some 'Millennium'.

*Another book was opened, which is the book of life-* The scroll of life is only opened once all the seals are loosed. These seals all refer to events leading up to the Lord's return. The book does not remain sealed until 1,000 years after His return. The reference is to the judgment seat at the Lord's return.

*Judged out of the things which were written in the books-* When Christ opens the books of His people (Rev. 20:12; as if each saint has a book written about him recording his life), He does this through discussing with our guardian the details of our life. Perhaps the Angels will have literal books with them; we pointed out earlier that the Angels do seem to use their facility for reading and writing.

The judgment seat is described as if literal books are written each day we live, and these will be opened and considered by God at the last day, in order to decide whether to give us the reward of the Kingdom or not. When we survey the total of God's revelation, it is evident that this is not to be taken literally. There will be a judgment, the result of which will be proportionate to the way we have lived our daily lives. But God (through the Lord Jesus) will not need to weigh up evidence. The books were written before the world began in the sense that God knew then who would be in His Kingdom. It is almost impossible to suggest that there will be literal scrolls unrolled. The idea of scrolls was no doubt used because it would have been understandable by those who were first inspired with God's word. Yet this is how God reveals the judgment to us; in human terms which we are capable of

understanding. We are not explicitly told that there will not be literal scrolls, or that God will not need to weigh up evidence to decide whether we will be in the Kingdom. Moses (Ex. 32:32) and Nehemiah (Neh. 13:14) perhaps saw the judgment in this literal sense, but this does not mean that there will be actual scrolls unrolled.

But there is another possibility. As suggested on :4 and :13,14, the resurrection and judgment here may refer to the beast's members who died during the tribulation. They are judged against what they did to those whose names are in the book of life; and it is those whom they killed, whose names are in that book and who are now alive, who judge them, according to what is written in the other book concerning what they did during the tribulation.

20:13 *And the sea gave up the dead that were in it, and death and Hades gave up the dead that were in them, and every man was judged according to their works-* But 21:1 says that in the new heaven and earth, there is no more sea. If 20:13 refers to the end of the Millennium, then 21:1 must likewise. But the coming of a new heaven and earth is a figure repeatedly used about the establishment of the Kingdom at the Lord's return. And 21:2 says that this is the time when the bride meets her husband, the Lord Jesus. This is at the Lord's return, and not 1,000 years later.

The sea giving up the dead doesn't refer to dead bodies floating upwards; the sea refers to the nations under the beast's dominion (17:5), which gave power to the beast and upon which it sat (see on 13:1). The sea in this sense won't exist after the Kingdom is established (21:1); therefore this refers to the judgment at Christ's return and not at the end of a thousand year period. Is the bottomless pit to be equated with the lake of fire? A place of punishment? The rebels are punished and then those who survive (i.e. those deserving more punishment) are sent back to this area, where they are punished for a long time, day and night for ever (20:10). But there will be no day and night as such in the Kingdom (21:25; 22:5). Therefore we must take this description of their punishment figuratively.

It could be that this giving up of the dead by "the sea" refers to how those who participated in the abuse of Israel and the believers during the tribulation will not escape final judgment; they will be resurrected and judged for what they did, and destroyed with the second death. This would explain why this is a judgment for "works", when works in that sense are irrelevant to those saved by grace. This group will be raised to answer for their evil works during the tribulation, and then be punished with the second death.

20:14 *And death and Hades were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death, the lake of fire-* The destruction of death is paralleled with the second death, which occurs at the judgment (21:8), when Christ comes. The second death can't happen twice, at the start *and* end of the 'Millennium'. What is in view here is events at the Lord's return and the establishment of the Kingdom, not at the end of some 1000 year period. Death, sorrow etc. (21:4) are destroyed for *us*, the believers; this is believer-centric language. Likewise "men" in 21:3 refers to the believers, not all human beings then alive (some will still be enduring punishment).

20:15 *And if anyone was not found written in the book of life, he was cast into the lake of fire-* The idea of being found written in a book is common in the narratives of the restoration, which looked forward to the final restoration of the Kingdom. Only those "found written" in the genealogies could be Levites in the re-established Kingdom (Neh. 7:5); those corrupted by their time in Babylon were excluded. And specifically it is those Jews who spiritually survive the final tribulation, the time of trouble in Israel such as never was, who are found written in the book and delivered

(Dan. 12:1). It is those written in that book who will not have worshipped the beast during the final three and a half year tribulation (13:8; 17:8). Some will tragically have had their names removed from that book (3:5). Again, the purview of the teaching in this chapter is specifically about the believers and unbelievers in the earth / land promised to Abraham during the tribulation period.

## REVELATION CHAPTER 21

21:1 *And I saw a new heaven and a new earth. For the first heaven and the first earth had passed away-* This is the situation presented in 2 Peter 3. The present system ["heaven and earth"] passes away at the Lord's return, and is replaced by the new one of the Kingdom age. I emphasize this because Rev. 21 is about the situation at the time of the Lord's return- and not some point 1,000 years after it. This means that the statement that "death shall be no more" (:4) is true at this point- of the Lord's return to earth and establishment of the Kingdom. If death is truly "no more" in the new system ["heaven and earth"], then there can be no 'mortal population' during the next 1,000 years. In other words, the theory of a Millennial reign needs to be radically re-thought, because as it popularly stands it is simply contrary to the text of Scripture.

*And the sea was no more-* "The wicked are like the troubled sea, when it cannot rest" (Is. 57:20). The sea refers to nations in 17:15, and as noted on 13:1, to the nations immediately surrounding the earth / land promised to Abraham who gave power to the beast and Babylon system. We read later in chapter 21 of how the nations enter into the new Jerusalem- the unbelieving, ignorant world at the time of the Lord's return are given the opportunity to come enter into the city of God, where there is only a new Israel, and no national differences. So this would be explaining how the situation where there is "no more sea" / nations came about. However it may be that the point of contrast is with the fact that in the Kingdom age, the source of water will not be the sea and its role in the water cycle, but rather the water which emerges from Zion (Rev. 22:1). The book of Revelation also seeks to subtly undermine the commonly accepted views of evil, by showing that all the beasts, dragons, demons imaginable are in fact not radical, free-ranging evil [as many imagined both then and now], but rather under God's very tight control; they are playing their role within His purpose, all leading towards the final end when sin and evil will be no more on earth. "The sea" was feared by the first century world, as being the source of monsters and evil. Rather than trying to argue that actually, that's nonsense- Revelation 21:1 instead teaches that whatever our beliefs are about "the sea", it will ultimately be no more when Christ returns.

The language of this whole section in 21:1-8 connects with Is. 65, concerning the establishment of the Kingdom, not after the Millennium. Heaven and earth pass away, the former (Gk. *proton*) things pass (:4)- the things that were once first place now pass. In 20:13, the sea gives up the dead; and this is applied to the 'end of the Millennium' by those who believe in a Millennial reign. But here in 21:1, "the sea" no longer exists at the start of the Lord's reign- for it is at this time that the bride meets the groom, and the Kingdom is established. Hence 20:13 must be interpreted as referring to some time around Christ's return; see my notes on chapter 20.

Revelation of the situation after the Millennium would surely be inappropriate, if not impossible, for us to receive in this dispensation. The context of Revelation 21 and Revelation 22 is set in chapter 20. The earth and heaven flee away when Christ sits on the throne, "and there was found no place for them" (20:11). This is almost quoting Dan. 2:35 concerning the establishment of the Kingdom, not the end of a 1000 year period. In place of this heaven and earth, a new heaven and earth appear in Revelation 21:1. This is the language of Is. 65:17 and 2 Pet. 3:13 concerning the second coming. In this context, John sees "the bride, the Lamb's wife" (Revelation 21:2,9). The church is only a bride at the time of the second coming, seeing she marries Christ at the marriage supper. At this time, "God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death", sorrow etc. (Revelation 21:4). The church will not be afflicted by these things during the Millennium; this must refer to Christ's return. Likewise the gift of the water of life (Revelation 21:6) is at the judgment at the second coming. The idea of former things (e.g. death, tears) passing away in 21:4 is one of many connections in Revelation 21 and Revelation 22 with Isaiah's prophecies of the second coming (Revelation 21:4 = Is. 60:20; 65:19; Revelation 21:25 = Is. 60:11,20). Revelation 21:7 speaks of the time when the faithful believer will receive his inheritance. This surely refers to the judgment at the second coming (Mt. 25:34). Revelation 22 has a number of connections with Revelation 21 which would indicate that we are to see Revelation 22 as also referring to the start, rather than the end, of the Millennium (e.g. Revelation 22:14, 21:27; 2:7). "The leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations" (Revelation 22:2) is another obvious example. "They shall reign for ever and ever" (Revelation 22:5) is the language of Dan. 7:18,27 concerning the judgment at Christ's return.

21:2 *And I saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God-* see on 1 Thess. 4:14. The whole prophetic metanarrative of the Bible is in many ways a tale of two cities- Babylon and Jerusalem. There are times when Babylon masquerades as Zion- a false city of God with a false Messiah leading her. Babylon / Babel was a city built to reach *unto* Heaven, in contrast to the true city of God which *comes down* from Heaven (Gen. 11:4 cp. Rev. 21:2). And there are times when Zion in her apostasy has appeared as Babylon. But in the final conflict of the last days, these two cities will be literally pitted against each other. Natural Jerusalem will be where Babylon makes her throne (see on 16:19) and will be destroyed by fire and sulphur; but then the new Jerusalem comes down upon her ruins. It was in Babylon where Nimrod first built the tower of Babel, the first organized rebellion against God; and it was there that God first entered into open judgment of flesh and humanity *en masse*. And it is here likewise that His purpose with sin and His true people will likewise be fulfilled. Babylon was also called Su-anna, "the holy city". Yet "the holy city" is Jerusalem, thus making Babylon a fake Zion, although she is briefly built on the site of Zion. Herodotus says the city was square, just as new Jerusalem. We have shown elsewhere that the events of the Babylonian invasion are typical of the last days. That invasion was "the time of [Israel's] trouble" (Jer. 11:12), clearly typical of Jacob's latter day "time of trouble".

