HOME CHURCH LESSON SERIES

The Book of Revelation

The Victory of the Lamb

"Behold, I am coming soon, bringing my recompense with me…"

Revelation 22:12

A Home Church Resources Lesson Series

homechurchresources.org

Who We Are

We are a Christian ministry that helps people start home churches through providing support to potential and current home church leaders. You don't have to spend years on a church staff and have college degrees in ministry (although they are welcome to help!) to be qualified. You can be a mechanic and start a home church…a teacher and start a home church…retired and start a home church.

We are here to help you get the support you or others you know need to get started!

How We Help

We provide the resources needed to help you get started. This includes:

- An online community for encouragement
- Online training that combines our best resources in one streamlined pathway
- Dozens of PDF tools to equip you to succeed
- Coaching to tackle the specific issues you face.
- Training for your home church members so they have ministry skills and disciplines

You can join a community where people interact, encourage and pray for each other as they live out the home church planting life together.

All of this is done through an online learning community where you can quickly and easily connect with all of the resources we have developed that are helping home church leaders around the world.

How to Start

Anyone can start, no cost, to start a home church. Our Prepwork will help you lay a biblical foundation for a home church and assembly the building blocks you need for a solid foundation to start a home church. You will also learn a few things to help you prayerfull consider if starting a home church is right for you in this season. This Prepwork comes with a Field Guide, which is a fillable PDF, so that when you are done you will have a guidebook in your hand that you have created, specific to the vision you are finding in scripture and through prayer.

Take the Prepwork Here

Introduction to Revelation

Resources consulted (I have tried to cite when appropriate):

Ben Witherington – Revelation (New Cambridge)

- Mitchell Reddish – Revelation (Smith and Hewlys)
- Keener – Revelation (NIVAC) **Disclaimers:**
- We don't live in their world, use their language, have a grasp on their every day circumstances and concerns.
- We don't have all the cultural specifics or hear the same symbols how they would have heard them.
- So it is hard to draw the same conclusions they would have or hear it the same way they did.
- We still try – but it is easy to come to a wide range of conclusions on many things in Revelation.
- It will take a careful and considerate study of the book to try to hear it as they would have heard it, in their shoes, in order to apply it to our lives today.

Two extremes to avoid:

- Everything has already happened ○ Some believe that Revelation was written only for the benefit of the readers in the first century. Yet, there are things in the book that have yet to take place. This is a mistake.
- Everything has yet to happen ○ Some believe everything in Revelation is about us or has yet to occur. So they read themselves into the text, finding all kinds of clues about modern day life and things yet to come. This too is a mistake.

1st – We have to know what it is we are looking at - Genre:

- Why is this important ○ You read a psalm, a gospel, a letter, and apocalyptic differently. ○ They each have different features, different tools, and different levels of meaning.
    - You come to the text with the proper understanding/expectations
- Apocalyptic literature (Mounce, 18) – Apocalypse means "Revelation" in Greek ○ Revelatory in nature – disclosing things we would otherwise not know. ○ Secretive ○ Divine disclosure ○ Angelic mediator ○ God promises to intervene ○ Bring an end to the wicked
    - Symbols used in regard to cosmic forces
    - Eschatological by nature – pointing to future events (not just the end of time) ○ God's perfect, good place vs. this evil place ○ – the first breaking into the second

Author – The apostle John (Rev 1:1-2)

Which John?

- Zebedee, John Mark, etc?
- At least 2 early Christian authors from 2 of those cities said it was John the apostle – See CMM on this & 1 who personally knew John the apostle said this was his writing. ○ Melito was bishop at Sardis
    - Irenaeus – Smyrna, he knew Polycarp who knew the apostle John ○ Papias – personally knew John **Location:**
- Patmos – probably a prison colony (BWIII, 9)
- Island off the west coast of Asia Minor

- He would probably never see his brothers in Christ in Asia Minor ever again **Audience:**
- 7 Churches of Asia Minor (Turkey) ○ These churches were in Western Asia Minor ○ This was written to them in their circumstances
    - 7 churches, could be representative of the church as a whole – in other words, there is something there for everyone.
    - These cities were some of the largest in the Roman empire (BWIII, 23)
        - Ephesus (200,000 pop., 3rd largest city in Roman empire)
        - Pergamum (120,000, 6th) – had one of the largest libraries in the world with over 200,000 volumes (Reddish, 7)
        - Sardis (100,000, 7th)
        - Smyrna (75,000, 14th) ○ These cities were "at the crossroads of the ancient world" (Reddish, 7) **Date:**
- Either during the reign of Nero (54-68) or Domitian (81-96). Most favor Domitian (Mounce, 32) ○ External evidence
        - Irenaeus, Origen, Eusebius, and Clement of Alexandria all thought it was during Domitian's reign
    - Internal evidence
        - References to the "imperial cult" (Mounce, 32)
        - Rev 13:4, 15-17; 14:9; 16:2; 19:20
        - While just about every emperor of Rome dating back to Caesar was worshipped as a "god", "It was not until the reign of Domitian that failure to honor the emperor as a god became a political offense and punishable." (Mounce, 33)
        - Revelation mentions many who did or would die for their faith:
- Antipas (2:13)
- Church in Smyrna (2:10)
- Church in Philadelphia (3:10)
- See also Rev 6:19, 17:6, 18:24, 19:2
- 7 Kings of Rev 17:9-11 – Key to dating the book ○ 5 have fallen, one is and the last has not yet come ○ Nero myth – Nero didn't die…he was coming back **Themes:**
- Who will you honor? God or Caesar?
- Living for God in light of persecution and difficulty
- Ultimate triumph and justice of God as victor over all principalities and powers of this world = release and relief from persecution.

Emperor cult and Cultural Assimilation:

- **Emperor cult:**
    - The Roman empire provided great blessing and protection to its inhabitants (peace, prosperity, aid in time of disaster, etc)
    - Cities liked to give back. ○ Emperor cult – the building of temples, statues, etc to honor and even worship Caesar as
      Lord/god ○ Temples also served as their
    banks (BWIII, 23)
        - Holding property
        - Giving loans at interest

        - Mortgages
- Chart from W. Howard-Brook on the pervasiveness of the imperial cult:

Asian City	Imperial Cult	Imperial Altar	Imperial Priest
Ephesus	X	X	X
Smyrna	X	X	X
Pergamum	X	X	X
Thyatira		X	X
Sardis	X	X	X
Philadelphia	X		X
Laodicea		X	

- "the subject of the ruler cult has special importance for the study of early Christianity because it formed the focal point of the early church's conflict with paganism" (E.F., Backgrounds, 199)

- **Assimilation:** ○ Participation in the cult religions of the city/empire was expected. To not worship the emperor was like wishing ill-will on the empire and the livelihood of those living in the city/empire. ○ One was expected to have faith in the empire (BWIII, 24)
    - Monotheism of Christianity prevented Christians from participating in many aspects of the city life/culture they lived in:
        - Trade guilds – to have a certain job worship of certain god expected
        - Civic associations – imagine to go to Kiwanis you had to worship a "god"
        - City parades/festivals – to be a citizen of a city and empire – worship expected ○ Monotheism = unpatriotic and unpopular ○ See the pressure to assimilate and lose faith?
- **Misunderstanding of Christians** ○ Some Romans thought Christians were strange and antisocial, even dangerous (Reddish 9-10).
    - If blessing of the city, life, empire depends on worship of gods – and they don't – they are wishing ill will on the city?
    - Christians accused of atheism for their refusal to worship other gods
    - People feared punishment of the city/community by the gods due to Christians lack of worship ○ Cannibalism – Lord's Supper
    - Incest – marrying "brother" and "sister"

This leads us to Revelation – here you have a group of Christians who are undergoing extreme, local or empire-wide persecutions and are afraid for their lives. Thus, there is the possibility of some giving up their faith out of self-preservation.

Purpose - John is calling on them to remain faithful in light of the big picture:

- Good will triumph over evil
- God is the real supreme ruler
- Don't give up the fight – let's be a fly on the wall in the throne room of God for a moment.
- Don't give in to live like the world around you.

Application:

How are Christians misunderstood today?

- *What difficulties does that lead to?*
- *What opportunities could that lead to?*

What pressures do we face to assimilate into our culture?

- *How do we combat them?*
- *How does Revelation help us address those things?*

How much assimilation do you think the average Christian has done? Why?

Revelation Chapter 1

Prologue (1:1-3):

- Revelation ○ something that is revealed – from God to us
  - Apocalypse comes from this word Purpose:
  - Show "his servants" what must soon take place
    - Servants = Christians John is writing to + others who are affected by these events
    - **Daniel 2:28-29, 45**
    - God is the one who reveals what is to come.
    - That is what Revelation is going to do for them and to a lesser degree for us (since some of these things have passed).
  - Soon – Many of the things in this book have already taken place. Some have not ▪ This book is relevant to them right there and then.
    - This can also mean (Mounce, 65):
- Suddenly
- "Without delay once the appointed time arrives"

○ This means all events in this book are coming soon, even if they still haven't taken place nearly 2000 years later.

- Witnesses/testimony (1:1):
  - God
  - Angels - Apocalyptic literature - God usually sends an intermediary to introduce the contents and revealing those things to a man. ○ John
  - Jesus Christ ○ His point – this is true
- Outcome of studying this book: ○ 1:3 – Blessing if you read it and take it to heart
  - THIS IS NOT JUST SOME UNVEILING OF THE FUTURE TO SATISFY OUR IDLE CURIOSITY - IMPACTS OUR LIFE PROFOUNDLY ○ 7

  blessings of Revelation
    - 1:3, 14:13, 16:15, 19:9, 20:6, 22:7, 14

Epistolary form (Fee – How to read the Bible for all it's worth, ?):

- Author (1:4, 8) – "John" and the "Lord God"
- Recipients (1:4) – "To the seven churches in the province of Asia"
- Greeting (1:4) – "Grace and peace to you" ○ Grace – like a Greek greeting ○ Peace – a Hebrew greeting (Mounce, 68)
- Prayer wish or thanksgiving (absent)
- Body of the letter (1:9-22:19)
- Final Greeting (22:20-21)

Strikes against Caesar

- God is eternal (1:4,8)
- Jesus is firstborn from the dead and sovereign over all the kings of the earth (1:45)
- Jesus will return and bring judgment (1:7)

- There will be mourning (1:7)
- His followers will live forever (1:6)

Seven Spirits of God (1:4) possibilities (Mounce, 69): ▯ A representation of the "Holy Spirit" (Morris, 48) ○ This is supported by the Father (1:4) and the Son (1:5) being included already ▯ Angels?

  - Seven archangels of 1 Enoch
  - Seven angels are before God's throne in Rev 8:2

- But this is spirits, not angels
- Zech 4:2,10 is roughly parallel, especially in light of 2 of the 3 other times this comes up in Revelation:
  - 3:1 ○ 4:5– represented as seven blazing lamps (Zech 4:2) ○ 5:6 – represented as seven eyes of the Lamb (Zech 4:10)
- Hard to draw a firm conclusion on the identity of the 7 spirits ○ It seems these spirits represent God's work in the world and his vision/knowledge of all that occurs
  - This is important to them and to us for two reasons:
    - God's power – God is able and is doing something here
    - God's knowledge – God sees the good and bad and will judge accordingly. This points toward victory for those in Christ and defeat of the powers of darkness ▪ Gives us hope.

Other points of interest (Mounce, 72-73):

- Jesus as witness (1:5) – that is where we get the word "Martyr". The ultimate witness he bore was his death on the cross - - - - empty tomb
- "Firstborn from among the dead and ruler of the kings of the earth" ○ *If you were being persecuted and fearing for you life, how would these descriptions of Jesus build your faith & encourage you to stay strong?*

Immediacey and Urgency – 1:7

- Look, he is coming…

"John reminds his readers that the drama of God's dealing with the world did not end with the crucifixion of God's faithful witness, for the last act is yet to be performed. When the final curtain does fall, those who have opposed God will be surprised at the ending. Even those who were responsible for the death of Jesus will lament their deed. The visions of the Apocalypse are John's attempt to portray in symbolic language the astounding truth that all evil and injustice will ultimately bow before the indomitable power of God." (Reddish, 37)

God's description (1:8):

- God speaks twice personally in Revelation:
  - 1:8 - beginning ○ 21:5ff - end
- Alpha and Omega – 1st and last letters of the Greek Alphabet
- God called "Almighty" only 10 times in NT and 9 of those are in Revelation ○ In LXX this is the word used to translated "Lord of hosts" (Reddish, 38)
  - God has a host of angelic, heavenly beings in heaven and hosts of faithful on earth that he is overseeing and he will see them to victory
  - Power, authority, the ultimate sovereignty of God **One like a Son of Man (1:9-20):**

- Patmos, the Lord's day, in the Spirit ○ Patmos:
    - Prison colony
    - John is likely exiled by Roman authorities to the island due to his preaching and the growth of the church
  - Lord's Day
    - Sunday
    - The day Christ won victory over sin, death and the world ○ In the Spirit
    - Trance-like state (Peter - Acts 10:10, 11:5; Paul – Acts 22:17, 2 Cor 12:2-4)

Instruction – write to the 7 churches

- 7 churches = representative of the church universal ○ Notice 2:11 – "Let anyone…" – this is for all Christians
- One scholar points out that each of these cities were probably major hubs in the postal routes of their day (Mounce, 76 citing Ramsey) = points of distribution to more churches Order of the churches named:
  - Some have looked for symbolism here but it is just geography
  - Forms a clockwise circle from southwest Asia minor around toward the east (from 7 o'clock to 5 o'clock)

Description of the scene:

- 7 golden lampstands = 7 churches (1:20) ○ The church is to be the light (2:5) – if we aren't serving the purpose we are here for we can be removed.
- Someone like a son of man ○ Daniel 7:13 – this is Jesus Christ Son of Man:
- Dressed in a robe to his feet – priestly garments
- Golden sash around his chest – priestly garments
- Head and hair were white like wool – Daniel 7:9 this is said of God. Jesus is part of the god-head Eyes like blazing fire
- Feet – bronze glowing in a furnace ○ Strength & stability (Mounce, 79)
- Voice – rushing waters
- Right hand – 7 stars ○ Angels of the churches – heavenly beings, protection?
  - Reddish says this represents Christ effectively holding the churches in his hand (p.47)
- Mouth – sharp double edged sword ○ This he uses in judgment, his words (from his mouth) bring judgment
    - Against the churches if need be (Rev 2:16)
    - Against the world (19:15, 21)
- Face – sun shining brilliantly ○ This word may not mean face ○ Used 3 times in the NT
    - John 7:24 – outward appearances
    - John 11:44 – face
    - Rev 1:16
    - His whole outward appearance was brilliant Jesus – transfiguration
- Moses – Sinai (Exodus 34:29)

