

REVELATION REVISITED

St. John's Bible Study, 2023

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REVELATION REVISITED

Week One: Intro & Chapter 1

Introduction

A. *What* is Revelation?

1. apocalypse – “the revelation of Jesus Christ” (Rev 1:1) – good news
 - a. Greek, *apokalypse*, “making fully know, revelation, disclosure” (BDAG) – not cataclysmic event or destruction of the world
 - b. prophet has vision of “present transcendent reality and future historical realization” (Johnson, 508) and communicates it to others using heightened and symbolic language
 - c. *written* to the faithful during times of persecution to assure them God is at work and encourage them to endure – reconcile conviction and experience
2. prophecy – “the words of the prophecy” (Rev 1:3)
 - a. Greek, *prophetia*, “act of interpreting divine will or purpose” (BDAG) – may speak of future events, but primarily about present realities – not only telling the future
 - b. prophet experiences God (usually sees and/or hears) and shares experience
 - c. “*speaking* words of comfort and/or challenge, on behalf of God, to the people of God” (Gorman, 23)
3. letter – “to the seven churches” (Rev 1:4), and to all followers of Christ (Rev 1:3)

B. *When* is Revelation?

1. Preterist – primarily about the past, reflects time of writing (1st century)
2. Futurist – primarily about the future, predicts what hasn’t happened yet – “dispensationalism”
 - a. proposed by John Nelson Darby (1800-1882) – proponents Hal Lindsey (*The Late Great Planet Earth*), Tim LaHaye & Jerry Jenkins (*Left Behind*), John Hagee
 - b. “literal” and predictive interpretation – Rev code to break, not guide to life
 - c. history is divided into seven ‘dispensations’ or ages, distinction between age of Israel and age of Christians
 - i. “premillennialism” – Christ will return *twice*, first to “rapture” Christians and then to reign with them for a thousand years (interpretation of Rev 20)
 - ii. seven years of tribulation will occur either after (pre-trib), during (mid-trib) or

before (post-trib) the rapture (interpretation of Rev 11)

iii. earth will be destroyed (interpretation of Rev 21)

3. Idealist – primarily about the present, depicts God at work in every age for people of God in every age

C. Historical Context

1. written in approx 90 AD, during the persecution of Christians by the Roman Emperor Domitian (ruled 90-95 AD), imprisoned and killed those who would not declare, “Caesar is Lord”
2. written from Patmos (Greek island in Aegean Sea) to “seven churches in province of Asia,” now Turkey (Rev 1:4, 9)
3. written by John
 - a. Gospel of John, 1, 2, 3 John, Revelation known as Johannine Writings
 - b. traditionally understood to be the Apostle – *but* Gospel of John author not named; Revelation later date; Revelation author looks at 12 Apostles from a distance (Rev 21:14); stylistic and thematic differences
 - c. often called “John the Evangelist”
4. encourages followers of Christ to remain faithful to Christ (Rev 14:12)
Revelation is “(primarily) good news about Christ...and therefore also about uncompromising faithfulness leading to undying hope, even in the midst of unrelenting evil and oppressive empire” (Gorman, 12).

REVELATION REVISITED

Outline

1. Rev 1 – Introduction and Opening Vision *(Week One / Oct 3)*
2. Rev 2-3 – Letters to the Seven Churches *(Week Two / Oct 10)*
3. Rev 4-5 – Vision of God and the Lamb *(Week Three / Oct 17)*
4. Rev 6-20 – Visions of Judgment
 - a. Rev 6-7 – Seven Seals *(Week Four / Oct 24)*
 - b. Rev 8-11 – Seven Trumpets *(Week Five / Oct 24)*
 - c. Rev 12-13 – Enemies in Conflict *(Week Six / Oct 31)*
 - d. Rev 14 – Visions of Salvation and Judgment *(Week Six / Oct 31)*
 - e. Rev 15-16 – Seven Bowls *(Week Six / Oct 31)*
 - f. Rev 17-20 – Enemies in Conflict *(Week Seven / Nov 7)*
5. Rev 21-22 – Vision of New Creation *(Week Seven / Nov 14)*

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### Symbolic Numbers and Colors in Revelation (Gorman, 18-19)

- ½ limited scope or time
- 3 a distinct group; actual divinity; false divinity
- 3 ½ limited time (half of seven)
- 4 fullness, completion, especially in creation
- 6 imperfection
- 7 fullness, completion, especially in heaven
- 12 fullness, especially of God's people (and multiples 24, 144)
- 1000 large number

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- Gold incorruptible wealth, beauty, royalty; actual divinity; false divinity
- Red blood, violent power
- Purple decadence, empire, imperial evil
- Black death, disaster
- Green (pale) death
- White victory, resurrection, purity/cleanliness, heaven, divinity

REVELATION REVISITED - Rev 1

A. Rev 1:1-3 - Prologue

1. "Apocalypse [Revelation] Jesus Christ" - *of, about, from* Jesus Christ
2. "testified" (Greek, *martyria*) by John to "servants" of Jesus (Matt 20:25-28)
3. to "keep what is written," for "the time is near" - call to present action

B. Rev 1:4-8 - John's Greeting to the Churches

1. to "seven churches" (v 4) - companions of John (v 9); in prominent Roman cities; representative for whole church (*significance of numbers*)
2. from Triune God - Father (v 4, 8); Holy Spirit, manifest in "seven spirits," (v 4); Son, Jesus Christ (v 5-7)
3. descriptions of Jesus Christ
 - a. "faithful witness" - speaks from experience of God (John 18:37)
 - b. "firstborn of the dead" - the resurrection (Col 1:18)
 - c. "rulers of the kings of the earth" - the true Lord (Phil 2:5-11)
 - d. "loves us" - present tense (1 John 4:7-12)
 - e. "freed us from our sins by his blood" - past tense (1 Peter 1:18-19)
 - f. "made us a kingdom, priests to his God and Father" (Ex 19:5-6, 1 Peter 2:9)
 - g. Son of Man, "coming with the clouds" (Dan 7:13), Messiah/Christ/Savior

C. Rev 1:9-20 - John's Vision of Jesus, the Son of Man

1. John, on Patmos, in the Spirit, on "the Lord's Day," first NT use for Sunday (v 9)
2. **John sees Jesus** - "one like the Son of Man" (v 13)
 - a. *Reflections of Daniel* (Dan 7:9-14, 10:1-22)
 - i. *Daniel set during Babylonian conquest and rule (587-538 BC); time of persecution*
 - ii. *Daniel's experience (chapters 1-6) and Daniel's apocalyptic visions (chapters 7-12)*
 - iii. *expresses hope for Messiah, who will end suffering and make things right*
 - b. descriptions of Jesus Christ
 - i. long robe with gold sash (v 13) - vestment of High Priest (Ex 28:4)
 - ii. eyes like flames; feet like bronze; head and hair white as wool, as snow (v 14-15) - descriptions of God, the "Ancient One" (Dan 7:9)
 - iii. voice like sound of many waters (v 15) - God's voice (Ezekiel 43:2)
 - iv. face like the sun (v 16) - Jesus at transfiguration (Matt 17:2)

- v. from mouth a sharp, a two-edged sword – speaks the Word of God (Isa 49:2, Eph 6:17, Heb 4:12) – not a literal sword (Matt 26:52, ‘put sword away’)
3. **John hears Jesus** – Jesus places his right hand on John and says...
- a. “do not be afraid” (v 17) – see also Matt 10:31, Matt 14:27, Matt 17:7, Matt 28:10, Luke 5:10, Luke 12:32, John 14:27, Acts 18:9, Acts 27:24....
 - b. “I am the first and the last” (v 17) – Jesus is God (Isa 44:6)
 - c. “the living one,” “was dead and see I am alive forever” (v 18) – Jesus rose from the dead and lives, he is the source of life (John 1:1-5, John 11; John 20)
 - d. “I have the keys to death and Hades” (v 18) – Jesus conquered death and freed us from it (Matt 16:18, gates of Hades not prevail against church)
 - e. “write down what you have seen” (v 19) – testimony
 - f. “seven stars” in Jesus’ right hand (v 16) are the angels of the churches (v 20) – Jesus holds fullness of creation, and the churches
 - g. “seven lampstands” (v 13) are the churches (v 20)
 - i. seven-branched lampstand in the Temple (Exodus 25:31-37) – vision of Zechariah (Zech 4:1-6), rebuilding the Temple (approx 520 BC) – first temple destroyed by Babylon (586 BC), second temple destroyed by Rome (70 AD)
 - ii. Jesus is new temple, God dwelling with us (John 1:1-14, John 2:13-22, Col 2:9-10, Heb 1:1-4, Rev 21:22)
 - iii. Jesus is “in the midst of” (v 13) the church, holding us up, speaking to us words of comfort, showing us the way – Jesus is with us always (Matt 28:20)



REVELATION REVISITED – Rev 2 & 3

Letters to the Seven Churches

Outline

1. *Greeting*: “to ... write...”
2. *Christ*: “these are the words of...” – descriptions of Jesus Christ
3. *Commendation*: “I know your works...”
4. *Critique*: “I have against you...”
5. *Challenge*: “Repent...otherwise...”
6. *Promise*: “those who conquer...”
 - a. Greek, “conquer,” *nikan* – Roman goddess of military victory, “*Nike*,” Rome worshipped conquest, Julius Caesar, “I came. I saw. I conquered.”
 - b. Revelation – different vision of “conquer,” overcoming oppression, remaining faithful to Christ in midst of persecution (Rev 12:11) – Jesus, the Lamb, conquers in sacrificial, triumphant, life-giving love, God’s healing power (Rev 5:5-6)
7. *Call*: “Listen...” (Matt 13:9; Mark 4:9; Luke 14:35)

Context

- A. Cities significant in the Early Church, *e.g.*
 1. Ephesus
 - a. Ministry of Paul, Apollos, Priscilla and Aquila (Acts 18-20); *Ephesians*
 - b. associated with Apostle John and Mary, mother of Jesus (John 19:25-27)
 4. Thyatira – hometown of Lydia, met Paul in Philippi (Acts 16:14-15); *Philippians*
 7. Laodicea – *Colossians* also intended for church in Laodicea, including house church lead by Nympha (Col 4:13-16)
- B. Cities significant in the Roman Empire – wealthy centers of trade and commerce; center of Greco-Roman deity worship; centers of Emperor worship/imperial cult
 1. Ephesus – major port; home to the Roman appointed governor; center for worship of Greek goddess *Artemis*
 2. Smyrna – major port; temple to Emperor Tiberius (ruled 14 – 37 AD)
 3. Pergamum – cultural center with large library; center for imperial cult; site of altar to *Zeus*, worship of Greek god *Asclepius*, medicine (snake staff basis of AMA symbol)

4. Thyatira
 - a. on major trade route, commercial center known for trade guilds, metalworking ('feet like bronze') and dyeing industry (Lydia, "dealer in purple cloth")
 - b. Greek god *Apollo*, son of *Zeus*, patron deity of city ("son of god")
5. Sardis
 - a. known for wealth, "rich as Croesus" (king, 6th century BC), and royal archives
 - b. twice captured by surprise attack (like "thief in night") - Cyrus of Persia, ca 547 BC (Ezra 1:1-11); Alexander the Great of Greece, 334 BC
6. Philadelphia - founded in 2nd century BC to spread Greek culture
7. Laodicea
 - a. center for banking, finance, clothing manufacturing ("white robes") - used own finances to rebuild after 61 AD earthquake ("you say, 'I am rich'")
 - b. medical school known for eye ointments ("salve for your eyes")
 - c. drinkable water came via aqueduct from cold springs six miles north; also known for nearby Hierapolis hot springs ("neither cold nor hot")

Letters

1. **Ephesus** (2:1-7)

