

THE COMING OF THE KINGDOM

A SURVEY OF THE BOOK OF REVELATION

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OUTLINE OF THE BOOK

KEY VERSE: 1: 7—“*Behold, He is coming with the clouds, and every eye will see Him, even those who pierced Him, and all the peoples of the earth will mourn because of Him. So shall it be! Amen.*”

PROLOGUE (1:1-8)

- I. FIRST VISION: Christ in His Church (1:9 - 3:22) “What Is Now” (1:19)
- II. SECOND VISION: Throne Scene in Heaven (Chapters 4-16) “What Will Take Place Hereafter” (1:19)

A. THE SEVEN SEALS (7 Years)*

- 1. At the Sixth Seal: “Great Earthquake” (Chapters 6-12)

RAPTURE**

- 2. At the Seventh Seal: Refrain of Judgment (8:5)

“ . . . *peals of thunder, rumblings, flashes of lightning, and an earthquake.*”

REFRAIN STATED (8:5)

B. THE SEVEN TRUMPETS (7 Years)*

- 1. “*In the days when the seventh angel is about to sound his trumpet the mystery of God will be accomplished*” (10:7).

“ . . . *A loud voice from heaven . . . they went up to heaven in a cloud . . . at that very hour there was a severe earthquake . . .*” (11:12-13).

RAPTURE**

- 2. The end of the Seventh Trumpet (11:15-19)

“ . . . *There came flashes of lightning, rumblings, peals of thunder, an earthquake and a great hailstorm.*”

REFRAIN ENLARGED (11:19)

C. THE TWO SIGNS (Middle of “Week” and last 3 1/2 Years)*

- 1. The Woman and the Dragon, etc. (Chapters 12-14)

RAPTURE (12:5)**

- 2. THE SEVEN BOWLS OF GOD’S WRATH: (Chapters 15-16)

“*Then there came flashes of lightning, rumblings, peals of thunder and a severe earthquake. No earthquake like it has ever occurred since man has been on earth, so tremendous was the quake. The great city split . . . from the sky huge hailstones . . . fell upon men.*”

REFRAIN BROUGHT TO A CLIMAX (16:18-21)

III. THIRD VISION: The Fall of Babylon, The Great Harlot, and the Destruction of all Enemies (Chapters 17-21:8)

IV. FOURTH VISION: The Bride, The Wife of the Lamb, Coming into The Promised Inheritance (Chapters 21:9 to 22:5)

EPILOGUE: (22:6-21)

*These refer to Daniel's 70th "week" of years, alluded to in Rev. 11:2, 3; 12:6, 14; 13:5. See Dan 7:25; 9:24-26.

**"Rapture" is a popular term for the resurrection of the church.

THE COMING OF THE KINGDOM

PROLOGUE (1:1-8)

In the preceding outline of the Revelation, we have followed a widely-used literary division of the book into the four visions preceded and followed by a prologue and epilogue. A natural literary break comes with each mention of being “in the Spirit.” In Revelation 1:10, John writes: “On the Lord’s Day I was in the Spirit.” The second division is introduced at 4:2 with the words: “At once I was in the Spirit”; the third division (17:3) with “Then the angel carried me away in the Spirit into a desert”; the last division (21:10) with “And he carried me away in the Spirit to a mountain great and high.” A close examination of these passages shows that the similar pattern in the disclosure to John always connects the authoritative voice from heaven with the activity of the Spirit at the beginning of each vision. Surely this deliberate refrain has significance.

Another literary feature underlying the whole structure of Revelation is the constant reference to Old Testament prophecy, especially Daniel, showing that the revelation Christ gave to John was the same as that given to Daniel. On closer examination we will see how these literary features prove out.

In a prologue we would normally expect to find a statement of the theme, and in the prologue of the Revelation we are not disappointed. The parousia—the coming of Christ—is stamped right on the surface in the twofold greeting of the prologue (1:4, 8) and is most dramatically announced in the words at verse 7: “Look, he is coming with the clouds, and every eye will see him, even those who pierced him; and all the peoples of the earth will mourn because of him.” At 1:4 and 8, the parousia is directly stated in the words “who is to come.” Notice how John arranged his ideas in the tristich¹: “who is, who was, and who is to come.” He has punctuated this infinite horizon “ever-living-one” with two historical notes: Christ was there at creation and He is going to manifest Himself again at the consummation. All this answers very neatly to the other metaphor he uses in verse 8: “I am the Alpha and the Omega . . . who is, and who was, and who is to come, the Almighty.” John has emphasized Christ’s coming at the consummation of the age in the construction of this tristich. He has clearly focused attention on his major theme, the coming of Christ.

That coming is reiterated at the end of the book in the Epilogue (22:6-21). There is a beautiful balance between the things said at the beginning of the book and at the end. After John has finished his formal outline in 22:6, Christ speaks: “Behold, I am coming soon!” Then follows a repetition of motifs we have heard at the beginning of the book: “I am the Alpha and the Omega, the First and the Last, the Beginning and the End” (the *arche* and the *telos*—the *goal*—22:13). The words: “I, Jesus, have sent my angel to give you this testimony for the churches” (22:16), parallel John’s statement in 1:1 where the same expression is given in the third person: “. . . he made it known by sending His Angel.” Again and again the motif is sounded as in 20:20: “Yes, I am coming soon.” There can be little doubt that this great thought is stamped upon the book as its overriding theme.

Returning to the prologue, we find the most obvious announcement of the theme in verse 7: “Look, he is coming with the clouds.” This headline announcement takes us back to Daniel 7:13, while “Every eye will see him, even those who pierced him; and all the peoples of the earth

¹ Tristich means a group or stanza of three lines of verse.

will mourn because of him” takes us back to Zechariah 12:10-12. Notice that those two prophecies have been previously put together by our Lord himself in the Olivet discourse (Mt. 24:30). Here the Lord’s order is reversed by John, with Daniel put first, doubtless because it is so appropriate as the dramatic announcement of the parousia of the One who is twice designated as “the coming One” (1:4, 8).

The Lord’s combination of Daniel and Zechariah, two parallel passages which mutually support and interpret one another, illustrates the important exegetical principle that the “infallible rule of the interpretation of Scripture is Scripture itself.” This unique and powerful combination of true parallels from Old Testament Scripture is initiated by none other than the Lord Himself. Here, prominently highlighted at the beginning, is the pervasive influence of Daniel on the structure of Revelation which we will find emerging in each of the major sections.

THE FIRST VISION (1:9 through 3:22)

As we come to the first vision, we would ask: does the eschatological² theme come through? Is John updating or filling in Daniel’s vision? Yes, the very use of the term *Son of Man* to identify Jesus Christ carries us back to Daniel. Why would John adopt that language if this were not the same majestic person of whom Daniel speaks (7:13)? John here (1:12-16) describes what he saw, using the words of Daniel 10:5-6. The details of the visions of both John and Daniel are so strikingly similar we must conclude that both John and Daniel are speaking of the same Lord. The golden belt, the face like lightning or the sun in its brilliance, the eyes blazing, the legs and feet like glowing bronze, the voice like the sound of a multitude or of rushing waters, all point to the One Daniel has called *Son of Man*. This is the One who now appears to John, as He stands in the midst of the “lampstands” (1:13). As He speaks to his trembling apostle and raises him up, He makes it clear that He is the risen Christ who has conquered death and who holds the destinies of men in his hands. Again we hear the words: “I am the Living One.” John is commanded to write, even as Daniel had been, of what will happen in the future (cf. Dan. 10:14 and Rev. 1:19). But first John is to write a message to the churches.

In these messages we see Christ in the midst of his Church during the present age, that is, in the “what is now” of 1: 19. How beautiful that the lampstands among whom the Lord moves are the churches: those who display to a dark world the light of the Spirit of God! It is noteworthy that the seven-fold Spirit is symbolized by the seven blazing lamps before the throne of God (1:4 and 4:5). And now Christ tells us (1:20) that the lampstands are the churches, reminding us of his earlier words: “You are the light of the world . . . [a light that is to be put] on its stand” (Mt. 5:14, 15). But not only does the Lord care for the churches, but He also speaks a special word of encouragement for the pastors of the churches: “In his right hand he held seven stars” (1:16). These, he tells us, are the *angels* or *messengers* of the seven churches, that is, their pastors.

We note that at the end of each of the letters to the churches there is a promise explicitly or implicitly associated with Christ’s coming, projecting ahead to “what will take place later.” The practical lesson is that the future is always linked to the present. The promise is given to the overcomer, as in the first letter: “To him who overcomes, I will give the right to eat from the tree of life, which is in the paradise of God” (2:7). The emphatic repetition of this thought at Revelation 22:14—“that they may have the right to the tree of life”—bears out this truth that

² The word “eschatological” refers to events which will happen in the last days.

future glory is linked to present spiritual status. This is exactly the pattern of the beatitudes: “Blessed are the meek, for they will inherit the earth” (Mt. 5:5).

In the second letter we read: “He who overcomes will not be hurt by the second death” (2:11). The fulfillment of this is given in 20:6: “Blessed and holy are those who have part in the first resurrection. The second death has no power over them, but they will be priests of God and of Christ and will reign with him for a thousand years.” The third letter with its promise of the “hidden manna” (2:17) alludes to the truths spelled out by Christ in John 6:48-51, where He makes it clear that He is the manna, the eating of which means eternal life. This and the tree of life in Revelation 22:14 are the same. The fourth letter promises the overcomer “authority over the nations”; then it quotes Psalm 2:9: “He will rule (*shepherd* in the Greek) them with an iron scepter; he will dash them to pieces like pottery.” Christ promises the overcomer this authority, “just as I have received authority from my Father” (Rev. 2:26-7). Thus Christ identifies the Church with himself in ruling or judging the nations. This same passage is used again in 19:15 of Christ and his people at his parousia.

The fifth letter, where the overcomer will “walk” with Christ, “dressed in white,” gives the promise of complete perfection and holiness in the future. This is matched in later verses of Revelation (19:7-8, 14) at His coming, where the bride of Christ, the Church, is dressed in “fine linen, bright and clean.” The armies of heaven, which follow Christ at His coming, also are “dressed in fine linen, white and clean.” The rest of the language of the promise (“I will never erase his name from the book of life, but will acknowledge his name before my Father and his angels”) also is clearly eschatological and is matched by two later references to the “book of life” (13:8 and 21:27) and words of the Lord, speaking in a judgment context, in Matthew 10:32-33.

The sixth letter ends with the promise: “Him who overcomes I will make a pillar in the temple . . . I will write on him the name of my God [‘his name will be on their foreheads’ 22:4] and the name of the city of my God, the New Jerusalem, which is coming down out of heaven from my God.” This is an allusion to what we hear in chapter 21 where the Holy City, the new Jerusalem, comes “down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride beautifully dressed for her husband.” And finally the seventh letter: “To him who overcomes, I will give the right to sit with me on my throne.” In Revelation 20:4 John says: “I saw thrones on which were seated those who had been given authority to judge.” So the immediate relevance of a worthy walk is obvious in every one of these eschatological promises given in the messages to the churches.

THE SECOND VISION (Chapters 4 through 16)

In the second vision, John, like Daniel before him (Dan. 10:14), heard the authoritative voice speaking to him of what must take place in the future. Earlier, in the first vision, John was commanded: “Write, therefore, what you have seen, what is now and what will take place later.” This is generally understood as indicating something of the structure of the whole book in relation to time. “What you have seen” clearly is the vision of the Lord standing among the golden lampstands, the churches, to whom he sends special messages. All of this is the “what is now.” At the second vision there is no repetition of the “what is now,” but only: “I will show you what must take place later.” The plain meaning is: the scene before you lies in the future. This is not to say that the divine Personages who appear have not already accomplished in history the matters about which the heavenly hosts are singing their praises, namely creation and

redemption. But it is to say that the consummation when “the kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of our Lord and of his Christ” has not yet taken place.

The Throne Scene in Heaven (Chapters 4-5)

Chapters 4-5 appear to be the same as the vision in Daniel (7:13) where “one like a son of man . . . approached the Ancient of Days and was led into his presence.” Note what follows in Daniel 7:14: “He was given authority, glory and sovereign power; all peoples, nations and men of every language worshiped him. His dominion is an everlasting dominion that will not pass away, and his kingdom is one that will never be destroyed.” This is clearly eschatological, for as Daniel watched, “this horn [ruler] was waging war against the saints and defeating them, until the Ancient of Days came and pronounced judgment in favor of the saints of the Most High, and the time came when they possessed the kingdom” (7:21, 22). That this is an eschatological scene is further confirmed in the explanation that follows (7:25-27): “He [‘another king,’ the little horn] will speak against the Most High and oppress his saints and try to change the set times and the laws. The saints will be handed over to him for a time, times, and half a time. But the court will sit, and his power will be taken away and completely destroyed forever.” Now notice the parallel between verse 14 given above and that which follows. “Then the sovereignty, power and greatness of the kingdoms under the whole heaven will be handed over to the saints, the people of the Most High. His kingdom will be an everlasting kingdom and all rulers will worship and obey him.” That which is given to the son of man in verse 14 is given to his people in verse 27. This all underscores the thought that this is an eschatological scene.

No doubt John was aware that he was seeing the same eschatological event about which Daniel had written, and was filling in the dramatic details. In John’s vision the *Son of Man* becomes both the Lion and the Lamb with all that those rich symbols imply. The Lion of the tribe of Judah symbolizes the Lord’s active kingly function and is harmonious with the immediately subsequent picture of the rider on the white horse who is crowned and, armed with a bow, is going forth to conquer his enemies.

The Lamb is the only one who is worthy to take the inheritance, the will, the title deed to all creation, for he was slain and with his blood he purchased men for God. As the One seated on the throne holds in his right hand the seven-sealed scroll, the rhetorical question—“Who is worthy to break the seals and open the scroll?”—focuses our attention on this all-important drama. We have come to that hour, yet future, when He who died to redeem a people is about to come again to bring his people into their inheritance. This scene fills in the details that tell us we are now ready for the end time when the heir takes over, as in Daniel 7. There is no way to calculate the time. All we know is that at some point in the future, this scene will set in motion those events which will bring His people into their eternal inheritance.

In the very first song of praise in the heavenly scene (4:8), we hear the same familiar tristich we first met in the prologue where the beginning and the end of history are highlighted. In the two songs beginning “You are worthy” (4:11 and 5:9), praise is rendered because of Christ’s work of creation and redemption, with a looking forward to the completion of that redemption when the resurrected saints are going to reign on the earth: “You have made them to be a kingdom and priests to serve our God, and they will reign on the earth.” Notice the discriminating statement about the status of believers found here (5:10; also in 1:6): “You have made them to be a kingdom and priests to serve our God” (not *kings and priests* as the

Authorized Version incorrectly translated it). This is then followed by the future state of God's people: "They will reign on the earth." The *already* and the *not yet* are juxtaposed. Believers are *already* priests, but *not yet* kings, though they will yet reign. The fulfillment of this prediction comes in chapter 20, when believers have come to life, have begun to reign, and are kings as well as priests of God and of Christ.

Also anticipated are the events of judgment and the subjugation of all enemies (as seen in Dan. 7:10-14) as John introduces the last song of the heavenly drama (cf. Ps. 8, 110): "Then I heard every creature in heaven and on earth and under the earth and on the sea, and all that is in them singing: 'To him who sits on the throne and to the Lamb be praise and honor and glory and power, for ever and ever!'"

The Three Series of Sevens

All the remainder of this vision, made up of three series of sevens, is oriented to this throne scene. The opening of the seven seals very obviously grows out of this dramatic hour in the court of heaven. But through the literary device of a refrain, so common in Semitic poetry, not only the seals, but also the trumpets and the bowls, are oriented to the throne scene. That refrain is first stated at 4:5: "From the throne came flashes of lightning, rumblings and peals of thunder"—all of which speaks of God's righteous judgment, even as the parallel passage in Daniel 7 speaks of the destruction of the beast. Each series of seven ends with that same refrain (8:5; 11:19; and 16:18-21), suggesting that these series are differing analyses of the same eschatological complex, all ending at the same point. In other words, these are three descriptions of a part or the whole of Daniel's seventieth "week" of years (See chart on Daniel's 70 Weeks of Years), observed from different points of view. Each series originates with the heavenly scene; similar events take place, always ending with the manifestation of God's righteous wrath in the thunder, voices, lightning and earthquake. As the refrain builds to its climax, hail is mentioned (11:19), and in the final refrain, greater details are added concerning both the hail and the earthquake and the identity of the enemy being destroyed (16:18-21). The vision is here structured like a great poem, a Semitic poem, characterized by repetition of the essentials, with the addition of details, as in Psalm 51:7: "Cleanse me with hyssop, and I will be clean; Wash me, and I will be whiter than snow." Is it not reasonable then to suppose that the series of seals, trumpets, and bowls end with the destruction of the beast and his army? Later, in the third vision (17:1 to 21:8), John will be given full details about the destruction of all enemies, but here that motif is compressed in this bit of Semitic poetry: the refrain of God's judgment.