John's response – fall on his face

- That is what people do when they are face to face with divinity:
  - Joshua 5:14 ○ Ezek 1:28 ○ Dan 8:17, 10:15, etc ○ Isaiah and others

    - Guards in the garden to arrest Jesus in John **Keys of death and Hades (1:18):**
- Key – Jesus was a victor over sin and death. He subdued it through his resurrection. He know holds the keys/sits in the driver's seat. He is in control of the very worst that the world can throw at us or threaten us with!
- Hades – in their view this was a place of waiting for the return of Christ ○ Christ would release them from death and bring victory at the appropriate time **Christ's presence among his people (1:19-20):**
- This is the ultimate image of hope
- HE IS STANDING AMONG US! We don't see him but it doesn't mean it isn't real. **Application:**
- The world is an evil place
- Christ stands in judgment over the world ○ He has the power and wisdom to do so
- *What are you facing in life that is so powerful not even God can help you?*
- *What is the worst thing the world can do to you?*

Revelation 2-3 (7 Churches of Asia)

"Write, therefore, what you have seen, what is now and what will take place later. The mystery of the seven stars that you saw in my right hand and of the seven golden lampstands is this: The seven stars are the angels of the seven churches, and the seven lampstands are the seven churches." – Rev 1:19-20

- Command from Jesus to John to record everything
- *What does it signify that he stands among the lampstands?*
    - Jesus' presence among his churches
    - This is especially important since they are going through a difficult time *What does it signify that the churches are in his hand?* ○ Jesus' control and authority over them – they are in his hand

Archer and Ridgell (p.33) point out that to all of the churches Jesus uses part of the description about himself from chapter 1:

- Ephesus: "The words of him who holds the seven stars in his right hand" (Rev 1:20 --- 2:1)
- Smyrna: "the words of…the First and the Last, who died and came to life" (Rev 1:17, 1:5 --- 2:8)
- Pergamum: "the words of him who has the sharp, double-edged sword" (Rev 1:16 ---2:12
- Thyatira: "the words of the Son of God whose eyes are like blazing fire and whose feet are like burnished bronze" (Rev 1:14-15 ---2:18
- Sardis: "the words of him who holds the seven spirits of God and the seven stars" (Rev 1:4, 20--- 3:1
- Philadelphia: "the words of him who is holy and true who holds the key of David" (Rev 1:18 – "key of death" ---3:7 – "key of David" ○ Why the difference?
- Laodicea: "the words of the Amen, the faithful and true witness, the ruler of God's creation (Rev 1:5 --- 3:14

In each instance these have special meaning and significance to the message of each of these churches.

Significance of 7 Churches:
These letters are written to them but there are things for every single Christian and every single church to learn.

Structure of the Letters (BWIII, 91):

- Address to the angel of the church
- "thus sayeth" = directly from the Lord
- Description of the one sending the message (all from chapter 1)
- Commendation
- Formula – "But I have one thing against you" – description of this fault
- Judgment if they don't listen or follow the teaching
- "he who has ears…"
- Promise of victory

1. Ephesus (Rev 2:1-7) The closest of the seven cities to the island of Patmos.

Older Christians at this point in Ephesus as the Gospel had come here several decades prior.
 Paul preached there over two years (Acts 19:8-10) **Population**: 250,000 (3rd largest city in the Roman Empire) **Pagan worshipin Ephesus:**

- **Temple of Artemis -** one of the seven wonders of the ancient world
- **Emperor worship** was big in Ephesus and was a hub for it – 27 ft tall statue of Domitian, the emperor at the time Revelation was written.

Description of Christ (2:1) – From Revelation 1:20
Praise – Hard work, endurance, perseverance, intolerant of wicked, false apostles (2:2-3)
Judgment - Forsaking their first love (2:4) *What does this mean?*

- Probably refers to the way they were treating each other. ○ 1 John links our treatment with others as a reflection of our relationship with God.
- Ephesians 5 links Christ and his church very tightly.

Nicolaitans (2:6) – no reference to this group outside of Revelation so we don't know what their error was. The word itself means "Victory people". This is in contrast to the Christians who are then told to "overcome" (2:7)

2. Smyrna (2:8-11) *Would you say this congregation is rich or poor? Why?*

- More on this in a bit… **Diaspora:**
- Babylonian exile (600 BC) spread the Jewish people all over the place and later led to inroads for Christianity.
- Draw this out on the board.

Distance: 35 miles from Ephesus
Population: 75,000 (14th largest city in the Roman empire)
Geography - The next city on the circular route of the letters in Revelation 2-3.
Poverty & Pagan worship in Smyrna –

- John mentions their poverty. This might have been due to the prevalence of guilds in Smyrna where one was expected to worship the patron god of the guild in order to have employment in a particular field of business.
- Temple to Roma, goddess of Rome dating back to 195 BC. A very loyal city to Rome.

This is one of two churches to receive only praise with no criticisms. The other is Philadelphia.
Very large Jewish population in Smyrna which is reflected in Christ's statement to them in 2:9 **Description of Christ** – From 1:5, 17
Praise – You appear poor but are rich

- contrast this with Laodicea in 3:17 who claim to be rich but are poor
- One of two churches to receive no criticism from Christ
- Prosperous city – poor Christians. Could this have something to do with their abstaining from guilds and civic/cultic worship?
- Rich in the eyes of God – *What makes someone rich in God's eyes?* ○ **Mtt 13:44-46** – treasure in a field, pearl of great price ▪ *How do God's riches compare with the world's?*
    - *How much do you value God's kingdom?*

- *What are you willing to give in order to invest in God's economy?* ○ **Mtt 19:21ff** – sell all you have and you will have treasure in heaven ▪ *What does it mean to have treasure in heaven?*
- *Will we get piles of gold when we get there?*
- Word for treasure means something of value that is stored up. *What will that consist of in heaven?*

○ **Luke 12:32-34** – where your treasure is, there your heart will be also

Jesus knows…(2:9)

- *How does it help us get through difficulty if we know Christ knows about it?*
- Christ will predict more suffering but then ultimate victory – *Why is this hopeful?*
  - **Illustration -** Imagine being told you had cancer but that 100% certainty that a new drug would heal it. In the mean time you would have much pain but 100% certain you would live and get back to complete health.
  - *Would that hope help with the pain?*

Jews and the synagogue of Satan (2:9):

- These were Jews…large Jewish population in Smyrna
- Synagogue means to gather – assembly
- Who you serve is who you are ultimately assembled with – God or Satan
- Judaism was recognized as a religion and were at times exempt from emperor worship
- Jews cast Christians out of the synagogues thus removing them from being exempt from emperor worship putting them at risk of further persecution.

Prediction of future suffering (2:10):

- Possibility of death, assurance of eternal life
- Title of Christ in 2:8 has something to say to them – Christ died and is now alive. If they die they too will live.

3. Pergamum (2:12-17) *What do you remember about Pergamum from the Faith Lessons Video?*

- Lots of pagan worship and emperor worship
- Hidden mana – Dionysos
- White stones – Asclepius

Distance: 45 miles from Smyrna

Population: 120,000 (6th largest city in the Roman empire)

Description of Christ – 2 edged sword was a slap against the city officials. Since this was a capital city they were one of few cities that had the right to execute. The proconsul had the power to choose life or death. Christ is speaking against that, calling it a lie. He is the one who holds authority over life and death.

Pagan worship in Pergamum:

- Emperor cult was big in Pergamum – 1st city allowed to build a temple to a living ruler (Mounce, 96)
- Temple to Zeus was in Pergamum who they called "savior"
- Temples to Athena, Dionysos, and Asclepius (god of healing, represented by a serpent)
- **Satan's Throne -** Any one of these could be what is referenced to as the "throne of Satan" in 2:13 Second largest library in the world (200,000 volumes) **Praise:**
- They have kept the faith even to the point of death (Antipas).

- Yet, they are permissible on impermissible issues (Food sacrificed to idols and sexual immorality) **Nicolaitans** – Beasley Murray contended that these may have been wealthier members of the church who wanted to compromise with culture. BWIII cites him with the statement that their rationalization might have been, "Even the Romans don't really believe the Emperor is a god, so why not just go along, and have a good living as a member of a guild?" (BWIII, 103)

Food sacrificed to idols (2:14, see also 2:20 with Thyatira) – it was a common practice in Roman cities to have many offerings to gods and to eat that offering was a part of being in a particular guild (employment) or just as part of a social gathering or part of pagan worship. To not eat this meat could mean losing employment opportunities and status in the city.

Sexual immorality: (2:14)

- **Balaam/Balak (2:14):**
- Numbers 22-24 – Balaam was hired by Balak to curse the Israelites but he blessed them instead Numbers 25 – Israelites had sexual relations with foreigners and worshipped their gods Numbers 31:16 – links Balaam with Numbers 25 as the reason for that sin.
    - As Archer points out in Letters to the Lamb (p.90-91) it was Balaam who sought out a loophole where he could not curse the Israelites and check a box with God while still receiving the payout from Balak in bringing destruction on Israel. He did this by sending in foreign women to turn the hearts of the people against God
    - Archer points out the problem here and now at Pergamum is **compromise.**
        - Mounce, 98 – "Balaam became a prototype of all corrupt teachers who betrayed believers into fatal compromise with worldly ideologies."
- This is what Christ is playing on here – Christians in Pergamum were in danger of syncretizing their religion:
    - Eating meat sacrificed to idols
    - Sexual immorality ○ The two might be linked as well since both could be involved in pagan worship.
- Paul dealt with this in 1 Cor 8-10 and concluded that it was permissible for the mature who were wise enough to separate the worship to pagan gods with the food. John did not think this was something they should be engaged in *Why the difference between Paul and John on the same issue?* ○ It could be the maturity level of their audience. ○ Paul – referring to meat in the market from the temple
    - John – referring to going to the temple to partake in the ritual worship meals
- Archer's 5 areas we must not compromise in from this letter to the church at Pergamum ○ Doctrine ○ Lifestyle ○ Danger of inclusivity
    - Worship ○ Greed – Balaam wanted the money and loopholed his way to the payout.

Hidden Mana & White stones (2:17)

- Hidden mana – goes back to Balaam/Balak but also may point against the gods of the city Vander Laan talks about (Dionysius?) the food/grocery god.
    - The ark contained a jar of mana – this was to be a memorial of God's provision to future generations (Exo 16:32-34, Heb 9:4 - Mounce, 99)
    - 2 Maccabees 2:4-7 has the tradition that Jeremiah took the ark at the destruction of the temple and hid it underground at Mt. Nebo. He would come back and return it to the new temple in the Messianic age

- Contrast the hidden mana with the food offered to idols above White stones were used by a jury to show innocence/acquittal.

- Vander Laan believes the white stone refers to the temple of Asclepius who had white stones outside people would inscribe with what they had been healed of.

Application:

- *How are Christians tempted to compromise today?* ○ What we watch on TV, movies, internet, music?
- *How does the hope of better and lasting promises help us remain pure?*
- *Do some Christians today mix their faith with worldly or even pagan things?* ○ Superstition – a belief in impersonal forces/powers that can influence an outcome if something is not done just right ○ Phrases we use – good luck, not in the cards, etc
    - ○ Spirituality – ala carte faith

4. Thyatira (2:18-28)

Distance: 40 miles from Pergamum

Population: The least "important" of all seven cities from a worldly point of view. They are faced with the same scenario as Pergamum, pagan practices that lead to spiritual adultery (food sacrificed to idols being a part of this)

Description of Christ:

- eyes like blazing fire and feet like bronze (from Rev 1:14-15) ○ See Daniel 10:6
- Son of God – only time that is used in Revelation ○ Why is this the only time it is used? Because it is relevant to Thyatira. Their patron God was Apollo Tyrimnos who was thought to be the son of Zeus (Mounce, 102)

Pagan worship: Many trade guilds as this was a manufacturing city.

Jezebel: Israelite queen who led many astray through compromising with the surrounding culture and idol worship. That is the parallel here.

Compromise – rationale might be something similar to what BWIII mentioned in regard to Pergamum…since these gods aren't real anyway we might as well participate in some of the things that would allow them entrance into employment through the trade guilds.

Her punishment (2:22): Reddish points out the irony of the punishment…you like sexual immorality, fine…I will put you on a sick bed and make you suffer great pain. Notice too, those who commit adultery with her will also suffer (Reddish, 65)

Praise (2:19) – love, faith, service, and perseverance

Fornication/sexual immorality (2:20): Idol worship and compromise are adultery against God**.**

Morning star (2:28) – A symbol of victory or sovereignty **Compromise:**

- *What dangers do Christians face at compromising today?*
- *How can the world be seductive to Christians today?*
- *What promises does the world make that are empty?*
- *What makes Christ's promises greater?*

5. Sardis (3:1-6)

Distance: 30 miles from Thyatira

Population: 100,000 (7th largest city in the Roman empire). Had a large Jewish population.

Destroyed by an earthquake in AD 17 and was rebuilt by John's day. The quake also damaged Philadelphia 28 miles away

Sardis had a garment making industry (BWIII, 106)

- This sheds light on Christ's "white garment" analogy for purity and holiness among them
- Soiled garments were a disqualification for entering worship in some religions (BWIII)
- Mounce believes this was the disqualification of their witness due to contamination by the world.

Sardis had only twice been defeated, both times because of lack of vigilance (BWIII, 106) – Wake up!

Description of Christ (3:1) – Holds 7 spirits and 7 stars (from Revelation 1:4,20) **Pagan worship in Sardis:**

- **See Vander Laan video –** was it cultural compromise or boldness of a newly repented church? No one knows.
- "God wants us to build at the heart of our culture…but we have to be careful that we don't compromise. You are the salt of the earth" – Vander Laan

Judgment toward the church (3:1) – They seem to be alive but are dead

How is it possible for a church to appear alive but underneath it all are dead?

Cure for a dying church - Five Commands (3:2-3):

- Wake up/be alert
- Strengthen Remember
- Obey
- Repent

In our auditorium, due to the school using it for chapel, there is an American flag on the stag off the side. Does this compare to the synagogue in Sardis that had the Roman eagles adorning the great table in the midst of their worship?

Application:

Which of these commands do you think churches today need to hear the most?

Which of these commands do you think you need to hear the most?

Is it possible for an entire congregation to repent as a whole or is repentance only individual?