- v 4, *critique* - 'abandoned first love' ... love of God? (but see vs 2-3); love for each other?; love that inspires sharing the gospel in word and deed?
- v 6, *commendation* - 'hate works of the Nicolaitans' (see Pergamum, Rev 2:14-15)
- v 7, *promise* - reference to the Garden of Eden, God's restoration of creation, healing and life (Gen 2:9, 3:22; Rev 22:2, 14, 19)

2. **Smyrna** (2:8-11)

- v 9, *commendation* - not engaging in city's wealth; enduring slander from "synagogue of Satan" (3:9), not Jewish people, assembly of those against Christians
- v 10, *promise* - "crown" - Jesus' crown of thorns (John 19:2,5); wreath for athletic contest winner (1 Cor 9:2); appreciation for exceptional service (James 1:12, I Peter 5:4)
- v 11, *promise* - "not be harmed by the second death" - "second death" not in NT outside Rev (20:6, 20:14, 21:8) - St. Gregory of Nyssa (335-395 AD, Cappadocian Father), painful process of purification after death

3. **Pergamum** (2:12-17)

v 12, *Christ* – has the sharp two-edged sword (Rev 1:16), truth against falsehood

v 13, *commendation* – enduring where “Satan’s throne” is, imperial cult temple; did not deny faith, even with martyrdom of Antipas

vs 14-15, *critique*

- some hold “teaching of Balaam” (Numbers 22-24, 31) – Hebrew *bela* (conquer), *ha’am* (people) – food sacrificed to idols and sexual immorality (Acts 15:29; 1 Cor 8)

some hold “teaching of the Nicolaitans” (Rev 2:6), Greek *nike* (conquer), *laos* (people)

v 17, *promise*

- “hidden manna” – God’s provision (Exodus 16); Jesus himself, “Bread of Life” (John 6)

- “white stone” with new name – *tessera*, inscribed with words or symbols, used in ancient Rome – designates “innocent” in court; ticket for admission; identification– new name for new people (Isaiah 62:1-4; Rev 21:1-4)

4. **Thyatira** (2:18-28)

v 18, *Christ*, Son of God – the true and only God, God incarnate, the Lord

- confession of who Jesus is: the Christ, the Messiah, the Savior (Matt 16:16; Mark 8:27; Luke 19:20; John 11:27)

- eyes like flames, feet like bronze (Rev 1:14-15)

v 19, *commendation* – love, faith, service, patient endurance, ‘last works greater than first’

v 20-21, *critique* – tolerate “Jezebel” (1 Kings 16-21) – false prophet

vs 22-25, *challenge* – metaphor, not literal

- “Jezebel” sexual immorality metaphor for idolatry, unfaithfulness to spouse as image of unfaithfulness to God (Hosea 9:1; Matt 12:39); “children” metaphor for product of unfaithfulness to God: sin, evil, violence

- “the deep things of Satan” – “Jezebel” false teaching; cult; imperial worship

vs 26-28, *promise*

- “authority to rule over the nations,” Messianic language (Psalm 2); Christ has received authority (John 17:1-3; Matt 28:18-20; Phil 2:5-11)

- “morning star” is Jesus (Rev 22:16; 2 Peter 1:19; Num 24:17) – not *Venus*: planet, claimed as Rome’s ancestor, praised for conquests; Roman goddess

5. **Sardis** (3:1-6)

v 4, *commendation* – a few not “soiled their clothes” – “clothed” in Christ (Gal 3:27), in new life (1 Cor 15:53-54; Eph 4:24; Col 3:10), in compassion (Col 3:12)

v 5, *promise* – clothed in “white robes” (Rev 7:9); name not blotted out of “book of life” (Rev 20:12); Christ confess name before God the Father and angels (Matt 10:32)

vs 2-3, *challenge* – “obey what you have hear,” “repent,” “wake up – or Christ will come “like a thief” (see The Rapture below)

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

v 7, *Christ* – “the holy one, the true one”

has the “key of David” – Jesus is “root” (origin) *and* “descendant” of King David (Rev 5:5, Rev 22:16; Isaiah 1:1-11; Jer 33:15; Matt 22:41-46;)

opens and no one shuts, shuts and no one opens (Isaiah 22:22; Matt 16:19; Rev 1:18)

vs 8-10, *commendation* – little power, but kept Christ’s word and did not deny his name, despite opposition from “synagogue of Satan” (Rev 2:9)

v 11, *challenge* – “hold fast to what you have” so no one take crown (Rev 2:10)

v 12, *promise* – pillar in temple of God (Psalm 144:12; Jer 1:18; Gal 2:9), with inscription of God’s name (Rev 2:17) – new Jerusalem (Rev 21:1-4)

7. **Laodicea** (3:14-22)

v 14, *Christ* – “the Amen” (Greek, ‘so be it’); “the faithful and true witness” (Rev 1:5); “origin of God’s creation” (John 1:1-5)

vs 15-17, *critique*

- neither hot nor cold, lukewarm, so spit out – not healing (like hot springs), not pleasing (like cold springs) – problem not indifference, problem not being of benefit
- say ‘rich, prospered, need nothing,’ but really “wretched, pitiable, poor, blind, and naked” – critique of arrogant self-sufficiency

vs 18-20, *challenge*

- buy from Christ “gold refined by fire” and be rich, “white robes” and be clothed, ‘eye ointment’ and see
- “I reprove and discipline those whom I love” (Prov 3:12), therefore repent
- “I stand at the door and knock” – fellowship with Christ [Warner Sallman painting]

The Rapture

Details of the rapture, “must be pieced together from various passages of Scripture”

- Tim LaHaye (quoted in Rossing, p 21)

- ~ Church from Pentecost through 1830's – Christ will return, once (Matt 26:64; Luke 21:27; John 14:1-5; Acts 1:11; Rev 1:7), the second coming (incarnation is 'first coming')
- ~ John Nelson Darby (1800-1882), “dispensationalism” – Christ will return, twice – *once, to “rapture” his church, again to establish his kingdom on earth (the second coming)*
- ~ Popularized by Scofield Reference Bible, Moody Bible Institute, Dallas Theological Seminary, Hal Lindsay, Tim LaHaye and Jerry Jenkins *Left Behind* series – push back against scientific worldview

Piecing together Scripture

- 1) “Then we who are alive, who are left, will be *caught up* [Latin translation, *raptio*, of Greek word, *harpagēsometha*, meaning “seized”] in the clouds together with them to meet the Lord in the air; and so we will be with the Lord forever.” (1Thess 4:17)
 - **Paul is describing the resurrection of the saints and the second coming** – early church believed Christ's second coming was imminent, Paul assures the Thessalonians that those who had died hadn't missed it
- 2) “...while we wait for the blessed hope *and the* manifestation of the glory of our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ.” (Titus 2:13) – “and the” indicates seven year gap between “blessed hope” (the rapture) and the “Glorious Appearing” (when Jesus establishes his earthly kingdom in Jerusalem)
 - **none of this is in the biblical text**
- 3) Christ will return “like a thief in the night” (Matt 24:43-44; 1 Thessalonians 5:1-7; 2 Peter 3:8-13; Rev 3:3, Rev 16:15) – 1972 film, *A Thief in the Night*
 - **these passages refers to the second coming of Jesus – not ‘the rapture’**
- 4) “Then two will be in the field; one will be taken and one will be left.” (Matt 24:40) – contrast between those ‘taken’ in rapture, and those ‘*Left Behind*’ for judgment
 - **Jesus is saying the opposite** – contrast between those ‘taken’ in judgement (“swept away” by the flood, Matt 24:39), and those ‘left behind’ because watchful
 - in same passage, Jesus says, “**But about that day and hour no one knows, neither the angels of heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father.**” (Matt 24:36)



REVELATION REVISITED – Rev 4 & 5

Visions of God and the Lamb

Chapters 4 & 5 – the “central and centering vision” of Revelation (Gorman, 102)

- ▲ Two images guide Revelation: throne of God and Lamb of God
 - God the Creator reigns and Jesus Christ, the faithful, slaughtered Lamb reigns
 - Christ has conquered through sacrificial, triumphant, life-giving love
- ▲ God and the Lamb are worthy of worship
 - the Triune God – Father, Son, Holy Spirit – is the source, sustainer, center of life
 - the Triune God alone is the Lord (Gen 1:1; Psalm 96; Isa 44:6; John 1:1-5; Rev 4:11)
Shema – “Hear, O Israel: The LORD is our God, the LORD alone.” (Deut 6:4)
1st and Greatest Commandment – Love God (Ex 20:1-3; Deut 6:5; Mark 12:29-31)
- ▲ Heaven as a temple – place of worship in the presence of the Triune God
- ▲ Worship – revere, honor, serve God – “*Anything on which your heart relies and depends, I say, that is really your God.*” – Martin Luther, *1st Commandment explanation, Large Catechism*

Rev 4 – Worshipping God

Throne Room of God

- ▲ throne represents power, rule, majesty of the Lord God – earlier prophetic traditions, especially during Babylonian Captivity (Ezek 1:1-18; Isa 6:1; Dan 7:9)
 - ▲ throne room scenes common in ancient world – Greco-Roman gods; Roman emperors
- vs 1-2 – John sees door open in heaven (Matt 3:16, John 1:51, Acts 7:56)
- Jesus (Rev 1:12-13) calls John to “come up here”
 - John “in the Spirit” (Rev 1:10) sees “one seated on the throne”
- v 3 – God “looks like” jasper and carnelian; rainbow like emerald around throne
- metaphors for the majesty of God
 - precious stones on breastplate of Temple high priest (Rev 21:19-20; Ex 28:17)
- vs 5-6 – thunder and lightning – *theophany*, Mount Sinai (Ex 19:16)
- seven torches (Zech 4:2) are “seven spirits of God” (Rev 1:4)
 - “sea of glass, like crystal”
 - God rules the cosmos – sea represented chaos (Gen 1:7; Job 38:8; Mark 4:41)
 - bronze “sea” of Temple – basin for priests’ ritual washing (1 Kings 7:23-44)

Worshippers of God

v 4 – “twenty-four elders” – fullness of God’s people (Rev 21:11-14)

- leaders of 24 families of Temple priests organized by David (I Chronicles 24)
- 12 tribes of Israel + 12 Apostles of Jesus – fullness of God’s people
- on thrones, dressed in white robes (Rev 3:5, 3:18, 7:14), wearing golden crowns (Rev 2:10, 3:11, 14:14) – elders are sanctified and rule with God
- worship God throughout Revelation (Rev 5:5-14, 7:9-12, 11:16-18, 14:1-3, 19:4-8)

vs 6-8 – “four living creatures” (Ezek 1) – fullness of earthly creatures and heavenly beings

- “like a” ...lion; ox; human face; eagle – earthly creatures
 - powerful animals, symbols of power
 - range of terrestrial animals – wild, domestic, human, bird
- covered “with eyes” (Ezek 1:18) and “six wings” (Ezek 1:11) – heavenly beings
 - *cherubim* (Ezek 10) – living throne/chariot of God (Num 7:89; 1 Sam 4:4; Ps 18:10), represented in Temple (Ex 25:16-21; I Kings 6:21-25)
 - *seraphim* (Ezek 1) – Hebrew, “burning ones,” God’s refining fire (Isa 6:1-8)
- worship God throughout Revelation (Rev 5:5-14, 7:9-12, 14:1-3, 19:4-8)
- participate in later judgments (Rev 6:1-8, 15:7-8)

Worshipping God

The Lord God is the one...

v 8 – *to worship continuously, “day and night without ceasing”*

v 9 – *to “give glory and honor and thanks”*

vs 9, 10 – *“who is seated on the throne”*

vs 9, 10 – *“who lives forever and ever”*

v 10 – *to “fall before” and “cast crowns” before – indicates surrender*

v 8 – Hymn of Praise – ancient and contemporary liturgy

- “Holy, holy, holy” (Isaiah 6:3)
 - Greek, *trisagion*, ‘three holy’ – “Holy God, Holy and Mighty, Holy and Immortal, have mercy on us”
 - “Holy, Holy, Holy, Lord God Almighty” (ELW 413)
- “the Lord God, the Almighty” (Rev 1:4, 8)
- “who was and is and is to come” (Rev 1:8)

v 11 – Hymn of Praise – ancient and contemporary liturgy

- “You are worthy, our Lord and God” (John 20:28) – as opposed to Roman Emperor Domitian, who desired to be worshipped as “lord and god”
- “to receive glory and honor and power” (Rev 1:6, 5:12; I Chron 29:11; Isa 40:25-31)
- “for you created all things, and by your will they existed and were created” (Gen 1; Psalm 24; John 1)

Rev 5 – Worshipping the Lamb, Jesus

Who is Worthy to Open the Scroll?

vs 1 – John sees the sealed scroll

- in the “right hand” of God – right hand represents power and authority
- written ‘on inside and back’ and “sealed with seven seals” – complete concealment
 - ancient world – legal documents, papyrus roll with wax seal of witnesses
 - God’s plan to judge and save the world (Eze 2:9-10; Isa 29:11-14; Dan 12:4-9)

vs 2-4 – John weeps because no one “in heaven or on earth or under the earth” (Rev 5:13; Phil 2:5-11) is worthy and able to break the seals, open the scroll, look into it

- ancient world – scrolls opened only by those to whom addressed or officials
- worthy and able to communicate God’s plan to judge and save the world

Jesus, the Lion and the Lamb

v 5 – Jesus, the Lion – elder says to John, “do not weep,” and tells him to see...