We must continually remind ourselves that the Bible was written for an initial, primary audience. And we must seek to enquire what it meant for them. The primary audience of Revelation was Christians, particularly Jewish Christians, under persecution and pressure from both Roman and Jewish systems. In the decades leading up to the Jewish War and Jerusalem's destruction in AD70, there was a growing wave of nationalistic fervour which clearly dragged away many of the Jewish Christian converts. "Jerusalem" for them was the symbol of everything Jewish, it

stood for their mother city, to which one always spoke of 'going up' to. The initial purpose of Revelation was to help them see that holy space has been redefined. It is "the heavenly Jerusalem" which is significant (Heb. 12:22). The city of the Lord Jesus is "the *new* Jerusalem", and not the old one (Rev. 3:12 "the name of the city of my God, which is new Jerusalem, which comes down out of heaven from my God... my new name"). Identity with a city was very important in the Greco-Roman world. Jewish identity was to be with the heavenly Jerusalem, and not the earthly one. Gal. 4:25,26 is clear: "Jerusalem which now is... is in bondage with her children. But Jerusalem which is above is free, which is the mother of us all". Revelation speaks of the *new* Jerusalem as the ultimate reality, and therefore the *old* Jerusalem is delegitimized, or at best obscured in significance. This was also of great comfort to those who lived through the destruction of the temple in AD70. This was the end of the world for many Jews. But Jewish Christians who had grasped identity with "the *new* Jerusalem" would not be fazed by it. Their 'city identity' was not with any earthly city. Likewise the preservation of the temple spoken of in Rev. 11:1,2 was to be understood as spiritual preservation of the spiritual temple, the people of God. The destruction of the literal temple would've highlighted this interpretation. Those who had grasped the spirit of Christ would not have had their faith shattered at all by the events of AD70. Whereas those who had become caught up in the spirit of Jewish nationalism would've been driven to despair as all their hopes for an immediate Kingdom of God came crashing down. But those who grasped the spirit of Revelation would have understood that in fact the "new Jerusalem" has no need of a temple at all (Rev. 21:22).

The supreme city of identity in the Roman empire was Rome itself. And in that context, "Babylon" is presented as Rome. All that was aspired to and provided a sense of eternity and stability... is repainted as a whore about to be judged, something totally disgusting and fake. The New Jerusalem, Jerusalem "that is above", is presented as "mother of us all". There was to be a completely different locus and center for life, hope, identity and aspiration. And that in essence is true for God's people of all ages.

*Made ready as a bride*- "The bride" is married at the marriage supper (19:7-9)- not at the end of the Millennium. Therefore this is about the setting up of the Kingdom at Christ's return. The marriage supper of the lamb is at the Lord's return, not 1,000 years after it. The same words are used in Rev. 19:7 about the preparation of the bride. Therefore this vision, during which it is declared that death has ended (:4), is at the Lord's return. The destruction of death is spoken of in chapter 20 as being when the 1,000 years are established [mistranslated with the sense of "expired"]. Yet here in chapter 21, death ends at the time of the marriage of the lamb. There is thus no place for any theories of a 'mortal population' in the Kingdom of God. In the 1st century application, John the Baptists attempted to prepare [s.w. "made ready"] the bride, but this failed in that Israel crucified her Messiah (Lk. 1:17 s.w.). The marriage supper, the Kingdom, has been "prepared" from the beginning of the world (Mt. 22:4; 25:34;) and through the Lord's death (Jn. 14:2,3). It is the bride who is not ready. The implication is surely that once the bride is "prepared / made ready", then the marriage supper begins. The preparation of the bride is through the baptism of the last converts, and the spiritual preparation of those who are baptized.

The adornment or making ready is surely of good works and spiritual fruits, by which we adorn the teaching of the Gospel (Tit. 2:10; 1 Pet. 3:5). In this we see the significance of works. The Lord will marry us because we are His beloved, of His sovereign choice. But in response, we adorn ourselves as best we can for Him who

has so loved us. And yet the greatest adornment is the white garments of imputed righteousness which are given to us (see on 19:8).

21:3- see on Jn. 1:14.

*And I heard a great voice out of the throne, saying: Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and He shall dwell with them, and they shall be His people; and God Himself shall be with them-* This is stating the same wondrous truth three times. God shall indeed live with us on earth. Heaven shall come to earth. This is all an allusion to Ez. 37:26,27, concerning the time of Christ's return. If God lives with us at Christ's return, how will He be shielded from the 'mortal' population? This problem disappears if the 1000 years is seen as a description of the Kingdom itself. Seeing God's face was what motivated Job, and John seems to allude to it as the final consolation in 1 Jn. 4.

"The tabernacle of God", being God's people; He being our God; God living and walking with us, is all evidently alluding to Lev. 26:11,12 and Ex. 29:45,46 concerning the ultimate blessings of the covenant after Israel's final repentance. The shadowy fulfilment they have had in the past through God's manifestation in an Angel doesn't mean that these promises can and must only be fulfilled by some form of God manifestation. Surely Revelation 21:3 is saying that at the second coming the principle of God manifestation will change in that God will personally be with His people. Because we have so far lived under the paradigm of God manifestation, let's not think that it's not possible for God to personally be with us. Let's really try to be broad-minded enough to take this on board.

The other references to "God himself" are to Yahweh personally, rather than to Christ: Is. 45:18; Jn. 5:37; 16:27; 2 Cor. 5:18,19; Eph. 1:5. Indeed, those N.T. references seem to point a difference between "God himself" and Christ. So isn't it lack of spiritual vision- perhaps even of faith - that makes us wriggle against the idea of God Himself, in person, living with us? The idea of God Himself dwelling with men in the tabernacle (temple) of the new city of Jerusalem is a clear reference to Ez. 48:35, which says that the name of Jerusalem in the Millennium will be "Yahweh is there". These ideas doubtless also have reference to Yahweh's promise to David to build an eternal house for Yahweh's Name. This verse seems to teach that God Himself, in person, will descend to earth with Christ. This might sound altogether too incredible. But think about the idea. The King Himself (= God) comes to see the guests at the wedding of His Son (= Jesus; Mt. 22:11). "God himself" here either means God Himself or God manifest in Christ. "God himself shall be with them" seems to me an odd way of describing Christ's second coming. God will "be their God". I would just about be willing to concede that this might apply to God manifest in Christ - but for one significant fact: this Revelation 21:3 is packed with O.T. allusions which explicitly refer to God the Father.

*And be their God-* God promised Abraham that through Christ, His seed, blessing would come on people from all nations, with the result that God would be the God of Abraham's multitudinous seed: "To be a God unto... your seed... I will be their God" (Gen. 17:7,8). The seed is Christ, and the "God" is Yahweh. Let's not confuse them. Now in Revelation 21:3 this fundamental promise is alluded to; God Himself will be our God then; we will see Him and have a personal relationship with Him. This would mean that this idea of personally being with God is a fundamental part of the Gospel preached to Abraham.

21:4- see on Mt. 25:37-40; Rev. 20:14.

*And He shall wipe away every tear from their eyes-* The same word is used in Acts 3:19 concerning sin being blotted out at Christ's return. The tears are for our sins (sorrow likewise is connected with sin in Is. 53). Will we have an emotional breakdown straight after the judgment? The accepted will feel so certain of this that they will almost argue with the Lord Jesus at the day of judgment that he hasn't made the right decision concerning them (Mt. 25:37-40). It's only a highly convicted man who would dare do that. Thus the Father will have to comfort the faithful in the aftermath of the judgment, wiping away the tears which will *then* (see context) be in our eyes, and give us special help to realize that our sinful past has now finally been overcome. We will be like the labourers in the parable who walk away from judgment clutching their penny, thinking "I really shouldn't have this. I didn't work for a day, and this is a day's pay". Therefore if we honestly, genuinely feel that we won't be in the Kingdom, well, this is how in some ways the faithful will all feel.

The tears that will be wiped from our eyes are those associated with "the former things" of this life, and also the emotion associated with our acceptance. But it can't be that it means we will never have the emotion of sadness ever again. For God is made sad, grieved at His heart, even now. And we are to share *His* nature. Consider for a moment the *emotion* which we will feel after being granted Divine nature. Malachi says we will be like stalled animals, who are fed, fattened, kept in small dark pens to be killed... who then suddenly break out into the daylight, and go prancing away through the meadows. This will be our leap of joy and taste of true freedom. Yet the Father will have to comfort the faithful in the aftermath of the judgment, wiping away the tears which will *then* (see context) be in our eyes, and give us special help to realize that our sinful past has now finally been overcome.

God's comfort to the oppressed is that He will wipe away their tears (Rev. 7:17; 21:4). Revelation speaks particularly to those being persecuted. And "wipe away" is the word used in the LXX for the wiping away of evil people and systems from the face of this earth (Gen. 7:4,23; Ex. 17:14; Dt. 9:14). But it is also used of the wiping away of our sins (Ps. 51:3; Is.43:25). The two ideas go together. The final comfort will be that truly we have been forgiven for our own serious sins; and also, in the same comfort, there is the assurance that the evil of sinful men has also been permanently taken away.