*How powerful and motivating is the image of keeping our robes clean and white, unstained? (*James 1:27)

6. Philadelphia (3:7-13) Distance:

28 miles from Sardis

Pagan worship in Philadelphia:

- Main god was Bacchus, the god of wine. Philadelphia had a lot of vineyards.
- Called "little Athens" (Mounce, 116) due to its plethora of temples **Description of Christ:**
- Keys to the house of David may refer to Isa 22:22. Mounce says, "The language of Isaiah is used to present Christ as the Davidic Messiah with absolute power to control entrance to the heavenly kingdom." He also says it refers to Christ's authority to include or exclude people from the New Jerusalem. (Mounce, 116)
- Door no one can shut – Also goes back to Isaiah 22:22. Again, Christ has the authority to allow or deny entrance into the kingdom of God. **Judgment:** None

Praise:

- This is one of two churches to receive only praise with no criticisms. The other is Smyrna
- Synagogue of Satan ○ Christians being kicked out of the synagogue for their belief in Christ is held in contrast to Christ allowing them entrance into the New Jerusalem by holding the Key of David. **Three rewards for faithfulness (Mounce):**
- Vindication (3:9)
- Deliverance (3:10)
- Security in the coming age (3:11) **Pillars in the temple of God (3:12)**
- Christians referred to as "pillars" in the temple of God. Pillars some times had names written on them in dedication. Having God's name, name of his city and Christ's name written on them. So they are being dedicated to God as a permanent fixture in his dwelling place. Quite an honor…that is, if they hold on (3:11)

  High priest had written on his breastplate, "Holy to the Lord" (Exo 28:36-38)

Application:

- *How should these spiritual realities make a difference in our every day lives?*
- Importance of stressing faithfulness – this is not an academic exercise…it has real consequences with positive or negative results ○ *What are the positive results of faithfulness we see through the church in Philadelphia?*
  - God will reward them three-fold…see above ○ *What are the negative results we have seen in churches like Ephesus and Pergamum?* ▪ God will come and remove them or even fight against them

7. Laodicea (3:14-22)

Distance: 45 miles from Thyatira. 10 miles from Colossae **Prosperity of Laodicea:**

- Destroyed by an earthquake in 60.
- They rebuilt the city with their own money, refusing help from Rome.
- Laodicea was known for three things:
  - Textiles – lots of sheep/wool…made special black garments (contrast that with the white ones Christ wants to give them) ○ Banking – wealthy through agriculture and "commercial prosperity" (Mounce, 123) ○ eye salve – had a medical school, most famous for its eye salve
- Christ plays on these three things in Revelation 3:18) where he tells them they are not independent. They need Christ for things that will last.
- **The problem of self-sufficiency** ○ *Is this something Christians struggle with today?* ○ *How do we see this in our contemporary culture?*
  - *How do Christ's words to this church speak to us today?*

Hot/cold: Christ also plays off the water supply of the city that was supplied by a hot spring but turned cool on its way toward the city making it lukewarm and good for little.

- Problem here is, why would Christ rather them be cold.
- Mounce agrees with Vander Laan that it is a contrast between the hot waters of Hierapolis and the cold waters of Colossae. Both good for different things. They were neither = ineffectual Christianity ○ *What effect are we, as Christians, to have on this world?*

- *How can you tell if we are accomplishing this?*

Still hope:

- Despite all their problems and weaknesses, there is still hope **Pagan worship in Philadelphia:**
- Primary god worshipped in Laodicea was Zeus

The rest of Revelation in light of the context of these seven churches

The best way to understand the bulk of Revelation is to understand the situation of those who are being written to…they were supposed to understand most of what this meant (Rev 1:3 – read and take to heart) So let's look back at what we can gather from these churches from the seven letters and see if any themes jump out:

- Ephesus – you have endured hardships but forsaken your first love (2:3-4)
- Smyrna – don't be afraid of what you are about to suffer…be faithful to the point of death (2:10)
- Pergamum – you remain true to my name (2:13)
- Thyatira – perseverance (2:19), hold on until I have come! (2:25), overcome (2:26) Sardis – He who overcomes (3:5)
- Philadelphia – kept my word and endured patiently (3:8,10)
- Laodicea – called to repent from their accommodation and then told, "to him who overcomes…" (3:21)

Two things you hear – some were faithfully undergoing persecution and others were culturally accommodated.

You typically hear Revelation was written to tell Christians "We win!" and that is true but that message hits two different audiences two different ways:

- If you have been faithful, keep going!
- If you have accommodated, wake up!

"It is not that Christians are undergoing persecution but that they have become so much like the world around them that they are not worth persecuting." – Randy Harris, Spiritual Growth Workshop 08 (Tape 1, 5:27)

- This is true depending on which church you are talking about
- He contends that Revelation is about getting Christians to "adopt a lifestyle that is almost certainly going to bring them into conflict with the culture of which they are a part. And probably bring with it opposition and persecution."

John's purpose, then, in Revelation is to present an alternative worldview to the worldview of the pagan world around us. It is a call back to holiness and righteousness and a call to remind us why we are different than the world.

- So this is a call to persevere and to be different ○ to be who they were called to be that might lead them into persecution in some instances ○ to be called to stand firm for those who have not accommodated and are currently undergoing persecution.
- This makes the book far more relevant – calling an accommodated church to reclaim their original identity and mission and to those who have been serious about their mission to keep on keeping on and persevere.

Revelation 4 – The Heavenly Throne Room

The rest of Revelation in light of the context of these seven churches
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So that brings us to Revelation 4 – John takes us straight to the ultimate reality that is behind what is seen. Here is the very first thing you need to see if you are either:

1. Struggling to keep the faith
2. Asleep and needs to be awake
3. Those who “have a foot in both camps” (Harris) need to pick a side

Revelation 4 – The Heavenly Throne Room

If someone brings up that Rev 4 is the rapture, point out that this is John going to heaven in the spirit as an ecstatic experience and not a bodily rapture that many point to (BWIII agrees).

Two types of revelations in apocalyptic literature (from Reddish, 89):

1. “Direct discourse with otherworldly beings” (Rev 1-3)
2. “Otherworldly journeys” to be shown things not normally known (Rev 4ff)

Heavenly throne room in Revelation:

- Rev 4
- 7:9-17
- 11:15-19
- 19:4-8
- 20:11-15
- 22:3

Chronology in Revelation:

- Five times John uses “after this” in Revelation. Each time he is introducing a new vision or scene. This does not mean the visions take place chronologically in history
- John is not giving us a play by play of the rest of human history in perfect order.
- He is advancing various themes that his audience (including us) need to hear in order to remain faithful.

The vision:

- Jesus approaches John to give him a vision (voice I had first heard speaking = Christ from Rev 1)
- Picture of John looking up and seeing a door opened in heaven, taken in the spirit to see through that door (4:1-2). Through the door he saw a throne with someone sitting on it.
    - Open door = permanently open access to God by the church (BWIII, 116)
- John is being let in on heavenly realities. These are things that are eternally present and true, even though they are beyond our normal seeing
- 4:2-3 - God on the throne – John is giving us an idea, we shouldn’t think too hard about each of these things.

Why are thrones so important? They represent power. The people this letter was addressed to were faced with a choice – who do you serve? John paints this picture for them so they can see the superiority of the God of heaven and earth.

- Jasper and carnelian
- Rainbow like an emerald encircling the throne ○ Lightning and thunder

- Seven lamps blazing = seven spirits of God (See 1:4, 3:1) ○ See of glass

24 elders on 24 thrones around God's throne:

- Dressed in white (purity – see back to 3:4-5, 18)
- Crown on their heads
- 24 could mean 12 tribes of Israel + 12 apostles (See 21:12-14 where this is done). Reddish believes this means the "totality of the church" by doubling the tribes of Israel (include Gentiles).

Zooms closer to the throne in 4:6b – four living creatures, covered with eyes & 6 wings (Cherubim – Reddish talks about them at length, 99. They guarded the tree of life in the garden of Eden (Gen 3:24), they were part of the mercy seat of the ark of the covenant (1 Kings 6:23-28). They also powered God's throne-chariot in Ezekiel 1).

- Lion
- Ox
- Face like a man
- Eagle
- **Read all of Ezekiel 1 – the description of God's chariot** ▯ The purpose of the beasts and elders:
- Worship: ○ Beasts - Their job is to worship God day and night – "Holy, holy, holy" ○ Elders - fall down, lay down crowns and worship (4:10)
- God's control represented in the beasts and the sea ○ Sea = chaos and untrainable, unconquerable (21:1 – God finally brings it under total control by bringing it to an end)
    - Beasley Murray points out rabbinic saying, "the mightiest of birds is the eagle, the mightiest among domestic animals the ox, the mightiest among wild animals is the lion, and the mightiest of all these is the human being; and God has taken all these and secured them to his throne."…Murray points out God has taken control of all of these and has dominion over both them and the ultimate symbol of chaos, the sea. (From Rabbi Abahu in 300 AD)
    - Every living thing represented here – made to praise God

We want to know what every little symbol means – but be careful. It is not always meant to be read that way. Many people have gotten carried away by digging to hard in places John didn't mean for us to over analyze (See Reddish's take on this, p 91-92.

All of this is to emphasize the awesomeness and mystery of God. He is never fully described but the description of his throne and surrounding events are POWERFUL!

Implication and Application:

How does this inform our worship today?

- Helps us see that God is one worthy of worship
- Our ultimate purpose is to give God worship

How does this awesome description of God's heavenly court room inspire awe in us today?

How do we respond? - With worship!

Singing at the end of class:

- Holy, Holy, Holy

Revelation 5

Combating "Rapture" ideas in Revelation 4-5 (Thanks to BWIII, 122-123):

- Rev 4:1 – John taken up into heaven ○ He is not there bodily but in the spirit ○ Same language takes place in Rev 17:1 & 21:9 but no one is calling that a rapture. Otherwise, John was raptured 3 times!
- Other people are there – elders ○ They got there by death, not by rapture 7 lampstands & 7 churches:
    - Some say since the lamps are there, the churches are there
    - The lamps represent the angels of those churches. The church members are still on earth, suffering
    - Otherwise, John could stop writing because everything was done…everyone already in heaven.

Talbert and Witherington point out the parallels between Rev 4 & 5 that are present to show the equality and majesty of both God and Christ (BWIII, 114).

Revelation 4	Revelation 5
God's glory (4:2-8a)	Christ's glory (5:5-7)
Worship of God (4:8b-11)	Worship of the Lamb (5:8-12)
1st hymn (4:8b)	1st hymn (9-10)
Narrative (9-10)	Narrative (11-12a)
2nd hymn (11)	2nd hymn (12b)

Why is this important? It is putting God and Christ on the same level of importance, majesty, divinity, and as the object of our worship.

Laying out the scene John describes:

Him who sits on the throne and the lamb (5:13) – that is the image here:

- God is on his throne (5:1)
- He has a scroll in his right hand with 7 seals on it – a mystery that takes authority to reveal (5:1-3)
- The question goes out into all creation of who might have authority to open the scroll – John is disturbed and disappointed because if it cannot be opened then the mystery and plan of God will not move forward.
    - Practically that means the trouble his readers are enduring has no end in sight.
- The lamb is the only one who can open it, probably because of his obedience that resulting in his being slain but is now alive (5:6)
- The lamb took the scroll from the right hand of God (5:7) Worship in heaven:
- At the revealing of the lamb of God and his worthiness to open the scroll, worship erupted (5:8ff).
- 24 elders, 4 living creatures, and thousands of angels all singing (5:8-13) Amen – truly!

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Themes/explanation:

Mystery of God:

- Scroll with 7 seals
- No one with authority to open it ○ Failure by the heavenly court to be able to open the scroll magnifies Christ who is able to open it
- That means no man was able to reveal what the scroll contained.
- Only Christ had the authority/ability to reveal these mysteries Scrolls in the ancient world (from BWIII):
- Parchment/papyrus was used – normally written on one side
- Rolled and tied with a string that wax was sealed over the string and a seal was impressed into the wax to show no one unauthorized had read the contents of the scroll
- This ensured that only the proper person had access to the contents of the scroll Christ the Lion/Lamb:
- Lion of Judah (5:5) ○ Gen 49:9-10)
- Root of David ○ Isa 11:10
- Both refer to a king in the line of David (Reddish 109)
- Slain and risen lamb = Surprise – the conquering lion is actually a lamb ○ Most used symbol of Jesus in Revelation (28 times) ○ It is because he is a lamb that he was able to conquer and open the scroll ○ Recognizes with those of his own who have also been slain (24 elders) ○ 7 horns = power
    - 7 eyes = spirits (God's knowledge)
- Worshipped just like God (See chart above) ○ BWIII points out a pattern to the worship ○ Harps and incense:
        - Both parts of temple worship
        - Incense = prayers going up to God
- Their prayers made it into the presence of God.
- *Why is this important if you are undergoing persecution?*
    - Songs 1-2 to God (4:8 & 4:11) ○ Songs 3-4 – to Christ (5:9-10, 12) ○ Song 5 – to both (5:13)

5:10 – Christ purchased us for God and made us to be priests for God and to reign on the earth

Reddish points out that the chapter started with disappointment and ended in celebration.

Jesus is going to make the plans of God take place. These things are sure to take place because the one who has authority to reveal the mysteries of God has stepped to the forefront. Even though things don't look so good due to persecution, the lamb is in charge, that is good news…AMEN!

Chapter 6 tells us what was written in the scroll – judgment

- These are not the final judgment but are intended to bring the world to repentance (BWIII, 124-

5)
    - Repentance (11:13, 15:4)
    - Non-repentance (16:13-16, 17:14, 19:19)

Revelation 6 – The Seven Seals Opened

What does opening the seals signify?

- The revealing of God's plan for creation
- This is God's plan being revealed right before their eyes

John has been taken up in the spirit/spiritual experience, invited by an angel to see heavenly things and mysteries revealed (Rev 4:1). This is typical of apocalyptic literature

Three sets of 7 judgments:

- Revelation 6:1-8:8:5 – Seven seals
- Revelation 8:6-11:19 – Seven trumpets
- Revelation 15:1-16:21 – Seven bowls of God's wrath

Possibilities:

- All separate = 21 different judgments/wrath
- One set of 7 events from 3 perspectives (typical Semitic way of thinking/writing according to BWIII)
- A combination of some events the same, some not

Similarities:

- All 3 sets seem to end on the same note or with the same event – flashes of lightning and rumblings in the heavens
- All three seem to be split the same:
    - 1-4 – similar imagery ○ 5-6 grouped together ○ Pause
    - 7 – a final act of judgment

It could be that these are mostly the same events from different perspectives. Some are from the perspective of heaven and some from the perspective of earth. As you focus on different angles of the same thing, different things stand out.

- Reddish encourages us not to seek out a rigid timeline of events as apocalyptic literature was not written with that intent. Its purpose is more to give us an impression of what is to come rather than a roadmap or scientific explanation (Reddish, 122)

What do we learn about God in light of his judgments?

- God will make good on his word
- God cares about the oppressed and persecuted
- God leaves time for repentance
- We still find mercy here as the first judgment is not the final judgment – there is still time

Mounce believes the contents of the scroll are not revealed until all 7 seals are broken. Reddish points out that this is problematic because the scroll is not mentioned again. As each seal is broken, the contents are being revealed.