- the “Lion of the tribe of Judah” (Gen 49:9-10), the “Root of David” (Rev 22:16; Isa 11:1-10, David’s father, Jesse; Rom 15:12)
 - lion, ‘king,’ strongest in animal kingdom
 - hope for king, “anointed one” – Hebrew, *Messiah*; Greek, *Christ* – line of David (Jer 23:5; Isa 9:7; Ezek 37:24-25) – Jesus (Matt 21:9; Luke 2:10-11; Acts 13:22-23)
- “has conquered” (*nike*) – through sacrificial, triumphant, life-giving love (Rev 2-3)

v 6 – Jesus, the Lamb – John looks for the Lion and sees...

- the “Lamb standing as if slaughtered”
 - lamb, most vulnerable in animal kingdom, often victims of lions
 - Passover Lamb (Ex 12:1-28) – Jesus (John 1:29)
 - Suffering Servant (Isa 53:1-12) – Jesus (1 Peter 2:24)

- Jesus still bears the marks of his crucifixion after his resurrection (John 20:24-27) – slaughtered but standing, crucified but risen, dead but alive forever (Rev 1:18)
- between throne and creatures and “among the elders” – Jesus is the center
- with “seven horns” – symbols of rulers (Dan 8:1-27; Ezek 34:20-24; Zech 1:17-21) – Jesus has full power
- and “seven eyes” (“eyes of the Lord,” Zech 4:10), “which are seven spirits of God” (Rev 1:4) – symbols of perception – Jesus has full wisdom

“Lamb power” (Rossing, 109-113)

- evil is not defeated by violence, but by Jesus’ suffering love on the cross
 - Luther’s “theology of the cross” – cross is where God most fully reveals God’s self
 - Paul – God’s power made manifest in weakness (1 Cor 1:22-31; 2 Cor 12:10; Phil 2:1-11)
- v 7 – Jesus takes the scroll

Jesus, the Lion, the Lamb, the Lord

Jesus is the Lord God

worship of God in Rev 4 = worship of the Lamb in Rev 5

Ever-expanding Hymns of Praise – ancient and contemporary liturgy

- *This is the Feast* (ELW p 101); *Sanctus* (ELW p 108)
- *We Fall Down*, Chris Thomlin

vs 8-10 – Hymn of Praise (1) – offered by...

- four living creatures and twenty-four elders “fall before” the Lamb (Rev 4:10)
 - harp, associated with Psalms of praise (Psalm 33:2, 81:2, 150:3)
 - “golden bowls full of incense,” which are “prayers of the saints” (Psalm 141:2; Rev 8:3-4; Rev 15:7, bowl of “wrath”?)
 - sing a “new song,” offered to God (Isa 42:10; Psalm 40:3, 96:1, 98:1, 144:9)
- Jesus worthy and able to open scroll *because* slaughtered
 - and by his blood ransomed (1 Cor 6:19-20; Titus 2:14; 1 Peter 1:18-20) for God
 - saints from “every tribe and language and people and nation” (Dan 7:14; Isa 9:6-7 and Luke 2:10-11; Acts 2:1-13)
 - “a kingdom and priests” serving God, reigning on earth (Ex 19:3-6; 1 Peter 2:9-10)

vs 11-12 – Hymn of Praise (2) – offered by...

- multitudes of “many angels” (Dan 7:10; Psalm 148:2; Luke 2:13-14, “heavenly host”)
- seven praises Jesus worthy to receive: power and wealth, wisdom and might, honor and glory and blessing (Rev 4:11; 1 Chronicles 29:10-13; I Peter 3:21-22)

vs 13-14 – Hymn of Praise (3) – offered by...

- every creature “in heaven and on earth and under the earth and in the sea” (Rev 5:3; Ex 20:11; Psalm 96; Phil 2:5-11)
- “To the one seated on the throne and to the Lamb be blessing and honor and glory and might forever and ever” – “Amen!” (Greek, ‘so be it’)



REVELATION REVISITED – Rev 6 – 20

Visions of Judgment and Salvation

Notes on Revelation's Visions of Judgment (Gorman, 138-140)

- ▲ Do not conflict with the visions of God and Jesus, the Lamb (Rev 4 & 5)
- ▲ “Should be understood as symbols, rather than depictions, of divine activity” – envisions “the universality and finality of God’s ultimate eradication of evil *rather than the means by which God brings about that eradication*” (Gorman, 153)
- ▲ Judgment proceeds from God *in the sense that* “the rejection of the divine gift of life carries with it inherent deadly consequences” – ‘violence begets violence’
- ▲ God desires repentance of those who worship false gods and those who do evil (Gorman, 154)
 - “repent” – call to the Seven Churches (2:5, 16, 21-22; 3:3, 19)
 - during judgments, people “did not repent” (9:20-21; 16:9, 11)
- ▲ Prophecy in Revelation – not about predicting the future, about worship¹
 - false prophets call people to worship false gods (2:30, 16:13-14)
 - true prophets call people to worship true God (11:3, 19:10) – “Worship God! For the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy.” (19:10)
- ▲ Time in Revelation – “the time is near” (1:3, 22:10) – written approx 1900 years ago
 - *chronos* (Greek) – chronological or sequential time – minutes, days, years...
 - *kairos* (Greek) – the right, proper, or opportune moment
- ▲ Intended primarily for the Church
 - written by and for people suffering severe persecution
 - message of challenge and hope (Letter to the Seven Churches, Rev 2 & 3)

God will defeat imperial evil and heal the suffering it causes

“Goodness is stronger than evil. Love is stronger than hate.

Light is stronger than darkness. Life is stronger than death.

Victory is ours through God who loves us.” *Bishop Desmond Tutu*

¹ Craig R. Koester, Luther Seminary, *Enter the Bible: Revelation*

The Seven Seals - Rev 6:1-16; 8:1-5

vs 1-8 - 'The Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse' (Seals 1, 2, 3, 4) - John sees...

- OT visions of God's judgment, *if do not repent* (Ezek 14:21; Jer 15:1-4; Zech 6:1-8)
- escalating suffering caused by military conflict - conquest, war, famine, death
 - *white horse* - white/victory - bow and arrow - *conquest* (Roman god, *nike*) - also Parthia, archenemies of Rome, known for equestrian and archery skills
 - *red horse* - red/blood - sword - takes peace, breakdown of relationships - *war*
 - *black horse* - black/death - pair of scales - *famine*
 - pair of scales - used to weigh food in marketplace
 - 'denarius' for small amounts of wheat and barley - extremely overpriced staples
 - 'do not damage olive oil and wine' - grace note? vineyards and olive groves take years to grow back
 - *pale green horse*, "rider's name was *Death*," with *Hades* (Greek, *place of the dead*) - sword, famine, pestilence (deadly disease), wild animals

vs 9-11 - 'The Martyrs' (Seal 5)

- "slaughtered" for the word of God and for their "testimony" (Greek, *martyria*)
- seen "under the altar" - place of sacrifice
- cry out to God for justice - 'how long, O Lord' (Gen 4:10; Zech 1:12; Hab 1:2; Ps 13:1, 35:17, 74:10, 82:2) - do not seek revenge (Lev 19:18; Prov 20:22; Matt 5:38-48; Rom 12:19-21; 1 Peter 3:8-17)
- each given a white robe (Rev 3:4-5, 7:9, 19:11), told to rest, until number of fellow martyrs fulfilled - "great cloud of witnesses" (Heb 11:1-12:13)

vs 12-17 - 'The Day of Wrath' (Seal 6)

- OT apocalyptic image, "Day of the Lord," time when God will come and bring justice, accompanied by natural disasters...
 - earthquake (Joel 2:10, Amos 8:8, Haggai 2:6)
 - sun as black as mourning clothes; moon as red as blood (Joel 2:31; Ezek 32:7; Isa 50:3)
 - stars fall to the earth (Isa 13:10; Matt 24:29)
 - sky rolled up like a scroll (Isa 34:4)
 - every mountain and island moved from its place (Isa 54:10; Jer 4:24)
- human reaction

- “rich and powerful,” “everyone,” “slave and free” – *seven* descriptions, all humanity
- hide (Isa 2:10-22), call on rocks to fall and hide them (Hosea 10:8, Luke 23:30)
- from “the one seated on the throne” (Rev 4) and the “wrath of the Lamb” (Rev 5) – only reference to the “wrath of the Lamb” in Rev, spoken by those trying to hide
- who is able to stand when “the great day of their wrath” comes? (Joel 2:11; Mal 3:2; Ps 76:7) – the answer follows in Rev 7

Salvation Interlude – Rev 7:1-17

▲ “Salvation Interludes” (Rossing, 130-131; Gorman 144-145)

- a ‘break in the action’ to temper the horrific visions
- center on the salvation of God’s people in the midst of God’s judgment on evil

▲ Seven: Rev 7:1-17; 10:1-10; 11:1-14; 14:1-5; 14:6-20; 19:1-10; 20:1-6

vs 1-3 – Servants of God Sealed by God – John sees...

- “four angels” at “four corners of the earth” holding back “the four winds”
 - belief earth is flat; four corners the “ends of the earth”
 - “four winds” associated with judgment (Zech 6:1-7; Jer 49:36; Matt 24:31)
- another angel with “the seal of the living God”
 - the God who lives and gives life (Rev 1:17-18; Gen 1:1-2:7; Isa 44:1-28; Dan 6:26; Matt 16:13-10; Luke 20:37-38; Acts 14:15)
 - “seal” indicates belonging (Rev 3:12; John 6:27; 2 Cor 1:21-22, Eph 1:11-14)
 - on forehead (Rev 14:1, 22:4; Ezek 9:4) – *phylacteries*, small box holding Scripture, placed on forehead during prayer (Ex 13:9, 16; Deut 6:8, 11:18)
 - opposite of ‘the mark of the beast’ (Rev 13:16-17, 19:20)

vs 4-8 – 144,000 (Rev 14:1-5) – John hears (not sees) number of those sealed...

- “roll call” of the *nonviolent* army of God’s servants? (battalions of 1000)
- not a literal number (likely not even 144,000 Christians at this time)
 - represents vast number of the people of God (Rev 7:9)
 - 12 (fullness of God’s people) x 12 (tribes of Israel) x 1000 (large quantity)
- slightly different list of 12 sons of Jacob/Israel (Gen 35:23-26) – Judah listed first, tribe of David and Jesus (Rev 5:5)

vs 9-12 – Heavenly Worship – John sees...