The Seven Seals

It is fitting then that the opening of the first seal should reveal Christ in his kingly character coming to judgment. The white horse, the bow, the crown, and "a conqueror bent on conquest," all speak to this. Notice the conspicuous similarities between this description and the one given of Christ in the third vision at 19:11-16, where Christ, sitting on a white charger and crowned with many crowns, comes forth. "With justice he judges and makes war." Similarly here He is coming in judgment. The next three horsemen represent forces which would be specially operative in the eschatological complex. These three riders are summed up and identified in the second sentence of verse 8: "They were given power over a fourth of the earth to kill by the sword, famine, and plague, and by the wild beasts of the earth."

DANIEL'S 70 WEEKS OF YEARS*
or 70 x 7 = 490 years

Daniel 9:25: The issuing of the decree of Cyrus to restore and to rebuild Jerusalem = 536 B.C.
(See also 2 Chron. 36:22-23; Ezra 1:1-2; Isa 44:26-28)

The rebuilding under Zerubbabel "in troublous times" (see Ezra) 7 "weeks" = 49 years

(a gap in time, during which rebuilding lapsed).....

Revival of building about 440 B.C. under Nehemiah 62 "weeks" = 434 years unto
Messiah the Prince.....Birth 6 B.C.

Daniel 9:26: "After 62 'weeks' Messiah will be cut off, **but not for Himself**Cross 30 A.D.
. . . and the people . . . will destroy the city".....Fall of Jerusalem 70 A.D.

(another longer gap in time, allowing for this present age & the Gentile church)

Last "Week" = 7 years yet future

"The end will come like a flood, war will continue until the end, and desolations have been decreed. He ["the ruler who will come" = **Antichrist**] will confirm a covenant with many for one week, but in the middle of that week he will put an end to sacrifice and offering. And one who causes desolation will place abominations on a wing [of the temple] until the end that is decreed is poured out on him" (9:26-27).

Dan. 9:27: "**Middle of Week**" = **Covenant with Jews broken at 3 ½ years**

"He will put an end to sacrifice" and set up **Abominations in the Temple**

". . . until the end that is decreed is poured out on him" at the end of the 7 years (Dan. 12:11).

*See Dan. 9:2; Jer. 25:11-12; 29:10, AV and NIV

DANIEL'S PREDICTION OF WORLD HISTORY FROM THE TIME OF NEBUCHADNEZZAR TO THE END

	Dan. 2 (The Great Image)	Dan. 7 (4 Beasts)	Dan. 8 (Ram & Goat)	Dan. 9 (70 "Weeks")	Dan. 11-12 (Kings & Rulers)
BABYLON	Head of Gold	Lion w/ eagle's wings			
MEDIA-PERSIA	Chest & arms of Silver	Bear, one side high	2-horned ram, one horn longer	Decree of Cyrus (9:25)	4 Kings (11:2)
GREECE	Abdomen of Brass	Leopard, w/4 wings & 4 heads	1-horned goat becomes 4-horned (Alexander's successors) (8:13) Antiochus Epiphanes	7 "sevens" followed by a gap Revival of building (Nehemiah)	Mighty King (11:3) Empire divided (11:4) Egypt and Syria (11:5-20)
ROME	Legs of Iron	Terrible Beast W/ iron teeth		62 "sevens" MESSIAH 6 B. C. (9:25) MESSIAH cut off 30 A.D. (9:26) People of ruler to come destroy city & temple 70 A.D. (9:26) (Gap).....	Antiochus Epiphanes (11:21-22a)
PRESENT AGE					
ESCHATOLOGICAL FUTURE	Feet & 10 toes iron & clay	10 horns & Little Horn who uproots 3 of 10 horns		70th "week" (9:27) **Abomination of Desolation (breaking of covenant at middle of "week")	"prince of covenant"* Antichrist (11:22b-45) **A of D (11:31 & 12:11) Tribulation (12:1)
GOD'S KINGDOM	STONE destroys & becomes a MOUNTAIN	The coming of the SON OF MAN JUDGMENT Saints receive the KINGDOM		The Consummation	Resurrection (12:2) Millennium & Eternity (12:3)

*See Buswell 11, 381

**See Mt. 24:15

In the fifth seal the scene shifts from earth to heaven where we see the souls of those who have been slain for their witness, and hear them pleading: “How long, Sovereign Lord, holy and true, until you judge the inhabitants of the earth and avenge our blood?” They were told to rest “a little longer until the number of their fellow servants and brothers who were to be killed as they had been was completed” (6:10, 11). This mention of waiting a *little longer*, and the martyrdom of others yet to come, seems to put this drama in the context of “the great tribulation” mentioned at 7:14, out of which those who have been slain have come. At 7:14 the saints have been resurrected; they are no longer disembodied souls under the altar, but stand complete and victorious, with palm branches in their hands. What has happened to give us this contrast of scenes?

The answer would seem to lie in the stupendous event at the opening of the sixth seal. So swift and compressed are the dramatic episodes revealed by the seals that we are apt to miss their significance. However the obvious parallels between this scene and the one described by our Lord in the Olivet Discourse (Mt. 24:29-31; Mk. 13:24-27; Lk. 21:25-28) cannot be brushed aside or dismissed as mere apocalyptic language, not to be taken seriously. The series of cosmic events occurring in the sixth seal are enumerated in the same order by the Lord in the Olivet Discourse. It is he who puts together the quotations from Isaiah which spell out the events heralding his parousia.

ISAIAH	OLIVET DISCOURSE	REVELATION 6
13:10 sun darkened	sun darkened	sun like sackcloth
moon will not give light	moon does not give light	moon as blood
34:4 stars dissolved and fall like shriveled figs	stars fall and heavenly bodies shaken	stars fall as figs fall
sky rolled up		sky recedes

The Lord’s exposition, putting together the two contexts from Isaiah, appears to omit the reference to the rolling up of the sky. John follows the Lord’s sequence, but adds the Isaianic detail about the sky receding. Surely Christ, rather than omitting, is saying that his appearance in the sky answers to that vivid detail from the prophet:

At that time the sign of the Son of Man will appear in the sky, and all the nations of the earth will mourn. They will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of the sky, with power and great glory. And he will send his angels with a loud trumpet call, and they will gather his elect from the four winds, from one end of the heavens to the other (Mt. 24:30-31).

So the striking parallels would seem to indicate that John, in the sixth seal, is referring to the Lord’s coming for his church.

The terrified reaction of men to the cosmic disturbances in the heavens (6:15-17), and to the awesome and unparalleled catching up of the righteous, forms a fitting prelude to the climactic events of the seventh seal, marked by the refrain: “There came peals of thunder, rumblings, flashes of lightning and an earthquake” (8:5). But before the opening of the seventh seal, John interrupts the narrative to insert the dramatic vision of the resurrected multitude. This is no

unrelated interlude; this is an important aspect of the parousia. The vision of the raptured Church forms a vivid contrast to that of the terrified rebels who cry out to the mountains and rocks: “Fall on us and hide us from the face of him who sits on the throne and from the wrath of the Lamb! For the great day of their wrath has come, and who can stand?” (6:16, 17). Indeed, by interrupting his story at this point, the Apostle is answering the question of the panic-stricken multitude: “Who can stand?” (cf. Mal. 3:2).

John makes it clear by that which follows that only those who have the seal of the living God can endure the day of his coming. “When you believed you were marked with a seal,” said the Apostle Paul (Eph. 1:13; cf. Rev. 3:12, 22:4; Jer. 32: 9-12; 2 Tim. 2:19). By holding back the winds of judgment (7:1), God is granting time for a special ingathering, a period of evangelism, until all the nations of the world have heard the gospel and Matthew 24:14 is fulfilled. Presumably the first scene (7:1-8) is a flashback to the time of the first five seals. The 144,000 are clearly Jewish converts, probably turning to the Lord under the ministry of the two witnesses (11: 1-13). In any case, this period of Jewish evangelism seems to have taken place shortly before the Lord’s coming for his church, for later they are standing on the heavenly Mount Zion and of them it is said: “They were purchased from among men and offered as first fruits to God and the Lamb” (14:1-4). Apparently a greater harvest of their countrymen is yet to follow.

In the second scene the great multitude which stands before the throne and the Lamb in resurrection glory is made up “from every nation, tribe, people and language” (7:9). This obviously includes the 144,000. And how can all these stand in the day of His coming? They can stand only because they have been sealed, and have “washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb” (7:14). “Salvation belongs to our God,” is their song (7:10).

In chapter 8, the last seal is opened with a dramatic pause: the scene is heaven; silence reigns. By contrast, the opening of the sixth seal had revealed an earthly scene with cataclysmic events taking place, beginning with a great earthquake. Now as the last seal is opened, there comes this strange silence in heaven. What does it mean? An Old Testament passage comes to mind: “The Lord is in his holy temple; let all the earth be silent before him” (Hab. 2:20). Perhaps even more significant are the words of the prophet Zechariah when he commands all mankind to be still before the Lord, for Zechariah’s context is clearly eschatological:

“Shout and be glad, O Daughter of Zion. For I am coming and I will live among you,” declares the Lord. “Many nations will be joined with the Lord in that day and will become my people. I will live among you and you will know that the Lord Almighty has sent me to you. The Lord will inherit Judah as his portion in the holy land, and will again choose Jerusalem. Be still before the Lord, all mankind, because he has roused himself from his holy dwelling.” (2:10-13).

The climax of judgment follows. Notice that the angel “was given much incense to offer, with the prayers of all the saints” (8:3). This is the hour for which they have been praying down through the ages: “Thy kingdom come, thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven.” That hour has come when the kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of our Lord (11:15). “Then the angel took the censer, filled it with fire from the altar and hurled it on the earth; and there came peals of thunder, rumblings, flashes of lightning and an earthquake” (8:5; cf. 4:5; 11:19; 16:18-21).

This second earthquake is clearly not the same as the earthquake mentioned at the opening of the sixth seal. So it would appear that there are two distinct earthquakes, one coming at the time of the resurrection of the righteous, the other at the judgment of Christ's enemies, when men must face "the wrath of the Lamb" (6:16). These two earthquakes find their parallels in the two earthquakes of chapter 11, both of which are spoken of as "woes" for an unbelieving world (11:13-14, 19).

The Seven Trumpets (8:6 to 11:19)

In the trumpets we see essentially the same period of time as that portrayed in the seals. At the opening of the first seal, we saw the crowned Rider, with a bow, going out "as a conquerer bent on conquest." At the seventh seal, the prayers of the saints are answered as the Lamb brings upon earth the last fearful judgment. All of this is done with the swiftness and compression of Semitic poetry. Then in true Semitic style, the narrative goes back and fills in details. Let us assume for the moment that in the seals we have the broad outline of the seven year period known as "Daniel's seventieth week." In the trumpets we have an expansion of important aspects of the same period. In the first six of the trumpets we find details which seem to show an intensification and broadening of the warning judgments given with the opening of the seals. They are given in language that reminds us of the plagues of Egypt which were the prelude to the exodus of God's people. These are judgments on those hostile powers who oppress God's church. After the sixth warning trumpet has sounded, we read: "The rest of mankind that were not killed by these plagues still did not repent of the work of their hands" (9:20).

The Angel and the Open Scroll

Then comes the word of the mighty angel, the one who bears such a striking resemblance to the Son of Man: "There will be no more delay!" Immediately before these momentous words are spoken, this One who holds in his hand an open scroll, plants "his right foot on the sea and his left foot on the land" (10:2) in a symbolic gesture that is unmistakable. For example, when a poet speaks of Caesar as a "god" who "doth bestride the narrow world like a Colossus" (Shakespeare, *Julius Caesar*, I.i. lns. 116 and 128), the metaphor is clear: here is one who has taken possession of the world, who claims it as his own. Who then is the "mighty angel" John is describing? In the portrayal of this One whose "face was like the sun" with feet and legs "like fiery pillars," we hear echoes of passages heard earlier in the First Vision (1:15, 16). This is the One who moved in the midst of his church. He is also the One who is "robed in a cloud"; not only does this speak of his deity, but it also calls to mind the key verse for the whole of Revelation: "Look, he is coming with the clouds." The rainbow above his head recalls the throne scene at the beginning of the Second Vision (4:3), and speaks of the covenant-keeping nature of this majestic One. Furthermore, He holds in his hand a scroll, no longer sealed, but now lying "open in his hand" (10:2). In that earlier scene John had been told: "Do not weep! See, the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, has triumphed. He is able to open the scroll and its seven seals" (5:5). It is not surprising therefore that he now "gave a loud shout like the roar of a lion" (10:3) as he planted his feet upon the earth in a gesture of repossessing that which sinful man had forfeited. In his hand is the title deed to the inheritance, which he alone is worthy to open.

His loud shout is followed by the thunders, such as we heard coming from the judgment throne at the beginning of this vision (4:5), and again at the refrain after the seventh seal was

opened (8:5). As we have noted before, this is the thundering of divine wrath; the “seven thunders” speak of completeness, just as the “seven spirits” of God and the “seven churches” speak of the totality of each. By the command of God, what the thunders spoke must remain unknown until the proper time when their voice will be heard.

Meanwhile, there follows another highly significant act: this mighty One bestriding the whole earth, dominating the sea and the land, “raised his right hand to heaven” and swore a solemn oath. If this is indeed the Lion of the tribe of Judah, he is swearing by himself when “he swore by him who lives for ever and ever, who created the heavens and all that is in them, the earth and all that is in it, and the sea and all that is in it” (10:6; cf. 4:8-11). This calls to mind the words of Hebrews 6:13, 17-18:

When God made his promise to Abraham, since there was no one greater for him to swear by, he swore by himself . . . Because God wanted to make the unchanging nature of his purpose very clear to the heirs of what was promised, he confirmed it with an oath. God did this so that, by two unchangeable things in which it is impossible for God to lie, we who have fled to take hold the hope offered to us may be greatly encouraged.

This also calls to mind a striking parallel in Daniel, when he, clearly writing of “the time of the end,” received his last message:

The man clothed in linen, who was above the waters of the river, lifted his right hand and his left hand toward heaven, and I heard him swear by him who lives forever, saying, “It will be for a time, times, and half a time. When the power of the holy people has been finally broken, all these things will be completed” (12:7).

Both of these significant acts, bestriding the earth and taking a solemn oath, are but preludes to the most significant act of all, the announcement or proclamation of a great moment in the history of redemption: “There will be no more delay! But in the days when the seventh angel is about to sound his trumpet, the mystery of God will be accomplished just as he announced to his servants the prophets” (10:6-7). In this context, we can only conclude that this mystery is the same as that which the Apostle Paul referred to when he said: “Behold, I show you a mystery; we shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last *trump*” (1 Cor. 15:51-52, AV). This bringing of the elect into their inheritance would doubtless be the message of the scroll of which the prophet could say: “It tastes as sweet as honey in my mouth” (10:10). The bitterness came later, as we shall see, with God’s judgment upon the wicked at the end of “the days of the seventh angel.” Notice that the seventh trumpet spans a period of time. It is not *day* but *days* spoken of here (10:7, AV). How long a period of time we shall soon see, but for now we should notice the period announced to Daniel: the *time*, *times*, and *half a time* (12:7). John uses this same measurement in the next three chapters.

At first reading we may think of chapters 10 and 11 as digressions. But are they? Are they not rather the same sort of literary device used in chapter 7? There John interrupted the drama of the opening of the seals to give explanatory material about the resurrected saints, following the compressed statement of Christ’s parousia (6:12-17). In chapter 10 that same resurrection of the righteous is referred to in the words: “There will be no more delay . . . the mystery of God will be accomplished.” It should be no surprise that John continues the interruption in chapter 11,

where he gives us the dramatic setting and descriptive details for the momentous event and the bitter things that will follow in the days of the seventh trumpet. This after all is the logical consequence of the command to John at the end of chapter 10.

The Ministry of the Two Witnesses

It is evident as chapter 11 opens, and the temple and altar are being measured and worshippers counted, that Daniel's people are permitted to hold services in the temple. The outer court, and the Holy City itself are trampled on by the Gentiles for forty-two months; but within, the worship goes on unmolested. The whole picture is suggested by Daniel's prediction of the end time when "the ruler who will come" (the Beast of 11:7) confirms a covenant "with many" for a period of seven years, then breaks the covenant in the middle of that "seven," putting an end to sacrifice and offering (Dan. 9:27). At this point in Revelation (11:2), we are given a brief glimpse of the first half of the seven years, namely the forty-two months before the tyrant breaks his treaty. It seems that the Beast, while consolidating his strength in this early period of his rise to power, is allowing a measure of religious freedom. All this will end at the setting up of his image, the Abomination of Desolation, at the middle of the seven years.