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4 Riders – see Zechariah 1:8-17 & 6:1-8

Seal 1 – Rider on a white horse (6:1-2)

- "come" can mean "go" – so he is either calling him before God's throne and for John to see or he is sending him out.
- Description – white horse, rider holding a bow
- Purpose – Conquest (white)
- White = victory ○ Remember Christ comes to bring victory and overcome – opposed to the Nicolaitans (lit. "victory people") ▯ Meaning:
    - Parthians (BWIII, 133 for the following) ○ 62 AD were victorious against Rome in the east ○ 1 - known for their horse riding archers
    - 2 – Famous for their horses and white was their sacred color (and white horses) ○ 3 – Jews expected Parthians to battle against Rome in the end times
    - Familiar image to make a general point – BWIII. Does not mean the Parthians are the ones who are going to do this specifically but it was an image they understood and feared. ○ The Parthians did not defeat Rome after 62AD, so to limit this to the Parthians themselves getting this done would show God to be wrong as this never happened. Conclusion – general image of terror and battle they were familiar with.

Seal 2 – Rider on a red horse (6:3-4)

- Purpose – take peace from the earth
- Meaning – Pax romana – Rome prided itself on being powerful enough to keep the peace. ▯ War & bloodshed (red)

So riders are sent out for conquest to bring war and destruction. Rider #3 may recognize the results of Rider #1-2

Seal 3 – Rider on a black horse (6:5-6)

- Purpose – scales = judgment but also could represent the marketplace
- Meaning – result of the war and destruction is inflation and economic turmoil. Metzger points out (p.58) that the denarius, a day's wage, would normally buy roughly 10 times as many goods as this in their day.
    - It is like saying, "A gallon of gas for a day's wage" – we would think WOW!
    - This might also mean the beginning of famine in the land
        - Trumpet #3 in 8:11 had to do with the waters being bitter
        - Bowl #3 – water to blood
        - All the 3's could point to famine
- Famine (black)
- 1 quart of wheat = enough to feed one person for one day…this means a working man wouldn't have enough money to provide for his family (Reddish, 127)
- Do not damage oil and vine – mercy…these would take much longer to replenish than wheat if devastated by famine.

Seal 4 – Rider on a pale horse (6:7-8)

- Description – Death and Hades. Pale = decaying flesh (according to Metzger)
- Power to kill 25% of the earth by sword, famine, plague, and wild beasts (From Ezekiel 14:21)
- Wild animals – they come into uninhabited places…because the people are dead or dying "God does not approve of famine and death and hell, but they are what must follow if people persist in opposing God's rule. God wills community, which is the consequence of caring and love. Ignore physical laws, like stepping off a cliff, and disaster follows. Neglect moral laws, and disaster ensues just as surely. The woes described here are the result of not taking seriously God's command to achieve community and justice. God does not allow the woes, but as long as we are free agents God allows them." (Metzger, 58)

The 4 horsemen ride off to fulfill their purpose and the scene shifts back to heaven.

Seal 5 – Martyred Christians (6:9-11)

- Change in scenery – 1-4 dealt with things on earth
- Seal 5 – scene is in heaven under the altar of God
- Their prayer is for vengeance
- Why beneath the altar? (BWIII, 135) ○ Altar as a symbol of protection ○ Altar as symbol of the presence of God
    - Altar as the place of the shedding of God to bring forgiveness
- White robes – purity. They have entered into glory…no more sin and death for them
- They must wait – answer to their prayer is "Not yet" - 6:11 – full number must be counted.
    - They are in 7:1-8 – 144,000 sealed on the earth. These are future martyrs? (See notes on chapter 7)

Seal 6 – Natural disaster bringing in the end (6:12-17)

- Change in scenery back to the earth
- Joel 2 – parallels with 6 seal – the day of the Lord is a day of judgment:
    - Grain, wine, oil
    - Fig tree imagery here as well
    - Judgment on the nations but redemption and protection and provision for God's people ○ The day of the Lord
    - Sun to darkness and moon to blood

Take home points (2-4 from Reddish 134)

1. God is calling the shots. There is nothing to fear because the worst the world can throw at you will land you in the presence of God himself, to be protected and blessed and pure and live forever!
2. Sin is serious and will be punished
3. God is not vindictive but dispenses judgment and wrath in hopes of turning things around
4. God first did not spare his own Son

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Seal 7 – Not opened until Revelation 8:1 – not what you would expect – silence

Revelation 7 – God will hold back to make sure that his own will be protected on some level

End time (Eschatological) woes

From Reddish p.123

Matthew 24:6,7,9a,29	**Mark 13:7-9a,24-25**
Wars	Wars
International strife	International strife
Famines	Famines
Earthquakes	Earthquakes
Persecutions	Persecutions
Eclipses of sun & moon; falling of stars, shaking of the powers of heaven	Eclipses of sun & moon; falling of stars, shaking of the powers of heaven
Luke 21:9-12a,25-26	**Revelation 6:2-17,7:1**
Wars	Wars
International strife	International strife
Famines	Famines
Earthquakes	Earthquakes
Persecutions	Persecutions
Eclipses of sun & moon; falling of stars, shaking of the powers of heaven	Eclipses of sun & moon; falling of stars, shaking of the powers of heaven

Revelation 7 - Multitudes

Main point – there are difficulties that will come our way, will we remain faithful to the end?

Context:

- The 6th seal has been opened (6:12).
- Chapter 7 is in the pause that takes place before the 7th seal is opened (in 8:1).
- Before the catastrophic events of the 7th seal, God goes to his people to put a sign on them that they are his.
- This is a message of hope – no matter what the world throws at us, we will be with God forever!

144,000 sealed:

Four angels, and one from the east

- Coming from the direction of Jerusalem? Hard to say since these are heavenly visions Same four angels as before (1-4 seals, 4 living creatures, etc)?

Four corners

- flat earth? - It can also refer to the directions on the compass – N,S,E,W ○ God shows them things in a way that makes sense to them, in their time and understanding…same with saying his throne is covered in precious stones, streets of gold, etc) Four winds
- Merciful act to put these on hold before any more destruction – bring calmness over the earth after the destruction of the 6 seals being opened.
- Winds - destruction
- Mission – put a seal on the foreheads of all of God's people.

144,000 – what does this number mean?

- Jehova's Witness will tell you there will only be 144,000 saved. Period. Problems:
    - The number is symbolic - completion ▪ Completion in 2 ways:
- 12 squared times
- 1000
    - The very next verse tells you are there are more than that in heaven! (9:7ff) How much more obvious can it get?

12 tribes = All Jews?

- Jesus told disciples they would represent the 12 tribes of Israel (Mtt 19:28)
- We know God's people went to all nations with the apostles. So this is all God's people, not just Jews ○ Paul referred to Christians as Israel in Gal 6:16 – Christians are the Israel of God
- 3 views on the identity of the 144,000 ○ 1 – Only Martyrs
    - 6:11 – the full number have to be counted of those who have been slain for their testimony. Sounds like God is withholding his vindication until the persecution has reached a certain level…then judgment comes.
    - 144,000 sounds like the full number being counted.
    - Still alive on the earth = Represent 144,000 future martyrs

        - 7:9 – the full number of God's people…larger than the 144,000. The 144,000 are a subset of all of God's people. Sounds like the martyrs.
    - 2 – All of God's people on the earth at the time
        - 144,000 = completion
        - 7:9 makes it sound like a subset, but if the point of 144,000 = completion of all God's people (Jews and Gentiles)
        - 9:4 seems to say if you are on the earth and God's people you receive a seal. If you don't have a seal, you aren't God's possession.
        - This is a strong argument and should be considered.
        - That would make the group in 7:9 the same group of people…they are then more than 144,000. 144,000 is just a symbol for completion.
    - 3 – God's people from all history, across the ages.

Sealed – the king's seal marked something as his own

- Sphragizo – "a special stamp of ownership or approval" – BWIII, 136
- 14:1 – the seal has God's name and the Lamb's name on it
- Contrasted with the Mark of the Beast in 13:16-17 which was also on the forehead (or hand). This seal had the name or number of the beast on it (16:2, 19:20, 14:11, 13:17) – BWIII, 136 & Mounce, 167
- Ezekiel 9 – a symbol is placed on the foreheads of those troubled by the immorality of Jerusalem with an mark (Hebrew letter Taw) so they would be protected from judgment ○ could be from Exodus with the blood over the door posts taw in the old script that looks like an X or a slanted cross.
- Protect the contents ○ Being sealed does not make you physically impervious or immortal. ○ Sealed does not mean you are raptured up from the earth to avoid harm. ○ The message in Revelation is not one that we are whisked away before we die but that we might even die in the midst of these events, knowing our final place is with God.
        - In Chapter 11 the beast kills 2 witnesses, who presumably would have been in the 144,000 future martyrs. Also, these are future martyrs! So being sealed does not equal physical protection.

Sealed with the Holy Spirit/deposit guaranteeing what is to come and our inheritance:

- Ephesians1:13 – marked with the Holy Spirit
- That mark is a deposit or guarantee of what is to come.
- Paul never says that once they are marked that they will have no opposition. The opposite is true…he goes on to talk about putting on the armor of God in Ephesians 6:10ff – difficulty is coming. Be prepared to endure through it, not skate around it.
- Realize that this is just as true for us as it was for any other Christian – God loves you and values you more than you can imagine.

Great multitude (7:9-17):

Who are these people? 2 options:

1. Option 2 in the last point – the same as the 144,000
2. Multitude contains them and all the rest of God's people.

a. Good case here – no mention of them being martyred, just of their redemption by the blood of the lamb.

Innumerable – Genesis 15:5 (descendants like the stars in the sky, sand on the seashore) Palm branches – a symbol of victory

White robes – purity

- Explained in 7:14 – robes washed in the blood of the lamb

Day and night – there is no day and night in heaven (22:5) – just means continuously Worship (7:10)

- Salvation – rescue, saving
- Directed to – God and Jesus Christ

Praise grows – "all the angels" (thousands), four living creatures, 24 elders:

- Amen – truly ○ Normally comes at the end of a prayer or praise. Here at the beginning ○ Agreeing with the praise of the multitude **Elder and John – a conversation (7:13-14):**

The elder asks John a question he would not have an answer to.

"Sir, you know" – does not mean John knows but is requesting an answer from the elder. Great tribulation (7:14):

- Tribulation means "suffering"
- Language here shows that they did not avoid the tribulation but came through it (BWIII< 138).
- The view that the righteous will be raptured before God's judgment of the earth is not present here.
- Translation – "ek" – out ○ Some want to translate this "come from the great tribulation"
    - Message – "come from"
    - NIV, NASB, KJV – "come out of"
    - New Living – "died in" – very dynamic equivalence here
- The point is, they endured through it, not that they were whisked away to miss it. Remember, we are not privileged to something greater than Christ. Christ had to endure a cross and he calls his followers to do the same.
- "It is crucial that the reader understand this protection that is granted the people of God. John does not envision literal, physical protection for the faithful. As the scene of the martyrs under the altar indicates, John expects that fidelity to the cause of Christ may cost a person his or her life. God's people are not exempt from trouble and suffering. In fact, in typical apocalyptic fashion, John expects persecution of the faithful to become even more severe during the last days. John has no special "rapture" theology whereby the faithful are exempt from the pains and sufferings of the world. The Lamb who conquers is victorious through the path of suffering. The way of the Lamb is the way of the cross. Those who would be faithful to the Lamb cannot expect that their treatment should be any better than his. No, the protection afforded the faithful is spiritual protection. In spite of what happens, the people of God are secure in the arms of God. As Eugene Boring has commented, "Faithful Christians are preserved through (not from!) the great persecution that is about to be unleashed upon them."1 - Reddish, 145
- John does not describe the actual sealing of the faithful, but**The world has nothing on us (7:1617):**
- The results of the worst the world can do to us.

- *What blessings are they to receive?*
    - Before God's throne = in his presence
    - Serve in his temple – go back to 1:6, 5:10
    - Spread his tent over them

The Seventh Seal (Rev 8:1-6)

Silence in heaven for 30 minutes. So far heaven has been full of non-stop praise and worship of God.
What a contrast for everything in heaven to go silent.
Prayers of the saints heard in the silence.
Final judgment – fire hurled at the earth causing cosmic, catastrophic events.

The difficulty of interpreting the 7 seals, 7 trumpets and 7 bowls of wrath:

- Are there 7 events told three ways, 21 events, or a mix?
- Some of the symbolism is very similar between these 21 things. But you can't even say that similarity in symbolism means it is the same event.
- So we can notice similarities between the seals, trumpets, and bowls of wrath…but that doesn't necessarily mean they are one and the same.

Revelation 8-10 Seven Trumpets

Read 8:1-13 (Trumpets 1-6)

Trumpets were used to warn – here warning of impending judgment 7 attacks/trumpets:

BWIII points out that these events are all so general that it is hard to pinpoint just one time or multiple

More intense than opening the seals and wider reaching

- The seals affected mankind
- The trumpets affect all of creation
- More people are destroyed with the trumpets than with the seals
- 1-4 are attacks on the **cosmos** (BWIII, 147) ○ 1 – Hail ○ 2 – sea to blood
    - 3 - Bitter water (Wormwood – a bitter non-poisonous plant) ○ 4 - Darkness
- Paul between trumpets 4&5 (8:13) ○ Eagle or vulture
    - Eagle = Rome (probably not what is in mind here)
    - Vulture = decay and death ○ 3 woes yet to come = Trumpets 5-7
- 5-7 are attacks on **"wicked humanity"** ○ Not allowed to touch those who are marked with God's seal
    - That means they are still on the earth but not to be touched by this series of judgments

5 – Star with a key – this is an angel

- Some identify this with the angel in 20:1. Some do not.
    - 9:1 – unleashes the destroyers
    - 20:1 – binds them back up
- Attack on non-Christians
- Abyss – a bottomless pit holding evil and demons ○ It is opened and smoke begins to rise ○ Demonic locusts are released
    - Locusts are in Exodus and Joel – signs of God's destructive judgment ○ Their leader king is Abaddon, means destruction
        - Prov 15:11 and 27:20 – parallel Sheol, Death and Abaddon
        - Bottom line – these are destroyers of life (Reddish, 178) ○ Apollyon – what does that sound like? – Apollo
        - Greek word would normally be apoleia (Reddisch, 179) but the name is changed a bit to sound more like Apollo (Reddish points out this is a variation) ▪ Why the change?
            - Apollo was linked with destruction
            - Domitian linked himself with Apollo, saying he was Apollo in the flesh
            - Symbol for Apollo = locust
            - John is saying Domitian is "king of evil" (Reddish, 179).

- But these don't have the power to destroy totally, only to torture – is that stretching this too far? Probably.