- “great multitude” worship God and the Lamb

- “from every nation, tribe, people, and language” (Rev 5:9, 14:6, 21:24, 22:2)
- robed in white (Rev 3:5, 4:4, 6:11)
- with palm branches – used to hail victorious kings (John 12:13)
- declaring “salvation belongs to our God who is seated on the throne and to the Lamb” (Rev 4-5)

- “angels” and “elders” and “four living creatures” worship God (Rev 4-5)

vs 13-17 – The Martyrs – an elder (Rev 5:5) explains who those are “robed in white”

- “have come out of the great *ordeal*” – Greek, *thlephis*, trouble that inflicts distress, oppression, affliction, *tribulation*
 - not specific time, e.g. seven years
 - condition in this broken world, persecution, suffering (Rev 1:9, 2:9-10, 2:22)
- “have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb”
 - blood indicates both the *death* and the *life* of Jesus
 - Christ, the Lamb (Ex 12:1-28; Isa 53:1-12; John 1:29) frees us from sin and death by his blood (Rev 1:5, 1:9; Acts 20:28; Heb 9:11-14; 1 Peter 1:18-19; 1 John 1:5-9)
- worship God “day and night” (Rev 4:8) within his temple,” and God “will shelter them”
 - “shelter” – Greek *skinao*, live, dwell, *tabernacle* (Rev 21:3; Isa 4:5-6; John 1:14)
 - Jesus is the new temple (Rev 21:22; John 2:13-22) – the Lord present with the people
- experience the Lord’s *shalom*, peace, wellbeing
 - no more hunger, thirst, sun strike, scorching heat (Isa 49:6-10, 55:1-8; Ps 121; John 4:13-14, 6:35)
 - for Jesus, the Lamb
 - “will be their shepherd” (Ps 23; Isa 40:9-11; Matt 2:6; John 10:7-18; I Peter 5:1-4)
 - and will “guide them to springs of the water of life” (Rev 22:1; Isa 44:3; John 4:14)
 - and “God will wipe away every tear from their eyes.” (Rev 21:4; Isa 25:8; John 21)



REVELATION REVISITED – Rev 6 – 20

The Seven Trumpets – Rev 8:1 - 9:21

- ▲ Seven Trumpets & Seven Bowls (Bauckham, 20)
 - suggest “worst experiences and worst fears of wars and natural disasters” of John’s contemporaries – plagues in Egypt (Exodus 7-14); invading armies like locusts (Joel 1-2); fear of invasion by Parthians; earthquakes; eruption of Vesuvius (79 AD) – inflated by John “to apocalyptic proportions” and “cast in biblically allusive terms”
 - point is not to predict a sequence of events; point is to “explore the meaning of the divine judgment which is impending on the sinful world”
- ▲ Limits to the destruction – Seals (1/4); Trumpets (1/3) – call to repentance for those who worship false gods and those who do evil (Rev 2:5, 16, 21-22; 3:3, 19; Rev 16:9, 1)
- v 1 – Silence (Seal 7) for “about half an hour” (Isa 41:1; Zeph 1:7; Zech 2:13)
- v 2 – *seven* angels with *seven* trumpets – trumpets: gather people; announce arrival of royalty, fanfare; sound the alarm, warning; call to battle, charge
 - associated with God acting in human history (Ex 19:16-19; Joel 2:1; Jer 4:5; Matt 24:29-31; I Cor 15:51-58)
 - musical instrument used in Temple worship (2 Chron 5:15; Ezra 3:10; Ps 98:6)
- vs 3-6 – angel with golden censer (container in which incense is burned)
 - incense is the “prayers of the saints” (Rev 5:8; Ps 141:2) – golden altar of incense in the Temple, burned before first and after last sacrifices of the day (Ex 30:1-10)
 - angel throws censer on the earth (Ezek 10:1-5) – ‘thunder, lightning, earthquake’ – “Day of the Lord” when God brings justice (6th Seal, Rev 6:12-17) – answer to the prayers of the saints?
- v 7 – Hail and fire (1st Trumpet), *earth* – Ex, 7th plague (Ex 9:22-26)
- vs 8-9 – Sea became blood (2nd Trumpet), *sea* – Ex, 1st plague (Ex 7:14-25)
- vs 10-11 – Rivers & springs bitter (3rd Trumpet), *fresh waters* – Ex, 1st plague (Ex 7:14-25) – “star named Wormwood” – symbol of bitterness
 - plant *artemisia*, known for bitter taste (Prov 5:4; Lam 3:19) – ancient world, used to treat intestinal worms – modern world, used in absinthe
 - ‘bitter water’ associated with God’s judgment (Ex 15:22-25; Jer 9:15, 23:15; Amos 5:7)
- v 12 – Sun, moon, stars struck (4th Trumpet), *heavenly bodies* – Ex, 9th plague (Ex 10:21-23)

v 13 – an eagle who cries “woe, woe, woe”

- one of the four living creatures “like a flying eagle” (Rev 4:7)
- “woe” – Greek, *ouia*, “interjection denoting pain or displeasure,” English ‘ouch’ – God’s expression of lament (Rossing, 128-9)

Rev 9:1-12 – Locusts from the bottomless pit (5th Trumpet/ 1st Woe)

vs 1-2 – the fallen star and the bottomless pit

- “star that had fallen from heaven to earth” – Wormwood (Rev 8:10-11)?; Abaddon/ Apollyon (Rev 9:11)?; angel of God (Rev 20:1)?
- “given the key to the...bottomless pit”
 - Greek, *abussos*, “abyss, depth, netherworld,” place of the dead (Luke 8:31; Rom 10:7)
 - Jewish apocalyptic lit, place where evil angels are bound – place for beast (Rev 11:7, 17:8) and dragon (Rev 20:1-3) – evil contained

vs 3-11 – the locusts – Ex, 8th plague (Ex 10:12-15) – destructive force

- literally – insects devastated crops, could darken sky (v 3); life span five months (v 5)
- figuratively – invading armies (Joel 1:4-12, 3:9-12) – like scorpions (v 5, 10) – like battle horses (Joel 2:1-11; Rev 6:1-8) with human faces (v 7)
- ‘king over them angel of bottomless pit’ – Greek *Apollyon*, Hebrew *Abaddon*, “destroyer” – Hebrew *Sheol* (Job 26:6, 28:22, Prov 15:11, Ps 88:11), Greek, *Hades* – place of the dead

v 12 – “woes,” expressions of lament – last three trumpets are three woes

vs 13-19 – Plagues (6th Trumpet / 2nd Woe)

- “four horns of the golden altar” – Temple altar (Ex 27:1-2); martyrs (Rev 6:9-11, 8:3-5)
- “four angels” (Rev 7:1-3) “bound at great river Euphrates” – evil angels unleashed – boundary of the Promised Land (Gen 15:18) & between Roman and Parthian territories
- 200 million riders on horses (Rev 6:1-8, 9:7-11); heads like lions’ heads (Rev 4:7); tails like scorpions (Rev 9:3); breathing fire – symbolic language

vs 20-21 – yet the “rest of humankind” did not repent – of their sin against God and others

- “works of their hands,” demon and idol worship (Ex 20:1-6; Deut 4:28; Ps 135:15; Isa 2:8, 37:18-20, 44:6-20; Jer 1:6; Dan 5:23; 1 Cor 10:20)
- *vice list* (Rev 21:8, 22:15; Matt 15:18-20; 1 Cor 6:9-11; Gal 5:19-24; Eph 5:1-11; 1 Peter 4:3) – “murders,” “sorceries” (Greek, “magic potions, poison”), “fornication” (Greek, “sexual immorality,”), “thefts”

Salvation Interlude: the Little Scroll - Rev 10:1-11

- ▲ 2nd of 7 “Salvation Interludes” (Rossing, 130-131; Gorman 144-145) - break between the 6th & 7th Trumpet (as Rev 7:1-17 break between 6th & 7th Seal) - giving people the opportunity to repent of their sin against God and others
- ▲ ‘Eating the scroll’ (Ezek 2:8-3:11; Jer 15:16; Ps 119:97-104) - the ‘sweet’ and ‘bitter’ work of being a prophet, speaking the hopeful and challenging words of the Lord

vs 1-7 - the angel brings The Little Scroll

- “mighty angel” - angels are messengers and agents of a higher power - “coming down from heaven, wrapped in a cloud” (v 1) - indicates presence of God / coming of Jesus
 - cloud (Ex 13:21, 19:9; Ps 78:12-16; Neh 9:9-15 / Matt 17:5; Dan 7:13-14)
 - rainbow (Rev 4:1-5, Ezek 1:26-28)
 - face like sun (/ Rev 1:16; Matt 17:2) & feet like pillars of fire (/ Rev 1:14-15)
 - ‘foot on sea and land’ - magnitude of God’s domain
 - ‘voice like lion’ (Joel 3:16; Hosea 11:1), ‘seven thunders’ (Ex 19:19; John 12:29)
- “little scroll [*biblapedion*]” - “scroll” [*biblia*] the Lamb is worthy to open (5:1-8)?
 - God’s plan to judge and save the world (Eze 2:9-10; Isa 29:11-14; Dan 12:1-13)
 - scroll is “open” - accessible to prophet John
- “voice from heaven” - Jesus (Rev 1:10-11) - tells John not to write down (Dan 12:1-13)
- angel raises right hand and “swears by” - ancient and modern practice of testimony
 - God “who lives forever and ever” (Rev 1:17-18, 4:9, 7:11-12)
 - God “who created” heaven, earth, sea, and what is in them (Rev 4:11, 14:7; 21:1-5)
- that ‘with the seventh trumpet blow’ (11:15-19), “the mystery of God will be fulfilled”
 - 7th Trumpet - “kingdom of this world has become the kingdom of our Lord”
 - God and Jesus, the Messiah will defeat imperial evil and heal the suffering it causes
- as God “brought the good news [Greek, *eunggelizo*] to his servants, the prophets”

vs 8-11 - the prophet John eats the little scroll

- voice from heaven - Jesus (1:10-11) - tells John to ‘take and eat’ the scroll - hearing and receiving the word of God
- John told to prophecy about many “peoples and nations and languages and kings” (Rev 5:9, 7:9, 14:6, 21:24, 22:2) - called to speak God’s word to everyone; in contrast to Ezekiel, called only to speak to people of Israel (Ezek 3:1)

Salvation Interlude: the Two Witnesses - Rev 11:1-14

▲ 3rd of 7 "Salvation Interludes"

▲ "Two Witnesses"

- not predictions about two specific people in a specific time frame
- composite representatives of faithful prophets – past, present, and future – who speak and enact the word of the Lord in the midst of persecution

vs 1-2 – John given "a measuring rod like a staff" – building project

- measure "the temple of God and the altar and those who worship there"

- Ezekiel's vision (573 BC) of the restored Temple, to which the "glory of the Lord" returns (Ezek 40-44) – after first temple destroyed by Babylon (586 BC)
- Zechariah's vision (Zech 2:1-4) of the rebuilt Temple (approx 520 BC) – second temple destroyed by Rome (70 AD)
- Babylon and Rome, nations that "trample over the holy city"
- for "42 months," a limited time – 42 months is 3 ½ years (half of 7 years) – also 1260 days, time Two Witnesses prophecy (v 3)
- angle with "gold measuring rod" measures the new holy city (Rev 21:15), where God makes "his home among mortals" (Rev 21:1-5)

- Jesus is the new Temple, God dwelling with us now and forever (Rev 1:9-16, 21:22; Matt 28:19-20; John 1:1-14, 2:13-22; Col 2:9-10; Heb 1:1-4)

vs 3-6 – the Two Witnesses described

- "witnesses" – "faithful witness," Jesus (Rev 1:5, 3:4) and his followers (Rev 2:10, 2:13)
- "wearing sackcloth" – mourning clothes, especially for repentance (Rev 6:2; Isa 37:1-4; Dan 9:3; Jonah 3:5-10; Matt 11:21-22)
- "two olive trees" and "two lampstands" (Temple, Rev 1:12-13; Ex 25:31-37) – Zechariah's vision (Zech 4:1-14) of the rebuilt Temple (approx 520 BC), "two olive trees," Zerubbabel (governor) and Joshua (high priest) led Temple rebuilding effort