We are well aware that many commentators view these pictures of temple worship and the holy city as "yet another designation of the church" (Mounce, *NICNT, Commentary on Revelation*, p. 221), and refuse to see here any relationship to the Jews and Jerusalem. But the language and the several parallels and allusions compel us to disagree. We are clearly informed by John that this is the city where the Lord was crucified, "which is figuratively called Sodom and Egypt" (11:8). Also, we fail to understand how a heavenly city, namely the church, can be trampled on by the Gentiles. This calls to mind another parallel. It is surely no mere accident of language that the One speaking to John should use this word *trample*: "They will trample on the holy city for forty-two months." This, of course, is an echo of the Lord's words in the Olivet Discourse when he predicted the dispersion of the Jews throughout all the nations: "Jerusalem will be trampled on by the Gentiles until the times of the Gentiles are fulfilled" (Lk. 21:24). The Lord was speaking of the present age, when the church is made up of both Gentile and Jew (cf. Mt. 24:14; Rom. 11:25). As He speaks it is abundantly clear that when "the times of the Gentiles are fulfilled . . . at that time they will see the Son of Man coming in a cloud with power and great glory" (Lk. 21:27). Not only does this allusion support our reading of this passage as speaking of a literal Jerusalem, but it also strongly suggests that at the end of the forty-two months we will witness the parousia of our Lord. And that brings us to the seventh trumpet.

Still further parallels to support our reading of the passage are seen in the seemingly inexplicable command to measure the temple. Here we must turn to that other prophet John has quoted in the headlines for his book (Rev. 1:7). We speak of Zechariah, who early in his prophecy writes of the restoration of Jerusalem and of his people, pointing to a time both near and far. In the far future at the end of the age, every man will invite his neighbor to "sit under his vine and fig tree" (3:10). The Lord gives him a symbol for this beautiful future time: "'I will return to Jerusalem with mercy, and there my house will be rebuilt. And the measuring line will be stretched out over Jerusalem,' declares the Lord Almighty" (1:16). Twice the Lord uses the measuring line as an object lesson, but He is pointing forward to a day when Jerusalem will not need walls for protection: "I myself will be a wall of fire around it," declares the Lord, "and I will be its glory within" (2:5). The symbol of the measuring rod as alluded to here in Revelation

is then a reminder that the Lord has not forgotten his people Israel but in due time will indeed be their Protector and Glory.

Zechariah was given another object lesson that bears on the events before us. He saw a golden lampstand and two olive trees (4:11, 14; cf. Rev. 11:3-12). The symbol of the lampstand with its seven lights is most simply explained in the Revelation (1:20 and 4:5), where we see the lampstands as the church, and the lights as the seven-fold Spirit of God. The latter is implied in the explanation to Zechariah: “‘Not by might nor by power, but by my Spirit,’ says the Lord Almighty” (4:6). When Zechariah asks the meaning of the two olive trees, he is told, “These are the two who are anointed to serve the Lord of all the earth” (4:14). If these two olive trees represent Zerubbabel and Joshua the high priest, as many believe, what is the significance of the strikingly parallel language in John’s prophecy?—“These are the two olive trees and the two lampstands that stand before the Lord of the earth” (Rev. 11:4). The “mighty angel” who speaks to John is surely saying, “These are the Zerubbabel and Joshua of the end time.” Just as John the Baptist was called the Elijah of his day, for he came “in the spirit and power of Elijah” (Lk. 1:17), so these two witnesses will appear, empowered by the same mighty Spirit of God as were Zerubbabel and Joshua. Indeed, these *prophets* foreseen by John may be the ultimate intent of Zechariah’s prophecy (cf. Zech. 3:8, “men symbolic of things to come”).

So in the same span of years during which the temple worship goes on unmolested, these two witnesses for Jesus are carrying on their powerful ministry—a ministry no doubt to all people, but perhaps especially to the Jews, considering that Jerusalem is their strategic center and that the 144,000 from the tribes of Israel are later offered as “firstfruits” to God and the Lamb (14:4).

That these witnesses were “clothed in sackcloth and ashes” reminds us of Daniel in similar garb, fervently praying and confessing his sin and the sin of his people Israel (Dan. 9:1-20). It was at the end of this prayer that Daniel was given the vision of the 70 “Sevens” or “Weeks” of years: “Seventy ‘sevens’ are decreed for your people and your holy city to finish transgression, to put an end to sin, to atone for wickedness, to bring in everlasting righteousness, to seal up vision and prophecy and to anoint the most holy” (9:24).

It would seem that these witnesses will come not only in the spirit and power of Zerubbabel and Joshua, but also in the spirit and power of Daniel. If they are Jews, as seems to be implied in these parallels and in calling them *prophets* (11:10), they are surely Jews, who know and serve their Messiah. The one who addresses John—presumably the same mighty One who was bestriding the earth in chapter 10—speaks of them as “my two witnesses.” In any case, they will be ministering during the first half of Daniel’s seventieth “week” of seven years, when “the prince that shall come” makes and breaks his covenant and sets up his image, demanding worship. So John is here giving a remarkably precise prophecy of the duration of the ministry of these two witnesses: 1260 days.

Moreover, this ministry is attended with great supernatural power. Like Moses in ancient Egypt, they are used of God to bring the warning judgments, the plagues, which follow the sounding of the various trumpets. We are told: “These men have power to shut up the sky so that it will not rain during the time they are prophesying: and they have power to turn the waters into blood and to strike the earth with every kind of plague as often as they want” (11:6). Notice how well this fits the description of the first plague, where a third of the trees and all the green grass were burned up (8:7), and the second plague where some of the seas are “turned into blood”

(8:8). Presumably during all the time of the 1260 days of the witness of these men, the six trumpet-plagues have struck the earth at their bidding. But, toward the end of these days the beast will “make war against them” (11:7 AV; also 13:7 and Dan. 7:21) and will:

overpower and kill them. Their bodies will lie in the street of the great city For three and a half days men from every people, tribe, language and nation will gaze on their bodies and refuse them burial. The inhabitants of the earth will gloat over them . . . (11:7b-11).

It is not difficult to identify this *beast* as the Man of Sin of Second Thessalonians who “sets himself up in God’s temple, proclaiming himself to be God” (2:3-4). Later the Apostle John describes him at some length and indicates, that he “was given power to make war against the saints and to conquer them” (Rev. 13:7). This warfare is referred to in remarkably similar terms in Daniel 1:21, Revelation 12:17; 13:7, and here in Revelation 11:7 (cf. 19:19). The same expression is used: *to make war against*. But here in this vignette of Revelation 11, the other saints are crowded out of the picture as the zoom lens focuses on the two mighty prophets of the Lord. These two men are the special target of the Beast.

The fullest description of this Beast comes in the third vision of the Revelation, but for now we should note the parallel between him and the “Abomination of Desolation spoken of by Daniel the Prophet.” These are the words of the Lord in the Olivet Discourse (Mt. 24:15; Mk. 13:14, AV). In this discourse Jesus was answering the disciples’ questions: “What will be the sign of your coming and of the end of the age?” First he gave them the negatives, those things which are not signs: wars, famines, earthquakes, persecution—“but the end is not yet.” Meanwhile, “this gospel of the kingdom will be preached in the whole world as a testimony to all nations, and then the end will come” (24:14). This is the first positive sign of “the end,” but a very general one. Then comes the first specific sign when Jesus speaks of the “Abomination of Desolation” which will stand in the holy place, a reference to the setting up of the worship of the Beast, the Man of Sin. According to our Lord, this is the signal for “great tribulation such as was not since the beginning of the world to this time, no, nor ever shall be” (24:21, AV). So great is this tribulation that “for the elect’s sake those days shall be shortened” (24:22, AV). J. Oliver Buswell, Jr., suggests:

. . . that the brief but terrible time of tribulation . . . is to be identified with the period of time when the bodies of the two witnesses lie upon the street of Jerusalem, and the inhabitants of the world rejoice over their death. I have suggested that the “shortening” of the terrible time of tribulation predicted by Christ might mean that the tribulation there referred to lasts only the three and one half days designated in Revelation 11:9ff . . . Certainly the Antichrist whose manifestation involves the proclaiming of himself as God, in the temple of God, could not tolerate the two witnesses of God for any extended period of time after his coup.

(*A Systematic Theology of the Christian Religion*, II, 456)

But the gloating of a rebellious world—presumably a period of intense persecution for Christians—is short-lived, a day for every year of the ministry of the witnesses. A terrifying thing happens—glorious for believers. While their enemies are watching, possibly on satellite TV, the witnesses are brought back to life and taken up to heaven “in a cloud,” while a voice

speaks from heaven (11:11, 12). The presence of the cloud is noteworthy, reminding us again (as it did at 10:1) of the headline of the Revelation: “Behold he is coming with the clouds” — reminding us of all those New Testament references that speak of his parousia³ “in the clouds.”⁴ So when we hear the loud voice from heaven saying, “Come up here,” and we are told that the witnesses “went up to heaven in a cloud,” is it not reasonable to suppose this is indeed the parousia when not only the two witnesses, but all of God’s people “will be caught up . . . in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air” (1 Thes. 4:17)? Especially is this plausible when the “loud voice from heaven” is shortly explained at the seventh trumpet (11:15).

But first, we are told: “At that very hour there was a severe earthquake and a tenth of the city collapsed. Seven thousand people were killed in the earthquake, and the survivors were terrified and gave glory to the God of heaven” (11: 13).

The parallelism of this earthquake with the “great earthquake” at the opening of the sixth seal (6:12-15) and with the cosmic disturbances mentioned by Christ argues that these are the same event. We see the same sorrow, anxiety, and terror of the survivors, the same recognition that this is “the sign of the Son of Man,” the manifestation of “the wrath of the Lamb!”

The Heavenly Scene at the Resurrection of the Righteous.

To God’s own people the last trumpet is the signal that the great hope for which all ages have waited is at last fulfilled; when our lowly bodies will be transformed and made like his glorious body (Phil. 3:21), when our prayers, “Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven,” will at last be accomplished. It is now that the heavens themselves break into song: “The kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of our Lord and of his Christ, and he will reign for ever and ever” (11:15).

The scene in heaven stands in sharp contrast with the scene on earth. For the resurrected saints and the heavenly hosts, this event spells joy and victory; for a rebellious earth, woe and destruction. It is noteworthy that in the heavenly scene before us, the familiar tristich we first heard in the prologue, and then again in the throne scene at the opening of the second vision, has now been altered. The worshippers at this juncture sing: “We give thanks to you, Lord God Almighty, who is and who was.” The third part—“who is to come”—has been omitted, and in its place are the words: “Because you have taken your great power and have begun to reign” (11:17). Here then is the heavenly proclamation that his parousia has been accomplished, that the consummation of the age is at hand.

As the song continues, it echoes a familiar prophecy: “The nations were angry; and your wrath has come” (11:18). Those nations have given the Beast supreme authority in matters religious and economic (Rev. 13:5-8); and now at the “sign of the Son of Man” they know their battle is with the Lord. Surely the heavenly song would not echo Psalm 2 if it did not mean to call to mind these words:

³ As mentioned on page 3, the word “parousia” refers to Christ’s Second Coming.

⁴ An examination of all the New Testament references to *cloud* or *clouds* shows that, with three exceptions, they are all associated with Christ’s return. Those exceptions are speaking of weather (Lk. 12:54 and Jude 12 and the history of Israel (1 Cor. 10:1-2). Of the other sixteen references, three are related to Christ’s transfiguration. But Peter makes it clear (2 Pet. 1:16-18) that this majestic moment was but a token of his power and glory to be made manifest at his parousia. The remaining thirteen references all speak of the end time (Mt. 24:30 and 26:64; Mk. 13:26 and 14:62; Lk. 21:27; Acts 1:9-11; 1 Thes. 4:17; Rev. 1:7; 10:1; 11:12; 14:14, 15 and 16).

Why do the nations rage
and the peoples plot in vain?
The kings of the earth take their stand
and the rulers gather together against the Lord
and against his Anointed One.
“Let us break their chains,” they say,
“and throw off their fetters.”
The One enthroned in heaven laughs;
the Lord scoffs at them.
Then he rebukes them in his anger
and terrifies them in his wrath, saying,
“I have installed my King
on Zion, my holy hill.” (Ps. 2:1-6)

Meanwhile, the heavenly song continues (11:18):

The time has come for judging the dead,
and for rewarding your servants the prophets
and your saints and those who reverence your name,
both small and great—

Here at the resurrection of the righteous—both those who have been alive at the parousia and those who “slept,” both small and great—for these comes a time of rewards. This is probably meant to parallel the picture given more fully in the third vision when the heavenly multitude shouts:

“Hallelujah!
For our Lord God Almighty reigns.
Let us rejoice and be glad
and give him glory!
For the wedding of the Lamb has come,
and his bride has made herself ready.
Fine linen, bright and clean,
was given her to wear.” (19:6-8)

This is the reward awaited eagerly throughout the ages, the resurrection transformation, that moment of entering into our inheritance.

The ending of the song in the courts of heaven tells us that the time has also come “for destroying those who destroy the earth.” As Christ takes up his power and begins to reign, we will see the bowls of God’s wrath poured out upon the Beast and all the inhabitants of the earth who worship him. The culmination of this blasphemy and rebellion, and its final destruction are all described in the third vision. But for now the climax of “the days, of the voice of the seventh angel” is given in the cryptic refrain we have heard before (at the end of the seventh seal), but now enlarged: “And there came flashes of lightning, rumblings, peals of thunder, an earthquake and a great hailstorm” (11:19). This is the third woe!

**The Days of the Seventh Trumpet:
From Middle to End of Daniel's Seven-Year Period
(Chapters 12 through 16)**

Before the Apostle takes us to view the culminating judgment of the vision, namely the seven bowls of wrath, he fills in more details about the all important event already sketched, the parousia. In the tenth chapter he gave us the dramatic buildup with the majestic Person who bestrides the earth, proclaiming, "There will be no more delay!" In the eleventh chapter he pictured the conflict of Christ's faithful witnesses, their martyrdom and resurrection, (with the resurrection of all the faithful implied), and finally the response of both earth and heaven to this momentous event. Now in chapters 12 to 16 he portrays still further details to give us a better understanding of the whole grand scenario of the last trumpet. These are presented as vignettes in several small pictures.

The Woman and the Dragon

The first includes two great "signs" appearing "in heaven." It is as though Christ were saying to John, "Here is a great supernatural token appearing in heaven itself that reveals the cosmic significance of my coming." John describes the actors in the allegory, thus:

A great sign appeared in heaven: a woman clothed in the sun, with the moon under her feet and a crown of twelve stars on her head. She was pregnant and cried out in pain as she was about to give birth. Then another sign appeared in heaven: an enormous red dragon with seven heads and ten horns and seven crowns on his heads. His tail swept a third of the stars out of the sky and flung them to the earth (12:1-4).

The identity of the woman has been much debated; but the significance of the dragon is not in doubt. He is identified as "the devil or Satan" (12:9). The meaning of his heads, horns, and crowns will become clear later (chapters 13 and 17), but his tail sweeping numbers of stars to earth is interpreted almost immediately when John tells of the war in heaven (12:7-9), at which time Satan will be cast out "and his angels with him." An intimation of this was seen back at the fifth trumpet when John saw a star fall from heaven to earth (9:1). He is identified there as an angel who is king of the abyss, the bottomless pit. His name is Apollyon or Destroyer (9:11). That he is given the key to the pit (9:1) implies his rule over the fallen angels, made explicit in 9:11 with the word *king*. The next verse (9:12) says: "The first woe is passed: two other woes are yet to come." Notice that this first *woe* is remarkably similar to the *woe* in chapter 12, where heaven's song of rejoicing that the "accuser of our brothers . . . has been hurled down" is followed by the warning of trouble for the earth: "Woe to the earth and the sea, because the devil has gone down to you! He is filled with fury because he knows that his time is short" (12:10-12). So the first of the three announced *woes* is directly associated with Satan's activities.

The action of this little drama centers on the woman who is crying out with the pains of childbirth. Next we see the dragon standing in front of the woman, waiting for her child to be born that he might devour him. But when she brought forth the child, he was immediately "caught up" to God and to his throne. Who or what does the woman represent and who is her child in this allegory? To take the woman as the Virgin Mary and her child as the infant Jesus is to misunderstand the nature of symbol and metaphor, though such a view has been the traditional Mariological interpretation of the Roman Catholic Church. To view the child symbol as the

ascended Christ also strains the figure, for Christ was not caught up at birth; nor can it be a symbol and a literal child at the same time.