6 – Destruction of the wicked

- The only 1 of 7 trumpets that involves destruction targeted at mankind involving death 4 angels – bound?
    - Jewish tradition (Enoch) that God bound up angels due to their wickedness in the days of Noah (1 Peter 3).
      Here it seems God uses them for his purposes ○ Euphrates? – Assyrians, Babylonians, Parthians, etc – lots of heritage here. ○ 200 million? – literally says two twice 10,000 X 10,000 ○ Description 9:17-19 – demonic horses from hell Echoes of Egypt and exodus:
- Trumpets and bowls of God's wrath both remind us of exodus (hail, sea to blood, darkness, locusts, etc)
- Theme – God is delivering his people Partial judgment and destruction:
- ¼ or 1/3 of people destroyed
- **God has not completed total destruction against the evil and wicked. Why not? – He awaits the repentance of those who are left (9:20-21).**

Revelation 10 - Big angel, little scroll

Don't write it down – some things are still not going to be revealed
Don't stretch Revelation too far – Reddish asks how you can seal up contents you were told not to write down…don't make too much of some of these things or take them to strictly and literally. These are images meant to convey the point that God is the revealer of mysteries and the one pushing forth his plan for creation and mankind.

- Connection with Dan 12:5-10 ○ Same imagery with a few slight differences ○ Answer to the question "How long" is different…now we learn it is at hand.
    - What is at hand? God's ultimate plan for the earth, justice, and reconciliation.
- Little scroll ○ Bitter – judgment ○ Sweet – God's plan is unfolding, redemption and salvation of the people of God.

Application:

- God really does hear our prayers – they matter
- God still has a lot of mystery about him – there is much he knows that we will never know.
  So we approach life from a humble perspective and not as "know it all's" God's wrath is real and it is destructive God can use wicked things for his purposes.

Revelation 11 – Two witnesses

Pause between the blowing of the 6th and 7th trumpet just as there was with the 6th and 7th seal. Lots of OT references in here…

11:1 - "Go and measure the temple of God"

- Cannot be the physical temple. It was destroyed 20 years prior
- Symbolic of either:
    - God's temple in heaven
        - Con – why would the outer court be the pagan nations if this is in heaven? ○ God's people (often seen as his temple, Paul, Peter and others – 1 Cor 3:16, 1 Pet 2:5, etc)
        - If this is, then, not in heaven but on earth the only way to see this is God's people as God's temple.
        - This is supported also in Revelation 3:12 – they were to be pillars in God's temple
- Measure and count ○ You measure something in order to restore it – God is going to rebuild his temple through the faithfulness of his people and by his grace Gentiles in 11:3:

- Ethnos = nations, non-Jews
- There were Gentile Christians and Gentile non-Christians. Sometimes "ethnos" refers to all those not in the kingdom of God as in Ephesians 4:17
- Herod's temple there were several courts: ○ Inner - Court of women, court of Israelites and court of the priests ○ Outer – court of the Gentiles
    - Gentiles to "trample over the holy city for 42 months" – 3.5 years
        - Time - 42 months = 1260 days = 3.5 years (30 days X 42 months = 1260)
        - 3.5 = half of seven, incomplete…this trampling will not last forever, God has put a limit on it and it will not be a total destruction, just limited
        - Dan 9:27 & 12:7 – represented Gentile desecration of the temple – Antiochus IV and the "abomination that desolates"
- Set up altar to Zeus in temple and sacrificed swine on it Defiling of God's temple.
        - This is a reference back to this event in order to symbolize a similar event in the future ○ Inner courts, God's people, have some level of protection (whether physical or spiritual).
    - Outer courts – if God's people are in the temple, then who is being trampled in the outer courts? Reddish believes it represents the unbelieving world (209) Two witnesses (11:3ff):

- They prophesy the same amount of time as the trampling of the holy city will take place – 42 months ○ An incomplete time that the church is to testify to the world concerning repentance ○ Half of 7 = incomplete time in history that has its limits…this time will not last forever.
    - Maybe, this is where we find ourselves today in a sense, an undisclosed amount of time that has limits before God finally acts, the 7th trumpet is blown and the end comes.

        - Notice references to the 2nd coming have a trumpet (1 Thess 4:16)
- They are the 2 olive trees/lamp stands – olive trees gave oil for the lamps (BWIII) ○ Function of Moses and Elijah (often paired in scripture and tradition)
    - Job – prophesy and testify for God against the people of the earth
        - 11:3 – sackcloth is a sign of mourning and repentance (Ninevah in Jonah) – they are calling on the world to repent in the midst of a great persecution and this trampling.
    - 2 Olive trees – Zech 4:1-14 which was a vision of Joshua and Zerubbabel:
        - Zerubbabel & Joshua – governor of Jerusalem in the days of Zechariah (kingly role of Messiah) & Joshua – high priest in those days (priestly role of Messiah?)
        - Doesn't seem to be the focus – immediately associates these two with Moses (law) and Elijah (prophets)
        - Elijah – Mal 4:5
        - Moses – Deut 18:18
        - Represent the role of the church to usher in the last days ○ 2 lampstands – represent the church, as in 2 of the 7 from chapters 2-3
        - Possibly only 2 to represent the portion of the church that will be martyred.
        - How does this fit with Moses, Elijah, Joshua, and Zerubbabel? Hard to say
        - It could just be that they were likened to them because they could accomplish similar things – curses on the land: plagues, no rain, water to blood, etc. Just as God is going to send those types of things to the earth in judgment (hence, reference to Jerusalem being like Egypt)
        - Messianic expectation – Moses and Elijah would return to bring in the kingdom of God. Mark 8 – some say you are
- Mtt 17:3 – Transfiguration
- Deut 18 – prophet like Moses = messiah Killed/martyred: ○ The beast (11:7) – kills these men. Same beast as in 13 & 17 ○ Great city – Jerusalem
        - Sodom – reflecting the lax morality
        - Egypt – slavery and oppression (Metzger) ○ Bodies in the street 3.5 days – denied burial long past time the soul would depart from the body ○ Mtt 23:37 – the city that kills the prophets
        - Shows how evil the world will become when this is taking place even in Jerusalem…Rome, maybe…but Jerusalem?!?
- Victory and defeat ○ The world will gloat over them
    - Resurrection of their bodies and ascension into heaven
    - So persecution is very real and God's people won't be spared but we are still called to speak out against evil, even if the world hates us for it
    - Defeat results in victory – this is representative of God's church…though the world gloats, the church will live forever and be victorious
        - Ascension – Elijah ascended to heaven. Tradition said Moses may have as well (Josephus).

Divine punishment:

- God brings his wrath against he city of Jerusalem – earthquake that leads some to repentance.
- Finally God got some of the response he was looking for during the seals and trumpets.

Home Church Resources

7th Trumpet 11:15-19

7th seal resulted in prayers of the saints
7th trumpet – jubilant praise in heaven!

- God's kingdom has fully come – 11:15
- God's power
- God's overthrowing of the nations
- God's judgment
- God's rewarding of the faithful

God's temple opened and the ark displayed followed by cosmic events similar to the opening of the 6th seal.

- What was the ark of the covenant? The sign of God's presence among his people (Metzger, 70) Ark – God has made good on every promise…all the way back to the very beginning.

It could be that the book proper would end here if this were chronological. What follows are items that could fit back into the story, according to Metzger as what we read with the 7th trumpet sounds like the end of the world, the judgment of mankind, and God reigning with his people, victorious

The coming kingdom of God – this is what life is all about. This is the plan God had from the beginning to reign forever with his people, victorious over sin, death and evil. This is the ultimate act of reconciliation.

Reddish points out that the story is now told, outlined, or sketched out and in the chapters to come he is going to give us more detail of the things he has told us – who is the best, the dragon, etc…this is not the telling of new events as these chapters unfold but a doubling back to fill in the details of the events already told about in chapters 4-11

Revelation 12 - The Woman and the Dragon

Setting the stage:
The 7th trumpet has just been sounded and God's temple in heaven and the ark revealed to John. The events of 11:15-19 sound like the final judgment of the earth. So what follows is a sort of recapitulation of events – a further revealing of things yet to come but that would, then, come prior to the blowing of the 7th trumpet.

Themed rather than chronology – Cosmic conflict between good and evil – results have an impact on the earth

12:1-14:20 highlights the theme and further details of the fight between good and evil (Reddish, 229)
 So far we have seen God acting out against evil (seals and trumpets) Now we see evil is not without its own set of teeth.

Things are about to get real crazy – "John makes clear in this material that the battle is with the powers and principalities not just human forces. Here more than elsewhere John peels back the canvas and shows us the underlying and overarching supernatural forces at work. – BWIII, 166

Read Revelation 12:1-9

The Apollo myth:

- Leto became pregnant by Zeus
- Python, the serpent/dragon, came to kill the baby but Poseidon hid her on the island of Delos and protected her from being found by Python by putting the island under the sea.
- Python stopped his search.
- Apollo was born in safety
- Apollo then went after Python and killed it **Roman take on this:**
- Caesar was an Apollo figure who was born of the Goddess Roma. Emperor is born and kills the dragon, all that challenges the good of the empire.
- They called Caesar "lord" and "Christ"

John's take:

- Christ is born to take on the forces of chaos, evil and darkness He brings victory, not Caesar.
- Jesus is the real Lord/Christ

This is the story of the Gospel, retold to slap Rome and the "powers that be" square in the face. **The woman described:**

- Clothed with the sun
- Moon under her feet

- Crown of 12 stars on her head – this is a laurel crown, symbolizing victory. 12 = the whole people of God (tribes, apostles)
- Pregnant and in pain, about to give birth *Who is this woman?*
    - Catholics – Mary
        - Problem – who would be the rest of her offspring in 12:17?
    - God begetting his people (BWIII, 167)
        - Isa 66:6-9 & Gal 4:26 ○ God begat his people the Jews & the Gentiles. God begat his one and only as well, Jesus Christ. He is the child born the dragon wants to devour and so are all those who follow, who are also offspring of God – they will be persecuted **The dragon described:** Enormous red dragon *Who is this dragon?*
- 7 heads – Leviathan of the Hebrew Bible, similar to Tiamat of the Babylonian literature who had 7 heads. Leviathan = chaos ○ Reddish points out that components of all kinds of mythical, evil, and chaotic serpents of the ancient world come together in this one red dragon…this thing is BAD!
    - Reddish – evil is real…and we would be well advised to take it seriously (p.134)
- 10 horns – power and strength
- 7 crowns – "his attempt to usurp all power" - BWIII
- Tail sweeping stars from the sky – powerful (evil is dangerous and serious) About to devour her child **Child described:**
- A son – *Who do you think this is?*
- Will rule all the nations with an iron scepter ○ From Psalm 2:9 – a messianic prophesy. This child is Christ
- Snatched up to the throne of God – not harmed by the dragon/Satan; - *What event(s) is that describing?*
    - This is the birth, life/ministry, death, burial resurrection and ascension of Christ all rolled into a handful of verses

Further Events:

- women fled to the desert to a place prepared by God for 1260 days ○ same time as the prophesy of the witnesses and the trampling of the world on the outer courts of God's temple in 11:1-3
- War between angels and the dragon ○ Angels win
    - Dragon "lost his place in heaven" – but this is plural – "they lost their place" (devil and his angels)
    - He and his angels were hurled to the earth
    - These events are tied to the death, burial, resurrection and ascension of Christ…not some ancient story of Satan being cast out of heaven as a disobedient angel. As Reddish points out, that story is not in the Bible (Isa 14:12 is often used to try to pull that one off but that is **See end of these notes for more on that**.
- Victory

- Victory of the angels may just be symbolic because the victory song says it was won by the blood of Christ and the testimony of the martyrs, not by the angels. Or it could be these two things are what set the stage for the angels defeat of the angered Satan.
- Yet, he is placed back on the earth…where God's people are.
- The woman could represent God's people:
    - God is producing a people for himself, first Israel then the church

- Israel – gave birth through lineage to the messiah
- Church – the fulfillment of Israel and still left on the earth like the woman being chased by the dragon in the desert.
    - The world = a desert place to God's people.

Victory = Satan thrown to the earth…but then there is more persecution.
Revelation 20 – Satan thrown down twice more (BWIII, 170):

- 12:9 – cast from heaven to earth
- 20:2 – from earth to abyss
- 20:10 – from abyss to lake of fire
- What happens in between (Chapters 13-19) describe much of Satan's attempts to persecute and overcome the church through whatever powers he has at his disposal (the nations, spiritual forces, etc)

Woman and dragon on the earth:

- Exodus – liberation – promised land ○ who else fled to the desert? – Hebrews in the exodus ○ God's people are often liberated by a wilderness experience
    - Christians – God has liberated us from slavery to sin and now we are on a wilderness trek with him where we learn to be his people and he provides for us (12:14 – taken care of for a time) until we reach the ultimate promised land.
    - Exodus 19:4 – "I bore you on eagles wings"
    - Spewing water that is dried up = parallels back to crossing the Red sea, but not the event itself but the event as a type of NEW EXODUS EXPERIENCE for God's people.
- Her offspring = God's people. They were not taken to the throne of God to be spared the dragon making war with her offspring ○ No rapture here – "The image is of protection on earth from the wrath of the dragon, something one does not need protection from if one is in heaven." – BWIII, 170
- 3.5 years – an incomplete period of time = temporary ○ Satan will do battle/persecute her offspring for a limited period of time on the earth. This is what some people call the **"Tribulation"**

Victory Hymn (12:10-12):

- Victory came through Christ and the martyr's testimony
- This gives hope to those left on the earth – speaking for Christ, in a sense, disarms the powers of darkness in the world and defeats them
- Satan's time is short (12:12) – hopeful for us but makes him more desperate to inflict as much damage to the world as possible in the short time he has left
- Reddish believes, this is the story of the cross, told in terms of angelic battle

Dragon vs Woman II (12:13-17)

- While the victory was won on the cross, there is still a struggle on the earth
- This is where we find ourselves in this story – victory won, but still fighting against evil **Looking back to Genesis (Gen 3:15 vs Rev 12:17)**
- Offspring is literally "seed"
- This is the playing out of the prophesy given way back in Genesis (BWIII, 172) **What of Satan's role? (See Reddish, 240-248 for more on this)**

Application:

- Our testimony for Christ matters – his defeat comes at the testimony of God's people as well as the blood of Christ.
- Evil is only temporary – none of this will last forever

Isaiah 14:12 & Revelation 22:16 – Morning Star – from mattdabbs.wordpress.com

I have heard this accusation for the third time this week and I want the truth to be put out there clearly and concisely so that if people google this subject hopefully they don't find all the misinformation out there but get the truth. Here is how this argument against the NIV usually goes. The claim is laid that the NIV is corrupt and deliberately misleads people into believing that the Savior is actually Satan. They attempt to work that out with two verses (Isaiah 14:12 and Revelation 22:16). Here are the verses:

"How you have fallen from heaven, ***O morning star***, son of the dawn! You have been cast down to the earth, you who once laid low the nations!" - Isaiah 14:12

"I, Jesus, have sent my angel to give you this testimony for the churches. I am the Root and the Offspring of David, and the ***bright Morning Star***." – Revelation 22:16

No appearance of a problem until you look at Isaiah 14:12 in the King James Version – "[12]How art thou fallen from heaven, ***O Lucifer***, son of the morning! how art thou cut down to the ground, which didst weaken the nations!" That is the basis of the charge…that the NIV deliberately replaced Lucifer with "morning star" the same word used for Jesus in Revelation 22. That appears to be problematic on the surface but let's dig a little deeper. The word translated Lucifer by the KJV and "Morning tar" by the NIV is the word (heilel). That word literally means "shining one" as the verb form means "to shine." It is not a word that means atan or the devil in Hebrew as a proper name. So two questions arise:

1. Why does the KJV use "Lucifer" and not "shining one"?
2. Why does the NIV use "morning star" and not "shining one"?

1 – Why does the KJV use "Lucifer" and not "shining one"? Lucifer is how the Latin Vulgate translated this word, which the KJV adopted. Lucifer in Latin is a combination of two words Lux = light

and ferous = “to bear” or “to carry” which would make Lucifer = bearer of light in Latin. That was a valid translation in the Vulgate. The problem is the KJV didn’t translate it into English. They kept the Latin Lucifer instead. The problem is 99.9% of people don’t know that any more and only think of it as a proper name referring to the Devil or Satan.