Moses and Elijah – "two witnesses," with extraordinary power – towering figures in OT

- represent "the law and the prophets," the people of Israel, the word of the Lord
- thought to return before the "Day of the Lord" (Deut 18:18; Malachi 4:5; Luke 1:7)
- present at transfiguration of Jesus (Matt 17:3; Mark 9:4; Luke 9:30)

- “fire pours from their mouths and consumes their foes”
 - Moses challenged 250 rebels against him, who were consumed by fire (Num 16:1-35)
 - Elijah called down fire on soldiers of Israelite King Ahaziah (2 Kings 1:1-10)
- authority to “shut the sky” and turn waters “into blood”
 - Moses struck Nile river and waters were “turned to blood,” 1st plague (Ex 7:14-25)
 - Elijah prophesied “neither dew nor rain these years” (1 Kings 17:1-7)

vs 7-10 – the Two Witnesses killed

- “the beast” from “bottomless pit” (Rev 9:1-2, 11) makes war, “conquers,” and kills them
 - first mention in Rev of “the beast” – evil power that wages war against God and the Lamb (Rev 13:1-19:21), and is ultimately defeated (Rev 20:1-15)
 - “conquers” (Greek, *nike*) – imperial evil
- bodies of the two witnesses lie in street of “great city” where Lord Jesus was crucified
 - Jerusalem, the “city that kills the prophets” (Luke 13:33-34)
 - “prophetically” [Greek, *pneumatikōs*, “spiritually”] called “Sodom” – symbolized wickedness (Gen 18:20; Isa 3:10-17; Jer 23:14-15; Matt 11:20-24 Luke 10:1-16) – “and Egypt” – imperial oppressor of God’s people (Exodus)
- “for 3 ½ days” – limited time (vs 2, 3); denied a proper burial (Ps 79:1-13) – tragic result of war; by “peoples, tribes, languages, nations” (Rev 10:11, 21:24, 22:2), who gloat and celebrate – unrepentant humankind (9:20-21)

vs 11-13 – the Two Witnesses risen

- “the breath of life from God,” brings them back to life – death is not the end
 - Greek *pneuma*, life-giving Spirit of God (Gen 2:7; Job 33:4; Acts 17:24-28)
 - resurrection of Jesus (Matt 28:1-20; Luke 24:1-52; John 20:1-31) & resurrection of God’s people (Rev 21-22; Ezek 37:1-14; John 11:1-44; Rom 8:1-39; I Cor 15:12-58)
- a “voice from heaven” calls them “come up here;” they ascend into heaven “in a cloud”
 - Jesus ascended into heaven “in a cloud” (Acts 1:9)
 - Elijah “ascended in a whirlwind into heaven” (2 Kings 2:11)
- “an earthquake” (Rev 6:12, 8:5, 11:19, 16:18) causes “a tenth of the city to fall” and “seven thousand” (a tenth of city inhabitants) are killed – the rest are “terrified and give glory to God” – they repent
- “second woe” passes; “third woe is coming very soon” (Rev 8:13, 9:12)

vs 15 – God Reigns (7th Trumpet / 3rd Woe) – “mystery of God” (Rev 10:5-7) is fulfilled

- “loud voices in heaven”
 - worship of God and the Lamb (Rev 4-5, 7:9-17)
 - fullness of heavenly and earthly beings – four living creatures, twenty-four elders (v 16), angels, multitudes, saints (v 18), martyrs
- “kingdom of this world has become the kingdom of our Lord and of his Messiah”
 - the promise of the Messiah (Ps 2, Isa 9:1-7, Dan 2:36-45, 7:1-28) – fulfilled in Jesus Christ (Rev 1:12-20; Matt 16:13-20; Mark 1:1; Luke 2:1-20; John 20:31)
 - age when God’s will is done on earth as it is in heaven (Matt 6:10)

kingdom of God – reality embodied and proclaimed by Jesus Christ

- “the range of God’s effective will, where God wants done is done” – we pray “thy kingdom come,” ask to come into our being (Dallas Willard, *Divine Conspiracy*, 25-26)
- “God’s good and gracious will comes about without our prayer, but we ask in this prayer that it may also come about in and among us” (Martin Luther, *Small Catechism*)

vs 16-18 – Song of Worship

- God is “almighty,” “who is and who was” (Rev 1:4, 1:8, 4:8)
- God brings justice – “time for judging the dead, for rewarding your servants”
 - OT, apocalyptic language of reward and punishment, written by and for people suffering injustice
 - “God’s kingdom means destruction of those forces that would destroy the world God made”²

v 19 – God’s “temple in heaven” opens and “the ark of his covenant was seen”

- ark was secluded in Most Holy Place (Ex 40:21; Lev 16:2; Num 7:89), now revealed to all
- ‘thunder, lightning, earthquake, hail’ (Rev 4:5, 6:12, 8:5, 16:18) – “Day of the Lord” when God brings justice (6th Seal, Rev 6:12-17)

² Craig R. Koester, Luther Seminary, *Enter the Bible: Revelation*



REVELATION REVISITED – Rev 6 – 20

The Cosmic Battle – Rev 12-20

- ▲ Reflects OT apocalyptic, prophetic, symbolic imagery – especially Daniel 7-12
- ▲ Visions, “portents” (Rev 12:1), signs – representations to aid present perception, not to predict future events
- ▲ Cosmic Battle between
 - God, the Holy Trinity, and God’s people – personified as a woman and her children – who exercise power in love and truth
 - and evil forces – personified as the “unholy trinity” of the dragon and two beasts, symbolizing Satan and the Roman Empire (Gorman, 123-4) – who exercise power in violence and lies – “either through the manipulation of force (militarism) or through the manipulation of words (propaganda)” – Eugene Peterson (in Gorman, 125)
- ▲ Historical Context – destructive imperial power
 - *Seleucid (Greek) Empire (196-166 BC)* – ruler Antiochus Epiphanes, “made war” against the Jewish people and committed “blasphemies against God” and the Temple (Rev 12:6; Dan 7:23-28) – set up a statue of Zeus and sacrificed a pig
 - *Roman Emperors: Augustus (27BC-14AD); Tiberius (14-37); Caligula (37-41); Claudius (41-54); Nero (54-68) – first widespread persecution of Christians; Galba, Otho, Vitellius (68-69); Vespasian (69-79); Titus (79-81) – as general, led siege on Jerusalem; Domitian (81-96)*
- ▲ Multifaceted Symbols in cosmic conflict
 - “a woman” = person/people of the Lord God
 - Israel (Ex 19:3-6; Isa 26:18-19; Micah 4:8-10)
 - Mary (Matt 1:18; Luke 1:27-2:39; John 2:1-11; Acts 1:14) – the mother of Jesus
 - Eve (Genesis 3:1-24) – the “mother of all living”
 - “her child”/“her children” = person/people of the Lord God
 - Jesus, the Messiah, the Lord (Rev 2:26-28, 19:11-16; Ps 2:1-11; Acts 13:32-34)
 - Followers of the Lord, “those who keep the commandments of God and hold to the testimony of Jesus” (Rev 12:17)
 - “a dragon” = “called the Devil and Satan” (Rev 12:9) – that which opposes God
 - “first beast” and “second beast” = imperial evil (Rev 17:9-14; Dan 7:1-8)
 - “a harlot” (contrast to “a woman”) = imperial evil, specifically Babylon/Rome (Rev 17:5-6)

God, a Woman and her Child, and a Dragon - Rev 12:1-17

Rev 12:1-6 - the woman, her child, and the dragon (part one)

vs 1-2 - woman - 'clothed with sun,' 'moon under feet' - symbols of divine authority (Gen 37:9; Ps 104:2; Isa 66:1); "crown of twelve stars" - fullness of God's people (Rev 1:20)

vs 3-4 - "great red dragon" - dragons in ancient and contemporary culture

- Babylonian myth, *Tiamat*, god of sea water, 'dragon,' represented primeval chaos
- *Leviathan*, sea monster subdued by God (Job 26:13, 41:1; Ps 74:14; Isa 26:20-27:1, 51:9)
- 'seven heads, ten horns, seven diadems' - traits of *Leviathan*; symbols of power (Dan 7:7)
- tail swept down "a third of the stars" (Dan 8:10) - battle with Michael (Rev 12:7-9)?
- described as... (Rev 12:9)
 - ancient serpent- tempts to evil (Gen 3:1-21; Isa 26:20-27:1; 2 Cor 11:3)
 - Devil - Greek, *diabolos*, "slanderer" (Matt 4:1-11; Luke 8:12; Acts 10:38)
 - Satan - Greek, *satanas*, "adversary" (Rev 2-3; Job 1-2; Zech 3:1-2; Matt 4:10; Rom 16:20)
 - deceiver of the whole world (John 8:44, "father of lies"; Acts 13:9-10)
 - devil seeks to "devour the child" (Matt 2:16; Acts 7:17-19; 1 Peter 5:8) - does not succeed

vs 5-6 - woman gives birth to a male child, who will rule nations with "rod of iron" (Ps 2:9; Isa 7:10-17; Luke 1:31) - Jesus Christ

- Jesus not *ultimately* harmed, "snatched away" to God and God's throne - ascension (Acts 1:9; Phil 2:5-11; Rev 5)

- Woman not *ultimately* harmed, "nourished" by God in "the wilderness"

- Jesus, Mary & Joseph (Matt 2:13-23) & Elijah (2 Kings 17:1-7)
- Israelites escape Egypt (Exodus); Egypt as "dragon" (Ps 74:14; Isa 51:9-10) - prophetic vision of new exodus before restoration (Isa 40:3; Hos 2:14; Matt 3:1-3)
- for "1260 days," 3½ years (Dan 12:3-13; Rev 11:2-3, 12:14) - limited time in wilderness

Rev 12:7-12 - the dragon defeated

vs 7-9- "war broke out in heaven" - when?

- Michael - archangel who defends God's people (Dan 10:13, 21, 12:1; Jude 1:9) - and his angels defeat Satan and his angels
- Satan and his angels - perhaps one third of angels, angels as "stars" in Rev 12:4? - "thrown down to the earth" (Isa 14:12-15; Luke 10:17-20; John 12:31)

v 10 - "Now have come" God's kingdom, salvation, power (Rev 1:4-8, 4:1-11, 7:9-12, 11:15-17)

and “the authority of his Messiah” (Rev 1:12-20, 5:1-14, 7:9-12, 11:15-17) - *‘now and the not yet’ of God’s reign*

v 11 – God’s people “have conquered” (Rev 2-3) Satan by...