A not uncommon view, one which is much more appropriate and satisfying, is that the woman who is clothed with the sun in some sense represents the church.

Yet her explicit marks of identification as Israel must be accounted for. The three major features associated with the woman, the sun, moon, and the stars are closely parallel to Joseph's dream of Genesis 37:9-10. The woman clothed with the sun, with the moon under her feet, and with a crown of eleven stars is clearly Israel. The origin of John's image in Joseph's dream seems clear because, though in Joseph's dream there were eleven stars, John shows the woman with a crown of twelve stars. Since John includes Joseph as one of the tribes of Israel in his list (7:8), the change from eleven to twelve is accounted for, and confirms the Israelitish identity of the woman.

However, there are indications that the picture of the woman has implications going beyond Israel. Her child is to rule the nations, a promise given to all believers in Revelation 2:26-27. Further, if we are correct that the child represents resurrected and raptured believers, it would be unnatural to suppose that John meant only Jewish believers. Finally, we have argued that chapter seven pictures the raptured host of believers, Jews and Gentiles. Hence, we conclude that John here in chapter twelve must be speaking of the entire resurrected and raptured church. John's picture of the woman is Israelitish, yet her child is the entire body of Jews and Gentiles to be gathered to Christ at the first resurrection.

It appears that John has done the same thing with his image of the woman that Paul did with the image of the olive tree in Romans eleven. There the root of the olive tree is Israel—Paul specifically refers to “the fathers” (11:28). His references to the “natural branches” over against the “branches of the wild olive” point to the Israelitish character of the olive tree. The idea that the Jewish branches will be grafted into their own olive tree makes it plain that the tree has Jewish roots. Yet it can accommodate Gentile branches grafted in from the wild olive.

The church, therefore, is an augmented and enlarged Israel: Gentiles have been grafted in and share in the root and fatness of the olive tree. It is not strange, then, that John can picture the whole raptured church as the child of a woman so distinctively Israelitish.

The woman symbolizing the church is in travail. In a sense, the church of God is always in travail, as the Apostle Paul was, over his “dear children.” To the church at Galatia he wrote: “I am again in the pains of childbirth until Christ is formed in you” (4:19; cf. Isa. 26:17-18). But there is a special travail that precedes that great birthday of Romans 8, that birthday for which “the whole creation has been groaning as in the pains of childbirth” (8:22). This birthday is the apocalypse of the sons of God, “heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ” (8:17 and 19). This is that moment we all eagerly await: “our adoption as sons, the redemption of our bodies” (8:23). This is none other than the resurrection of believers.

A rationale for the use of the figure of a male child in this symbolic picture is that he is to rule the nations; he is the heir-apparent to the throne. The application of portions of Psalm 2 to the male child has made it easy to jump to the conclusion that the child is Christ. Yet John records that Jesus spoke these same words to believers in the church at Thyatira:

To him who overcomes and does my will to the end, I will give authority over the nations—

“He will rule them with an iron scepter;
he will dash them to pieces like pottery”—

just as I have received authority from my Father (2:26-27).

There is here implied a principle found in certain Messianic texts, that what is said of the Messiah is, in appropriate degree, applicable to the Messianic community and vice versa. Psalm 8, for example, speaks of redeemed man, for only he could have all things put victoriously under his feet. Yet Hebrews applies the passage to Christ and makes it clear that the fulfillment is yet future: “Yet at present we do not see everything subject to him” (2:8). So here in Revelation, the same words are applicable to Christ and to his community. The community is viewed collectively with reference to its reigning, and is appropriately pictured as a male, the heir-apparent to the throne.

Now some will ask: if the catching up of the child to heaven is the resurrection of believers, how can the woman and the child both represent the community of the saints in the same figure? Perhaps we may see the appropriateness and beauty of this metaphor if we think of the woman as the visible church. She carries within her the invisible church, known only to God, until that glorious birthday when the children of God will be revealed. Meanwhile, in this life we cannot know with certainty, nor distinguish exactly, those who are the genuine people of God, and those who are his in name only. Within the community there are always some who profess but do not possess the living reality. The woman then is the visible church. At the appointed time, when this gospel “will be preached in the whole world as a testimony to all nations . . . then the end will come” (Mt. 24:14), and she will bring forth a child, fully formed who will be *caught up* to God and to his throne. John’s use of *harpazo*, *caught up*, could well be a deliberate echo of Paul’s use of the same word when writing of the resurrection of the whole community of believers, both the living and the dead, who will be *caught up* in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air (1 Thes. 4:17).

Satan, having been cast out of heaven and waiting to destroy the heir, is “filled with fury.” We have already seen some of his fury in the Lord’s description of “the great tribulation” (Mt. 24:21) and in John’s picture of his attack on the two witnesses of chapter 11. We will see more in chapter 13. But the tribulation is cut short for the sake of the elect, and the Lord gathers them from the four winds as He comes in the clouds of heaven. This, we have said, is the male child *caught up*. Having been thwarted in his attempt at destroying the child, the dragon pursues the woman. She, the visible church, still has the Word and the sacraments, which Satan hates and would like to destroy. But God gave means to the church that she might escape Satan’s fury, and he preserved her throughout a period of 1260 days after “the child” was snatched up (12:6). This span of time is repeated with the words that she was “taken care of for a *time, times, and half a time* out of the serpent’s reach” (12:14). These two allusions to Daniel’s time scheme are noteworthy, but before we fix attention on them, we should observe that the dragon’s fury was directed “against the rest of her offspring—those who obey God’s commandments and hold to the testimony of Jesus” (12:17). This characterization of her subsequent children helps to clarify the meaning of the first child.

But with the church caught up, who are these, her offspring? This remnant will no doubt be made up of that great company of both Jews and Gentiles who will see the sign of the Son of

Man appear in the sky, who will mourn for their sin and will believe (Rev 1:7). We read that this is how it will be at the coming of the Son of Man: “Two men will be in the field; one will be taken and the other left. Two women will be grinding with a hand mill; one will be taken and the other left” (Mt. 14:40-41). For the indifferent and godless, and the nominal Christians alike, this event will surely shake them. The testimony of the Church, of the ones who have been taken, will doubtless pierce the conscience of many who remain; this, together with the cosmic upheaval accompanying the mighty Sign, will convince many a skeptic of the truth of God’s promises and prophecies. At the resurrection of the faithful witnesses, at the point where the death-dealing earthquake follows their rapture, “the survivors were terrified and gave glory to the God of heaven” (11:13). This would seem to indicate, on the part of some at least, repentance and a bowing of the knee. Furthermore, both the apostles and the prophets have pointed to a time of national repentance and restoration for Israel. Indeed, one of the very prophets from whom John had borrowed his headline for his book predicted this time:

And I will pour out on the house of David and the inhabitants of Jerusalem a spirit of grace and supplication. They will look on me, the one they have pierced, and mourn for him as one mourns for an only child, and grieve bitterly for him as one grieves for a first born son. . . . On that day a fountain will be opened to the house of David and the inhabitants of Jerusalem, to cleanse them from sin and impurity” (Zech. 12:10; 13:1)

The preparation for the ingathering of Israel may well take place in this span of time, this 1260 days during which the dragon is making war against the rest of her children—those who have now recognized and hold to the testimony of Jesus.

The Dragon, the Beast, and the False Prophet

In the vignette put before us in chapter 13, we meet two familiar symbols: the Dragon and the Beast. We have just been made aware of the manifold activities of the Dragon (chapter 12). His activities continue as he inspires another phase of the battle against the church. The Beast appeared once before (chapter 11) when he overpowered and killed the two witnesses and exposed their dead bodies to public view. He is there described as ‘the beast that comes up from the Abyss” (11:7), which doubtless means he is under Satan’s control. The word *abyss* first appears in the fifth trumpet where Satan, who has been cast out of heaven and given the “key” to the abyss, is king over that dark region (9:1, 11). These beast symbols are just one of the literary devices that John uses to give a clear continuity to the three overlapping dramas (chapters 11, 12 and 13), describing the events leading up to and comprising the *days of the voice of the seventh trumpet*.

As the vignette of chapter 13 begins, the Dragon takes his stand on the shore of the sea⁵ as the Beast rises out of the sea. The *sea* or *ocean* or *waters* is often a metaphor for the restless multitudes (“sea of humanity”: see 17:5 and Dan. 7:2). In appearance he is like the Dragon, and not surprisingly, for the Dragon proves to be the inspiration and power behind the Beast (13:2b). Now John, in painting a many-headed creature to designate both the Dragon and the Beast, does not intend to give us a bizarre, grotesque picture, the better to frighten us. Rather, through the

⁵ Whether this verse is put with chapter 12 or with chapter 13 is immaterial. In either case, it is transitional and ties the two together. The *he* refers to the Dragon.

compression of symbolism and allusion, he is, in a small space, showing us a large span of world history, from the ancient past to the eschatological future, just as Daniel did.

I would like to pause a moment to state an important concept about the relationship of Revelation to Daniel. Basically it is this: not all Old Testament prophecies end with the first coming of Christ; some are about Christ's first coming, but others are about his second coming. In the Old Testament we have an over-arching, holistic view of the entire course of history, sometimes in brief outline, sometimes in detail. When we come to the New Testament we have, in effect, an overlay, as more details are added to the basic outline. This is my conception of Revelation: it is an overlay and authoritative interpretation of the broad outline Daniel has given. So when John alludes to Daniel, as he so clearly does in sketching the beasts of chapters 12 to 17, we do well to check carefully the cross-references.

The seven heads of both the Dragon and the Beast are identified by the angel (17:9) as seven *mountains*, that is, empires or kingdoms, and not the seven little hills of Rome, as some expositors insist. Consider these Old Testament uses of the symbol: Speaking to Babylon, the Lord declares: "I am against you, O destroying mountain. You who destroy the whole earth" (Jer. 51:25). And in Daniel 2:35, when the stone from heaven strikes the feet of the great image of Daniel's first vision, the stone becomes a huge mountain. This mountain is interpreted as the kingdom of God which will crush all the other kingdoms of the world and bring them to an end (2:44-45). That the Dragon should now appear as a many-headed monster seems quite appropriate if these heads are intended as a portrayal of the kingdoms of the world down through the ages. Upon his introduction in Revelation, the Dragon is identified as "Satan, who leads the whole world astray," and "the deceiver of the whole world" (12:9). Later he will be bound that "he should deceive the nations no more" (20:3, AV), but for now, as we have already seen, he is quite active. True, he was judged in the cross (Jn. 13:31-33) and his days of such activity are numbered; but until then, as Christ himself says, and John records, he is "the prince of this world" (Jn. 12:31; 14:30; 16:11). That world governments are allies of this usurper is indicated in the visions of Daniel. "That the whole world is under the control of the evil one," is John's own statement (1 Jn. 5:19). That the dragon is red is not surprising since elsewhere John has called him not only a liar, but "a murderer from the beginning" (Jn. 8:44).

The ten horns are an allusion to the fourth beast of Daniel 7. One will remember that Daniel the prophet stood beside a wind-swept sea and saw four great beasts coming out of the waters: the lion, representing Babylon; the bear, Medo-Persia; the leopard with four heads representing Greece and the four kingdoms into which Alexander's empire was subsequently divided; and finally the last terrible beast with iron teeth, representing Rome. It was different from all the former beasts; it had the extra, important feature: the ten horns—the equivalent of the ten toes of Daniel's image in chapter 2⁶. While Daniel pondered the puzzle of these ten horns—ten rulers or kings of the eschatological future—he saw another horn come up among them and uproot three of the former ten. "This horn had eyes like the eyes of a man and a mouth that spoke boastfully" (7:8). Then Daniel beheld the "Ancient of Days" on his judgment throne, after which he witnessed the final destruction of the boastful ruler. The explanation is given (7:23-27): the "little horn" is a king who arises and subdues three of the ten kings and controls the others. He speaks against the Most High and oppresses his saints for "time, times and half a time," after

⁶ See Chart "Daniel's Prediction of World History from the Time of Nebuchadnezzar to the End"—page 9.

which he will be completely destroyed, and the sovereignty of the kingdoms will be handed over to the saints of the Most High.

It is not difficult to see that in Revelation 13, John has amplified this same prophecy. (He will give even more details in chapter 17.) However, instead of the four beasts, John gives us a composite image, having in *one* beast all the ferocious and cruel characteristics of the four. By such imagery John is telling us that this last world dictatorship will be the culmination of them all. John's addition of the seven heads on both the Dragon and the Beast allows him to give a more explicit and complete analysis of the series of world empires than Daniel does. This will become more obvious when we get to chapter 17. But for now let us consider John's overlay in picturing for us the *horns* or *kings* who come at the climax of Daniel's prophecy of the end times.

It is these ten horns which especially mark the Beast (chapter 13) of Revelation as characterizing the last phase of godless world sovereignty. By mentioning the horns first, with the further detail that they are now crowned, John immediately focuses our attention on Daniel's federation of kings. One will recall that on the Dragon, it was the heads, or past world powers, which were crowned. They have had their day when they held sovereignty over the earth. They were allowed to live for a time, but eventually their dominion was taken from them (Dan. 7:12)—except for one head. That is the head upon which the ten horns appear. The horns are not yet crowned when we first see the Dragon (chapter 12). When we meet the Beast, however, we learn that this same head, the Roman Empire, from which the horns grow, had earlier received a fatal wound, now healed. No explanation is given for the fatal wound. J. Oliver Buswell, Jr., suggests the following:

The dying out of world empire with the fading away of Rome, and the future resurrection of world empire in the form of the ten horns, followed by the Little Horn, who is the Antichrist, would certainly correspond to the figure of one of the heads of the Beast being wounded to death, and the death stroke being healed. (*A Systematic Theology of the Christian Religion*, II, 467)

Further, the ten horns are now reigning, for each of them is now crowned (13:1). Later the angel explains: "The ten horns you saw are ten kings who have not yet received a kingdom, but who for one hour will receive authority as kings along with the beast. They have one purpose and will give their power and authority to the beast" (17:12-13). By showing them crowned, John seems to be saying that *hour* is about to come when the ten horns will be reigning as contemporaries of the Beast.⁷

The blasphemous names on the heads seem to suggest that in this Beast, now arising from the sea of humanity, are gathered up all the boastful, proud, blasphemous qualities of those earlier world empires. This surely parallels not only Daniel's Little Horn who speaks so boastfully against the Most High, but also the Man of Sin spoken of by the Apostle Paul (2 Thes. 2:3-4). Indeed, in the rest of this chapter it is not hard to see that the Beast, the Little Horn, and the Man of Sin are one and the same. In this Man of Lawlessness is seen the apex of blasphemy as he

⁷ Notice these kings are not Roman emperors, as some maintain. At the time of John's writing these kings had not yet received a kingdom and will not receive it until that hour which remains yet future when they will share sovereignty under the authority of the Beast.

claims for himself all the attributes and worship that belong to God alone. “He opposes and exalts himself over everything that is called God or is worshiped, and even sets himself up in God’s temple, proclaiming himself to be God,” Paul writes. And the coming of this one “will be in accordance with the work of Satan displayed in all kinds of counterfeit miracles, signs and wonders, and in every sort of evil that deceives those who are perishing” (2 Thes. 2:4, 9-10). So in this brief dramatic scene John is filling in more of the details of the prophecy already given by Old Testament prophet and New Testament apostle.

The Beast is the agent of the Dragon, the great Deceiver, who never uses his own name but clearly is the power behind the throne. Lest we miss this point, John has made it explicit: “The dragon gave the beast his power and his throne and great authority” (13:2b). So explicit is John that many see an evil or counterfeit “trinity” in the Dragon, the Beast, and the False Prophet. This last makes his entrance in this chapter. All three work together in behalf of the Beast who is no doubt proclaimed the Messiah. We get this intimation from the words of Jesus in the Olivet Discourse when, in predicting the time of great tribulation, He adds that “false Christs and false prophets shall rise, and shall show signs and wonders, to seduce, if it were possible, even the elect” (Mk. 13:22, AV). The goal of this evil “trinity” is that all the people of the earth will worship the Beast, the Antichrist, in their united warfare against God and the Lamb.