*And death shall be no more-* The end of death is portrayed in Revelation 20 as death being thrown into the lake of fire, which is also the second death. The second death is for those rejected at the judgment at Christ's return. Their punishment with death is therefore the end of death; there will be no more death after that because the curse of death upon Adam's race will be ended. There is no possibility therefore for a 'mortal population' after these things. If there is to be no more crying or pain after the Lord's return, we are scarcely to imagine that there will be exactly these things at some supposed 'second judgment' and 'second condemnation' 1,000 years later.

1 Cor. 15:54,55 likewise speak of the end of death: "But when this corruptible shall have put on incorruption and this mortal shall have put on immortality, then shall come to fulfilment the saying that is written: Death is swallowed up in victory. O death, where is your victory? O death, where is your sting?". The quotation is from Is. 25:8, which concerns events at Christ's return- not at the end of the 1,000 years. The end of death will therefore come at the resurrection- when Christ returns. And that is what is being taught here in Rev. 20 and 21.

*Neither shall there be mourning, nor crying, nor pain, any more-* The Greek for "pain" specifically refers to labour pains. This is all the language of the curse on Adam and Eve in Genesis 3. It fits into a theme of paradise being restored. But labour

pains are also used with regard to the experience of the believers during the tribulation. As ever in Revelation, there is especial relevance to the believers who are persecuted and die during the final tribulation in the earth / land promised to Abraham. It is they who have experienced death, sorrow and labour pains.

*The first things are passed away*- The parallel is with the passing away of the first heaven and earth (:1). The 'heaven and earth' is therefore a figure for "the former things". *Former things*... Defined in Is. 48:3,4,5 as God's prediction "from the beginning" that Israel would sin and be judged by Him with exile. When we read that the "former things" will no longer be remembered, and that both God and man will "remember not the former things" (Is. 43:18), perhaps the same reference is in view. Rev. 21:4 predicts that in the Kingdom age, there will be no more tears because "the former things are passed away", literally, 'they are behind'. That may appear obvious, a needless statement of a truism- that past things are past. But the suggestion is that then we will totally realize that our sins are behind us, as God has cast them behind His back. The connection between tears, sorrow and "former things" is a powerful psychological insight into the human condition- sorrow, tears, depression etc. are all connected with our awareness (however subconscious) of human sin, both our own and of others. When we finally grasp that all sin is indeed behind us, then there is the basis for a life without tears. And that is at least theoretically possible even now, if only we will see our sins and perceive them as God does- as past. But we must of course deal with the sins of others in that same way. God's emphasis in Isaiah is that He has "declared" the former things from the start. All our sins in one sense were known to God from the beginning, and He knew how to deal with them.

God (this is important) made Joseph forget all his "toil", his mental sufferings (Gen. 42:51). This was a miracle; no amount of steel-willed suppression of his past could have made Joseph paper over all the pain. But God did a psychological miracle upon him. Has God done the same to Christ now in His glory, as He will to us one day soon (Rev. 21:4)? Yet the Lord will be factually aware of His sacrifice and the associated pain. God presumably did not obliterate Joseph's memory cells, but He made him "forget" the pain. This is surely what God has done to Christ, and what He will do to us: take away the pain on a psychological level whilst still leaving a factual awareness. Is it too much to suggest that even now, God is ready and willing to do something like this?

21:5 *And he that sits on the throne said: Behold! I make all things new. And he said: Write! For these words are faithful and true*- All things will be made new at the Lord's coming, and yet those in whom the new creation is worked out already have all things made new in their spiritual experience (2 Cor. 5:17,18).

The utter literality of all this was emphasized to John, when he was told: "Write! For these words are true and faithful". The almost fantastical description of God Himself wiping away all the tears that are in (Gk.) the eyes of men... this really is true and faithful. It could be that the wonder of the idea of meeting God in person... boggled John's mind to the point he wondered whether he really was intended to write this down, doubting whether all this could be really true. And he exactly represents our feelings.

21:6 *And he said to me: They have come to pass. I am the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end. I will freely give to him who is thirsty from the spring of the water of life*- We, now, take the water of life (22:17; Jn. 4:14; Mt. 10:8). The picture surely is that at this time, we receive literal immortality. It speaks of the Lord's return and not the end of some point 1,000 years afterwards. It is at this time, when we receive immortality, drinking the water of life, that death itself ends. So there will



be no 'mortal population' after that. And yet as John's gospel stresses, we can right now drink of that water of life; we can receive the gift of the spirit, of the Lord's mind and thinking, of His life; so that we can begin to live now the kind of life which we shall eternally live. And the Greek tenses could imply that throughout eternity we are continually given, in an ongoing sense, to drink of this water of life. It is life as He has it, and not just the one-time gift of immortality.

The "freely" giving of the water of life recalls the river Pison in the garden of Eden, which means 'freely flowing'. There are allusions galore to Eden through the final visions of Revelation- for Eden shall be restored and the curse lifted.

21:7 *He that overcomes shall inherit these things*- The letters to the churches begin Revelation by repeatedly promising that "he that overcomes" will be recompensed at Christ's return- no suggestion is made that the recompense will be 1,000 years after His return (Rev. 2:7,11,17,26; 3:5,12,21). The Greek word translated "overcomes" occurs nowhere else. The reference here is therefore to the time of Christ's return; and it is at this time that death will be ended (:4), i.e. cast into the lake of fire. If death itself is destroyed at the Lord's return, there cannot be any mortal population during a supposed 1000 year reign which commences at His return.

*And I will be his God and he shall be my son*- An application of the promise to David about Messiah to each one of us who is in Christ (2 Sam. 7:14). The wonder of our eternal living will be that we shall relate to the Father as the Lord Jesus did. The prospect offered to us is very much in terms of *relationship* with the Father and Son, without being disturbed by personal sin and the possibility of sinning; rather than a presentation of a literal picture of a physical, materially optimal existence. Galatians 4 teaches that we are more than adopted sons; we become the actual begotten sons of God through the work of the Spirit. And when the Lord returns, this shall finally come to full realisation.

21:8 *But for the fearful and unbelieving and abominable and murderers and fornicators and sorcerers and idolaters and all liars, their share shall be in the lake that burns with fire and sulphur; which is the second death*- The language of murder, fornication, lying, sorcery and idolatry has all been used in Revelation of the beast / Babylon system and their various associated acts such as the false prophet. It is they who shall be destroyed in the second death; implying that they shall be raised to judgment even if they died during the tribulation. I have suggested in chapter 20 that the descriptions of resurrection, judgment by those who they killed, and destruction in the second death all refer specifically to this category.

These people are those of 20:15, those of 22:15 who are placed (geographically?) outside the encampment of the people of God in Jerusalem, perhaps to be literally burnt in Gehenna outside the city.

But just as apparently 'petty' sins [by secular judgment] are juxtaposed alongside apparently 'major' ones in Paul's writings, so here, the "fearful and unbelieving" are categorized alongside the abusive members of the beast system. Those who won't believe the good news of salvation in Jesus are in the same category as those society would characterize as serious sinners, the abusive members of the beast system. But before God, they all have the same final end. Note that the disciples, whose names are on the foundations of the new Jerusalem, were once both fearful and unbelieving (Mk. 4:40). Indeed they are described as "unbelieving" several times (Mt. 17:17; Jn. 20:27; Tit. 1:15). The point is that those who were once like those outside the city are in fact the foundations of the city.

And yet the language used here is also used about the behaviour of some within the church. The same words are used about believers in 1 Cor. 5:9,11; Heb. 12:16; 13:4. It means that in essence this is how God sees some in the ecclesias. I wonder how many of them will have literally done those things. Surely it is more reasonable to suppose that this is how their other deeds and attitudes were counted in God's sight. Or does it show that far more people than we expect will be classed as responsible to judgment? And it's noteworthy that those who won't believe are in the same category as these more 'awful' sinners. For we are either saved or rejected, there is no third road nor category.

21:9 *And there came one of the seven angels who had the seven bowls, who were laden with the seven last plagues; and he spoke with me, saying: Come here, I will show you the bride-* We are introduced to the idea of seven last plagues, and thus an expectation is set up that we shall now see some awful catastrophes poured out on earth. Instead, we have a vision of the bride and her Kingdom glory. I suggest this is purposeful; we are being shown that the Lord's focus is upon the salvation of His people. The punishment of the wicked is incidental to that, and not something He at all revels in. Perhaps the idea is that the final attack against Jerusalem is made whilst the Lord and His bride are within it. And His focus is upon enjoying the beauty of His bride rather than the necessary destruction of the invaders through those seven last plagues. Maybe the seven last plagues, like the seven thunders, are potentially prepared but do not actually happen; see on 10:4.

21:10 *And he carried me away in the Spirit to a mountain great and high-* The 'height' of the mountain likely refers more to its glory than its literal altitude. Zion and / or the mount of Olives was the great and high mountain in the Jewish thought in which Revelation is presented. And Acts 1 and Zech. 14 envisage the Lord Jesus returning to that mountain. The exact chronology of events need not concern us; not only will the meaning / experience of time likely be changed, but the chronology must to some extent be open, because the repentance of various groups will be possible. The final outworking of events will take that into account.

*And showed me the holy city Jerusalem coming down out of heaven from God-* Literal Jerusalem as the capital of Babylon will be destroyed; a new Jerusalem will literally come down to replace it. But this is not a pile of new stones, but more essentially the glorified believers, who as explained on 1 Thess. 4:14 come as it were with the Lord Jesus at this stage.

21:11 *Having the glory of God. Her light was like a stone most precious, as it were a jasper stone, clear as crystal-* Jasper appears in various colours, representative of the varying individual beauties of the believers, refracting the Lord's light in unique and beautiful [to Him] ways. The Hebrew idea of 'jasper' is 'polishing', and it is that process which is underway in our lives at this moment.