- “the blood of the Lamb,” Jesus Christ
 - Jesus conquers all evil through his sacrificial, triumphant, life-giving love (Rev 5)
 - Jesus defeated death forever (Rev 21-22; Luke 20; John 11; Rom 8; I Cor 15)
 - Jesus forgave our sins; can no longer be “accused” (Matt 26:28; Rom 8:1; 1 John 1:1-9)
- “by the word of their testimony,” martyrdom
 - not Roman vision of conquest (*nike*), remaining faithful to Christ (Rev 2-3)
 - speaking the truth of Christ against deceptions of Satan
 - declaring “Jesus is Lord,” even at great cost

v 12 – “rejoicing” in heaven (7:13-17); “woe” on earth (8:13) – devil rages in face of his defeat
Rev 12:13-17 – the woman, her child, and the dragon (part two)

vs 12-14 – woman given “eagles wings” to fly into wilderness – image of God’s uplifting care
(Rev 12:5-6; Ex 19:4; Deut 32:10-12; Ps 55:6-7; Isa 40:29-31)

vs 15-16 – serpent pours from mouth “water like a river to sweep her away in the flood,” but earth helps woman by swallowing river (Ex 15:9-12) – literal and figurative (like locusts)

- destruction caused by rising rivers and floods
- OT, flood waters symbolize destruction and tribulation (Gen 6-9; Ps 32:6; Jer 47:2)

The Lord is with the woman/ people of God/ us as we “pass through the waters” (Isa 43:1-2)

v 17 – dragon makes war on the rest of woman’s children, “those who keep the commandments of God and hold the testimony of Jesus”

- humanity (children of Eve) suffers from and overcomes serpent (Gen 3:1-21)
- persecuting church is persecuting Jesus (Acts 9:1-19; Matt 25:31-46; 1 Cor 12:12-31)

A Dragon and Two Beasts – Rev 13:1-18

Rev 13:1-10 – the first beast – Roman imperial militarism

Daniel 7:1-8 [setting, 605-530 BC] – four beasts, “out of the sea,” like lion, bear, leopard, and with ten horns – represent Babylon, Media, Persia, Greece (Dan 8:20-22), empires that threatened people of Israel

vs 1-2 – the beast described

- “out of the sea” – Romans arrived by sea from the east to conquer Asia
- “seven heads” – Rome known as “city of seven hills” (Rev 17:9), seven emperors of Rome

after Augustus (Rev 17:12) – “ten horns,” three additional Roman rulers

- “blasphemous names” – emperors claimed divinity – “Caesar is lord”; Augustus claimed to be “son of god”; Tiberius claimed to be “august son of the divine Augustus”; Nero claimed to be “the savior of the world”
- beast has the power, throne, and authority of the dragon, Satan – satanic power of destructive Roman imperial rule, persecuting the people of God (Rev 2-3)

vs 3-4 – worshipping the beast – “one head” healed from “mortal wound”

- *Nero redivivus* (“Nero resurrected”) myth – Nero begin widespread persecution of Christians; after his death, legend arose he would return and bring destruction
- *not called “the antichrist” in Rev*; John refers to “antichrists” [plural] as those who deny that Jesus Christ is God and has come in the flesh (1 John 2:18-23, 4:2-3; 2 John 1:17)
- they “worshipped” dragon and beast, Satan and Rome – worship of idols and emperors
 - “an obvious parody of the resurrection of Jesus and the resulting worship of God and the Lamb” (Gorman, 124) – “who is like the beast?” (Ex 15:11, “who is like” the Lord?)
 - “who is able to fight against” the beast? – answer: the Lamb (Rev 19-21)

vs 5-8 – the beast blasphemes

- beast allowed to “exercise authority for forty-two months,” 1260 days, 3 ½ years (Rev 11:2,3) – limited time; perhaps also time of persecution by Antiochus Epiphanes
- all people “worship the beast” – everyone whose name not written in “the book of life” (Rev 3:5, 17:8, 20:15, 21:27) of the Lamb

vs 9-10 – call “for the endurance and faith of the saints” (Rev 2-3)

- “into captivity you go” – quote from prophet Jeremiah calling on God’s people to turn back to God during Babylonian Captivity (Jer 15:2, 43:11)
- “if you kill with the sword” – quote from Jesus to his disciples at his arrest (Matt 26:52-53; Luke 22:50-51; John 17:11) – “conquer” through nonviolent resistance, sacrificial love

Rev 13:11-18 – the second beast – Roman imperial propaganda

v 11 – the beast described

- “two horns [Dan 8:3] like a lamb” – counterfeit of Jesus, the Lamb
- “spoke like a dragon” – deceptive words of “ancient serpent” (Rev 11:9; Gen 3:1-21)

vs 12-15 – the propaganda of the beast

- promotes worship of “first beast” – worship of Roman emperors

- signs “on behalf of the beast” that deceive “inhabitants of the earth” – Roman propaganda
 - tells them to “make an image” of beast, allowed to give it “breath” (*pneuma*) to speak, those not worship beast killed – Christians who refused to show allegiance to Roman emperors could be executed
 - later called “false prophet” (Rev 16:13, 19:20; Ex 7:11; Matt 24:24; 2 Thess 2:9-10) – counterfeit of the Holy Spirit, true power of God, revealer of truth, giver of life
- vs 16-17 – the mark of the beast
- causes “all” in society to be “marked on the right hand or the forehead” – opposite of God’s “seal” (Rev 7:3; Ezek 9:4); contrast to *phylacteries*
 - cannot participate in economic system without mark, name or number, of the beast (Rev 14:9, 14:11, 16:2, 19:20, 20:4) – perhaps imperial slogan, sign, image; Roman contracts and coins bore the name and/or image of Roman emperors – “render unto Caesar” (Matt 22:21)
- v 18 – the number of the beast
- “let anyone with understanding calculate the number” – both Greek and Hebrew languages used letters are numerals
 - number is “the number of a person,” “666” – some ancient manuscripts, “616”
 - either most likely represent “Nero Ceasar” – Greek, totals 666; Hebrew, totals 616
 - also, 777 representative of Holy Trinity, divine fullness – so, 666 representative of the “unholy trinity,” powers opposed to God
 - “Jesus” calculated as number, 888 – 8, new life (Luke 2:21, 9:8, 24:1; Matt 28:1; John 20:1)



REVELATION REVISITED – Rev 6 – 20

Salvation Interlude (4th): the Lamb & the 144,000 – Rev 14:1-5

- v 1 – the Lamb, Jesus Christ (Rev 4-5), stands on “Mount Zion” – Temple Mount, Jerusalem – vision of peace and wellbeing among all peoples in Messianic age (Isa 2:1-4, 25:6-9; Joel 3:9-10; Ps 2; Heb 12:22-24; Rev 21-22)
- vs 2-5 – with the 144,000 – fullness of God’s people (Rev 7)
- voice from heaven like “many waters” (Rev 1:15), “loud thunder” (Rev 4:5), “harpists playing” (Rev 5:8) – heavenly chorus
 - “sing a new song” (Rev 5:9) before throne, four living creatures, elders (Rev 4-5)
 - God and Lamb “name written on their foreheads” (Rev 7:3) – opposite of the beast’s mark
 - virgins, who “have not defiled themselves with women” – metaphor, not literal – idolatry as adultery, unfaithfulness to God (Rev 2:22-25; Deut 31:16; Hos 9:1; Matt 12:39; 2 Cor 11:2)
 - “follow the Lamb wherever he goes” – disciples of Jesus
 - “redeemed – by the blood of the Lamb (Rev 5:9)
 - “first fruits” for God and Lamb
 - first portion of harvest dedicated to the Lord (Ex 23:16-19; Num 28:26)
 - represent people dedicated to the Lord, the first of many more people to come (Jer 2:3; 1 Cor 15:20-26; Jam 1:18)
 - “no lie” in their mouth; “blameless” – Greek, *amōmoi*, in terms of sacrifice, without blemish; in moral terms, without fault (Ps 24:4-5; Col 1:22, Eph 1:3-4; Heb 9:14, 1 Peter 1:19)

Salvation Interlude (5th): Angles, the Harvest, and the Vintage – Rev 14:6-20

- ▲ Images “suggest to us the *promise* and *reality* of God’s defeat of evil, but they are not the *means* of that defeat” (Gorman, 155) – God does not use violence to defeat violence
- ▲ Call to repentance to those who worship false gods and those who do evil (Gorman, 154)

Rev 14:6-11 – the three angles

- vs 6-7 – first angel, flying at ‘zenith’ (Rev 8:13, 19:17), proclaims to all people an “eternal gospel” – fear God, give God glory, worship God
- “hour of judgment” – salvation of God’s people, judgement of those who harmed God’s people
 - perhaps “deliberate challenge to Roman flying Victory goddesses announcing another military victory” (Rossing, 107)

v 8 – second angel, announces “fallen is Babylon” (Isa 21:9) – also signifies Roman Empire

- Babylon fell to Cyrus the Great of Persia in 539 BC (Isa 44:28, 45:1)
- ‘Fall of the Roman Empire’ took place in 5th century
- made nations “drink wine of the wrath of her fornication” – metaphor, not literal – pressured God’s people to be idolatrous, unfaithful to God (Jer 51:7-8)

vs 9-11 – the third angel

- judgment on those who “worship the beast” and receive its mark (Rev 13) – participate in imperial religious idolatry and economic injustice
- “drink the wine of God’s wrath,” “cup of his anger” – metaphor, not literal
 - “cup,” symbol of (what was understood as) God’s anger against his people (Isa 51:17-20; Ezek 23:31-33) and against wicked nations (Ps 75:8; Jer 25:15; Lam 4:1)
 - “the wrath of God” as “divine consent to our own deadly trajectory” (Zahnd, 170)

Rev 14:12-13 – call for endurance

v 12 – “call for the endurance of the saints” (Rev 1:9, 2:2-3, 3:10, 12:17, 13:10) – “conquer” through faithful witness to Jesus (Rev 12:11-12)

v 13 – “voice from heaven” (Rev 1:10-11) says, “blessed” are those who “die in the Lord”

- *seven beatitudes in Rev*: 1:3 (read prophecy aloud); 14:13, 16:15 (stay awake); 19:9 (invited to Lamb’s marriage supper); 20:6 (share in first resurrection); 22:7 (keep words of prophecy); 22:14 (wash their robes)
- “they will rest from their labors, for their *deeds* follow them” – letters to the seven churches (Rev 2-3), “I know your *deeds*...”

Rev 14:14-20 – the harvest and the vintage – two different actions; positive and negative aspects of Jesus’ second coming (Bauckham, 95)

vs 14-16 – the harvest (Mark 4:26-29; Matt 9:37-38; 13:24-30, 36-43; Luke 10:1-2)

- “one like the Son of Man,” seated on white cloud, with golden crown (Rev 1:12-16; Dan 7:13; Matt 17:5) – Jesus
- with “sharp sickle,” uses to “harvest” the earth – gathering of God’s people

vs 17-20 – the vintage (Joel 3:13; Isa 63:1-6; Lam 1:15)

- “another angel” – not Son of Man – with “sharp sickle,” called on by “another angel,” with “authority over fire” (Rev 8:3-5, throws censor on earth), to use the sickle to gather grapes
- angel swings sickle and gathers vintage, throws it in “great wine press of the wrath of

God" (Rev 14:8-10; 19:15)

- blood flows "high as horse's bridal" – horrific bloodshed of war
- for "about two hundred miles" – 1600 stadia (40x40) – none of the beast's army survives

The Seven Bowls – Rev 15-16

▲ 3rd set of seven judgments, following the seven seals (Rev 6, 8:1-5) and the seven trumpets (Rev 8:6-9:19, 11:15-19) – more encompassing

▲ the Exodus Story retold in Revelation, "plagues" – God delivers God's people from evil

Rev 15:1-7 – the seven angels with seven plagues/bowls

v 1 – John sees "another portent" (Rev 12:1,3) – seven angels with last seven plagues, "with them the wrath of God is ended"

vs 2-4 – those who "conquered the beast" (Rev 12:11) praise God and the Lamb (Rev 7)

- stand by "sea of glass" mixed with fire (Rev 4:5-6, heavenly temple), with harps (Rev 5:8)
- "sing the song of Moses" – sung after God rescued the people from Egypt (Ex 15:1-18) – and "of the Lamb" (Rev 5:9, 14:3)

Only God is worthy of worship (Rev 4; Ps 86-9-10; Ex 15:1-18)