The third beast of this trinity, elsewhere called the False Prophet (16:13; 19:20), came out of the earth, looked like a lamb, but spoke like a dragon. No matter how deceptive his appearance, he clearly was speaking with the voice of the Dragon, the arch-Deceiver, all in the interest of the Beast who is being promoted, no doubt, as the Messiah, the Christ. Only the elect will recognize him for what he is: the Antichrist. The False Prophet then proceeds to perform counterfeit miracles by which he persuades men of the truth of his claims. In all probability this False Prophet, like the magicians of Egypt, was imitating the miraculous signs of the two prophets of the Lord we observed earlier in chapter 11. The consummation of his secret and evil arts came when, having ordered men to set up an image in honor of the Beast, the False Prophet was given power to make the image come alive—or so it seemed. He gave breath to the image so that it could speak, and when it did, it brought a message of death—death to all who refused to worship it. A frightful religious tyranny was thus instituted by the False Prophet in the name of the Beast. This is surely the Abomination of Desolation spoken of not only by Daniel the prophet, but also by the Lord Jesus himself, and by the Apostle Paul (Dan. 9:27; Mt. 24:15; 2 Thes. 2:4), where the Man of Sin “even sets himself up in God’s temple.” Also, as Jesus pointed out, this was the signal for “the great tribulation, such as was not since the beginning of the world to this time, no, nor ever shall be” (Mt. 24:21, AV). We soon learn that men cannot buy or sell without displaying the mark of the Beast. Just what that mark is, we do not know, but we can be sure it shows allegiance to the Beast and the forces of darkness, just as God’s name and seal placed upon his children show his ownership and their allegiance (Rev. 3:12; 7:2-3). From John’s description it becomes abundantly clear that the Beast, together with his False Prophet, has set up a cruel, despotic regime whereby all the inhabitants of the earth will be totally subject to his absolute authority.

The cryptic numerical identification of the Beast (13:18) has defied satisfactory interpretation. The wise comment on this point by Irenaeus, writing in the late second century, bears repeating:

It is therefore more certain, and less hazardous, to await the fulfillment of the prophecy, than to be making surmises, and casting about for any names that may present themselves, inasmuch as many names can be found possessing the number mentioned; and the same question will, after all, remain unsolved . . . if it were necessary that his name should be distinctly revealed in this present time, it would have been announced by him who beheld the apocalyptic vision . . . But he [John] indicates the number of the name now, that when this man comes we may avoid him, being aware who he is: the name, however, is suppressed, because it is not worthy of being proclaimed by the Holy Spirit . . . But when this Antichrist shall have devastated all things in this world, he will reign for three years and six months, and sit in the temple at Jerusalem; and then the Lord will come from heaven in the clouds, in the glory of the Father, sending this man and those who follow him into the lake of fire; but bringing in for the righteous the times of the kingdom, that is, the rest, the hallowed seventh day; and restoring to Abraham the promised inheritance, in which kingdom the Lord declared, that “many coming from the east and from the west should sit down with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob” (Mt. 8:11). (*The Ante-Nicene Fathers*, I, 559-560.)

The Recurring Statement of Daniel’s Three and One-Half Years

We have already noted a key phrase echoed from Daniel: *time*, *times*, and *half a time*. John uses it or its equivalent five times in chapters 11 to 13. To demonstrate how unmistakably John’s prophecy moves in the same circle of thought as Daniel’s, we repeat Daniel’s first use of the phrase in context. You will recall that in the explanation of the activities of the Little Horn, Daniel was told: “He will speak against the Most High and oppress his saints and try to change the set times and the laws. The saints will be handed over to him for a *time*, *times* and *half a time*” (Dan. 7:25). The New International Version gives the footnote: “Or for a *year*, *two years* and *half a year*.” In the parallel section of Revelation 13:5, John writes: “The beast was given a mouth to utter proud words and blasphemies and to exercise his authority for *forty-two months*.” Other variations of Daniel’s expression, as used by John, are: *1260 days* and *three and one half years*. Each is a reference to one half of Daniel’s seventieth week of years, either the first half or the last half.

We are here assuming the futurity of Daniel’s seventieth week. The continuity of Daniel’s seventy *weeks* or *sevens*, totaling 490 years, is broken after the coming of “Messiah the Prince” who is “cut off, but not for himself” (Dan. 9:24-26, AV). Between the 69th and the 70th series of *sevens* lies the New Testament church age when Gentiles are brought into the body. Hence no one can chart the time or calculate the date when the 70th period of seven years begins. That it is yet future, however, is clearly evident. From the Lord’s own reference to Daniel in the Olivet Discourse (Mt. 24:15; Mk. 13:14) to the details of the seventeenth chapter of Revelation, the evidence indicates that Daniel’s seventieth *seven* deals with the end time. The decisive point in this demonstration is the structural parallel between Daniel and Revelation, centering in the harmony of the sequence of world empires in both. The last of these empires or kingdoms is the federation composed of the ten horns. The whole is put in an eschatological judgment-time in the future.

The question remains, which half of the seven-year period does John intend when he uses Daniel's phrase? Daniel's first mention of *time*, *times*, and *half a time* at 7:25—where the Antichrist will speak against the Most High and will oppress his saints—is clearly the last half, as is John's in the parallel passage of Revelation 13:5 to 7. John comforts and assures those who will be enduring this severe test in the future by the words implying that the Beast and his confederates will be taken captive and slain.⁸

We have already seen that Daniel's chronology was used by John in the account of Jerusalem and the ministry of the two witnesses. The 42 months and the 1260 days there referred to (11:2-3) are a precise dating of the first half of the seven-year period. A glance at the last message of Daniel's last vision indicates that he there has the same time-frame in view. The ruler that will arise at "the time of the end" (presumably at the beginning of the seven-year period) obviously will be in command of a great war machine. "He will attack the mightiest fortresses . . . and will greatly honor those who acknowledge him. He will make them rulers over many people and will distribute the land at a price" (11:39). Earlier Daniel had noted that this ruler would break his treaty in the middle of the seven years, causing the Jewish sacrifices and offerings to cease, and replacing them with an abomination (9:27). This ties in with what he now reveals concerning this tyrant: "He will exalt and magnify himself above every god and will say unheard-of things against the God of gods" (11:36). This is obviously the end of any religious freedom previously permitted and the beginning of all-out war against those who refuse to worship the image, the Abomination of Desolation. This, of course, corresponds to that period when the two witnesses (Rev. 11) have "finished their testimony" after they have prophesied for 1260 days, and the Beast makes war against them. Prior to this time, when attacked, the two prophets could destroy their enemies with the word of their mouth,⁹ thus vindicating their testimony as true servants of the living God. But now the Beast is allowed to overpower and kill them.

Of these dark days, Daniel writes: "There will be a time of distress such as has not happened from the beginning of nations until then" (12:1). These familiar words, quoted by our Lord in the Olivet Discourse (Mt. 24:21; Mk. 13:19), have given the name Great Tribulation to that cruel and bloody hour, which, according to the word of the Lord (Mt. 24:29; Mk. 13:24-27), will come immediately prior to his parousia. So it is not surprising that we find Daniel has said the same thing: "But at that time your people—everyone whose name is found written in the book—will be delivered. Multitudes who sleep in the dust of the earth will awake: *these* to everlasting life" (12:1-2a). This corresponds to John's parallel: "Then they heard a loud voice from heaven saying to them 'Come up here.' And they went up to heaven in a cloud, while their enemies looked on" (Rev 11:12). It corresponds also to John's allegory: "The dragon stood in front of the woman who was about to give birth, so that he might devour her child the moment it was born. . . And her child was caught up to God and to his throne" (12:4-5). Notice that this moment of being *caught up* (*harpazo*) is precisely dated in the middle of the week of years, for John goes on to say: "The woman fled into the desert to a place prepared for her by God, where she might be taken care of for 1,260 days." Lest we miss this point, he says it again (12:14), that she will be

⁸ Revelation 13:9-10 implies that those who wrongfully attack believers will themselves be destroyed: they will certainly be led captive and be put to death. The actual eventuation of this is narrated in Revelation 19 in the consignment of the Beast and the False Prophet to the lake of fire, after their armies are destroyed.

⁹ The NIV says "fire comes from their mouths" (11:5), which is metonymy for *fire comes by the command of their mouths*.

taken care of for a *time, times and half a time*. Moreover, in this vignette, as in Daniel's vision, Michael appears as a protector of God's people.

It is at this point, after Daniel has had the vision of the resurrection, that for the second time he uses the phrase *time, times and half a time*. It occurs after Daniel sees the Man clothed in linen "above the waters," who takes the solemn oath, swearing by Him who lives forever, as in Revelation 10. This One is asked: "How long shall it be to the end of these wonders?" (Dan. 12:6, AV). He answers: "It will be for a time, times and half a time. When the power of the holy people has been finally broken, all these things will be completed" (12:7).

How does this differ from the first use of the phrase? There we learned that for 3 1/2 years *the saints* will be tormented by the Beast. This lines up well with John's picture of "the rest of her offspring," those individuals who believe after the church is *caught up*—"those who keep God's commandments and hold to the testimony of Jesus" (Rev. 12:17)—whether Jew or Gentile. But this last reference in Daniel to the *holy people* whose power will eventually be broken is something else. To Daniel the *holy people* were the descendants of Israel who never ceased to be a nation before God, in spite of sin and unbelief (cf. Jer 31:36). This we know, that after the Beast has consolidated his power and has compelled all men to worship his image, he will come against Jerusalem. The Lord speaks of a day when "Judah will be besieged as well as Jerusalem . . . when all the nations of the earth are gathered against her . . . the city will be captured, the houses ransacked, and the women raped" (Zech. 12:2-3; 14:2). This is the time, at the end of the 3 1/2 years when Israel will look on the One they have pierced and will mourn and grieve bitterly (Zech. 12:10; Rev. 1:7). In either case, the 3 1/2 years covers that span of time from the middle of that eschatological week of years to its end.

As Daniel's prophecy ends, a further word is given him concerning the chronology of the end time. He is told: "From the time that the daily sacrifice is abolished and the abomination that causes desolation is set up, there will be 1290 days" (12:11).¹⁰ This of course is 30 days more than the 3 1/2 years or 1260 days that John speaks of. As we reflect, we realize that the extra days in Daniel's vision may allow for the activities of the Man of Sin at the middle of the seven years: causing the temple worship to cease, setting up of the Abomination in the holy place, proclaiming himself to be God, demanding worship, and dealing out death to all who refuse to bow the knee. We would suggest that this 30 days is the major part of the Great Tribulation. The 1290 days of Daniel, which start with the Abomination (here only—12:11), appear to overlap the 1260 days of the ministry of the two witnesses by one month, during which time the Beast makes war on God's prophets, and all others who refuse him worship, and by the end of that month overpowers and destroys them. Three and one-half days later, the witnesses are caught up.

In summary, Daniel's seventieth week of years, as supplemented by John, would seem to go something like this: At the opening of the seven-year period, a powerful ruler among the nations of the world makes an agreement with the Jews of Jerusalem and perhaps also others, assuring them of freedom of worship for seven years. At the same time, two prophets of the Lord appear on the world scene, witnessing for Christ and authenticating their claims with miraculous signs. Indeed, they seem to be administering the warning judgments of the Seals and Trumpets. Meanwhile, the powerful ruler spoken of by Daniel is consolidating his strength, dominating or

¹⁰ No explanation is given for the extra 45 days included in the *1335 days* of Daniel 12:12.

destroying the other rulers or princes with whom he has been allied, until he has become virtually a world dictator. At about the middle of his seven-year agreement (one month short, Daniel seems to say—12:11), he stages a well-planned coup, and with the assistance of his prophet, proclaims himself to be God and demands worship. His image, set up in the holy place, speaks and condemns to death all who refuse to worship. His prophet performs great and miraculous signs, even imitating the mighty works of Christ's two witnesses. Inevitably the confrontation will come between these two sides: the Beast and his False Prophet, and the Lord's two Prophets. That confrontation comes on the streets of Jerusalem exactly 1260 days after the beginning of that seven-year period. The Beast overpowers and kills the two witnesses and refuses them burial. (This is the Dragon's attempt to devour the male child, the heir, of Revelation 12.) Then comes the deliverance for everyone whose name is found written in the book of life, both the living and the dead. The Seventh Trumpet sounds. The dead are raised imperishable, the saints are transformed in resurrection glory as they now come into their inheritance. The time has come for rewarding the saints, both small and great—and for destroying those who destroy the earth (Rev. 11:18). That that period of destruction now takes place as God's wrath is poured out in the 3 1/2 years that remain is indicated in the refrain of the very next words: *Then God's temple in heaven was opened, and within his temple was seen the ark of his covenant. And there came flashes of lightning, rumblings, peals of thunder, an earthquake and a great hailstorm* (11: 19). The days of the voice of the Seventh Trumpet appear to be the equivalent of the last half of the seven-year period of Daniel, from the time of Christ's return *for* his saints at the *middle* of the week to his return *with* his saints in judgment at the *end* of that period.

Encouragement and Warning (Chapter 14)

Chapter 14 gives a series of brief pictures which anticipate the battle of Armageddon and the fall of Babylon, the major events climaxing the Second Vision. By anticipating, these pictures also unify, since the same events become the themes of the forthcoming Third Vision.

THE 144,000

The 144,000 (14:1-5) have already been identified in chapter 7 as Jews who have been marked with the seal of the living God. Here they stand in resurrection glory before the throne. They are called first-fruits, clearly suggesting that the greater harvest of Jewish believers is yet to come. The rapture of the church at the middle of the seven years is a great miraculous sign which motivates belief, even in the stress of the last half of the period. *First-fruits* suggests that the 144,000 have anticipated the great hour of Israel's believing, when she recognizes her Messiah (Rev. 1:7).

The earlier listing of the tribes (7:5-8) immediately comes to mind at the mention of this multitude. Such a listing may well be a way of reminding John and his readers of Christ's promise: "I tell you the truth, at the renewal of all things, when the Son of Man sits on his throne in heavenly glory, you who have followed me will also sit on twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel" (Mt. 19:28). Again he says: "You are" those who have stood by me in my trials. And I confer on you a kingdom, just as my Father conferred one on me, so that you may eat and drink at my table in my kingdom and sit on thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel" (Lk. 22:28-30). The new song they sing is known only to the "redeemed from the earth" whose redemption is now complete. They are viewed as males, the better to picture them as heirs, and

are said to be chaste, not defiling themselves with women. When, three verses later, we read of Babylon the Great, “which made all the nations drink the maddening wine of her adulteries” (14:8), this reference to chastity should be no problem. It is clearly figurative language for their faithfulness to Christ. “You have followed me . . . you who stood by me . . . to you the promises are given to judge the tribes of Israel.” In the remainder of the Revelation there will be many and continued vivid contrasts between Christ’s Bride (his faithful ones) and the Harlot, Babylon the Great (the unfaithful multitudes of the earth, who follow false gods).

The Three Angels

The messages of the three angels (14:6-12) are supernatural warnings of what is to come. The first is a call to worship and a warning of judgment: “Fear God and give him glory, because the hour of his judgment has come. Worship him who made the heavens, the earth, the sea and the springs of water” (14:7). The second is an announcement of the fall of Babylon. This is the first mention of Babylon in the book. (Further details follow in 16:19, and chapters 17 and 18.) What does John include under the figure of a city? The ancient concept of a city included the whole complex of political, social, and religious organization. The word Babylon brings together the themes which John pictures in the Third Vision (chapter 17): the woman who is Babylon riding on the beast, the political power. The woman and the beast in combination suggest the total manifestation on earth of Satan’s kingdom of evil. By synecdoche¹¹ John tersely brings them together saying: “The woman whom you saw is the great city which reigns over the kings of the earth” (17:18). In the destruction of the army of the beast, Babylon is also destroyed (19:17-21).

The announcement of the third angel is the fullest, most solemn warning of the consequences of worshipping the beast. Such worship is the spiritual adultery pictured so vividly in the Third Vision. The certainty and justice of the fate of those who worship the beast serves to reassure the saints, encouraging them to faithfulness. The angel is putting before men the stark consequences of their choices: to worship God or to worship Satan’s representative.

The Harvest of the Earth

The chapter concludes with two parallel pictures of judgment. The first reaping suggests the gathering out of the tares of Matthew 13:39-43, after which “the righteous will shine like the sun in the kingdom of their Father,” pointing to the millennial period. The companion picture also speaks of judgment. The angel who has power over fire (8:3, 5) directs the grape harvest. Grapes of wrath, indeed! The figure of the treading of the winepress outside the city suggests the destruction of the army of the beast gathered around Jerusalem from Armageddon in the north to Edom and Bozrah in the south. Isaiah 63:1-6 (cf. Joel 3:13) sums up the whole scene. The destruction of so many people, plus the downpour of a cataclysmic thunder and a hailstorm, gives some hint of the astonishing picture of the gory water reaching to the horses’ bridles.