21:12 *She had a wall great and high, having twelve gates; and at the gates were twelve angels, and the names of the twelve tribes of the children of Israel written thereon-* The 12 gates of the Heavenly Jerusalem are identified with 12 Angels, whereon are written the names of the 12 tribes of Israel. This suggests that the tribes of Israel are reflective of the situation in Heaven, where there are Angels representing each tribe. This identity between heavenly Angels and the believers they represent on earth is a common theme in Revelation. This connection between Angels and Israel is commonly found in the Old Testament. Dan. 8:24 speaks of Israel as "the people of the saints" (RVmg.), although v. 13 speaks of "the saint" (RV "holy one") as an Angel. 1 Sam. 17:45 parallels the Angelic hosts, and the hosts of Israel's armies; they were to follow where the host of God went, just as David's army had to follow the

sound of the cherubim “marching” over the mulberry bushes (1 Chron. 14:15). And whilst we follow where we are led, we are identified with our Angels to the extent that what is done to us is done to them. To defy the armies of Israel was thus to defy the armies of Heaven (1 Sam. 17:45). Thus the four faces of the Angel cherubim were reflected in the four standards of the camp of Israel; the people were intended to “keep in step with the Spirit”, following where they went, as they had done in the wilderness years. They were to walk “each one straight before him” (Is. 57:2 RVmg.), as each of the cherubim went straight ahead (Ez. 1:12). And we too are to follow where our Angel potentially enables us to go. The Angel went in to Jericho to take the city; and the Israelites went “straight” ahead, following the Angel, and thus took the city (Josh. 5:13,14; 6:20).

21:13 *On the east were three gates, on the north three gates, on the south three gates and on the west three gates-* What is the significance of this order? It is not a circular view, i.e. not clockwise nor anticlockwise. Perhaps it is in conscious difference to the order of the gates of the city as given in Ez. 48:31-34, which goes north- east- south- west, i.e. in a clockwise direction, starting from where the hands of the clock would naturally begin, i.e. at the north. The many differences highlighted with the Ezekiel temple visions seem in order to make the point that contrary to Jewish expectation, that temple would not be literally built at the Lord's return. The new Jerusalem will be altogether beyond such literalism.

The square nature of the city (:16) is perhaps to demonstrate that the Kingdom of God is open to all peoples from all quarters; and the unbelieving nations who were not destroyed along with Babylon will now equally be able to enter God's Kingdom.

21:14 *The wall of the city had twelve foundations, and on them the twelve names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb-* Those men were so weak in their lifetimes, but out of such weakness were made strong. John must have been shocked to see his own name there. We can assume that the device to replace Judas with Matthias in Acts 1:26 was therefore eternally accepted. The tragedy is that the name of Judas could have been there, but it was removed, just as names can be deleted from the book of life.

21:15 *And he that spoke with me had for a measure a golden reed to measure the city and the gates of it, and the wall of it-* The allusion is clearly to the measurements of the new temple given in Ezekiel 40-48. But the details and dimensions are so different, and those emphasized differences [see on :13] climax in the statement that there is “no temple” in the new Jerusalem (:22). It all seems designed to underscore the point that the temple of Ezekiel's prophecy is *not* going to be built at the Lord's return. It was a potential, conditional prophecy of what could have been at the restoration from Babylon, which the Jews failed to actualize.

It's worth reflecting on the significance of how the same words for “reed” and “measure” are used in Rev. 11:1, where John is bidden measure the temple with a reed. But there is no record of him doing so. Now, an Angel does make the measurements, not just with a “reed” but with a “golden reed”, the gold maybe speaking of faith brought to completion. Perhaps John represented the lack of faith and obedience which precluded the Lord's Kingdom coming in the first century. Likewise it was a lack of faith which precluded the building of the temple which Ezekiel had seen measured out with a reed. Hence the difference in reeds- the one in Rev. 21:15 is a *golden* reed, speaking of faith.

21:16 *And the city is laid out as a square, its length is as great as its breadth, and he measured the city with the reed, twelve thousand stadia-* This is clearly not to be

taken literally. And so one wonders why the insistence on reading 'one thousand years' as a literal measurement in this very same section of Revelation.

*The length and the breadth and the height of it are equal-* As were the dimensions of the most Holy, and of Babylon, which was rebuilt briefly on the site of Jerusalem. The perfect congruence of the design reflects how in this life, each of the component parts is being brought into perfect symmetry with the others. This would be one explanation for the inter-personal friction which so many have experienced as a result of their Christian walk. In the bigger picture, this was all necessary to make us fit together so perfectly in eternity.

The square nature of the city (twice emphasized) is perhaps to demonstrate that the Kingdom of God is open to all peoples from all quarters; and the unbelieving nations who were not destroyed along with Babylon will now equally be able to enter God's Kingdom. The temple was not a cube, but the Most Holy Place was (1 Kings 6:20). The idea may be that the new Jerusalem is not just a temple, but the entire city is the Most Holy Place, with God Himself present there with us. For the personal presence of God in the new Jerusalem is a repeated theme. The implication of Zech. 14:20,21 could be that the holiness of the temple and the Most Holy is going to be extended to the whole city of Jerusalem, confirming the impression here that the new Jerusalem is in fact a temple: "In that day there will be on the bells of the horses, HOLY TO YAHWEH; and the pots in Yahweh's house will be like the bowls before the altar. Yes, every pot in Jerusalem and in Judah will be holy to Yahweh".

21:17 *And he measured the wall of it, one hundred and forty four cubits-* Again, numbers are not to be taken literally. The idea is clearly of 12 x 12, the foundations of Jacob's twelve sons mixed with those of the twelve apostles, maybe speaking of the perfect fusion of Jew and Gentile. We may well wonder why the new Jerusalem has a wall; for a wall is a symbol of protection, and implies some are within, and others without. The wall is 144 cubits high, but the city itself is 12,000 stadia high (:16). The wall and the city are not therefore identical. The wall is given quite some attention here. If sin and evil are no more, the idea of protecting from external threats seems inappropriate. I therefore would focus more on the sense of security. We shall be eternally secure. No more niggling doubts as to our salvation. No more fear of sin, but eternally secure within God's love.

*The measurement of a man, which is also an angel's measurement-* The parallel between men and Angels would suggest that now the believers have become as Angels (Lk. 20:35,36). This would suggest a reference to the time of the Lord's return, when there will be this change from humanity to immortality and Angelic nature. John has seen Angels representing believers in the heavenly throne room, and now they are united. The wall is "great and high" (:12) but 144 cubits is not a huge height for a city wall- only 216 feet / 65 meters. The walls of Babylon were almost double that, and in the context, Babylon is set up as the antithesis of the new Jerusalem. And the wall seems very low compared to the height of the city itself, which is "twelve thousand stadia", about 340 miles (:16). The point may be that what is small by man's measurement is great by God's; and that is perhaps the idea behind the enigmatic comment that a man's measurement is also an Angel's measurement in this city. Babylon was famed for its walls, but they are nothing compared to the walls of the new Jerusalem. Because the walls of God may appear to man far smaller, but are "great and high" by God's standard.

21:18 *And the building of the wall was of jasper-* Why a wall? It can hardly be for protection. Perhaps there will eternally be a sense of separation between light and darkness, saved and unsaved, which we do well to be aware of now too.

*And the city was pure gold, like pure glass-* See on :21 *pure gold*. Glass was not totally transparent in John's day, but he saw glass as if it were transparent, and had the impression this was in fact transparent gold (:21). Yet gold by its nature cannot be transparent. In these paradoxes we have reflected the wonder of the whole thing. The city of God, the Kingdom of God, is transparent- it is *open*. The gold, the wonderful reality which by its nature is closed and dense, is also amazingly open and transparent. For a theme of these visions is that the unbelieving world [those not destroyed during the last judgments] are invited to come in to the Kingdom, to the community of believers, the Jerusalem which is above which has now been revealed on earth. The gates are open day and night, the wall is there- but transparent; the city itself is the ultimate image of openness. The bride and the Lord Jesus are urging the nations to come into it. No longer do the 12 tribes of Israel define membership- the symbolism of 12 x 12 gives the impression of an innumerable greater openness. The spirit of that openness is to be seen in us today.

21:19 *The foundations of the wall of the city were adorned with all manner of precious stones-* The allusion is to the temple in Jerusalem, whose precious stones had made John and the other disciples so awestruck (Mk. 13:1). That was all to be replaced by a spiritual temple. Instead of the names of donors and other leading lights within Judaism engraved on the precious stones, now the names of the humble disciples are to be written. As the bride was adorned (:2), so the same figure is used here. The adornment is surely of good works and spiritual fruits, by which we adorn the teaching of the Gospel (Tit. 2:10; 1 Pet. 3:5).

*The first foundation was jasper. The second, sapphire. The third, chalcedony. The fourth, emerald-* See on :20.

21:20 *The fifth, sardonyx. The sixth, sardius. The seventh, chrysolite. The eighth, beryl. The ninth, topaz. The tenth, chrysoprase. The eleventh, jacinth. The twelfth, amethyst-* The stones echo the spirit of the High Priest's breastplate. Within the city, therefore, is the heart of the High Priest. The thinking, spirit and heartbeat of Jesus is the all-consuming characteristic of the community within those walls, as it should be of us today.

21:21- see on Mt. 7:6.

*And the twelve gates were twelve pearls. Each of the separate gates was of one pearl-* The gates are open constantly (:25), and even if shut, the glory passing through the pearl would have given the effect of the pearl being transparent. This fits with the otherwise strange image of transparent gold (see on :18). The gates are open; but why are there gates, therefore, and why are they effectively transparent? It is in order to teach something to the nations who witness Christ's return. They must recognize that there is indeed a wall and gate to be passed through, but it is effectively open and transparent to them, such is the Lord's will that they should enter in.