So the first point to make is that the verse is not about Lucifer but is about a “light bearer.” Who is that light bearer? Let’s have a look at Isaiah 14 in context…that is always a good idea right? When we do this, we see exactly who Isaiah 14:12 is referring to and it is not Jesus or the Devil. Look back at Isa 13:1 – “An oracle concerning Babylon that Isaiah son of Amoz saw.” (NIV). Isaiah 13 speaks of the destruction of Babylon (see especially 13:19). Chapter 14 continues this message. 14:1-3 is about the return from exile back to Israel. Then notice 14:4 (just 8 verses before the verse in question) – “You will take up this taunt against the king of Babylon:” The taunt seems to go from 14:4b-8. Then 14:9 talks about the grave meeting them at their coming. Meeting who? The same people the taunt was against – Babylon. It is a curse referring back to the object of their taunt…not Jesus or atan but the King of Babylon. Then 14:1123 is more about Babylon – “your pomp has been brought down, maggots are spread out beneath you, worms cover you….how you have fallen from heaven shining one, son of the dawn.” Also, notice verse 16-17 – “

Those who see you stare at you, they
ponder your fate:
“Is this ***the man*** who shook the earth and
made kingdoms tremble,

[17] ***the man*** who made the world a desert, who
overthrew its cities
and would not let his captives go home?”

In context you see this is about a man and not Satan. It is about what the rest of the chapter is about – the king of Babylon. **2 – Why does the NIV use “morning star” instead of “shining one”?**

This is best understood by the rest of the verse Isaiah calls him “son of the dawn.” It is a parallel to a star that rises high and bright in the sky at morning but then disappears quickly (like the planet Venus). There was an ancient myth in the Babylonian literature that Heylel the morning star Venus scaled to great heights to make himself like a king in the heavens but was quickly driven back down. That is what the king of Babylon will be like…one who rises to great heights and then is toppled from his high position. In other words, the NIV makes the connection that would have been made by Isaiah’s hearers and people in Babylon…those who knew the myth about now its new found application by God toward the king of Babylon. The NIV translators recognized this parallel and made us of it as in the Babylonian mind the “shining one” was the “morning star Venus.” Was that the best move? Probably not if you are going for a literal translation. But if you are trying to read and hear the Bible as they heard it, it is actually a pretty good take on this verse. It is a little too much interpretation in the text for me.

Bottom line, I wish the KJV had actually translated this rather than borrowed from the Latin. I wish the NIV had left interpretation for the footnotes and not taken so much liberty with the text. But at the end of the day it can hardly be said that the NIV was propogating a view that Jesus and Satan are the same based on this text. Instead, when you look at the evidence it appears to be more the case that the NIV was taking

history, cultural context, linguistics and much else into consideration to give their best shot at this verse to end up with “morning star” and not some grand conspiracy by wicked and careless translators.

For more information on this as well as more details and a thoughtful analysis, see this link as well.

Revelation 13 – Two Beasts

12:17 – we learned that the dragon was loose upon the earth and he was after the offspring of the woman – God's people.

Chapter 13 tells us how that plays out and by what agents Satan is going to attack God's people. He does so by two ferocious beasts that he grants power and authority to in order to lead people away from God and to persecute God's people. Chapter 13 is about life here on earth in the presence of evil. There are symbols that had specific meaning in their day, but it is important to ask ourselves how these same themes are lived out today and where we stand

The beasts are set against Christ:
Beast 1:

- Looks like he was slain, the lamb does too (5:6)
- Rules over every tribe, nation, etc, that is God's title
- Who is like it and can stand against it (Exo 15:11), same with God Destroys while God creates

Beast 2:

- 2 horns like a lamb
- Jesus number is 888 – the beast can't measure up!

Beast out of the sea (13:1-10): Description:

- 10 horns – great power
- 7 heads – representing various rulers ○ One with a fatal wound that had been healed
    - Nero myth – Nero had died but he would come back again to "wreak havoc" (Reddish)
    - Nero was a great persecutor of the church – the thought of him coming back could be a scary thought for Christians.
  - Reddish, 250 – In Greek, this is the same language as the lamb who looked as if he had been slain
  - So this beast is an anti-type to the lamb
- 10 crowns – blasphemous name ○ He claims divinity
  - Emperor was regarded as deity. This was considered only after their death until Domitian who declared himself "lord and God" during his lifetime
  - In John's day, the emperor cult was big and emperor worship was at its peak. Their cities had shrines and temples built to the emperor to give him worship
  - These names belong to God – yet Roman emperors bore these names/titles Feet like a bear
- Mouth like a lion
- 42 months = temporary

The world will blindly follow – no questions asked Satan
(dragon) gave several things:

- Power

- Throne
- Authority – lasting 42 months (3.5 years)
- Mouth that utters blasphemies – against those who live in heaven (martyrs – you persecute them, you persecute God)

The beast led men to worship the dragon
Men worshipped the beast as well – who is like the beast and who can make war against it?

Rome presented a particular problem for Christians. To be a part of society, one would engage in cultural and religious festivals that would ensure the protection of the gods and the emperor. To do anything other than that would incur the wrath of society. Today, people want a relgiousless society…don't bring your god(s) in here.

- Compromise – it kills because participating with the empire and its pagan practices is participation with Satan **Who is this beast?**
- This beast represents the Roman empire and its heads represent different emperors So the power and authority of the Roman empire have been given to it by Satan.
- This beast is under the control of Satan for Satan's purposes **Beast out of the earth (13:11-18):**

Description:

- 2 horns like a lamb
- Spoke like a dragon
- Exercising authority of the first beast
- Performing miracles
- Deceived people on the earth Role:
- Brought honor and worship to the first beast
- Set up an idol to the first beast

Those who fulfilled this role in John's day…those who facilitated the worship of Caesar and the preservation of the Roman empire (1st beast) were local authorities and priests.

- This fits because there was usually not a mass, wholesale persecution of Christians from the top level. It came from the local level.
- These guys were known to use all kinds of deceptive things including talking statues to get people to follow their gods.

Marked those in the earth with his name/number – so they could trade and do business

- Business in Rome was done with Roman coins. Those coins usually had an inscription with the name of the emperor and something about his divinity.

Number 666

- Gematria – common in the ancient world ○ You would likely know the number of your name
    - This would be your lucky number or you might think that number appearing was an omen from the gods, if you were pagan 666 = perfect evil.
    - One short of 777 ○ Three of them = evil This was meant for them to understand, not for us to be working out 2000 years later for someone alive today Who is it?
- Textual variant - Ancient manuscripts have 666 & 616 ○ 666 = Neron Caesar & beast
    - 616 = Nero Caesar as N = 50 in gematria

Greek translated into Hebrew: Neron Caesar or Nero Caesar

More to it – points to the resurrected one in the likness of Nero being an 8th head (BWIII, 177):

- 666 is a triangular number – final number is most important ○ 1+2+3…+36 = 666 ○ 1+2+3+4+5+6+7+8 = 36 ○ Stops there at 8
    - Points to Nero being the 8th – beast has 7 heads – resurrected or now alive again Nero will be the worst

But Nero is dead – those who follow in his footsteps, who are out to destroy God's people fit under him or are best symbolized by his name.

Questions for us:

- Who do we give our allegiance to?
- How do we view the state when it is out of line with God's purposes?
- Is it possible to see the state in terms that we should only see God? Provider, sustainer, redeemer, dependency, etc?

We should not be in the business of waiting for the antichrist to appear in association with this number or this beast.

Revelation 14 – Heavenly Assurance

Revelation often shifts back to scenes of heavenly hope

- Revelation 13 had lots of things that seemed pretty bad…beasts and dragons taking on the people of God and almost seeming victorious.

The Lamb and the 144,000 (14:1-5)

See Revelation 7 for the 144,000 sealed

The lamb is standing with the redeemed. Notice they have God's name on their foreheads in contrast to those marked by the beast.

14:4 – those who have not defiled themselves with women, virgins

- Not slept with women ○ Literal – would exclude all women (Reddish, 274) so not the case ○ Talking about spiritual adultery and idolatry symbolized as adultery against God. ▪ Rev 2:14, 20-22 – unfaithfulness referred to as sexual immorality so there is precedent in Revelation for this (reddish)
    - ▪ Notice 14:8 – Babylon is considered a whore who has committed adulteries. Those who sin with her are unfaithful to God.
- No lies and pure – holiness and being different than the world

Holy war symbolized (Reddish, 274) – men were warriors and to dedicate to God would abstain from sexual activity. It could be that is what we are seeing here symbolically. If we are dedicated to God we won't defile ourselves with the world.

- If that is what is depicted here, we are to see ourselves engaged in a battle and we must maintain our purity if we are going to be on God's side.

Three angels (14:6-13)

1. Preaches/declares the Gospel and calls all in the earth to worship God.
    a. What is his Gospel message and what can we learn from it?
        i. Fear God and worship him
        ii. God as creator (vs. Satan as destroyer)
    b. Preaches to all nations – an offer to turn to God to all people.
        i. We see all this judgment of the wicked/world in Revelation but the people aren't without a chance. God offers it to them over and over again
2. announces the fall of Babylon (14:8)
    a. Babylon = Rome (1 Peter 5:13). Why?
        i. Babylon and Rome both destroyed Jerusalem and the temple
        ii. Babylon and Rome both erected idols and commanded people to worship them (Dan 3) – Reddish, 277

"Babylon (Rome) entices the people with her power, her idolatry, and her riches. Her allures are intoxicating; yielding to them renders one guilty of 'fornication,' for one has then committed unfaithfulness to God. Those who are intoxicated by Rome are the nations of the world. In view here are the imperial claims to universal sovereignty. Rome's authority is great, and its power is seductive." – Reddish, 277

    b. Drank of her wine of sin (later they will drink from a second cup, the cup of God's wrath – 14:10)

c. all nations indulged in the adulteries
d. Defining spiritual adultery – anything that draws one away from God

3. Preaches/declares judgment on those who worship the beast
    a. Will drink God's wine of judgment and wrath
        i. Punished with sulfur for ever and ever
        ii. No rest (from this punishment)
    b. Why would this call for patience on the part of God's people? (14:12)
    c. Reddish points out that Rev 13 says those who don't worship the beast will be punished (by Satan). Now Rev 14 says those who do worship the beast will be punished (this time, by God).

Contrasting the torment and judgment of the wicked with the relief found by God's people even though they die at the hands of the wicked (14:13)

14:13 – 2nd beatitude/blessing of the book. There are 7 total

The Harvest of the earth (14:14-20)

Joel 3:13 serves as background to this text.

14:14 – Seated on the clouds – where we get the image of going to heaven and sitting around on clouds. Jesus to harvest the earth:

- "like a son of man" – used of Jesus in 1:13
- Crown of gold
- Sharp sickle in his hand Angel:
- Calls for the time of harvest to which the one like a son of man responds by harvesting the earth Second angel:
- Also had a sharp sickle
- "had charge of the fire"
- Harvesting grapes and into the winepress (God's wrath) ○ Blood flowed from the winepress

2 harvests - Who is getting harvested, trampled, judged, etc?

 Harvest 1 by the son of man – could be the wicked or the righteous ○

Wicked – Joel 3:13

○ Righteous – Jesus will come back to claim his own (Luke 10:2, Mark 13:26-27 where Jesus will come back on the clouds to claim his own) – that could be it Harvest 2 by the angel – the wicked Those who have the mark of the beast.

"outside the city gates" – irony. Executions took place outside the city. Jesus was crucified outside the city (John 19:20 & Heb 13:12). Now those who are evil will receive the same fate.

Revelation 15 – Seven Plagues

Same structure as the 7 trumpets – pause followed by viewing heaven (8:3-4 & 15:2-8) – Reddish, 289

Seven angels gives seven bowls of God's wrath by one of the four angels that surround the throne of God. With these 7, God's wrath is complete. Judgment is done.
Describing the scene:

- Sea of glass, mixed with fire. On the shore, those who had been victorious over the beast, his image and the number of his name.
    - Wait a second, I thought these guys were killed by the beast and yet they had victory over him?
    - Sounds like the lamb – he was slain and yet lives and now comes victory. ○ Victory is not defined by survival. Victory is defined by staying faithful to God and relying on his grace.

Their song:

- Praise of his deeds and his ways
- All earth will fear and praise him due to his holiness Temple of the tent of witness in heaven:
- The angels came out dressed as priest, received the bowls of God's judgment.
- Temple was filled with smoke and no one could enter until the plagues were completed.
    - Isaiah 6

Connections with exodus:

- Sea of glass – red sea, standing on the shore and the impending doom/defeat of those who stand against them.
- Plagues – some will parallel the plagues of Egypt
- Song of Moses – "sing the song of Moses and the lamb by and by and dwell with Jesus evermore" ○ This was the song of the sea…the song of victory they sang after crossing the red sea
- Temple of the tent of witness – also called "tent of meeting" because that is where Moses met with God.

This is a message of hope for God's people but more than just good things that we wait on. This information should impact the way we live and the hope that we have here and now.

How does knowing victory will be God's help you face the world?

Revelation 16 – 7 Bowls of Wrath

Echoes of Egypt:

"Biblical religion revolves around two themes, Creation and the Exodus. The former asserts God's undivided sovereignty over nature, the latter his absolute hegemony over history." – Sarna, Exodus **Are these the same events as the seals/trumpets or something else?** BWIII points out the similarities (BWIII, 207):

1. The earth
2. The sea
3. Rivers and foundations
4. Sun
5. Darkness
6. Judgments from beyond the Euphrates
7. Cosmic events and loud voices in heaven **Differences:**

- Bowls targeted at the followers of the beast
- Now the whole earth is a target, not just 1/3

Bowl 1 – painful sores

- 6th plague of Egypt (Exo 9:8-12)
- Those with the mark of the beast receive this
- Reddish points out the irony – they have a new mark, sores (p.303)

Bowl 2 & 3 – Water to blood

- 1st plague of Egypt (Exo 7:14-25)
- First the ocean (salt water) and then the rivers (fresh water)
- The oceans have never been turned to blood across the earth. Either this hasn't happened yet or its meaning is symbolic.
- Parallels the 2nd trumpet – seals, trumpets and bowls may all be the same events told 3 ways. Song break – highlights God's justice in these plagues.