- great and amazing deeds (Ps 92:5, 98:1, 111:2)
- just and true (Deut 32:4, Hos 14:9, Ps 145:17)
- alone is holy (Ps 99:9, Isa 6:3, I Sam 2:2)
- all nations will worship him (Ps 86:9, Jer 10:7, Zech 14:6)
- judgments revealed (Ps 98:2, Isa 52:10, 62:2)

vs 5-8 – seven plagues/bowls

- tent/tabernacle/temple – represent God's dwelling place (Rev 11:19; Ex 40:34-38; 1 Kings 8:22-30; John 2:13-22)
- angels, robed in bright linen, golden sashes – clothes of temple priests (Rev 1:3; Ex 28:4)
- given "golden bowls full of the wrath of God" (Rev 8:3-5) by one of the four living creatures (Rev 6:1)
- temple "filled with smoke," from glory and power of God (Isa 6:1-4) – Moses (Ex 40:34-35) and priests (1 Kings 8:10-11) could not enter temple in these circumstances

Rev 16:1-21 – the seven bowls – bowls of incense (Rev 5:8)

v 1 – voice from temple tells angels to pour out bowls of the wrath of God

v 2 – painful sores (1st bowl) – Ex, 6th plague (Ex 9:8-12)

v 3 – sea “like blood” (2nd bowl) – Ex, 1st plague (Ex 7:14-25)

- “every living thing in the sea died” – 2nd trumpet (Rev 8:8-9), only 1/3

vs 4-7 – rivers & springs became blood (3rd bowl) – Ex, 1st plague (Ex 7:14-25) – 3rd trumpet (Rev 8:10-11), “wormwood”

- “angel of the waters” – belief natural elements had directing angels (Rev 7:1-3) – angel declares that God is just in his judgments
- because “they shed the blood of saints and prophets,” God gave them “blood to drink”
 - they “deserve it,” Greek *axious*, “corresponding, comparable, worthy”
 - “oppressors who commit acts of violence will eventually unleash destructive consequences against themselves” (Rossing, 127)
- “altar” agrees God’s judgments are true and just – perhaps voice of martyrs, who call on God to “avenge our blood” (Rev 6:9-11, 8:3-5)

vs 8-9 – sun scorches (4th bowl)

- people “*blasphemed* God,” and they did not repent (Rev 9:20-21) – repentance is “implicit summons in the judgment visions” (Gorman, 154)

vs 10-11 – kingdom of beast “plunged into darkness” (5th Bowl) – Ex, 9th plague (Ex 10:21-23) – also 6th seal (Rev 6:12) and 4th trumpet (Rev 8:12), sun is darkened – they did not repent

vs 12 – Euphrates river dries up (6th bowl), prepares way for “kings from the east” – Rome feared invasion from Parthia

vs 13-14 – frogs – Ex, 2nd plague, duplicated by Pharaoh’s magicians (Ex 8:1-15)

- three “foul spirits like frogs” come from the mouth of dragon, beast, false prophet – “unholy trinity”
- “demonic spirits” who perform signs (Rev 13:11-18) and assemble “kings of the whole world” for battle at *Harmagedon*

v 15 – parenthetical call to stay awake, Jesus is coming (Rev 3:2, 3:3, 3:18; Matt 24:36-44; Luke 12:35-40; 1 Thes 5:1-11; 2 Peter 3:8-13)

v 16 – assemble at *Armageddon/ Harmagedon/ HarMagedon*

- only mention in Bible, “mythical placename” (BDAG), associated with Mount Megiddo in Plain of Esdraelon, travel route from Egypt to Damascus, location of numerous historic battles (Josh 12:21; Judges 4:7; 2 Chron 35:20-27) – “icon of war” (Zahnd, 169)
- no fighting occurs here; there is no ‘battle of Armageddon’

vs 17-21 - thunder/hail (7th bowl) - defeat of Babylon/Rome (Rev 17-18)

- angel pours bowl "into the air," and loud voice from temple (Rev 16:1), from the throne (Rev 4), says, "It is done!" (Rev 21:6) - judgment complete, defeat of evil, accomplishment of God's purposes
- thunder, lightning, earthquake - signs of God's righteous presence (Rev 4:5, 8:5, 11:19, 14:2)
- "great city" - Babylon/Rome - "split into three parts," cities fall, God gives Babylon "wine-cup of the fury of his wrath" (Rev 14:8)
- islands and mountains displaced - 6th seal (Rev 6:14)
- hailstones "weighing a talent" (75-100 pounds) drop from heaven - Ex, 7th plague (Ex 9:13-35), 1st trumpet (Rev 8:7) - they blasphemed God for the fearful plague



REVELATION REVISITED

The Beast and the Harlot of Babylon – Rev 17

- ▲ Seven Features of Empire found in Revelation 17 (Gorman 145-6)
 - 1) “system of domination” that seduces both rulers (“kings”) and common people (“inhabitants of the earth”) with false promises of power and prosperity (17:2)
 - 2) “territorially grand and ideologically expansive,” makes “claims about itself that are rightly made only about God” (17:3-5)
 - 3) presents as being full of benefits, but in fact practices “abominations” (17:4), that include oppressing and abusing human beings like commodities (18:11-13)
 - 4) claims divine status, but is always ultimately opposed to God and God’s people, and will resort to violence to silence the witness of the faithful (17:5,14)
 - 5) grows, in part, “because the conquered acquiesce” (17:13)
 - 6) “often eventually die of self-inflicted wounds;” subjects revolt, and this reversal may be seen as the judgment of God (17:16-17)
 - 7) empires, particular historical realities, are short term manifestations of what “we may call Empire” (*Egypt, Assyria, Babylon, Seleucid, Rome, etc.*)
- ▲ Rome as “Harlot” – metaphor, not literal
 - BDAG (dictionary) definition: (1) “prostitute” (2) “a political entity hostile to God” – symbol for Babylon (Rev 17:5); the “great city” Rome (Rev 17:18, Rev 13); Empire(s)
 - Greek for “city” is feminine noun *polis*, “parody of feminine images of *Aeterna* and *Dea Roma* (Eternal Rome and Goddess Rome)” (Gorman, 128)
 - antithesis of person/people of God – “a woman” (Rev 12); Lamb’s “bride” (Rev 19-22)
 - anthesis of the “the holy city, the new Jerusalem” (Rev 21-22)

Rev 17:1-18 – the fall of Babylon/Rome

vs 1-2 – Rome as harlot

- seated on “many waters” (Babylon, Jer 51:13) – represents “peoples and multitudes and nations and languages” (Rev 17:15)
- “committed fornication” with kings of the earth (Jer 51:7) – metaphor, adultery as idolatry
- drunk with ‘wine of fornication’ (Rev 14:8-10, 16:19; Isa 23:17; Jer 51:1-18)
 - destructive profits of unholy behavior

vs 3-4 – Rome/harlot described

- John carried “in the spirit” (Rev 1:10, 21:10) “into the wilderness” (Rev 12:6,14)
- sees the harlot sitting on a “scarlet beast,” “full of blasphemous names,” had “seven heads and ten horns” – city of Rome, Roman Empire, Roman Emperors (Rev 13:1-18)
- woman clothed “in purple and scarlet,” adorned with “gold and jewels and pearls” (Rev 18:16) – wealth and decadence of imperial Rome, economic injustice
- holds “golden cup” (Jer 51:7) of abominations and impurities – violence and moral corruption of Rome, religious idolatry

vs 5-14 – Rome as Babylon

- “mystery” in Rev – symbolic significance (Rev 17:7-8, 1:20, 10:7); name written on forehead – identification (Rev 7:3, 13:6, 14:9) – Babylon represents Rome
- “drunk with the blood” of the saints and the martyrs/witnesses to Jesus (Rev 1:9, 2:13, 6:9-11, 7:9-17, 12:17, 16:4-7) – Christians tortured/executed during Roman festivals

vs 7-11 – the beast described

- “was and is *not* and is to come” – counterfeit of God, “who is” (Rev 1:8, 4:8)
- amazes “inhabitants of the earth” whose names are not “written in the book of life” (Rev 13:3, 8) – *Nero rediivus* (Nero resurrected) myth
- about to ascend from “bottomless pit” and go to destruction (Rev 9:1-2, 11:7, 20:1-3, 7-10) – evil will be defeated
- “seven heads” are “seven mountains” and “seven kings” – Rome (Rev 13:1-2)
- “an eighth, but it belongs to the seven”
 - Domitian (81-96), son of (7th Emperor) Vespasian, likely ruled while Rev was written
 - repeated evils of Nero, revived imperial cult practices and persecution of Christians

vs 12-14 – beast and “ten kings” make war against the Lamb (Dan 7:19-28)

- “ten horns” are “ten kings” – Rome appointed rulers of Rome’s client kingdoms (e.g. Herod the Great and his sons)
- receive authority with the beast for “one hour” – swift and brief period (Rev 18:17,19)
- Jesus, the Lamb, will conquer them (Rev 5)
 - for Jesus – *not* Rome’s emperor and its client kings – is “Lord of lords and King of kings” (Rev 19:6; Deut 10:17; Ps 136:3; Dan 2:47; Matt 28:18; Phil 2:5-11; 1 Tim 6:15)
 - those with him are “called and chosen and faithful” (Rev 1:9, 2:2-3, 3:10, 12:11,17, 13:10)

vs 15-18 – Babylon/Rome/harlot is ‘devoured’

- “ten horns” and “beast” turn on “harlot”
 - metaphor for other nations turning on Rome and destroying the city – “desolate” (lay waste); “naked” (plunder); “devour her flesh” (destroy); “burn her up with fire”
 - most of city of Rome burned to the ground in 64 AD – Nero blamed the Christians and began persecuting them
- “For God had put it in their hearts to carry out his purpose...”
 - God is love (1 John 4:7), and does not want or cause harm
 - God is redemptive, and uses human actions – even evil human actions – for his purposes – Joseph and his brothers (Gen 50:19-21); empires defeating empires (Isa 10:5-15); the crucifixion of Jesus (Matt 26-27; Luke 22-23; John 18-19)

The Fall of Babylon/Rome/Empire – Rev 18

- Expansion of the seventh plague/bowl (Rev 14:8), “end of God’s wrath” (Rev 15:1)
- Echoes “lamentation” over Tyre in Isa 23:1-18; Ezek 27:1-36 (Matt 11:21-22; Luke 10:13-14)
 - Tyre, capital of Phoenicia, region north of Galilee – seaport infamous for wealth
 - “Tyre and Sidon,” center of Hellenization, hostile relations with Israel
- Rome lived “by its predatory trade...economic and political critique” (Rossing, 132-3)

Rev 18:1-8 – the angel declares it

vs 1-3 – angel, ‘bright with splendor’ (Rev 1:16, 10:1, Ezek 43:1-5) calls out...