*And the street of the city was pure gold, as if it were transparent glass-* Gold cannot by nature be transparent. John is struggling in words to convey what he saw and the impressions which arose. As with the language of demons, we have an example here of how the Bible uses human language and at times records things from the limited perspective of observers on earth.

21:22 *And I saw no temple therein. For the Lord God the Almighty, and the Lamb, are the temple of it-* This seems almost purposefully intended to teach that the temple outlined in Ez. 40-48 will not be built at the Lord's return. See on :13. The dimensions of the city, measured by a reed as was used in Ezekiel's vision, are specifically different from those in Ezekiel's temple vision. I suggest Ez. 40-48 was command rather than prediction; it was what could have been if the returned exiles

had built it. Revelation was given in the first century, at the time when Jerusalem and its temple were destroyed. This was no small tragedy for Jews and Judaism. Revelation's message is that Jerusalem and the temple are not necessary in the new order of things; there will be a new Jerusalem, comprised of the believers; and no need in any case for a temple.

In John's Gospel, the Lord states that He is the temple / tabernacle which was to be taken down in His death and rebuilt in His resurrection. Our abiding in Him is therefore abiding within the temple; for He has prepared for us an abiding place in that spiritual house through His death (Jn. 14:1,2). As discussed on :2, this replacement of the temple by the Lord Jesus had huge significance for the primary audience of Revelation. For the destruction of AD70 was going to shake the world and faith of most Jews, including Jewish Christians. But those who correctly perceived the message of Revelation would not have been at all fazed.

21:23 *And the city has no need of the sun, neither of the moon, to shine upon it-* The sun and moon were created partly in order to give a sense of time and seasons, not least the Jewish feasts. Grasping God's view of time means that we will see the Kingdom as immortality, not everlasting life. The eternity of our future existence is not the big theme of the Bible; it is "God manifestation, not human salvation", in the words of John Thomas. The process of eternity, the life and Kingdom of God, is already going on now; the tree of life *is* now (not 'will be'; Greek tenses are precise) in the midst of the paradise of God, at least from God's perspective (Rev. 2:7). We will have no need of the sun, for the light of God's glory will replace our concept of time (Rev. 21:23). Indeed, "the time of the end" can be read as "the end of time" (Dan. 12:4,9). There will be "time (Gk. *chronos*, the idea of time) no longer" (Rev. 10:6). The image of Dan. 2 is destroyed together by the Lord's return; each metal in some sense exists at his coming. Rather than meaning that each of those empires must have an end time revival, this may be teaching that the whole concept of human history and time will be ground to powder by the advent of the Kingdom. One day, when we are then with the Lord, will be like a thousand years (2 Pet. 3:8)- there will be no comparison between our present view of time and what will then be. The ploughman shall overtake the reaper (Am. 9:13)- which may refer to the collapsing of time, rather than just being a figure of fecundity. Before people pray, they will be heard (Is. 65:24- although this is our present prayer experience too, Mt. 6:8). Our focus should therefore be more on the *quality* and *nature* of the Kingdom life, rather than the mere eternity of it.

*For the glory of God did light it, and the lamp of it is the Lamb-* This seems to imply their physical presence. There was no 'candlestick' [Gk.]- no temple and temple furniture was necessary. This was radical reasoning for the first century Jewish audience, dominated as they were by the temple cult.

21:24 *And the nations shall walk by the light of it, and the kings of the earth bring their glory into it-* Revelation 20 has described a period of time when the dragon is chained. It could be that during this period, a chance is given to the nations outside of the earth / land promised to Abraham, which is the focus of Revelation and Bible prophecy. And they respond by realizing that indeed their wealth and glory is nothing (:26), and come up to Jerusalem in repentance of their materialism, where they are invited to the Lord's table. See on 19:18. The previous kings of the earth / land had supported Babylon / the beast and were now no more. But they will be replaced by leaders who bring their glory to the Lamb rather than to Babylon. The glory they

bring in to the new city is surely not physical gifts; but giving glory to God through repentance and commitment to Him.

God dwells in light (1 Tim. 6:16), and this new city will have light from God, through Christ (21:11,23; 22:5)- because Yahweh Himself will be there. Perhaps some of the intensity of that light will spread out to the surrounding world, so that the nations call Jerusalem the place where Yahweh is (Ez. 48:35).

21:25 *The gates of it shall in no way be shut by day (for there shall be no night there)*- Representing the tribes of Israel (:12). They will be continually open to Gentiles entering in and joining with them. There would be no more Jewish exclusivity of the type which troubled the believing community at the time Revelation was given. There will finally be nothing and nobody untouched by the light of the Lord Jesus. And yet John's gospel presents the Lord as the total light of our lives now; in this sense we can live the eternal life now. But again we enquire why there would be gates in an eternal city, in a situation where ultimately there are none left 'outside'. The next verses could suggest that this is because in some way, there will always be an openness for others to enter. We can only speculate who those 'others' might be. But perhaps the gates remain as an eternal reminder that those within the city had at one point entered it. This is the huge significance of baptism, and of entering through the narrow gate in this life, as well as into Divine nature at the Lord's return.

21:26 *And they shall bring the glory and the honour of the nations into it*- The idea of entering the city (:27) which represents the Kingdom of God is found in the Lord's teaching of the camel passing through the needle gate in order for a rich man to enter the Kingdom. There is the same message here- the wealth and glory of the world must be sacrificed in order to enter in. See on :24.

21:27 *There shall in no way enter into it anything unclean, or he that makes an abomination and a lie, but only they that are written in the Lamb's book of life*- As noted earlier, there is an intended contrast between the descriptions of the city in Rev. 21 and 22 seem to contradict those given in Ezekiel 40-48:

| Revelation                                                    | Ezekiel                                                                                                               |
|---------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 21:27 Only those in the book of life can enter                | 45:6 the city is for natural Israel (Zech. 8:5- children play in the streets). 44:11; 46:9 ordinary mortals enter it. |
| 21:25 City gates never shut                                   | 44:1 Gates shut at times                                                                                              |
| 22:5; 21:23 Glory of God is the light, eclipsing sun and moon | 45:17; 46:1,3 Moon shines in the city                                                                                 |
| 22:14 those who enter the city eat the tree of life           | mortal priests inside the city                                                                                        |
| 21:22 no temple in the city                                   | a temple in the city                                                                                                  |

The true  
temple has  
already been  
sprinkled by  
Christ's blood.

45:20 This  
temple needs  
regular cleansing  
("so shall  
ye reconcile the  
house") by  
sprinkling of  
blood.

These are just some of the many disparities, yet both cities are said to be built on a great mountain. The language bids us look back to Ezekiel's temple- and realize that it is *not* going to be built at the Lord's return. Such literalism will be far out of place once the Kingdom is established in all its glory.

## REVELATION CHAPTER 22

22:1- see on Jn. 1:14.

*And he showed me a river of water of life, bright as crystal, proceeding out of the throne of God and of the Lamb-* The throne of God and Jesus will be in Jerusalem. The river of life proceeds from there. Whilst I fail to see a doctrine of a Millennial reign taught in Revelation, it's clear that after Babylon is destroyed and Christ and the saints are enthroned in Jerusalem, there is a period of time during which the surviving mortals have the opportunity to identify themselves with the Kingdom and be immortalized. The water of life thus flows out to them, and they are urged to drink freely of it, thereby finding immortality. Likewise the tree of eternal life offers its fruits to them in :2; all they have to do is take it. And both the Lord Jesus and us His bride urge the peoples to come into the city of God, through the gates into the city of eternal life (:17). It may be that in order to eat of the tree of life they must first "wash their robes", undergoing a kind of baptism experience (:14). There may be some literal element of fulfilment of the prophecy that a fountain will be opened in Jerusalem where sin can be cleansed (Zech. 13:1).

The New Jerusalem described here is clearly presented as the capital city of the true Christian. This was another counter cultural stab at the cult of empire, whereby Rome was to be seen as the eternal mother city. To go to Rome was seen as the ultimate pilgrimage, with Caesar's palace perceived and imaged as the most 'holy' place on earth. All this is subverted by presenting the New Jerusalem, replete with the actual throne of God Almighty, as the ultimate city of identity. So Christians who lived within the Roman empire were not to see Rome as their capital, nor for that matter "Jerusalem that now is"; but rather the heavenly Jerusalem "which is above".

The new Jerusalem comes down from Heaven, clothed as a bride. The city is therefore people. Just as "Babylon" is people, so is the new "Jerusalem". The wall is 144 cubits high, combining the 12 apostles with the 12 tribes of Israel. The wall too is representative of people. This needs to be understood, lest we fall into some kind of excessive literalism regarding the physical city called Jerusalem. Indeed, Paul's connects "the Jerusalem that now is" with bondage and condemnation, rather than salvation. The "Jerusalem that is above" is free, and for freedom has Christ set us free. We are that city. Revelation is full of pictures of the triumphant, victorious believers "in Heaven", and then pictures of them "on earth" under persecution and suffering. There is no conscious survival of death. The believers "in Heaven" are not alive. But



they are assured of salvation, and so the God who is outside of time sees them as they shall eternally be. But on the ground, they are suffering. The new Jerusalem 'coming down' therefore means that the salvation now assured for us, and the nature of which is currently being worked out in Heaven, will then be turned into reality on earth. Right now, our reward is being prepared; the nature of eternity, our part in the 'new city', reflects our own chosen path, our works, the nuances of our personal relationship with the Lord Jesus which we are now developing. In this sense it is a reward prepared for us, and we will be given according to our works (Rev. 22:12), although salvation itself is by grace and not works. What the Lord is now working with us to prepare will then be transferred, from heaven to earth. This all may be represented by a physical entity appearing in Jerusalem from heaven, to replace the abomination built there by the antiChrist. Although *contra* that is the bald statement in Rev. 21:22 "And I saw no temple therein. For the Lord God the Almighty, and the Lamb, are the temple of it". This was clearly aimed at the way the primary Jewish audience of Revelation were being sucked back in to the temple cult of Judaism. But any such future physical entity is of small moment compared to the far greater spiritual reality which that would represent.