The Seven Bowls of God’s Wrath (Chapters 15 and 16)

Chapters 15 and 16 form a unit. The scene of 15 is not in the series of pictures of chapter 14. It is rather a third *sign* in heaven (12:1, 3; 15:1). The word seems to be used as it was in John’s Gospel, as a miraculous, visible proof of divine predictions and claims.

¹¹ Synecdoche is a figure of speech where the part is used for the whole or the whole for a part. Here the woman only is used for the woman and the beast who together make up the great city of Babylon.

The last seven plagues and the setting remind us of the circumstances of the Exodus from Egypt. (Notice that *plagues* and *bowls* are used interchangeably.) The plagues are like the plagues of Egypt, but are expanded to worldwide dimensions. The victorious throng beside the sea singing the song of Moses and of the Lamb (15:2-4) again parallels the deliverance from Egypt. These people have been victorious over the Beast and his image. They resemble the great throng of chapter 7 who came out of great tribulation. They are the same group, the raptured church. They praise God as the King of the nations, and exult in the thought that all nations will come and worship before Him, a clearly millennial prospect.

As in the earlier throne scenes (chapters 4-5; 8:1-3; 11:19), the dramatic setting is made clear: God's judgments are proceeding from the temple in heaven (15:6-8). The sonorous description of God "who lives forever and ever" has been heard before (4:9, 10; 10:6) and seems peculiarly appropriate as God is about to act in unrelenting fury against sin and rebellion.

These plagues or bowls of wrath come in the last half of Daniel's seventieth week of years. It is a time of God's wrath poured out upon a rebellious world and should not be confused with the *tribulation* of the elect, which is caused by men. The deliberate, numbered sequence of the bowls emphasizes the relentlessness of the judgments as they proceed to their climax. Only at one point is there a pause in the measured succession. After the third bowl, the angel of the waters proclaims the justice and holiness of God in executing judgment. In doing this he uses the oft-repeated tristich we first met in the prologue: "who is, who was, and who is to come" (1:4 and 8; also 4:8). We have already noted a change in this refrain following the last trumpet. There we saw that the heavenly worshipers no longer sang of him "who is to come," for He has come. Rather, they sang "because you have taken your great power and have begun to reign" (11: 17). Now as the bowls of God's wrath are poured out, the third part of the tristich is again omitted, and in its place are the words: "because you have so judged" (16:5). Here is the Lord of all the earth executing judgment. Heaven replies, "Yea, O Lord God, the Almighty, true and righteous are thy judgments" (16:7, AV). Again, at the seventh bowl, there is the single word (in the Greek) of finality from the temple and the throne: "It is done!"

At the climax and end of this second vision comes the familiar refrain, this time identifying *Babylon the Great* and spelling out God's judgment in its fullest expression: lightnings, voices, thunders, an earthquake, and a great hail, all the accompaniments of the destruction of the army of the Beast. The earthquake is described at great length and is reminiscent of the one in Zechariah's prophecy:

Then the Lord will go out and fight against those nations, as he fights in the day of battle. On that day his feet will stand on the Mount of Olives, east of Jerusalem, and the Mount of Olives will be split in two from east to west, forming a great valley, with half of the mountain moving north and half moving south . . . Then the Lord my God will come, and all the holy ones with him . . . The Lord will be king over the whole earth. On that day there will be one Lord, and his name the only name. (Zech. 14:3-5, 9)

VISION III
THE FALL OF BABYLON, THE GREAT HARLOT,
AND THE DESTRUCTION OF ALL ENEMIES (17:1 to 21:8)

The major theme of this third vision is the destruction of Babylon the Great. Under the double symbol, which is at once both a city and a harlot, John pictures the whole evil world system, indeed, all that is opposed to Christ—in short, “the works of the devil” (I Jn. 3:8, AV). Babylon, the Great Harlot, stands in sharp contrast to the Holy City, the New Jerusalem, which is the Bride, the wife of the Lamb. The Bride becomes the major theme of the Fourth Vision.

It is significant that each of these last visions is introduced by one of the angels who had the seven bowls of wrath, for the two motifs of eschatology—destruction of enemies and salvation of believers—are found in the climactic pronouncements and events of the pouring out of the bowls of wrath. John’s literary plan becomes apparent, and its dramatic power is felt. John put his theme in headline form: “Behold, he cometh with clouds; and every eye shall see him, and they also which pierced him: and all kindreds of the earth shall wail because of him.” There followed the initial vision of chapter 1 which identifies the One who sends the letters to the churches. Each letter ends with a glimpse of future glory. The Second Vision of chapters 4 and 5 dominates the seven-fold episodes of seals, trumpets and bowls, each of which ends with the refrain pointing to the destruction of the army of the Beast. Now in this Third Vision, John will elaborate the meaning of that refrain of judgment on Babylon.

As God strikes the blow which destroys the massed army of the Beast, thus destroying Babylon and all its wealth and power, He is at the same time bringing His people into their promised inheritance—the other motif of eschatology. A prerequisite for taking the inheritance is, of course, resurrection (1 Cor. 15:50 f), foreshadowed in John’s narrative by the early intimations (1:6; 5:10) that believers will be both kings and priests, and that they will reign on the earth. The ultimate destiny of the Bride forms the last climactic vision.

This entire scenario is compressed in Paul’s summary in First Corinthians 15:20-28, with the enunciation of the key motif of putting all Christ’s enemies underfoot. Paul lays emphasis on the conquest of death by resurrection. First comes Christ’s own resurrection; then follows the resurrection of His own at the resurrection of the just. Until the Church has been resurrected, she, the Bride, cannot participate in the conquest of the army of the Beast and the destruction of Satan (Rom. 16:20). Thus John’s narrative gives the historical and dramatic details implied in Paul’s central motif taken from Psalms 110 and 8: putting all things under the feet of Christ and his people, that is, the defeat of all his enemies, including death.

The Beast and the Harlot (Chapter 17)

The details concerning the Harlot and the Beast together with the dirge over Babylon (chapter 18) prepare for the swift narrative of the fall of Babylon in the defeat of the armies of the Beast (chapter 19). This will be followed by the complete destruction of the works of the devil in chapter 20. Chapter 17 then prepares not only for this consummation, but also explains the implications of the bowls of wrath just narrated. At the pouring out of the sixth bowl (16:13-14), the Beast and False Prophet cooperated to deceive the nations in bringing their armies together to Armageddon. We have already seen the Beast in action, but now John is giving further details concerning the Beast and his relationship to the Harlot.

The woman who is riding on the Beast is drunk with the blood of the saints, a vivid picture of the murderous activities of Satan and all those who follow him. That the Beast is described as scarlet would also point to the bloodiness of his rule in sentencing to death all who refuse to worship him. The woman is named Babylon the Great, the Mother of Harlots and of the Abominations of the Earth. She represents all those who commit spiritual adultery, who despise the God who made them, all those who have exchanged the truth of God for a lie, and who worship and serve created things rather than the Creator (Rom. 1:25). Together they represent this great city Babylon “that rules over the kings of the earth” (17:18). Notice that her ruling or reigning is symbolized by *sitting* upon the Beast; she also sits upon the *waters*, that is, the “peoples, multitudes, nations and languages” (17:15).

The beast with seven heads and ten horns is presented by the angel in a tristich not used before, but now repeated twice in the same sentence, and again two more times in succeeding verses. The angel said to John, “The beast, which you saw, once was, now is not, and will come up out of the Abyss and go to his destruction” (17:8).¹² The angel appears to be posing a riddle. The puzzle comes in verse 11: “The beast who once was, and now is not, is an eighth king. He belongs to the seven and is going to his destruction.” How can the Beast be an *eighth* and *of the seven*? John apparently wishes his readers to remember that in Daniel, three of the ten kings are put down by the Little Horn (Dan. 7:24). That would leave seven and the horn himself would be the eighth. Thus he is identified vis-a-vis his contemporaries, as the eighth. At the same time, he is *of the seven*. If we accept the idea that Daniel predicted a series of world empires, then the Beast (Daniel’s Little Horn) and the phase of world empire headed by him, would be the last or seventh. It would then be clear that John did not regard the Roman empire as the last phase of worldly opposition to the church, for he says that one king (or kingdom) has not yet come (17:10), and he also says that the ten horns are ten kings who have received no kingdom as yet (17:12). This solution in which the Beast is eighth among his contemporaries and seventh in the succession of world empires gives an intriguing solution to John’s riddle, doubly identifying the Beast. It is clear then that John is not locating the Beast (horn) among the emperors of first-century Rome. Rather, Rome would be the sixth head of the Beast which receives the deadly wound, from which wound the Beast revives in the final eschatological phase of history. Here is the note of assurance for John’s first-century readers. Knowing the outline of Daniel, and accepting John’s interpretation, they are assured that Rome is *not* the final phase of worldly opposition. Rome will pass, and later the eschatological events will come.

In order to see this full series of seven kingdoms, we must extrapolate back from Daniel’s first kingdom, Babylon, and find two more kingdoms: Assyria and Egypt. Thus John’s seven

¹² John’s References to the Beast which imply the tristich:

Reference	The Past	John’s Day	The Future
11:7			who comes out of the abyss
13:3		head wounded to death	beast lives=came to life
13:12, 14			wound healed
17:8a	beast was	is not	about to come out of the abyss and go to destruction
17:8b	was	is not (soon will not be)	will be
17:10	five heads fallen	one is	one has not yet come
17:11	which was	is not	is the eighth
17:12			ten horns receive power with the beast

kingdoms would be Egypt, Assyria, Babylon, Medo-Persia, Greece, Rome, and the Kingdom of the Beast. In any case, the sixth kingdom existed in John's day. The fact that John explicitly says a seventh kingdom is to follow gives an authoritative clue for John's understanding of Daniel.

Rome should be identified as the *fourth* in the Danielic succession of kingdoms,¹³ recognizable as the successor of the kingdom of Greece, and *sixth* in John's series, thus bringing the assurance of a fulfilled prediction to John's readers. Moreover, on this construction, John is not erroneously predicting the immediate eschatological end of human history, but is explicitly saying that Rome is *not* the final kingdom. John thus speaks against the widespread practice of attributing to the New Testament writers the expectation of the eschatological finale in the near future, or even in their own lifetimes. Hence, no problem of interpretation arises because of the supposed failure of the end to arrive as predicted.

This interpretation challenges the assumption that John's seven-headed beast is Rome because Rome had seven hills. Revelation 17:10 is the crux: is John speaking simply of the succession of the kings of Rome or is he referring to the outline of Daniel? If John is referring to Daniel's larger outline of world history when he speaks of seven mountains (equated with seven kings), and is locating Rome as a whole as one (presumably the sixth) of the heads of the Beast, then the fact that Rome had seven hills is irrelevant for John's main purpose of aligning his vision with Daniel's outline of world history.

Thus, in the beast of Revelation 17, we see that stage of world empire represented by the ten toes of Daniel's image, ripe for the smiting of the stone from heaven.

Lament Over Babylon (Chapter 18)

Chapter 18 is a mournful poem or dirge over Babylon the Great. It is speaking of imminent judgment, preparing us for the climactic events which will follow: the destruction of a proud world, its armies, its wealth, its culture. Repeated woes anticipate the reaction of those who will survive: When the kings of the earth, the merchants, the sea captains, "see the smoke of her burning they will weep and mourn over her" (18:9, 11, 17). The call to salvation is still heard, even up to the final hour: "Come out of her, my people" (18:4).

The justice of God's judgment is emphasized: "Rejoice over her, O heaven! Rejoice, saints and apostles and prophets! God has judged her for the way she treated you" (18:20). And again: "In her was found the blood of prophets and of the saints, and of all who have been killed on the earth" (18:24). The note of finality comes in verse 21: "Then a mighty angel picked up a boulder the size of a large millstone and threw it into the sea, and said: 'With such violence the great city of Babylon will be thrown down, never to be found again.'" This reminds us of the vision of Daniel where the mighty stone struck the feet of the image and became a great mountain, the mountain of Christ's millennial kingdom.

The Climax of Vision III (Revelation 19:1-21:8)

Celebration of God's Righteous Judgments and the Marriage of the Lamb (19:1-10)

The hallelujahs come from heaven. The first three hallelujahs celebrate the righteous judgments of God while the fourth announces the marriage of the Lamb. The concluding verses (9, 10)

¹³ See the chart of Daniel's kingdoms on page 8.

emphasize the blessedness of those called to the marriage supper of the Lamb. The angel who originally began the revelation concerning the great harlot (17:1) speaks to John, emphasizing the truth and divine authority of his message, concluding with the weighty declaration that the testimony of Jesus is the Spirit of prophecy.

The two motifs of this passage, the celebration of the righteousness of God's judgments and the exultation because of the marriage of the Lamb, are but an eloquent reiteration of the two themes of eschatology: judgment on evil and glory for the righteous.

The use of the four-fold hallelujah is surely climactic. These four occurrences of the word are the only ones in the New Testament. The combination with *Amen* in verse 4 is especially emphatic. The first three hallelujahs (verses 1-4) appear to counterbalance the fourth (verses 5-8). This artistic arrangement also answers to the change in subject matter. The first three hallelujahs deal with the destruction of the harlot, while the fourth focuses on the marriage of the Lamb and the Bride.

The first and second hallelujahs are the utterances of a great multitude in heaven:

Hallelujah!
Salvation and glory and power belong to our God,
for true and just are his judgments.
He has condemned the great prostitute
who corrupted the earth by her adulteries.
He has avenged on her the blood of his servants . . .
Hallelujah!
The smoke from her goes up for ever and ever.

The third hallelujah comes from the twenty-four elders and four living creatures in worship to God, answering to the theme of praise to God for his righteous judgments (verses 1-2a). The addition of the *Amen* gives strong and emphatic counterpoint to the first two hallelujahs, and rounds off the stanzas dealing with the destruction of evil. The fourth hallelujah answers the voice from the throne calling God's servants to praise Him:

Praise our God, all you his servants,
You who fear him, both small and great!

The entire heavenly host, with the sound of "a great multitude," voices its reply:

Hallelujah!
For our Lord God Almighty reigns.
Let us rejoice and be glad
and give him glory!
For the wedding of the Lamb has come,
and his bride has made herself ready.
Fine linen, bright and clean,
was given her to wear.
(Fine linen stands for the righteous acts of the saints.)

The fourth hallelujah is focused entirely on the Lamb and His bride. The bulk of the material of the fourth hallelujah seems to be disposed to balance the weight of the first three hallelujahs.

This heavenly chorus of hallelujahs, centrally located as it is, becomes the keystone in the structure of the entire third vision. It underscores the judgment of Babylon and announces the wedding of the Lamb. Chapters 17 and 18 describe in detail the identity and destruction of the Harlot. The burden of the first three hallelujahs is the justice of God's destruction of the Harlot. The second hallelujah has a particularly pointed reference to the burning of Babylon (18:8, 18), thus preserving the continuity. The focus of attention on the Lamb and the Bride sounds the victory theme of eschatology, God's bringing of His elect into their inheritance. The marriage figure has implications of covenant inheritance. We think of Boaz as the Kinsman-Redeemer marrying Ruth, redeeming her inheritance, and securing it for her. The sounding of this covenant motif prepares for the magnificent paragraph at the end of vision three (21:1-8) which announces the new heaven and new earth, presents the Bride, and reiterates the ancient Abrahamic covenant (verse 7) which issues in the Bride's coming into her inheritance.

The brief exchange between the angel and John (vss. 9, 10) emphasizes the privilege of those called to the marriage supper. It also certifies the origin and authority of John's prophecy as the testimony of Jesus.

Denouement: Parousia, Destruction of Babylon, Millennium, and Final Judgment (19:11 to 21:8)

All of this serves to bring to a climax the previous anticipations of the parousia. The unity of the third vision is not broken. The first part (17:1 to 18:24) is anticipatory and gives the needed summation of the harlot's identity and relations with the Beast. But just because it is anticipatory, the actual denouement is required. This is what we have in the last part of the vision (19:11-21:8). It is remarkable that the carefully arranged series of sevens so economically sets the stage that when the final sequence of cosmic events comes, they can be briefly narrated: Parousia, Millennium, and Judgment.

Thus, 19:11-21 does not begin a new section as some suggest, but rather gives the actual destruction of evil, though there are glimpses of the glory of the righteous interspersed. The full display of the glory of the righteous comes in the Fourth Vision. This passage is John's description of that most majestic and awesome of all events, the parousia of Christ and His Church.

The major segments of the section (19:11-21:8) are marked by John's use of "and I saw" (19:11, 17, 19; 20:1, 4, 11, 12; 21:1, 2). The psychology is similar to that used in a TV summary of a movie. A series of "clips"—brief segments of action taken from longer contexts—are flashed before the viewer. In the present case, the larger contexts are the book of Revelation itself, with the related Old Testament contexts.