Bowl 4 & 5 – Light and darkness

- 9th plague of Egypt – darkened sun.
- Similar to the 4th trumpet but opposite effect
- Stubborn result of the disobedient – they won't give it up. Instead they curse God
- Poured on the throne of the beast, Rome (Reddish, 307) ○ Darkness doesn't sound so bad, but imagine it for a moment, noon and no light anywhere.
    - *What would be so terrifying to you about that?*

Bowl 6 – Dry up Euphrates

- Exodus - Drying up the Red Sea ○ In Exodus this served two purposes:
    - It was a means for deliverance for the people of God
    - It was a means of judgment for those who persecuted God's people
    - ○ Same here

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- Euphrates separated Rome from the dreaded Parthians
- Some believed Nero would come back as a Parthian ruler and attack Rome.
- Evil spirit frogs out of the mouth of the dragon (Satan) ○ Goes back to Egypt as well ○ Frogs were unclean
    - Sent to deceive and performing miraculous signs (same role as the 2nd beast?) ○ Some believed Nero would come back as a frog! (BWIII, 209)
    - Some believed a frog coming out of something's mouth was a very bad omen (BWIII, 209)
- Sounds like the river is dried up for kings from the east to come, gathered by these evil spirits for battle at Armadeddon1 **Kings of the world:**
- 16:12 - Kings from the East – Parthians who threaten Rome.
    - The bowl is poured out by God in judgment of Rome resulting in the Euphrates being dried up. These eastern kings have to be anti-Rome
- 16:14 - Kings from throughout the world ○ Gathered by the dragon/evil spirits, so they must be pro-Rome to do battle on the great day of God (16:14)

16:15 – Importance of preparation

- *Why is it tempting to let our guard down concerning God's final judgment and return? How are you preparing yourself and your family to be faithful to God?*

Bowl 7 – Cosmic events – finality

- Pours it into the air causing cosmic events
- Earthquake, hail, lightning, etc
- Great city
- Babylon the Great – Rome & her cup of wrath (See 14:8-10)

Revelation 17 will further describe her punishment. So even though these are final events, the details of what takes place here is described in further detail in the chapters that follow.

Armageddon

16:16 – only place where this is in scripture
Har – mountain
Megiddo – a city in Israel that dates back thousands of years to Canaan It
is in a valley, not on a mountain.
Day of the Lord – Joel 2:11 saw this as a time of gathering of the nations for God to bring judgment Real battle or symbolism?

- Reddish believes it is symbolic of end time conflicts – it was a place of lots of military conflict
- Several kings had been killed at Megiddo including Ahaziah and Josiah
- It is a place of lots of battles
- "Armageddon symbolizes the final desperate struggle of evil against the overwhelming power and goodness of God." – Reddish, 319

Not really a mountain at all – a tell, a place where city after city had been built up. Mounce says it was 70 ft. high in John's day (Reddish, 313)
It doesn't even say what happened there, just that they gathered.
Many believe this is more about what will happen than where it will happen. In the end, God will battle against evil and win.

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The Point: God is just. God will judge and punish. God is looking for people to repent.

Revelation 17

Context:
Revelation 17 fits within the 6th-7th seal.
BWIII thinks this is zooming in on the 7th seal (BWIII, 217)
Revelation 17-18 are a judgment upon Rome, symbolized as Babylon Rome as Babylon:

- Rev 14:8 – also mentions wine of her adultery
- Both destroyed Jerusalem and the temple
- Both worshipped false gods
- Code words to speak against the empire **Rome, the great whore:**

17:18 – she is the great city – *Which city is that?* – Rome Whore
– spiritual adultery against God.

- Kings of earth committed adulteries – obviously you can't sleep with a nation.

Royal Whore:

- She is dressed in a seductive way (17:4)
- Purple and scarlet – royalty but also wearing the color of prostitutes. This is a play on Rome as the government who has prostituted themselves for bad.
- Cup filled with abominable things – a word used of idolatrous things (Reddish, 325) 17:6 – drunk on the blood of the saints Written on her forehead:
    - "Mystery/Secret…Babylon the great…the mother of whores (Reddish, 326)…and of the abominations of the earth"
- The mystery is, she is not Babylon. She is Rome (17:18)
- Abomination keeps coming up – has to do with idolatry, detestable things.

Rome's sins:

- Claim of Complete sovereignty ○ Caesar as "lord" and "god"/divine ○ Demanding allegiance from its citizens
- Persecuting God's people – filled her cup with the blood of the saints ○ Fed them to beasts
    - Dressed them in animal skins in the arena to be attacked by wild animals
    - Covered them in oil, crucified them and set them on fire to light the city (Tacitus, Annals, XV, 44 – see Metzger, 86)

The things will result in the judgment of God.

- God will use the nations to bring judgment on her:
    - The beast/kings will wage war against her (17:16-17) ○ They will leave her naked and burned
- God will personally judge her (18:8) and bring on her, her own plagues and disasters (18:6-8)

The beast – an 8th king

- Mix of beast from Rev 13 and dragon from Rev 12
- Same as the beast from the sea in Revelation 13. It was then a symbol for the Roman empire. So is the beast a symbol for the whole empire and the woman a symbol for the city of Rome? Scarlet beast - Extravagant/royal colors

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- 10 horns and 7 heads
- Blasphemous names
    - Claiming to be lord
- 7 heads = 7 kings
- Beast = 8th king…does this mean the beast represents all the other 7 rolled up into 1?
- Rise up from the abyss – Nero to come back…really, one like him.
    - So at first this is Rome but now we see more specifically it is one like Nero (who does represent Rome to some degree, Reddish 328)
- The end of all the persecution, Rome, evil, etc is near

17:6 - John is confused, astonished, flabbergasted, or astounded (BWIII, 220)

- So are God's people in 17:8
- Even John is wrestling with these things. This prompts the angel to give insight into the meaning of these things in 17:7ff)

Vision interpreted (17:7-18):

Seven heads = 2 things – 7 hills of Rome & 7 kings

- Five have fallen (died)
- 1 is (Domitian?)
- 1 has not yet come
- If you try to match this up to a list of emperors it doesn't come out all that great to make a nice neat fit with anything that makes sense.
- John is just making the point that there is a complete set of kings (BWIII) and that the 8th is very, very important.

Nero myth - The beast is an 8th king – he once was and now is not.

- Nero = 666 (mark of the beast)
- Nero lived = he was
- He died = now is not
- Nero myth - But was expected to live again as a king
- Obviously Nero would not rise from the dead. So this will be someone like Nero, in persecuting the church and uttering blasphemies against God

10 Horns – kings along with a now alive Nero-like king

- These 10 will side with the beast/Nero-like king These 10+1, then, will make war against the lamb The lamb will win.
- The lamb winning is the church winning (See 17:14)

Timeline – 17:12-14 takes place after 17:15-18. The lamb will conquer the beast but first the lamb will use them to defeat the Whore, Rome.

- It could be that God will use these powers of darkness for his own purposes and then (See 17:17) ultimately bring their defeat.

Bottom line – there is only one God. When the people or kingdoms of the earth try to make it otherwise, God will humble them and put them in their place.

Where is your allegiance?

Have you compromised anything?

Don't let the world leave you astounded and trick you out of following God. Often what we can see too easily overshadows what is not seen (God).

Revelation 18-19

Rex needs help with food and drinks at next prayer time – Saturday

BWIII makes the point that 17-18 stand in contrast to 19:1-10, which city are you going to be a part of? The fallen Rome or the New Jerusalem?

This is a funeral dirge.
Reddish points out the five parts/sections:

1. Angelic taunt song (1-3)
2. Summons to flee the city (4-8)
3. Lament over the fallen city (9-19)
4. Call to rejoice (20)
5. Pronouncement of the city's destruction (21-24)

19:1-10 is the heavenly reaction to the fall of the great city

When the righteous mourned, the wicked rejoiced. Now, the opposite is true.

The wealth of Rome:
Quoted from Reddish, 346 – this is from the 2nd century writer Aelius Aristides,

"Around *the Mediterranean+ lie the continents far and wide, pouring an endless flow of goods to [Rome]. There is brought from every land and sea whatever is brought forth by the seasons and is produced by all countries, rivers, lakes, and the skills of the Greeks and foreigners. So that anyone who wants to behold all these products must either journey through the whole world to see them or else come to this city. For whatever is raised or manufactured by each people is assuredly always here to overflowing. So many merchantmen arrive here with cargoes from all over, at every season, and with each return of the harvest, that the city seems like a common warehouse of the world. One can see so many cargoes from India, or if you wish from Arabia Felix, that one may surmise that the trees there have been left permanently bare, and that those people must come here to beg for their own goods whenever they need anything…The arrival and departure of ships never ceases, so that it is astounding that the sea – not to mention – the harbor – suffices for the merchantmen…and all things converge here, trade, seafaring, agriculture, metallurgy all the skills which exist and have existed, anything that is begotten and grows. Whatever cannot be seen here belongs completely to the category of nonexistent things."

Irony:

- She had a cup of abominable things (17:4, 6) and now she must drink her own destruction (18:6)
  - Given as much torture and grief as she gave out (18:7)
- Those who once came near and engaged in her adulteries now stand far off (18:17)

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What happened to Rome?

- The city was not destroyed until 410 when Alaric and the Goths (sounds like some sort of hip band) destroyed and pillaged it.
- John's day – 1 million people
- 410 AD – 30,000 people
- From John's day to 300 years later the city deteriorated greatly (BWIII, 226)

Rome will not prevail. God and his people will (Rev 17:14)
Emptiness will come to those who fill themselves at the expense of others. Fullness will come to those who have been emptied

Application:
This is not just about some city 2000 years ago. Powerful image of Babylon – more than just Rome…This is about any nation, city, or people who put themselves above God (Metzger, 88)

Revelation 19

Hallelujah is used only in this chapter in the entire NT.
Reddish's concentric circles of praise – starts with the throne of God and moves out to the God's people on the earth.

Contrasting sin and purity:

- The prostitute and her lovers are cast down
- The wedding of the lamb and his bride triumphs over evil – fine linen, bright and clean
- God's church is to be pure – we, as individuals, are to be pure

How God uses these images – flexibility:

- We are the church being married to Christ
- We are the guests invited to the wedding (vs.8)

Contrasting cities – New Jerusalem and Rome:

- BWIII points out – smoke rises to heavens from Rome, N.J. comes down from heavens.

Jesus as rider on the white horse:

- Faithful and true goes back to 1:5, 3:14)
- Eyes like fire (Rev 1:14, 2:18)
- Many crowns – the beast had 7 crowns
- Name is the Word of God – John 1:1
- Sword from his mouth (Rev 1:16, 2:12, 2:16)
- We know this is Christ
- So how does he have a name no one knows? This is more about him that we don't understand that only he (as God) knows.

- Knowing something's name was to have power or be able to exert control over it – you can't control or manipulate Christ.
- Robe dipped in blood:
    - He hasn't yet gone into battle – so is this his own blood or the blood of his enemies that he is going to wage war against?
    - This is Christ as warrior – fighting against the wicked nations. ○ So it could be either one – either he wins victory by the blood already shed ○ Or – this symbolizes the blood he is about to shed in judgment of those on the earth Army in heaven:
    - God is Lord of hosts – this is an angelic army ○ God back to angel of the Lord killing 180k?

Winepress – see 14:19-20 – a symbol of judgment

A battle between good and evil where good finally prevails. This has to do with Rome but it also has to do with the end times, final things/eschatology.

Revelation 20

Disclaimers:

- Many Christians have argued over these verses
- People have strong opinions and views on this chapter
- No matter what you believe about Christ's return and the events leading up to it we all agree that we can disagree on this and still be brothers.
- Jesus didn't say you won't go to heaven if you have the wrong view on the millennium, etc. We want to be biblically informed on this. We don't want our views coming from the movies, fictional books (Left Behind), or just a guess. We want to know what the Bible says and some possibilities of what it might mean.

Read Revelation 20

Revelation 19 set the stage for victory over those who oppose God.

- Victory comes through the words of God/Christ (19:21)

- Unholy trinity:
    - Beast (19:20) ○ False prophet (19:20) ○ Satan (20:2) **The events summed up:**

- An angel comes with a key (authority)
- He binds Satan for 1000 years into the abyss (bottomless pit)
- Satan will not deceive the nations at this time
- After the 1000 years Satan will be released for a time
- Beheaded martyrs came to life to reign with Christ for 1000 years
- After the 1000 years the remaining dead were raised to reign with Christ – literally taken that would put them reigning with Christ at the release of Satan ○ "This is the first resurrection" – hard to say if this is referring to both these groups or just the second.
    - Don't forget – Ezekiel 36-39 background here
- Satan is released to deceive the nations all over the earth
- Gog and Magog will assist in the battle
- Satan and his zillions of minions will march against Jerusalem
- God will devour them with fire and cast the evil ones into the lake of fire forever
- Last, comes the judgment and in the next chapter our heavenly dwelling

20:1-3 – Imprisonment of Satan (Reddish)

- Reversal of 9:1 where an angel with a key went down and opened the abyss and allowed a demonic horde to be released onto the earth
- This is being undone now – God controls everything, ultimately.
- Satan is bound with the angel's chain, locked down and sealed up in the bottomless pit
- His binding is certain – he cannot escape unless released by someone with more power and authority than himself

- Matt 12:29 and Mark 3:27 – Satan has to be bound up if the plunder is to be removed from his house.
    - Jesus did this in his earthly ministry but not completely ○ This is talking about something after Jesus' ministry **20:4-6 – The resurrection of the faithful**:
- Background – Ezekiel 37 (dry bones) & Daniel 7:9-27 (those judging with the ancient of days) ○ The restored people of God ○ Their role in judging the world
- Those with authority to judge – the apostles (Mtt 19:28, Luke 22:30) or the martyrs…hard to say Two groups:
    - Beheaded saints/martyrs
        - **6:9-11** – those under the altar asking for vindication
        - Beheaded – this was for Roman citizens so they wouldn't have to undergo crucifixion. So these are Roman Christian martyrs. This means it is speaking first and foremost to John's audience.
    - Non-martyrs
- **Martyrs – "came to life" – the crux of this whole debate (Mounce, 356)** ○ Verb used in 20:4 & 5 for the 2 groups – **must mean the same thing** ▪ 20:4 – "They came to life and reigned with Christ a thousand years."
    - 20:5 – "The rest of the dead did not come to life until the thousand years were ended."
- This only makes sense if this is referencing a bodily resurrection
- Why would God take on sin, death, Hades, decay, and all the rest…even raise Christ bodily and he ascended to heaven bodily and our bodies not be raised?
- Come to life – you can't come to life if you are already alive. This is about our bodies being raised.
    - This can mean "they lived and reigned" or "they came to life and reigned" ○ "they lived" – problem is they are eternal beings.
    - *How can you "come to life" if you are already alive?*
        - **Ezekiel 37** – bodily resurrection ○ Where else is this used?
        - Rev 2:8 – Christ died and came to life. He was never really dead spiritually speaking. But his body died and came back to life.
        - 13:14 – beast was wounded by the sword and yet "lived"
        - Matthew 9:18 – his daughter would be "restored to life" if Jesus would touch her – clearly doesn't mean she would only be alive in the spirit but would be alive bodily as well
- Reign with Christ 1000 years ○ Symbolic or literal? ○ Probably symbolic – this symbolizes a "lengthy yet limited period of time" (Reddish, 385) ○ *Reign with Christ where?*
    - Many assume this is reign with Christ on earth as a period of earth's history with Christ reigning and present, supreme ▪ That is not in the text
    - **Key question -** *If Christ reigned on earth 1000 years with mankind free from the influence of Satan, why in just a few verses, following the 1000 years, when Satan is released that the world is again so easily deceived to be led to fight against God and his people?*
    - Millenial views – see below What is John writing about here?
    - He is encouraging those facing death that their ultimate sacrifice will all be worth it.