He who overcomes will be made a pillar in that new temple / city: "He that overcomes, I will make him a pillar in the temple of my God; and he shall leave there no more, and I will write upon him the name of my God, and the name of the city of my God, the new Jerusalem, which comes down out of heaven from my God; and my own new name" (Rev. 3:12). Clearly the temple and the city are parallel. It is a city which is a temple. And we are now that temple. The apostles are now the foundation stones of that city just as we are pillars within it. But there is a present dimension to all this. We can be pillars now within it (Gal. 2:9); and we are now the temple of God. The temple [which is the city] is now being built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets: "You are fellow-citizens [as if living in a city state] with the saints and of the household of God, being built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus himself being the chief corner stone. In whom the whole building, being fitted together, grows into a holy temple in the Lord. In whom you also are being built up together for a dwelling place of God in the Spirit" (Eph. 2:19-22). Heb. 12:22,23 is clear: "But you have come to association with mount Zion and to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to innumerable hosts of angels, to the general assembly and church of the firstborns, who are enrolled in heaven". This is what Revelation calls the "new Jerusalem". We are now like Abraham, walking in search of the city whose builder and maker is God (Heb. 11:10). Hebrews specifically mentions these things in view of the impending destruction of the city and temple in AD70. The point is, that at the Lord's return, what we are now in prospect will be revealed and manifest in ultimate terms, visibly and actually upon this earth.

22:2- see on Rom. 5:12.

*In the midst of the street thereof. And on both sides of the river was the tree of life, bearing twelve fruits, yielding its fruit every month; and the leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations-* The righteous man is right now like "a tree planted by the rivers of water, that brings forth his fruit in season; his leaf also shall not wither; and whatever he does (in this work of preaching?) shall prosper" (Ps. 1:3). These words are quoted in Rev. 22:2 concerning our holding out of life to the mortal population at the Lord's return. The conclusion? If we witness now we are living the Kingdom life now, and therefore we will be perpetuated in that time.

Rev. 21 and 22 seem to describe a "wood of trees of life" (22:2- A.V. 'tree' must be wrong because the 'tree' is on either side of the river), watered by the river of life proceeding from the mountain of "the throne of God and of the Lamb". There was a mountain in Eden, seeing there were four "headstreams" there, and it seems fitting to suggest that God's throne was on this same mountain before the fall. So whilst the picture is of Eden restored, there are differences- there will be a whole forest of trees of life, and no liar will be within the restored paradise, i.e. there will be no serpent, no possibility of sinning. Which means paradise indeed.

"The healing of the nations" suggests a process of time after the Lord's return during which the nations are healed, perhaps physically from the effects of the judgments, and spiritually.

The situation here is part of the description of the new Jerusalem. But already in this life, the tree of life "is" in God's paradise: "To him that overcomes, I will permit him to eat from the tree of life, which is in the Paradise of God" (Rev. 2:7). Just as the new Jerusalem in one sense exists. But these things will be made physically manifest upon earth when the new Jerusalem is as it were transferred to earth at the Lord's return.

22:3- see on Rev. 21:27.

*And there shall be no curse any more, and the throne of God and of the Lamb shall be therein, and his servants shall serve him-* One option is "No more cursed one", alluding to the serpent. No more possibility of temptation and sin; and that would indeed be attractive to all who are spiritually minded and frustrated at their own propensity to failure.

The final chapters of Revelation so often parallel God and "the lamb" (e.g. Rev. 22:3). The Father was so deeply united with the Son in His time of sacrificial offering. See on Jn. 19:19. The descriptions of the new city of Jerusalem in the prophets and Revelation can be better understood once it is appreciated that Eden will literally be restored in that area. Zech. 14:8-11 lays the basis for the descriptions of the city in Revelation, and includes the main elements of Eden- "living waters" ('Hiddekel') going out from a "Lifted up" mountain in Jerusalem, with "no more curse" there, v.11 (the phrase "no more utter destruction" is translated like this when it is quoted in Rev. 22:3).

The removal of the curse of itself suggests that this world is not going to be destroyed; but the curse will be removed, reverting things to how they were before the sin in Eden. This is also the implication of "I am making all things new" in Rev. 21:5. The old is not destroyed totally, but made new. The word for "new" is not *neos*, meaning new in time or quality, but *kainos*, which means newness in nature or quality. The new heavens and earth are clearly based on the idea of the creation of heavens and earth in Genesis 1. But there too, we have pre-existing matter being re-ordered, and something beautiful emerging from chaos. And this is how things shall be at the Lord's return; and this is our personal hope. "We shall be changed", but not totally destroyed into some kind of nirvana / non-existence. Salvation is personal, and so we can see continuities between our present existence and how we shall eternally be. In this we see the paramount importance of personality; for who we are now is who we shall eternally be. "The spirit shall be saved". The new Jerusalem is likewise us now, "in heaven" in God's plan and purpose, which must 'come down' and be more materially and tangibly manifest upon earth. This fits with the repeated teaching that the Kingdom of God will be a restoration of the Kingdom of God as it was historically. The Lord Jesus will "restore again the Kingdom to Israel". The first heaven and earth "passes away", but that is parallel with "the former things are passed

away" (Rev. 21:1,4). Likewise "no more sea" (Rev. 21:1) is hardly literal; it refers to the environment out of which the evil beasts arise (Dan. 7:3; Rev. 13:1,6,7). Nowhere does the Bible teach the literal destruction of the earth.

*22:4 They shall see his face, and his name shall be on their foreheads-* The reference seems to be to God Himself. This is in the context of the allusions to the situation in Eden being restored. The result of sin was that Adam and Eve went away from the face of God whereas they had previously seen it (Gen. 3:9-11). It is all about relationship with God without barrier. Throughout Revelation 21 and 22 there is a distinction made between God and "the Lamb". This further suggests that the references to "God himself" are *not* to God manifestation in the Lamb, but to Yahweh Himself. "They shall see his face; and his name shall be in their foreheads" indicates that "His face" and "His name" refer to the same being. The Name which will be in our foreheads will be that of Yahweh, the Father, not Christ (Rev. 3:12; 14:1). Therefore it is *His* face which we will see. Of course there is *some* reference here to 'seeing' in the sense of understanding, which is how we see the Father now. But then our fuller mental comprehension of the Father will be reflected in our physical vision of Him. Is. 25:6-9 speaks of how God's people will enjoy a feast in Jerusalem at the Lord's return, the veil will be withdrawn from their eyes, all tears will be wiped away, and then "It shall be said in that day, Lo, this is our God... this is Yahweh". There is a parallel between physically seeing God and having the veil of our present incomprehension removed. The fuller understanding which we will then have will be reflected in our literal seeing of God.

The seeing of God's face is parallel with having His Name or personality in our heads, in the centre of our minds. This is what will make the physical seeing of His face appropriate.

The Name of God in the forehead contrasts with the name in the forehead of Babylon. Here we find continued the idea that the city of Babylon is the antithesis of the new Jerusalem. But neither are literal cities; they are women, one a prostitute and the other a bride; they represent the world and the church. There is no third group, and the two systems can never assimilate into each other. They are radically opposed. And this is the situation between the believer and whatever form of 'Babylon' surrounds them. The harlot Babylon has jewels, as does the new Jerusalem. The unclean things and abominations within Babylon (Rev. 17:3,4) are the very things which are outside the new Jerusalem (Rev. 21:6). The new Jerusalem has names belonging to it, which are in the book of life (Rev. 21:27); the names associated with Babylon are not in the book of life (Rev. 17:8). Again we see that these cities refer to people and not to geographical locations.

*22:5 There shall be night no more, so they do not need the light of a lamp, nor the light of the sun; for the Lord God shall give them light-* The candle, symbol of God's word (Ps. 119:105) will no longer be needed by the faithful, because "the Lord God shall give them light". Our personal, direct contact with God will replace the ministry of the Bible and indeed all God's manifestations and communications as we now have experienced them. Personally seeing God's face means that we need no other form of illumination. But the parallel in Rev. 21:23 says that "the city has no need of the sun, neither of the moon, to shine upon it. For the glory of God did light it, and the lamp of it is the Lamb". "The city" is the "they" who are God's servants (:3). The light God will give is the light of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ, the Lamb. But we now see that same glory, albeit through a glass darkly (2 Cor. 4:6); just as we are in a sense the city now.

The allusion is to the prophecies that Zion's light shall be everlasting and shall eclipse the need for sun and moon (Is. 30:23-26; 60:1,2,19,20). But that everlasting light shall shine "day and night", according to Is. 60:20. So we are not to think that the literal heavens shall be destroyed. But the message we get is that the spiritual shall far eclipse the physical, although the physical shall remain. All pictures of the Kingdom of God which focus heavily upon the physical [ideal climate etc.] are simply missing the Biblical emphasis- which is upon relationship with God, and His glory.

*And they shall reign for ever and ever-* This continues the allusions to Eden and the restoration of the situation there. Man will again see God's face (:4), as he did there. But the intention was that Adam in Eden would reign over all creation (Gen. 1:26). This intention is now going to be realized- for ever.

22:6- see on Jer. 23:18,22.