Dramatically 19:11-16 flashes heaven before us, standing open. Christ appears on the white horse, coming to make war and judge. He is accompanied by the armies of heaven. Both in Revelation 2:27 and 12:5 the activity of shepherding the nations (as predicted in Psalm 2:9) is given to believers, whereas in Revelation 19:15, it is Christ who shepherds (see comment on 2:27). Therefore, 19:15 suggests that Christ and His people will shepherd the nations with a rod of iron, that is, in strict and righteous government. Moreover, 19:15a, paralleling Isaiah 11:4b and 2 Thessalonians 2:8, shows that Christ also smites and destroys the wicked, presumably at the battle soon to be described. Though there is the hint of the strict but beneficent government of the millennium, the emphasis seems to fall on Christ's "making war" rather than on His "judging" (cf. vs. 11).

Revelation 19:17-18 gives the second of the series of “and I saw.” The picture is harmonious with the reference to Isaiah 63:2 (vs. 15 above) picturing Christ in battle. Here further vivid details of the slain are given.

John’s third topic in his report of the battle takes place in 19:19-21. Verse 21 has links with what has preceded: the army is slain by the sword which proceeds from the mouth of Christ (cf. vs. 15). Of special significance is the seizure of the Beast and False Prophet. They are cast alive into the lake of fire, where they will be joined by Satan in due time.

John gives the fourth vivid picture in 20:1-10. The question of what happens to Satan is of supreme importance, because he has been presented already as the instigator and leader in the deception of the nations and their gathering at Armageddon. When his tools, the Beast and False Prophet, are disposed of, there is the logical necessity of accounting for Satan himself. The narrative of the binding of Satan (20:1-3) follows and does not precede the events of chapter 19, and therefore is an advance toward the final crushing of Satan.

John’s fourth “I saw” (the binding of Satan) is closely linked to the fifth in the series, the vision of the millennial reign (20:4-6). This latter pericope appears to be a parenthesis in the whole passage (20:1-10). It is closely linked to verses 1 to 3 because it deals with the same thousand years during which Satan is bound. Yet verses 4 to 6 are not followed by a new “I saw,” but by a continuation of the narrative of 1 to 3. Thus it is very clear that verses 1 to 10 are a close knit unit, 4 to 6 giving additional details of the thousand years, and 7 to 10 resuming and completing the primary theme of the destruction of Satan.

The brief paragraph describing the millennial reign does not advance the story chronologically, since it is obviously the same thousand years during which Satan is bound. This double view of the events of the thousand years gives a clue to the fundamental chronological organization of the series of events between the parousia (19:11 ff) and the New Heaven and New Earth (21:1). The description of the millennial reign lies off the main story line, whose primary theme is the putting of all enemies under the feet of Christ. The glimpse of the millennial reign does, however, give a commentary on the binding of Satan. When the millennial picture is put in this logical relation to the chronological sequence—that is, after the thousand years Satan is released, and the story moves on to the final consignment of Satan to the lake of fire—the millennial reign adds a dramatic and theological explanation for the awful destiny of Satan, and a theodicy for God’s righteous acts of judgment.

The fundamental fact displayed in the narrative about Satan is that he is a deceiver, a theme which John’s Gospel also underscores (8:44). In this climactic eschatological narrative, Satan, the Beast, and the False Prophet have deceived the nations and gathered a great army to fight against Christ and the heavenly host. The thousand-year relief from Satan’s deceit (he was incarcerated so that he might not deceive the nations—20:3) is linked to the beneficent reign of Christ and His people. When the story of Satan continues, his incorrigible character is proved, because he resumes his program of deceit. The story of Satan then moves to its conclusion in the final rebellion, and the Devil and his angels are finally consigned to the lake of fire (Mt. 25:41).

John’s sixth and seventh uses of “I saw” are in his vision of the Great White Throne and final judgment (20:11-15). It seems altogether fitting, when “the one who has the power of death” has been put in the lake of fire forever, that the “last enemy”—death—should be destroyed by resurrection, as implied in 20:12. Resurrection is made still more explicit in verse 13 by the

awesome words: “The sea gave up the dead that were in it, and death and Hades gave up the dead that were in them”

The eighth of the “I saw” passages is Revelation 21:1, in which John sees the new heaven and the new earth. This is John’s farthest vision of the future, following the final judgment.

Closely linked to the vision of the new heaven and the new earth is the vision of the new Jerusalem. This is also introduced by “I saw” (21:2), the last and ninth in John’s series. The new Jerusalem is described as a Bride. The bride motif, as we have seen, ties in with the covenant inheritance theme, and that theme is reiterated in the present passage. The brief mention of the new Jerusalem, the Bride, points forward to the fourth vision which is a final and climactic description of the Bride in resplendent detail. “Now the dwelling of God is with men and he will live with them. They will be his people, and God himself will be with them and be their God . . . He who overcomes will inherit all this, and I will be his God and he will be my son” (vss. 3, 7). Notice the words of comfort of verse 4: “. . . He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away.”

The majestic words, “I am making everything new!” come from the one seated on the throne. And the same one says to John: “Write this down, for these words are trustworthy and true.”

The concluding words of the vision (vss. 6-8) are also uttered by the one seated on the throne. What finality and assurance! There is a wonderful sense of completeness when the Lord Jesus Christ, who on the cross said: “It is finished,” here says of his own trustworthy and true words, [They have been accomplished] “It is done.” All this lies within the power and authority of the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End, the Creator of the worlds, and the Consummator of all God’s purposes.

The passage concludes with gracious words of invitation and warning:

. . . To him who is thirsty I will give to drink, without cost from the spring of the water of life. He who overcomes will inherit all this, and I will be his God and he will be my son. But the cowardly, the unbelieving, the vile, the murderers, the sexually immoral, those who practice magic arts, the idolaters and all liars—their place will be in the fiery lake of burning sulfur. This is the second death.

VISION IV THE BRIDE, THE WIFE OF THE LAMB, COMING INTO HER PROMISED INHERITANCE (21:9 to 22:5)

“Come, I will show you the bride, the wife of the Lamb,” are the words which mark the beginning of the last, climactic vision given to the Apostle John. As noted earlier, an authoritative voice from heaven together with the activity of the Spirit distinguish the introduction to each of the four visions of the Revelation. The word of command in the first instance is: “Write” (1: 11). In the other three visions it is: “Come up” (4:1) or “Come” (17:1 and 21:9). The last two visions are remarkably parallel in the literary structure of the opening words, and at the same time are strikingly dissimilar in the picture portrayed: the harlot and the bride. Both of these last visions are introduced by “one of the seven angels who had the seven bowls full of the seven last plagues” (21:9; cf. 17:1). But what a contrast in the significance of

the words spoken! The angel says at 17:1-2: “Come, I will show you the punishment of the great prostitute, who sits on many waters. With her the kings of the earth committed adultery and the inhabitants of the earth were intoxicated with the wine of her adulteries.”

Reserved for the introduction to the last vision are the simple, beautiful words given above at the opening of this discussion.

Other contrasts are noteworthy. The setting for the two visions tells us much of the ultimate destinies of men. In the one, John is carried away “in the Spirit into a desert” (17:3). In the other, John is carried away “in the Spirit to a mountain great and high” (21:10). One points to waste and ruin. The other points to glory. Most explicit is the description of those who make up the two communities symbolized by the two women. “The inhabitants of the earth whose names have *not* been written in the book of life from the creation of the world” (17:8, italics added) are those who play the harlot, rejecting the God who made them, and becoming a part of an evil, idolatrous culture where men worship and serve the creature rather than the Creator. But of the Bride, the Lamb’s wife, who is also called “the New Jerusalem,” we read: “Nothing impure will ever enter it . . . but only those whose names are written in the Lamb’s book of life” (21:27). Five times the Apostle has referred to *the book of life*, once in each of the first two visions (3:5 and 13:8), twice in the third vision (17:8; 20:12), and now in his fifth and final use he gives it a strong, positive emphasis, appropriate to the subject of the bride coming into her inheritance. Put in its most basic form, the contrast between the Harlot and the Bride is that of Romans 6:23: “For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life through Christ Jesus our Lord.”

So now, in the final vision, the emphasis is on the beauty of that eternal inheritance. We have had glimpses of the future glory of the Bride all along the way. In the vivid contrast in the third vision between “the wedding supper of the Lamb” and “the great supper of God,” where the vultures and other birds of prey feed greedily on the flesh of the dead, we saw the whole ugly, hideous nature of sin. But it also gave us a glimpse of the marvel and beauty of God’s grace in his provision for the Lamb’s Bride: “Fine linen bright and clean *was given her to wear*” (19:8; italics added). Again in Vision III, as the Apostle came to the last “I saw,” it was necessary for the completeness of his chronology of last things that he give us a glimpse of the ultimate destiny of the Bride, be it ever so brief:

I saw the Holy City, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride beautifully dressed for her husband. And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, “Now the dwelling of God is with men, and he will live with them. They will be his people, and God himself will be with them and be their God. He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away” (21:2-4).

In these words John not only gave us a foretaste of the vision to follow, but he stated its theme: she shall be perfect and beautiful as she comes into her inheritance.

With this theme before us we are reminded of the words of the Apostle Paul in his instruction to husbands to love their wives as Christ loved the church (Eph 5:25-27). It is here in this fourth vision that we see illustrated this “profound mystery” of which Paul speaks (Eph. 5:32), when at the marriage of the Lamb, Christ presents his radiant bride to himself and to the whole universe

“without stain or wrinkle or any other blemish, but holy and blameless.” This consummation comes, of course, at the resurrection of the saints and their entering into their inheritance.

The beauty of the Bride, the wife of the Lamb, as she descends out of heaven from God is likened both to a bride adorned for her husband and to the brilliance of a precious gem. Both are appropriate when we recall the prophecy of Isaiah concerning “the day of vengeance of our God” when Zion will be comforted and will be given beauty instead of ashes; she then will rejoice:

I delight greatly in the Lord;
my soul rejoices in my God.
For he has clothed me with garments of salvation
and arrayed me in a robe of righteousness,
as a bridegroom adorns his head like a priest,
and as a bride adorns herself with her jewels. (61:10)

In John’s further description of her gates, her walls and her foundations, he again pictures her, the Bride, the Holy City, with the splendor of gold and precious gems, even as Isaiah had done before him. You will remember that the Lord, speaking of a future glory for Zion, had said:

For your Maker is your husband—
the LORD Almighty is his name—
the Holy One of Israel is your Redeemer;
he is called the God of all the earth. . . .
O afflicted city, lashed by storms and not comforted,
I will build you with stones of turquoise,
your foundations with sapphires,
I will make your battlements of rubies,
your gates of sparkling jewels,
and all your walls of precious stones. (Is. 54:5; 11-12)

John lists twelve stones as adornment for the twelve foundations; hence some scholars have attempted to equate these with the stones of the high priest’s breastplate. But since John makes it clear that the twelve foundations are inscribed with the names of the apostles (21:14), it seems unlikely that he is thinking of the twelve tribes of Israel as symbolized in the jewels of the high priest’s breastplate—unless he is thinking of Jesus Christ as the great High Priest of the whole people of God. Then Paul’s words become relevant: “Consequently, you are no longer foreigners and aliens, but fellow citizens with God’s people and members of God’s household, built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ Jesus himself as the chief cornerstone” (Eph. 2:19-20). By faith Abraham “was looking forward to the city with foundations, whose architect and builder is God” (Heb 11:10). What is beyond dispute in John’s symbolism of the New Jerusalem is that the city is made up of both Old and New Testament saints, for “on the gates were written the names of the twelve tribes of Israel” (21:12).

The gems with which the Bride is associated stand in sharp contrast to the jewels of the Harlot. The picture of the woman “dressed in purple and scarlet,” and “glittering with gold, precious stones and pearls” (17:4) calls up images of lust and lechery. Later “the cargoes of gold, silver, precious stones and pearls” (18:12) point to luxury, power and pomp. More significantly they point to the brief, vanishing and corruptible nature of this world’s wealth,

especially when heard within the thrice-repeated “Woe! Woe, O great city.” Notice the second of these refrains of woe:

Woe! Woe, O great city,
dressed in fine linen, purple and scarlet,
and glittering with gold, precious stones and pearls!
In one hour such great wealth has been brought to ruin! (18:16-17)

In contrast, as the Bride, the Holy City, comes down out of heaven from God, she shines, not with a few perishable trinkets, not even with her own brilliance, but *with the glory of God* (21:11). She is God’s trophy of grace. Zechariah puts it this way:

The LORD their God will save them on that day
as the flock of his people.
They will sparkle in his land like jewels in a crown. (9:16)

The last pictures of this vision are *the pure river of the water of life*, speaking of the work of the Spirit, regenerating, cleansing and giving life, and *the tree of life*, speaking of Christ himself and our covenant relationship with Him. These two pictures are skillfully compressed into a benediction in the epilogue: “Blessed are those who wash their robes, that they may have the right to the tree of life and may go through the gates into the city” (22:14).

Whether this fourth vision refers to the church in the millennial kingdom, or in the eternal state following it, is not clear. But this is not an *either-or* choice. There is a third alternative. As Beasley-Murray has argued (*Revelation*, p. 317), John may have intended to here portray both millennial and eternal relationships synchronously. John’s method would then be broadly parallel to that of Isaiah’s in his concluding chapters. J.O. Buswell, Jr., has persuasively argued that Isaiah’s purpose is comfort; his method is topical, and he chooses material from millennial or eternal perspectives, as his purpose requires, in seeking to assure God’s people that He will never forsake them or allow His promises to fail (*Systematic Theology*, II, 511-522). It may well be that the Apostle John has treated his material in similar fashion in this last vision. This would explain the references which seem more readily applicable to life in this world, as in Revelation 21:24: “The nations will walk by its light, and the kings of the earth will bring there splendor into it.” In any case, God’s people have been resurrected and have their immortal bodies. Since we have very little knowledge about these resurrection bodies and their future home, we can speak with no certainty concerning the physical nature of the heavens and earth portrayed by the Apostle. As Buswell says: “John is clearly describing a condition of personal fellowship of the saints with God in a space-time universe of tangible relationships, not merely in a ghostly state. Further, John is describing a state of things unspeakably glorious and stimulating to the imagination; a state of things not static or abstract, but developing (Rev 22:11) and concrete” (*Ibid.*, II, 524).

EPILOGUE (22:6-21)

The epilogue answers clearly to the Prologue, giving a symmetrical structure to the book. The three persons appearing in the prologue, Jesus Christ, the angel, and John, appear again in the epilogue. Preeminently, the book is the revelation of Jesus Christ: “The testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy” (19:10). In the epilogue Jesus states directly (22:7, 12, 13, 16, 20) His assurances of the truth of what has been revealed and of His coming. These assurances are

interwoven with the assurances and testimony of the angel whom Jesus sent to guide John (1:1; 19:9, 10; 22:8, 9, 16), and of John himself.

EXTENDED NOTE ON REVELATION 20

1. Indications of chronological sequence in 19:11-21:8

a. The central problem of Revelation 20 is the matter of sequence. Do the events of Rev. 20:1-10 follow or precede those of 19:11-21?

The whole section is concerned with the destruction of God's enemies. Two outstanding enemies, the Beast and the False Prophet, are destroyed at the parousia. Is Satan also destroyed at the parousia, or do 1000 years elapse before his doom in the lake of fire? The ancient Augustinian interpretation takes the binding of Satan back to Christ's ministry, equates the thousand years with the present age, and puts Satan's release for a little time and the gathering of Gog and Magog immediately before the parousia. Thus 20:10 brings Satan to the lake of fire, logically completing the destruction of the triumvirate of evil.