Period. Linking this to events in our day is way disconnected with its original intent.
    - Yet, John would be encouraging all Christians, of all time, to be faithful to the end and there is a great reward and victory that comes with Christ to the faithful.

20:7-10 – Satan's Doom:

- Satan is released – God must have done this as God was the one, through his angel, who locked him up
- Satan is never, ever completely destroyed. But he is ultimately put away and punished forever.
- Gog and Magog ○ Background - Ezekiel 38-39 where Gog is a leader from the land of Magog (Reddish, 386) ▪ They were a people who God said would come up and fight against God's people (Ezekiel 38:14-16)
        - God would defeat them himself to show himself holy. He would destroy them by fire.
        - Connections – evil will come against God's people and God will fight for his people and win by destroying them with fire – prove himself holy and glorious
    - They are from the four corners of the earth
    - some have tried to equate these with specific countries but this was probably not intended (BWIII and Reddish both say this).
    - "symbols of evil" in the world (BWIII, 250) –they can represent anyone/entity that stands up for evil in the world. God will ultimately bring their plans to an end
- Camp of God's people/city he loves ○ Jerusalem? – Some make a big deal out of all of this and that is why many uphold

  Jerusalem today thinking these things are still going to take place their today ○ This could just mean the people of God at large. We are his people, his holy city. This is not about a location but about a people.
- The battle ○ There is no battle – God defeats them. ○ Left behind pre-trib rapture view promotes violence by God's people against unbelievers as that is, from their view, the ultimate happening to those who aren't Christians. That is not scriptural – God defeats them
- 20:10 – Ezekiel 39:6 has Satan being cast into a lake of fire

20:11-15 – Judgment of the dead

- Those in the sea are mentioned because there was a belief that those who died in the sea might not make it into the afterlife – couldn't really be buried, etc.
- Death and Hades and the devil and his two agents and all that is evil cast into the lake of fire. This tells us that Hades is not exactly hell (BWIII, 251). These are just residences of the dead prior to judgment.
- *Why is Hades thrown into the lake of fire if it is a holding place for the dead?*
    - We view a holding place for the dead as a neutral thing
    - But it really is a negative – death is bad. God is doing away with any and everything related to sin and death. Hades is no longer needed. No way for it to return.
- Individualistic view of judgment vs. corporate and cosmic view:
    - Individualistic view – when we die the dead are judged…the wicked to hell and righteous to heaven

- Corporate/cosmic view – more judged than just individuals. Sin, death, hades, Satan, etc all judged. This judgment is the ultimate defeat of death and the inauguration of all God has intended for mankind 2 books:
- One of our deeds – what we do still matters ○ One is the book of Life – we are saved by grace **Millenium - 4 main views:**

Commonality among views – Christ will return some day and be victorious over evil Disagreement – when he will return and what will take place during his absence.

1. Amillennialst – there is no 1000 years in a literal since. Like the majority of Revelation the number is symbolic. The 1000 years symbolizes the lengthy period of time between Christ's ascension and return.
2. Postmillennialist – The millennium of peace is brought to the church after which Christ will come. After the 1000 years Christ will reign
3. Premillennialist – Christ comes before the millennium
    a. If you are going to stick to a literal 1000 years then those reigning with Christ are martyrs only. This is not a general rapture (a word not used in Revelation) of all God's people to reign with Christ, etc.
4. Dispensational Premillennialist – Came about in 1900s
    a. Dispensationalism – "interpreting events occurring in the world today as literal fulfillments of events mentioned in Revelation and other biblical texts" (Reddish)
    b. We are living in the last days that will include a period of intense tribulation. Christians will be raptured away (at 1 of 3 times) from these events and when the tribulation is over, Christ will return and reign for 1000 years:
        i. Pre-tribulation – Christians raptured before the tribulation
        ii. Post-tribulation – Christians raptured after it iii. Mid-tribulation – Christians raptured during it Problems with all of these views:

1. Over emphasis of the 1000 years – It is only mentioned in Revelation 20:1-7 and no where else in all of scripture.
    a. Reddish calls this concept "insignificant" – it is blown way out of proportion on how we view the 1000 years as figurative or literal.
    b. John didn't make a big deal out of it and neither did anyone else. They didn't spend much time on it or even try to explain it.
    c. So we also have to be careful to not over emphasize it or draw lines of fellowship around it.
2. It misses the point – trying to connect these events to events in history is never an easy thing to do because it wasn't always intended to be read that way. That is a major problem with dispensational premill but is a problem with pretty much all of these views.
3. Any literal view of 1000 years has some very difficult questions to answer (see Reddish, 394):

Reddish – "Perhaps the best approach to take regarding the millennium is the view advocated by the *guy+ who claimed to be "panmillennial" explaining, "It will all pan out in the end" **Background:**
Ezekiel 36-39 forms a solid backing for Revelation 20-21 (BWIII, 246):

- The rising of the people of God, restored
- New David ruling over them
- Rebellion of Gog and Magog (a place)
- New Jerusalem and new temple
- “paradisiacal-like conditions” (BWIII, 246)
- Satan thrown into a fiery lake **Second death – lake of fire**:
- God’s people don’t experience this
- Death, Hades, Satan, and unbelievers will experience this
- What is the second death? - Options ○ Total annihilation (Fudge)
    - ○ Eternal punishment – 14:10-11 tells us this is not annihilation but eternal punishment

Revelation 19 – victory comes through the Word (Metzger, 92), not through our violent actions toward non-believers. The Left Behind theology has God’s people doing violence against non-believers

Revelation 21 – New Jerusalem

Revelation 20 – The final judgment of all mankind. This is followed by what will happen to the righteous and redeemed whose names are found in the book of life. AND – what will happen to creation itself.

Background – **Isaiah 65:17 & 66:22** – new heavens and new earth that will last forever

Qualities of our new eternal existence:

- **21:3** - God will dwell with His people – this is the MAIN POINT! This is what God has always been after but sin has kept this from being the case. Once God has made all things new and there is no more sin and death, he will again dwell with his people like he did in the beginning (before sin and death entered the picture) ○ **Rom 8:35ff** is finally fully fulfilled!
- No tears, death, mourning, or pain – all things new and redeemed
- No sea – a symbol of chaos and "restless insubordination" (Metzger, 99) ○ This was the home of Leviathon, etc – God has brought even the most chaotic parts of creation to order
    - This could be the sea on the earth or the sea that was around the throne of God (**4:6**)

21:5 – God speaks for only the second time in the whole book of Revelation "I am making everything new"

- New
    - This is not like having an old pair of shoes and getting a new pair, which means the old is no longer used and the new is a completely different, replaced pair.
    - This word means "a new kind" (Metzger, 98) ○ Continuity with and different from what we now know
- "I am making" ○ not I will make ○ the sense that the things are so sure and true because God is the one doing it ○ It is already happening – gives us hope!

21:6 - "It is done"

- Again…present tense. Not it will be done like this but it is done
- This is like John 14 :1 – "I go there"
- When was the last time we heard this? – It is finished (John 19:30) **Alpha** – beginning and **Omega** – end.
- Here we have the end of all things which is, ironically a new beginning. God is creative by his very nature.
- In bringing old things to a close he actually starts something new
    - "Because God is the initiator of the world, God is also its consummator" – Reddish, 404

21:6-8 – Two camps:

- Those who follow God will end up where he is (given their blessing and inheritance by God)
- Those who follow the beast will end up where he is (firey lake of the 2nd death) The city of God comes down from heaven (the church – 21:9-10) 21:9-27 – a description of the church.
- God's people are his city and a bride – shows you can't take these images too literally but that each is trying to make its own point.

Home Church Resources

Many believe that the New Jerusalem of Rev 21 is set up in contrast to Babylon (Rome) of Revelation 1718. See Reddish's chart at the end of these notes.

Highlights even further – God's way will win and the way of the world, though it seems mighty and righty…will fail.

21:10 – carried to a mountain (a place of divine revelation) to see the bride, the Holy City and New Jerusalem

- Shone with God's glory
- 12 open gates with angels at each one ○ 12 tribes ○ 12 apostles
    - OT and NT together – God has unified it all Cube-like city of vast proportions.
    - It is not about figuring out how many feet or miles this is and analyzing it.
    - The point is, it is **HUGE** and **PERFECT!**

21:18-21 – 12 Jewels decorating the foundations of the city

- Could come from Exodus28 & 39 where the breastplate of the high priest had 12 stones.

21:22 – no more temple

- The temple represented God's dwelling among his people
- There is no more need for mere representations. God is visibly present!

21:24 – kings of the earth?

- Up to this point kings of the earth have represented evil Why do they now bring glory to God's city?
    - Some have said this is pushing for universal salvation (ignores the rest of Revelation) ○ More probable – some of the worldly will be saved and come to repentance.

21:25 – No gates

- No need for security or protection
- Cities typically shut gates at night – now there is no night
- There are no more evil or danger left. All God's enemies have been defeated

21:27 – Application

- If we are to be the kind of people God wants in his kingdom, we have to avoid the shameful and deceitful ways of the world.
- Take a moment to reflect on anything that falls into those two categories in your life and think about how important it is to God that they be taken care of.

The Two Cities (Reddish, 404):

Home Church Resources

John has drawn an intentional contrast between the city of “Babylon” and the new Jerusalem. A comparison of the details of the cities illustrates the opposing natures of these two cities.

Babylon	***The New Jerusalem***
Its “sins heaped high as heaven” (18:5)	The holy city (21:2)
Located in the wilderness (17:3)	Located on a mountain (21:10)
The great prostitute (17:1)	A bride (21:9)
Clothed in purple and scarlet (17:4)	Prepared as a bride adorned for her husband (21:2)
Adorned with gold and jewels and pearls (17:4)	Adorned with precious jewels, gates of pearls, street of gold (21:18-21)
Full of abominations and impurities (17:4)	Uncleanness, abomination and falsehood are excluded (21:27)
A dwelling place of demons (18:2)	The dwelling of God (21:3)
God’s people told to “come out” of the city (18:4)	God’s people will enter the city (21:14)
A city of death – filled “with the blood of the saints and the blood of the witnesses to Jesus” (17:6)	Death will be no more (21:4)
The kings of the earth commit fornication with the city (17:2)	The kings of earth bring their glory into the city (21:24)
God will give the city torment and grief (18:7)	“mourning and crying and pain will be no more (21:4)
The light of a lamp will shine in it no more (18:23)	God is its light, the lamb is its lamp; there will be no night there (21:23, 25)
Deceives the nations by its sorcery (18:23)	Leaves of its tree are for the healing of the nations (22:2)
The city will be destroyed (Ch. 18)	The redeemed will live in the city forever and ever (22:5)

I am not sure who compiled this. It can be found online on several cites but it was published at some point in a book. I am just not familiar with the original source.

Genesis 1-3	Revelation 20-22
“In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth” (1:1)	“I saw a new heaven and a new earth” (21:1)
“The darkness He called night” (1:5)	“There shall be no night there” (21:25)
“God made two great lights” (1:16)	“The city had no need of the sun or of the moon” (21:23)
“In the day that you eat of it you shall surely die” (2:17)	“There shall be no more death” (21:4)
Satan appears as deceiver of mankind (3:1)	Satan disappears forever (20:10)
Shown a garden into which defilement entered (3:6-7)	Shown a city into which defilement will never enter (21:27)
Walk of God with man interrupted (3:8-10)	Walk of God with man resumed (21:3)
Initial triumph of the serpent (3:13)	Ultimate triumph of the Lamb (20:10, 22:3)
“I will greatly multiply your sorrow” (3:16)	“There shall be no more death or sorrow, nor crying; and there shall be no more pain” (21:4)
“Cursed is the ground for your sake” (3:!7)	“There shall be no more curse” (22:3)
Man’s dominion broken in the fall of the first man, Adam (3:24)	Man’s dominion restored in the rule of the new man, Christ (22:5)
First paradise closed (3:23)	New paradise opened (21:25)
Access to the tree of life disinherited in Adam (3:24)	Access to the tree of life reinstated in Christ (22:14)
They were driven from God’s presence (3:24)	“They shall see his face” (22:4)

Who We Are

We are a Christian ministry that helps people start home churches through providing support to potential and current home church leaders. You don't have to spend years on a church staff and have college degrees in ministry (although they are welcome to help!) to be qualified. You can be a mechanic and start a home church…a teacher and start a home church…retired and start a home church.

We are here to help you get the support you or others you know need to get started!

How We Help

We provide the resources needed to help you get started. This includes:

- An online community for encouragement
- Online training that combines our best resources in one streamlined pathway
- Dozens of PDF tools to equip you to succeed
- Coaching to tackle the specific issues you face.
- Training for your home church members so they have ministry skills and disciplines

You can join a community where people interact, encourage and pray for each other as they live out the home church planting life together.

All of this is done through an online learning community where you can quickly and easily connect with all of the resources we have developed that are helping home church leaders around the world.

How to Start

Anyone can start, no cost, to start a home church. Our Prepwork will help you lay a biblical foundation for a home church and assembly the building blocks you need for a solid foundation to start a home church. You will also learn a few things to help you prayerfull consider if starting a home church is right for you in this season. This Prepwork comes with a Field Guide, which is a fillable PDF, so that when you are done you will have a guidebook in your hand that you have created, specific to the vision you are finding in scripture and through prayer.

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