*And he said to me: These words are faithful and true-* It seems the Angel sensed John's struggle to accept the reality of it all. See on 21:5 *Write!*

*And the Lord, the God of the spirits of the prophets, has sent His angel to show His servants what must soon take place-* Perhaps this continues the theme noted in :5; that now we shall be face to face with God, there is no need for any more manifestation of Him to us through things like His word. His Spirit was in the prophets, but now the God whose Spirit that was- is with us face to face.

*His servants-* We are given the same simple title in :3. We will eternally serve Him, and so we have begun the eternal life now, in so far as we serve Him now. The present experience of the eternal life is a major theme in John's writings.

22:7 *And behold, I come quickly-* These words would be appropriate to the Lord Jesus, so we assume that He spoke them; or that the Angel so intensely represented the Lord that he could appropriately say them. The Lord's quick or soon coming could refer to the suddenness of His coming, implying the need for constant readiness for it on our part. Or the idea may indeed be that He is coming "soon", in that all believers are to live as if the second coming is imminent. And the Lord could have come "soon" after John's time, had Israel repented. The Olivet prophecy and many New Testament references certainly support that possibility. But because of the unreadiness of the bride, the lack of repentance in Israel and lack of spiritual fruit in the church, that coming has been delayed to our days.

*Blessed is he that keeps the words of the prophecy of this book-* The book is hardly a list of commandments, and this particular section of Revelation is a description of the awesome destiny awaiting God's people by grace. So the reference is not really to 'keeping' in the sense of keeping commandments; nor can 'keep' be twisted to mean 'keep the right interpretation of...'. Perhaps the idea is that blessed is he who believes these wonderful things and keeps the reality of them far further than merely seeing the vision, being visually awed, and then slipping back into the humdrum of the mediocre religious life.

22:8 *And I John am he that heard and saw these things. And when I heard and saw, I fell down to worship before the feet of the angel that showed me these things-* The "these things" don't therefore refer to the entire vision, but to what John saw prior to falling before the Angel. Presumably the reference is to the amazing vision of eternity in 22:1-5. Faced with these eternal realities, our natural response should be to fall down and worship.

22:9 *And he said to me: You must not do that! I am a fellow-servant with you, and with your brothers the prophets, and with those that keep the words of this book. Worship God!*- This shows that the Angel was a prophet. This title does not only mean one who foretells future events, but in Biblical usage refers more to one who

ministers the word of God under inspiration; the Angel was therefore responsible for inspiring the Bible like the prophets (Old and New Testament ones) were. Note too how the Lord describes the Angels as "servants" (Mt. 22:13), using the common description of the prophets as Jehovah's servants- as if He saw a close connection between Angels and prophets. See on 2 Cor. 3:6.

22:10 *Do not seal up the words of the prophecy of this book. For the time is at hand-* The implication would be that the interpretation of Revelation would be sealed until the time for fulfilment was at hand. Daniel was told the same about his prophecies (Dan. 12:9). This fits with much other Bible teaching, to the effect that prophecy will be understood at the very end of time, just before its final fulfilment in the Lord's return. The flagship verse concerning the opening of our eyes to latter day prophecy must be Dan. 12:4,10: "Shut up the words, and seal the book, even to the time of the end: many shall run to and fro (an idiom often used concerning response to God's word: Ps. 119:32,60; 147:15; Amos 8:11,12; Hab. 2:2; 2 Thess. 3:1 Gk.), and knowledge (of Daniel's prophecies) shall be increased... many shall be purified, and made white, and tried (in the tribulation); but the wicked shall do wickedly: and none of the wicked shall understand; but the wise shall understand". This is all in the context of the Angel rejecting Daniel's plea for insight into his own prophecies. All he was told was that they would be fulfilled in the far distant future, but he was comforted with the thought that the faithful at that time would understand. That the fulfilment of all the latter day prophecies will be understood fully in the very last days is implied in Jer. 23:20: "In the latter days you shall understand it perfectly". The "it" refers to "the intents of [God's] heart" revealed in His prophetic word. It is no accident that the Apocalypse ends with words which clearly allude to the closing words of Daniel. John falls at the Angel's feet, as Daniel did. The Angel then says: "Seal not the sayings of the prophecy of *this* book (unlike Daniel's, which was sealed): for the time is at hand. He that is unjust, let him be unjust still: and he which is filthy, let him be filthy still (cp. "the wicked shall do wickedly")". The implication is that the book is sealed for those who are a long way from the time of fulfilment; hence John must not seal the prophecy *because* its fulfilment is near. Thus Dan. 12:4 LXX reads: "Seal the book until the time of its accomplishment"- *then* it will be unsealed and the meaning become apparent. The primary application of Revelation is to the events of AD70; the implication is that the righteous understood the pattern of events then because of this book. There is a repeated stress throughout the NT epistles on the need to understand and get true knowledge (1 Pet. 3:7; 2 Pet. 1:2-6,8,16; 2:20; 3:18), perhaps with special reference to Scripture like the Olivet prophecy and Revelation; likewise 1 Tim. 3:1,16; 4:1,2 encourage Bible study in the 'last days' leading up to AD70. The need for understanding and study at that time is reflected in our last days. Paul told the Thessalonians (in the context of AD70) that he didn't need to tell them about the times and seasons because they already understood the prophecies so well- but they needed rather to make sure that their lifestyle was appropriate to their understanding (1 Thess. 5:1-5). The situation in AD70 is a type of the true "last days". Therefore the understanding of Revelation will not be sealed just before its second and major fulfilment in the second coming of Christ. In the same way as Daniel's prophecies will be opened to us in the last days, so must the book of Revelation, because the understanding of Revelation is so bound up with the meaning of Daniel. "None of the wicked shall understand; but the wise shall understand" suggests that this true understanding of prophecy motivates the faithful remnant in holding on to a righteous

lifestyle. Time and again Israel are condemned because their lack of *understanding* of the prophecies led them into sinful behaviour (Dt. 32:29; Ps. 94:8; Is. 44:18).

As to the time being "at hand", see on :7.

22:11 *He that is unrighteous, let him continue to do unrighteousness, and he that is filthy, let him remain filthy, and he that is righteous, let him continue to do righteousness, and he that is holy, let him remain holy*- This verse appears to be stating the obvious and axiomatic, but probably the idea is that God will confirm people in the way they wish to go. Seeing the reference is to the time of the very end (:10), the idea may also be that once the Lord comes, we cannot change our ways. Now is the time to do that. We will as it were be frozen as we are.

22:12- see on Mt. 26:70.

*Behold, I come suddenly*- See on :7. The suddenness / quickness of judgment is a major Biblical theme. The suddenness of how the wicked had shot words like arrows at David (Ps. 64:4) is matched with how "suddenly" they will be struck by God's arrow in judgment. Judgment will be "sudden" (Ps. 64:7); and that may be part of the idea behind Rev. 22:12 "I come quickly / suddenly". Judgment will be a sudden surprise for the wicked, but something long and slowly awaited by the righteous. The Lord's coming will be as "thief in the night" for the wicked, "at an hour you do not expect", in that it will be unexpected, catching them off guard (Lk. 17:26-30; Mt. 24:42-44; 1 Thess. 5:2,3 "While people are saying, 'Peace and security,' destruction will come upon them *suddenly*"). The sudden nature of Divine judgment is a major Biblical theme. We think of the sudden deaths of Ananias and Sapphira; Miriam's immediate leprosy after her complaint; and the sudden nature of the coming of the flood and judgment upon Sodom. It was sudden in the sense that the judged people were hit by it as a surprise. Hence calamity or judgment from God comes suddenly (Prov. 3:25; 6:15; 24:22; Ecc. 9:12). "It shall be at an instant, suddenly" (Is. 29:5), like a bowing wall "whose breaking comes suddenly at an instant" (Is. 30:13). God's historical judgments have likewise come "suddenly" on those who experienced them, even though God's people expected them. We think of Babylon "suddenly" being destroyed (Is. 47:11; Jer. 51:8; Hab. 2:7), just as Babylon "suddenly" destroyed Judah (Jer. 4:20; 6:26; 15:8; 18:22). The suddenness was in the experience of the judged people; the righteous were aware of the judgment coming and saw it coming.

*And my reward is with me*- The reward has been prepared for us in Heaven (Mt. 5:12). In this sense the new Jerusalem descends from Heaven- to us.

*To repay everyone for what he has done*- Gk. 'according as his works shall be'. It will be in our last days that Israel's blindness starts to be cured, thanks to a Word-based revival, led by the Elijah ministry. Solomon's prayer stated that when Israel properly repented, God would then "render unto every man according unto all his ways" (2 Chron. 6:30). Our Lord here definitely applied these words to the work of His second coming. His allusion to Solomon's prayer should be proof enough that the time of His full apocalypse is related to the time of Israel's repentance. The "everyone" in view is not only the believers; the phrase 'according to works' is found in Rev. 18:6 about the judgments upon Babylon according as their works have been. We noted on 20:13 that the judgment according to works may specifically be a reference to the judgment of those who persecuted the believers during the tribulation. For the believers are not judged according to their works in that salvation is not on the basis of works, although it is also true that our works will have eternal consequence.

22:13 *I am the Alpha and the Omega, the first and the last, the beginning and the end*- The Lord Jesus is appropriating to Himself the titles of His Father, as used in Is. 41:4; 44:6; 48:12. Those statements that God is "the first and with the last" are all in

the context of assuring a doubting Judah that really, God has saved them. We sense from the encouragement to John to really record all this, and the repeated reminders that these words are true and faithful, that the Lord's people will struggle to grasp the wonderful truth of all this. Right through the process, from our foreknowledge at the beginning to the "last things" of our final salvation- He will have been in the process.

22:14- see on Mk. 10:25.