However, the whole effort, ancient and plausible though it is, is, in my opinion, a failure. The binding of Satan, the millennium, and the release of Satan follow rather than precede the events of chapter 19. This is made plain in the first place by the words of 20: 10. When Satan comes to the lake of fire, the Beast and False Prophet are *already there*. The intent of the author clearly is to deal with Satan in a special way subsequent to the parousia, before he is finally brought to the lake of fire. Second, there is a broad parallel between the eschatological perspective of First Corinthians 15 and this climactic section of the Revelation. Beasley-Murray says: ". . . scholars differ in their understanding of 1 Corinthians 15:22-25, but there is little doubt that the whole paragraph in which those verses are set (verses 20-28) is closely related to the theology embodied in John's vision, and it may well indicate that it was an established tradition in the primitive church. . . ." (*Revelation, New Century Bible*, p. 290). The "closely related theology" that Beasley-Murray detects, I believe, is concentrated in Paul's triumphant eschatological principle found in the words of Psalm 8:6 (1 Cor. 15:27a): ". . . He [God] has put everything under his [Christ's] feet." The assured conquest of all enemies thus promised is dramatized in John's vision. John unfolds the sequence that Paul compactly states ". . . all will be made alive. But each in his own turn: Christ, the first fruits; then, when he comes, those who belong to him. Then the end will come, when he hands over the kingdom to God the Father after he has destroyed all dominion, authority and power. For he must reign until God has put all his enemies under his feet" (1 Cor. 15: 22b-25). The involvement of the elect in the defeat of enemies, including Satan, is indicated by Paul: "The God of peace will soon crush Satan under your feet" (Rom. 16:20). Hebrews brings its perspective: ". . . that by his death he might destroy him who holds the power of death, that is, the devil—" (Heb. 2:14b). The elements of John's complete dramatization are here. The sequence and logical relationships necessary for the conquest of all enemies are tied to the scheme of resurrection which underlies John's narrative. That scheme may be stated in chiastic order: (a) "first death" —implied in John's "second death" answering to (b) the first resurrection (followed by millennial reign: "flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom"). The kingdom involves the humiliation of Satan and leads to his final overthrow. When the one who has the power of death is crushed, then the second resurrection (b) follows (the last enemy destroyed by resurrection) as the necessary preliminary to the final judgment and

the second death (a), when Death and Hades are emptied out into the lake of fire. Now John's rapid summary of the end of the age is compressed in the 26 verses of 19:11-20:15. It is apparent that 20:1-10 are the story of the humiliation and defeat of Satan. It is doubtful that in a narrative of 26 verses covering the whole sequence from the destruction of the army of the beast to the Great White Throne, 10 verses would be taken from that sequence to make a "flashback" tracing Satan's activity during the present age. It is cumbersome and disproportionate from a literary point of view. The narrative of 20:1-10 logically and chronologically follows the parousia.

b. The motif of deception in Satan's career requires the narrative to move forward after the destruction of the army of the beast, and argues against a recapitulation or flashback in Revelation 20:1-10. The theme of deception may be traced beginning with 19:20.

Through counterfeit miracles the False Prophet deceives those who receive the mark of the Beast. Satan is bound so that he may not deceive the nations until the thousand years are ended. When he is released (20:7) he proceeds to deceive the nations again. As he is finally imprisoned in the lake of fire (20:10), he still is marked as the one who deceives them.

The question arises, why is not Satan consigned to the lake of fire at once along with the Beast and the False Prophet? If the whole section (20:1-10) is concerned with the defeat of Satan, why the delay?

A literary answer would be that dramatic suspense is injected into the swift-moving narrative which runs from Armageddon to the destruction of Satan to the final resurrection and judgment. Before Satan's final banishment along with those who have followed him, we see the contrast of what happens under the beneficent rule of Christ and his people in a world from which the deceiver has been banished for a time. Literary suspense does not break the forward movement of the narrative, as a flashback or recapitulation would.

It is at this point that some want to break off the narrative and say that the binding of Satan is not a part of the same action. Instead, they say, it is a sudden flashback to the ministry of Christ when Satan is said to have been bound (Mt. 12). Our answer to this is that the bindings are not the same. The binding of Matthew 12 does not cause deception to cease; it continues until Satan comes to his end. In Revelation 20:1-3 deception ceases altogether. In Matthew 12, though Satan is bound, he can still act. Further, since the binding of Satan is the necessary condition of Christ's deliverance of a soul, Satan must have always been bound in some sense, ever since the pronouncement of the curse in the garden. On the contrary, the binding here in Revelation 20 is a complete immobilization. Satan is bound "with a great chain" and cast into the Abyss. The abyss is locked and sealed over him. This amazing repetition of the restraints put upon him surely makes it plain that the binding of Revelation 20 is not the binding of Matthew 12. Satan is thus restrained to prevent his age-long practice of deceiving the nations, for deceit is the very means he uses to keep his captives until a stronger than he, by the light and power of the gospel, opens men's eyes and turns them from the power of Satan to God (Acts 26:18). Further, the literary device of suspense leads us into the basic theological reason for the thousand-year delay in the disposal of Satan. It is appropriate to demonstrate his incorrigible character as a deceiver so that his destruction is seen to be eminently just.

c. The unique feature of the combination of kingship and priesthood in Revelation 20:4-6 requires a correspondingly unique period of history for its exercise. That unique period, the

millennium, provides the stage for the realization of God's creation purpose in making man in his image. Resurrection perfectly restores the image of God and makes possible the dominion over creation, one aspect of God's image in man.

Redeemed and resurrected men, through Christ, fulfill God's creation purpose. Men are then both kings and priests. In their reigning and judging, Satan is crushed under their feet (Rom. 16:20); in their service as priests, men are led to God and salvation.

The usual discussion of the pericope of Revelation 20:4-6 focuses on kingship alone. The thrones and the reigning are prominent, but those who reign, are *also priests*. This unique combination of kingship and priesthood makes it impossible to equate the millennium with the present experience of the church. Presently we are Christ's *kingdom* and we are priests, but not both kings and priests. Charles points out that Revelation 20:6 and 5:10

connect the priesthood with a special period of kingship, i.e. that which they are to exercise in the Millennial Kingdom, and share with Christ (xx:6) on the earth (v:10). These facts suggest that the priestly offices of the blessed in the Millennial Kingdom have to do with the nations, who are to be evangelized during this period (xiv:6-7, XV), and this suggestion receives some support from xxii:5 where, when the eternal reign of all the saints after the Judgment is mentioned . . . there is not the remotest reference to any special or other priesthood of the faithful. (ICC, II, 186)

In fact, in the eternal situation where all the redeemed "see His face" and have access to the one High Priest, any intermediate priesthood would be out of the question.

The fact of priesthood is the final theological consideration against the kingship and priesthood of disembodied souls, in the present era, before resurrection. This assumption is the basis of the ancient Romanist error of the invocation of the saints. The reasoning seemed to be that if the saints are reigning and functioning as priests, it is reasonable to call upon them in prayer. Hodge quotes Bellarmin: "The saints who are reigning with Christ, pray for us, not only in general, but also in particular" (*Sys. Theo.*, III, 281). Bellarmin's dependence on the Augustinian exegesis of Revelation 20:4-6 seems evident. All of the strictures of Reformed theologians against the intercession and invocation of the saints weigh with equal force against the supposition that 20:4-6 describes the intermediate state of believers.

d. We have argued that the displacement of the millennium back into the present age and before the parousia destroys an important logical and chronological sequence which John wishes to emphasize. This argument is supported by the exegetical details of the passage (20:4-6). Foremost among the debated details of Revelation 20:4-6 is the idea of resurrection. Usage of the word *anastasis* [resurrection] in the New Testament with one possible exception (Lk. 2:34) clearly requires a bodily resurrection. The theory of a flashback or displacement requires a radical spiritualizing of the concept, since a literal resurrection of all believers will not happen before the parousia. This resurrection is essential for the reign and priesthood described: "they came to life and reigned" (20:4b). We have already shown that a reign on earth contemporary with the binding of Satan is a necessary ingredient of John's narrative. The present point is that such a reign requires a literal resurrection. In Paul's language, "flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom" (1 Cor. 15:50). The usage of the word *anastasis* is wholly in favor of this

interpretation. Nor does the grammar of the passage favor the idea that souls are pictured as reigning.

Information about the righteous dead has already been given in the picture of the souls under the altar (6:9-11). There they cry for vengeance; they have been avenged in the destruction of Babylon (18:24; 19:2). In Revelation 20:4-6 the narrative has advanced so that the “little while” (6:11) those under the altar were asked to wait has passed; resurrection has come; they have been avenged; the millennial reign logically comes next.

John’s vivid picture of souls under the altar and souls in Revelation 20:4 has led some to suppose that disembodied souls reign in Revelation 20:4-6. This spiritualizing expedient is demanded by the unwarranted displacement of Satan’s binding and the millennial reign back into the present age. The decisive arguments against the displacement are literary and theological. We have already shown that the rapid, continuous chronological narrative has an order which a flashback would interrupt. We have shown that the movement of the book as a whole has advanced beyond the picture of the souls under the altar. In 6:9-11 John sees under the altar the souls of those who had been slaughtered for the faith. *Souls* is feminine in grammatical gender, and every subsequent reference in the passage to the persons contemplated is masculine. In 6:9 the participle, *saying* is masculine. In verse 11 a literal translation would run: “And was given to them [masc.], to each [masc.] a white robe and it was said to them [masc.] that they rest a little while until should be fulfilled their fellow-bond-slaves and brethren who were going to be slain as they themselves [masc.] were.” The two dative references *to them* are masculine, as is the nominative intensive *themselves*. John sees souls, but uses the generalizing masculine, clearly referring to them as persons and by synecdoche, anticipating resurrection. James Orr is probably correct when he says: “Soul, in the Old Testament, is not opposed to body; it is *in* body, its animating and informing principle. It is the possession of a soul which makes a body; as, on the other hand, there is no soul which does not imply a body. It follows that soul, in Scripture, has always this connotation of a body” (*God’s Image in Man*, p. 51). John’s usage is explained if we understand that when he saw souls and spoke of them as persons, he was thinking of their approaching resurrection. The use of the masculine gender in the subsequent references fixes as masculine the participle in verse 9: “the souls *of those who had been* slaughtered.” It is those persons who speak in verses 10 and 11.

In Revelation 20:4-6 a similar phenomenon occurs. In verse 4 John says “judgment was given *to them*”: the pronoun is masculine in gender. John saw the “souls of those who had been beheaded.” The *hoitines* [they] of 4b is masculine and parallel to the participle *who had been beheaded*; 4c says, “[They] came to life and reigned with Christ.” Greek has no pronoun for the *they*: the verb is in the third person plural; there is no specific indication of gender. Who came to life and reigned? It seems unreasonable and forced to say that souls came to life and reigned. The natural antecedent of the third plural in *came to life and reigned* is settled by verse 5. “*The rest* [masculine] of the dead did not come to life until the thousand years were ended.” John is consistent with the theme of the paragraph. He saw *people* on thrones; judgment was given to them. The reference to the souls (fem. gender) of those who had been beheaded (masc.) is a cross reference to 6:9-11. Subsequent references are masculine gender. John is explaining who those are on the thrones. They (dead persons) had come to life and reigned. Verse 4d neatly links up and equates those on the thrones (4a), those who had been beheaded (4b), those who had not worshipped the beast (4c), with those who came to life and reigned. The rest of the dead did

not come to life until the end of the thousand years. Both passages show that when John referred to souls, it is in a context of resurrection, when dead persons come to life. He does not teach the bizarre doctrine of disembodied souls reigning, much less their functioning as priests.

2. Guthrie's Exposition of the "amillennial" view.

I believe that our earlier running analysis of Revelation 19:11-21:8 established a basic chronological and logical sequence in the eschatological events John describes.

There exists, however, the long-standing Augustinian amillennial interpretation, with its post-millennial variant. Donald Guthrie discusses the whole matter in his *New Testament Theology*, "Note on the Millennium" (pp. 869-874). Guthrie says,

Our main question must be whether the passage [Rev 20:4-6] requires the postulation of a future millennial kingdom of 1000 literal years . . . The crux of the matter is whether this follows or precedes the parousia of Christ. If the book of Revelation is intended to be understood in chronological order, there would be no denying that the millennium, whatever its duration, would take place immediately following the coming. But it is difficult to be certain whether the book should be interpreted in chronological order. Indeed it is impossible to trace such an order throughout the whole book, and this should caution us against making the assumption that it occurs here (p. 871).

It seems to me that Guthrie makes an excellent point when he says that the "crux of the matter is whether [the Millennium] follows, or precedes the parousia of Christ." He also sees, in the description of the three competing views (pp. 869-70), that this basic question of chronology is found in each of them. Even in his description of the amillennial view he says: ". . . [it is] a symbolic description of the period between [sic!] the ascension and second coming of Christ." The amillennial view is therefore generally identical with the post-millennial in that it puts the millennium before the parousia. The question of chronological sequence cannot be avoided. Indeed, there appears to be no reasonable statement even of the amillennial view which completely eliminates the question of sequence. Therefore, it is quite wrong to deny that chronological order is found in Revelation 20. The question is not chronological order versus no chronological order, but *which* chronological order, before or after the parousia. Guthrie reasons that since it is difficult to trace a chronological order throughout the book of Revelation, we should be cautious about making the assumption that such an order occurs in chapter 20.

However, Guthrie does not really mean to conclude that there is *no* chronological order, because he has shown in his description of his view that it is "a symbolic description of the *period between* the ascension and second coming." He must mean that we should be cautious against a particular chronological sequence which puts the millennium *after* the parousia. The exegetical arguments which follow (pp. 871 ff) are designed to show the superiority of the "spiritual interpretation" of the millennium. Under the cloud of confusion attending the "spiritual" and "symbolic" interpretation, Guthrie is arguing for a particular chronological order which puts the millennium *before* the parousia.

Why do Guthrie and others reason as though the presumption is against putting millennium *after* instead of *before* the parousia? In my opinion, the explanation must be found in the long dominance of the Augustinian interpretation. Hans Bietenhard well says:

The eschatological interpretation of Rev. 20 was decisively rejected by Tyconius, but not in such a way that the eschatological hope itself was completely lost. Tyconius lived in a real expectation of the coming end, which he looked for in the year 380. His view dominated the exegesis of Rev. 20 for the next 1300 years, mainly because Augustine took it over from his Donatist opponent and clothed it with his authority. In the form given it by Augustine it has had an influence which has persisted right up to the present time, especially in Roman Catholic circles (“The Millennial Hope in the Early Church,” *Scottish Journal of Theology*, March, 1953, VI, 28).

Adolf Harnack helps to put Augustine’s far-reaching exegetical choice in perspective:

. . . carried away by the church’s authority and triumph in the world, as also profoundly moved by the fall of the Roman world empire, whose internal and external power manifestly no longer existed save in the Church, Augustine saw in the present epoch, *i.e.*, in the Church’s History, the millennial kingdom that had been announced by John (*De Civit.* XX). By this means he revised, without completely abolishing, the ancient Chiliasm of the Latin Church. *But if it were once determined that the millennial kingdom was now, since Christ’s appearance, in existence, the Church was elevated to the throne of supremacy over the world; for while this kingdom consists in Christ’s reign, he only reigns in the present through the Church.* (*History of Dogma*, V, 152)

Here then is the probable origin of the assumption that the millennium should be put before the parousia. The common practice of presenting the millennial problem as a choice between “spiritual/symbolic” and “literal” is hopelessly misleading. Augustine fell into the error of trying to make the predictions of Revelation fit his own time; the appeal to symbolic and figurative interpretation necessarily followed. If millennial and eschatological material is brought into the present age, a reductionist exegesis is inevitable.

Does that exegesis prove to be preferable? Guthrie develops two exegetical arguments (pp. 871 and 844). First, he maintains that the Lord’s statement about the fall of Satan (Lk. 10:18) is parallel to Revelation 20:1-3:

During the present age Satan’s power is limited. He may tempt, but he cannot finally deceive the disciples of Christ. The ‘little while’ of his release would then coincide with the final period of great tribulation, when through his agent antichrist he would make his final opposition to God (p. 871).

To say that Satan’s power is limited in the present age is very far from the complete immobility which Revelation 20:1-3 teaches. Further, this exegesis says nothing about the part which Revelation 20:3 and 7 emphasize, namely, Satan’s *deception* of the *nations*.

Second, Guthrie proposes a spiritual interpretation for the first resurrection of 20:5:

If, however, the millennium is symbolic of the present kingdom of Christ on earth, the first resurrection could be considered as a spiritual and the second

as a physical act. This is supported by the fact that the first resurrection is distinguished from the second death, which must clearly be spiritual death (20:6).

To say that the “second death” is spiritual is to forget that Revelation 20:14 identifies the lake of fire as the second death, where both body and soul are to perish (Mt. 10:28), thus clearly requiring a literal resurrection. This latter resurrection is the “coming to life” of the “rest of the dead” in verse 5. The reference to “the rest of the dead” requires that the earlier contingent of dead experience the same kind of resurrection. Guthrie says: “There is force in H. Alford’s contention that to make *ezesan* [come to life] mean one thing in verse 4 and another in verse 5 empties language of its significance” (844 footnote). I could only wish that Guthrie had felt the decisive force of Alford’s reasoning. Alford writes:

. . . if, in a passage where *two resurrections* are mentioned, where certain souls lived at the first, and the rest of the dead lived only at the end of a specified period after that first,—if in such a passage the first resurrection may be understood to mean *spiritual* rising with Christ, while the second means *literal* rising from the grave;—then there is an end of all significance in language, and Scripture is wiped out as a definite testimony to any thing” (Henry Alford, *The Greek Testament*, IV, pp. 732-3).

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