*Blessed are they that wash their robes, that they may have the right to eat of the tree of life and may enter in through the gates into the city-* The reference may be to baptism, and belief in the efficacy of that washing. On this basis we will have the "right" to the tree of life (Rev. 22:14); yet our salvation is by pure grace alone. We are "meet" to be partakers of the inheritance, we walk worthy of the Lord Jesus unto all pleasing of him (Col. 1:10-12), the labourers receive the penny of salvation, that which is their right (Mt. 20:14). We are either seen as absolutely perfect, or totally wicked, due to God's imputation of righteousness or evil to us (Ps. 37:37). There is no third way.

This parallels the city and Eden by equating having "right to the tree of life" with entering "in through the gates into the city". Rev. 22:3 tells us that the throne of God will be in "it" - i.e. the wood of life (not the river- see context), as in Eden God's throne was in the garden, which garden was presumably a wood of trees and little else ("of every tree of the garden..." -other plants are not mentioned), in the same way as the new Eden is composed solely of trees of life. The invitation "of every tree of the garden thou mayest freely eat" is mirrored in "take the water (lit. take from the stream) of life freely" - the stream being that of Eden. Rev. 21:27 stresses that no serpent -"whatever works abomination or makes a lie"- will enter the new Eden as it did before. The midst of the new Garden will be the throne of Christ, who in every way will then be the tree of life and knowledge. This will be paradise restored, but without the possibility of sinning. Paradise indeed.

22:15 *Outside it-* We all worry as to whether we shall be left outside the Kingdom. This description of those outside is helpful in this regard. All are urged to enter, the gates are open constantly, the Spirit and bride both urging entrance, the water of eternal life can be drunk freely, a whole forest of trees of life offer their eternal fruit to all regularly, the wall around the city is transparent. Only those who don't want to be there will not be.

*Are the dogs-* One subtext of these visions is the criticism of Judaism and legalism. "Dogs" are elsewhere used to represent those who teach circumcision and who return to the Jewish law (Phil. 3:2; 2 Pet. 2:22).

*And the sorcerers-* Literally, poisoners. All these categories of the condemned have one thing in common- they entice others into sin and damage others, after the pattern of the serpent in Eden. The message is that paradise will be restored but with the major difference that there will no more be tempters and enticers to sin. *Pharmakeus* could perhaps dynamically be translated as 'drug pushers'. But the reference is to how the system of the beast and Babylon is guilty of all these things, spreading her sorceries, fornication, idolatry and lies to all the peoples in the earth / land during the tribulation.

*Idolaters-* Those who worship images, and Revelation has much to say about those who worship the image of the latter day beast.

*Lovers and practisers of falsehood-* Those who love and create lies. Given all the allusions to paradise restored, this must refer to the serpent in Eden.

22:16 *I Jesus have sent my angel to testify to you these things for the churches. I am the root and the offspring of David, the bright morning star-* This statement of the obvious seems to be another example of how the utter reality of these things is being emphasized. This is not fantasy or wild dreaming, there is an eternal truth to this message of the Kingdom. And the message is to be shared with "the churches", initially the seven [representative] churches of chapters 1-3.

The Lord is both the offspring of Jesse and David, and also "the root of Jesse" (Is. 11:1,10). This is another way of saying that He is the alpha and omega of all things. All this wonderful plan was planned for us from the beginning and shall come to fulfilment. Barnes helpfully comments: "Not the root in the sense that David sprang from him, as a tree does from a root, but in the sense that he was the "root-shoot" of David, or that he himself sprang from him, as a sprout starts up from a decayed and fallen tree - as of the oak, the willow, the chestnut, etc. The meaning then is, not that he was the ancestor of David, or that David sprang from him, but that he was the offspring of David, according to the promise in the Scripture, that the Messiah should be descended from him. No argument, then, can be derived from this passage in proof of the pre-existence, or the divinity of Christ".

22:17 *And the Spirit and the bride say: Come! And he that hears, let him say: Come!-* The whole spirit of the Lord Jesus is to invite others to come and share His salvation. He that hears will say to others "Come". This refers to the redeemed community and the Lord Jesus urging the survivors of Babylon's judgments to come within the city of salvation. Those who 'hear', i.e. believe, will invite others to 'come', in the spirit of Zech. 8:21. There is a wonderful theme in these last visions of urging others to accept the great salvation presented. The water of life can be freely drunk, the gates of the city are open constantly, and the Spirit ["the Lord the Spirit", the Lord Jesus] and us the bride urge others to enter. In the immediate context of this chapter, the reference would be to the mortal nations who survive Armageddon who are urged to enter the Kingdom which has been established in Jerusalem.

*And he that is thirsty, let him come. Let him that desires take the water of life freely-* The 'free' nature of the gift of eternal life fits into the general impression given in these visions that the community of salvation is so utterly and easily open to all, and the only qualification is that we 'desire' to be there; that we are those who 'thirst' for the water of eternal life. This goes back to the Lord's opening teaching in the Sermon on the Mount; that salvation is freely available quite simply for those who really want it. Our desire to 'be there' should therefore be the passion of our heart, our defining emotion and wish. And we shall be satisfied.

22:18 *I testify to every man that hears the words of the prophecy of this book, that if anyone shall add to them, God shall add to him the plagues which are written in this book-* The reference is not to the whole Bible, it is specifically to the words of the prophecy of the Apocalypse. The only other time the Greek text talks about 'adding things' is in Acts 15:28 where we read of the tendency to add things to salvation by faith alone. I have suggested that the language of the New Jerusalem and the open temple is all to be understood in the first century context in which it was given. For the admission of non-Jews to a largely Jewish Christian community was a live issue.



The picture presented here is of an eternal salvation where literal Jerusalem and its temple are surpassed by the reality of the Kingdom, and the 12 tribes of Israel are no longer to be understood literally. So I suggest with that background, the idea here is that the great salvation just presented is available to all, freely. And anyone who adds conditions to that shall be excluded from it; and likewise any who detract from the vision by not believing it. For the fearful and unbelieving are listed in Revelation alongside the whores and sorcerers who shall remain outside the new Jerusalem.

Yet the plagues written in the book have specific reference to latter judgments upon the Jews and upon the supporters of the beast in the earth / land promised to Abraham during the three and a half year final tribulation. Islam adds to the prophecies through claiming that the Koran and Hadith were given after the time of Revelation; and first century Judaism added to God's book by elevating their laws and traditions to effectively the same status as the words of God in the Bible.

22:19 *And if anyone shall take away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part from the tree of life and out of the holy city, which are written of in this book-* That disobeying the law of God is effectively adding to it was clearly brought home to Israel: "What thing soever I command you, observe to do it: thou shalt not add thereto, nor diminish from it" (Dt. 12:32). The command to Joshua to "observe to do according to all the law... turn not from it to the right hand or to the left" (Josh. 1:7) is probably reiterating the command not to add ("to the right") or subtract ("to the left") from the law. Rev. 22:18,19 is based on these passages.

Only those once written in the book of life can have their names taken out of it. The idea of taking away therefore refers to believers who fall away. In the last days especially, as the tribulation unfolds, it will be tempting for believers to downgrade the book of Revelation, and not to accept the plain teaching about the need for separation from the beast, even if it nets death and persecution. There will be a particular temptation then to "take away" from this book.

22:20 *He who testifies these things says: Yes. I come quickly. Amen-* See on :7. This could mean that the return of the Lord was all set up and possible in the first century, but was delayed due to human failure to meet the required conditions. It could equally mean that He will come suddenly, unexpectedly for many; and the key characteristic of the faithful is that we should be ready for His coming. Acceptance of His 'imminent' return is a feature of Christian life; we are to live expecting the end to come very soon.

The idea of delayed fulfilment of that which was expected imminently is, however, part of God's entire revelation. On one hand, the delays are because of human failure to meet required preconditions, e.g. the spread of the Gospel to all the world before the end comes, the fruit of repentance on the fig tree of Israel, spiritual fruit in the body of Christ, etc. And yet we have to note that throughout Revelation, we have visions of the "end"; as if that end is approached but not quite reached. Because then we go on to read of further events which must happen. There are gaps between the openings of the sixth and seventh seals, and again between the blowing of the sixth and seventh trumpets. The impression given to someone listening to the book being read would have been of 'strange delay'. We may take relief when we hear that there is to be "delay no longer" (Rev. 10:3-6); but then we go on to read of a three and a half year period of witness amidst persecution (Rev. 11:3). So promise of the end, followed by delay, and then another cycle of the same... appears to be part of God's style. It may well reflect human failures to meet preconditions. But it may also

simply be His style in history, in order to bring things to an even greater climax when the Lord finally does return.

Revelation comforts believers that their sufferings at the hands of systems of evil are only for "a short time" or "a little while" (Rev. 6:11; 12:12; 17:10) is from Heaven's perspective. For those 'on the ground' suffering persecution and death during that "short time", this would give perspective. But it would only be comforting if they accepted Heaven's perspective, as taught in Revelation. Believing in the ultimate return of Jesus and the eternity of God's Kingdom on earth... this enables us to locate our own sufferings, even if they last a lifetime, within the broader perspective of eternity. The comfort that suffering is only 'for a moment' only finds meaning if we accept the reality of the eternity ahead. In this sense, the Lord's return is "soon".

*Come Lord Jesus-* There is little point in praying for His coming if it is set for a date set in stone that cannot be altered. The calendar date of His coming is therefore not set; because it depends upon our prayers.

22:21 *The grace of the Lord Jesus be with the saints. Amen-* Given the awesome eternal future prepared, it is appropriate we are reminded that this is all by absolute grace. Yet "grace" often carries with it the idea of the gift of the Spirit, and this is a major theme in John's writings. He wishes all readers to accept that gift, the presence and power of the Lord Jesus with us; which is the essence of life now just as it shall be of the life eternal.