- “Fallen, fallen is Babylon the great” (Rev 14:8, 16:9, 17:5, Isa 21:9; Jer 51:8)
- “dwelling place of demons,” ‘haunt of every foul spirit, bird, beast’ – *doom song* for Rome/Babylon (Isa 13:19-22; Jer 50:39, 51:37); Edom (Isa 34:1-17); Nineveh (Zeph 2:13-15)
- nations and kings “committed fornication with her” (Rev 14:8-10, 16:19; Isa 21:9; Jer 51:1-18)
 - first mention in Rev of “merchants” – “one who travels by ship for business reasons” (BDAG, dictionary) – who have “grown rich” from Rome’s luxury
 - destructive profits of unholy commerce

vs 4 – another “voice from heaven” calls to God’s people to “come out”

- followers of Christ called to “come out” of Rome/Babylon/Empire and not participate in sins of economic/social/political injustice and religious idolatry – live differently
- Abraham called to “go out” from his home (Gen 12:1-4); people of Israel “came out” of Egypt (Exodus); people called to “come out” of Babylon (Jer 51:6, 45)

vs 4-8 – judgment on economic/social/political injustice and religious idolatry

- Israelite law, “double payment” as restitution for stealing from another (Ex 22:4, 7, 9)
- Rome/Babylon/Empire
 - “glorified herself” – Emperors’ claims to divinity (Rev 13:5-6, 11-15)
 - “lived luxuriously” – economic injustice (Rev 6:5-6, 13:16-17)
 - declares herself “a queen” and “no widow” – myth of self-centered self-sufficiency – Laodicea (Rev 3:15-17); Babylon (Isa 47:1-11); Parable of Rich Fool (Luke 12:13-21)
- violent empires fall violently – four horsemen (Rev 6:2-8); blood for blood (Rev 16:6); nations burn Rome/Babylon/Empire “with fire” (Rev 17:16)

Rev 18:9-19 – the kings (political power), merchants and sailors (economic power) mourn it

vs 9-10 – “kings of the earth” lament loss of their material wealth, “lived in luxury with her”

vs 11-14 – merchants lament loss of their material profit –

- “no one buys their cargo anymore”
- commodities listed came into Rome from all over known world – conspicuous consumption at great cost to those from whom they took resources, for example
 - precious metals import from mines in Spain, miners rarely lived more than a few years
 - wheat import lead to starvation and malnutrition for people in grain-producing area
 - ivory import nearly drove Syrian elephant to extinction
- including “bodies and human lives” – Roman system based on slavery, complete disregard for human life

vs 15-16 – merchants, “who gained wealth from her,” grieve “great city” (Rev 16:19) clothed in “purple and scarlet” and adorned with jewels (Rev 17:4)

vs 17-19 – ship owners, sailors, sea traders lament loss of their material profit, “grew rich by her wealth” – laid waste “in one hour” – swift and brief period (Rev 17:12)

Rev 18:20 – God’s people celebrate it

- “heaven, you saints and apostles and prophets,” called to “rejoice over her,” because “God has given judgment for you against her” (Rev 6:9-11, 8:3-5, 16:4-7; Ex 15:1-21; Deut 32:43; Jer 51:48; Joel 3:21)
- celebration is “cathartic and God-centered alternative” to human retribution – not about vengeance, but the end of injustice – written by and for those suffering injustice (Gorman, 156-8)

Rev 18:21-24 - the angel declares it

- angel throws “great millstone” in sea – Rome/Babylon/Empire will ‘sink like a stone’ (Jer 51:63-64) – millstone turned by mule to grind grain, used in Roman execution by drowning
- and “be found no more” – no more musicians heard, craftspeople, sound of millstones, lamps shining, voices of newlyweds heard – end of entire culture
- “for your...” – because of their sin against God and others (Rev 9:20-21)
 - merchants, “magnates of the earth” – injustice
 - deceived nations by sorcery (Rev 13:11-17, 14:8, 17:1-3) – idolatry
 - shed “blood of prophets and saints” and others (Rev 16:6, 17:6) – violence



REVELATION REVISITED

Salvation Interlude (6th): Rejoicing in Heaven – Rev 19:1-10

Rev 19:1-8 – Rejoicing in Heaven at fall of Babylon/Rome/Empire (Rev 18:20)

- vs 1-4 – great multitude praises God, “for he has judged” Rome/Babylon/Empire
- “great multitude in heaven” (Rev 5:11-12, 7:9-10, 11:15, 14:2-5) say, “Hallelujah!”
 - word “Hallelujah!” only in Rev 19 in Scripture – transliteration of Hebrew “Praise (*halal*) Yahweh” (found in Psalms 104-150, “Praise the LORD”)
 - God’s judgments are true and just (Rev 15:3, 16:7); God “avenged the blood of his servants” (Rev 6:9-11, 8:3-5, 16:4-7; Deut 32:43; Jer 51:48)
 - not war, but “class-action lawsuit” – God is judge, plaintiffs are saints, defendant is Babylon/Rome/Empire, charge is murder, sentence is passed (Rossing, 131-134)
 - repeat “Hallelujah!” “smoke goes up forever and ever” (Rev 14:11, Isa 34:10) – end of evil
 - twenty-four elders and four living creatures worship God (Rev 4:4-8, 5:14, 7:11-12)

vs 5-8 – great multitude praises God, “for the marriage of the Lamb has come”

- sounds like “many waters” (Rev 1:15, Ezek 43:2) and “mighty thunder” (Rev 4:5, 14:2), crying “Hallelujah!” for “God the Almighty reigns”
- “marriage of the Lamb has come, and bride has made herself ready” – symbolic image
 - people of God as “bride of God/Christ” (Rev 21:2,9, 22:17; Luke 5:34-35; John 3:29; Eph 5:32; 2 Cor 11:2; Hos 2:19; Isa 54:5, 62:5)
 - Messianic Banquet (Isa 25:1-9, 55:1-13); Jesus’ Second Coming as “marriage feast” (Rev 19:9; Matt 8:11, 22:1-14, 25:1-13)
- bride clothed in “fine linen, bright and pure,” which is the “righteous deeds of the saints” – faithfulness to Christ (Rev 3:4-5, 6:11, 7:13-14, 14:13, 19:4)

Rev 19:9-10 – John and the angel

- angel tells John to write (Rev 1:11,19, 10:4, 14:3, 21:5), “Blessed are those who are invited to the marriage supper of the Lamb” – these are “the true words of God” (Rev 21:5, 22:6)
- John attempts to worship the angel, but angel rejects this, saying he is “a fellow servant” holding the testimony of Jesus (Rev 12:17, 14:12, 17:6, 20:4)
- “Worship God! For the testimony of Jesus is the Spirit of prophecy” – true prophecy is the call to worship God and testimony of Jesus by the power of the Spirit

The Rider Defeats the Beast – Rev 19:11-21

Rev 19:11-16 – the Rider on the White Horse

- a symbolic image of Jesus, like the Lamb (Rev 4)
- rides a white horse – represents victory (Rev 6:2; Zec 6:1-8)
- called “Faithful and True” (Rev 1:5, 3:14, 21:5, 22:6; John 1:14-17, 14:6, 18:37) – judges and makes war in righteousness (Ps 96:13; Isa 11:1-5; Jer 23:1-8)
- Jesus is Lord

v 12 - “eyes like a flame” (Rev 1:14, 2:18, Dan 10:6) – Messianic image

- on head “many diadems” – royal crown, contrast to Roman rulers (Rev 12:3, 13:1)
- “name inscribed” only he knows – perhaps “new name” known only to those who conquer (2:17)? – name is
 - “the Word of God” (v 13; John 1:1-14) – “Jesus is what God has to say” (Zahnd, 71)
 - “King of kings and Lord of lords” (v 16, Rev 1:5, 17:14)

v 13 – clothed in “robe dipped in blood” before he engages in battle – the blood is his (Rev 1:5, 5:9, 7:14, 12:11; Col 1:19-20; Heb 10:19-25; 1 John 1:6-7) (Gorman, 153; Rossing, 119)

v 14 – “armies of heaven” in fine white linen – the saints (Rev 3:4-5, 7:13-14, 17:14) – follow him

v 15 – “sharp sword” *from his mouth*, not in his hand – metaphor, not literal

- Jesus is and speaks the Word of God (Rev 1:16, John 1:1-14; Isa 49:2, Heb 4:12,
- Jesus conquers through love, not violence (Matt 26:52, ‘put sword away’)
- rules with “rod of iron” – Messianic image (Rev 2:27, 12:5; Ps 2:9; Isa 11:4)
- ‘wine press of fury’ – evil defeated (Rev 14:17-20; Isa 63:1-3; Lam 1:5)

Rev 19:17-21 – the Rider on the White Horse defeats the beast and its armies

- Jesus, the Lamb, is the one who is able to defeat the beast (Rev 13:4)

vs 17-18 – angel calls on birds in “mid-heaven” (Rev 8:13, 14:6) to “great supper of God” to “eat the flesh” of kings, captains, mighty, horses and riders – carrion birds as symbols

- metaphor, *personifications of evil, not literal persons*
- OT apocalyptic imagery (Ezek 39:17-29; Jer 12:1-17)

vs 19-21 – beast and kings – Rome/Babylon/Empire and client kingdoms (Rev 17) – gather with armies, and are immediately defeated

- beast and false prophet – Roman imperial militarism and propaganda (Rev 11, 13, 16-17) – are captured and “thrown alive into the lake of fire” (Rev 14:20, 20:10, 21:8; Dan 7:11)

- the rest are “killed by the sword” that comes from the mouth of the Rider – God’s truth defeats the devil’s lies

Salvation Interlude (7th): the Thousand Years – Rev 20:1-6

- ▲ the Millennium (Rev 20:2,5,6) – when is “the 1000 years”?
- Biblical narrative – 1000 symbolic for ‘a lot’ (Rev 5:11, 7:4, 11:13; Deut 7:9; 90:4; 2 Pet 2:8)
- Interpretations
 - *Premillennial Dispensationalists* (e.g., *Left Behind*) – view as prediction of literal timeframe when Christ will “rapture” Christians, then return with them to reign on earth for a thousand years, then final judgement
 - *Amillennialists* (e.g., Augustine & Luther) view as representing time between Christ’s Ascension and Second Coming – the “now and the not yet” of God’s reign
- the primary function “is to reassure the church that its martyrs will be victorious, and thereby to reinforce the church’s faithful witness” (Gorman, 144)

Rev 20:1-6 – the thousand years

vs 1-3 – Satan bound

- angel – fallen star, Wormwood (Rev 8:10-11)?; “king” of the locusts (Rev 9:11)?
- holds “key to the bottomless pit”
 - Greek, *abussos*, “abyss,” place of the dead (Rom 10:7); OT “the deep” (Gen 1:2; Ps 148:7; Prov 8:24; Amos 7:4)
 - place where evil angels are bound (Rev 9:1-2, 11:7, 17:8, Luke 8:31)
- binds dragon/serpent/Devil/Satan (Rev 12:9) and throws into pit, so deceive no more
- “until the thousand years were ended”

vs 4-6 – martyrs

- on thrones (Dan 7:9; Matt 19:28) – “those who conquer,” martyred for their testimony to Jesus (Rev 12:17, 14:12, 17:6), will be given a place with Jesus on his throne (Rev 3:21)
- “given authority to judge” (Dan 7:22; 2 Cor 6:2) – receive justice (Rev 6:9-11, 8:3-5, 16:4-7, 19:2) in “class action lawsuit” against Empire (Rossing, 131-134)
- “came to life and reigned with Christ a thousand years” – victory over death

vs 5-6 – martyrs “blessed and holy,” share in “first resurrection” and “second death” has no power over them – “second death” not in NT outside Rev (2:11, 20:6,24, 21:8)

- St. Gregory of Nyssa (335-395 AD, Cappadocian Father) – “second death,” painful

process of purification after death

- 'first death,' death to self (Matt 10:34-39; Luke 9:23-27; John 12:23-26; Gal 2:20; Rom 6:1-11) - so "second death," physical death, has no power ("no sting," 2 Cor 15:41-58)

The Cosmic Battle Ends - Rev 20:7-15

Rev 20:7-10 - the "unholy trinity" is defeated

vs 7-9 - Satan is released from "his prison" - bottomless pit

- "to the deceives nations" - devil is "deceiver" (Rev 12:9, 13:14, 19:20) - at "four corners of the earth" (Rev 7:1), "Gog and Magog," to gather for battle

- *not literal nations, symbols of imperial evil*
- in Ezek 38-39, symbolize hostile nations, might also be coded name for Babylon

- surround "camp of the saints and the beloved city" - are immediately consumed by fire

v 10 - devil "thrown into lake of fire and sulfur" with beast and false prophet, where "tormented day and night forever and ever"

- *not literal persons, symbols of spiritual evil*
- evil will cease to exist (Rev 14:9-11; Isa 66:22-24; Mal 4:1; Matt 3:12; Mark 9:47-48)

Rev 20:11-15 - the 'great white throne judgment'

v 11 - John sees "great white throne and the one who sat on it," God (Rev 4; Dan 7:9)

- "no place" for earth and heaven (Ps 102:25-28; Isa 40:8, 51:6; Mark 13:31; 2 Peter 3:1-18) - perhaps making way for "a new heaven and a new earth" (21:1)

vs 12-13 - 'sea, Death, Hades' give up their dead

- dead "great and small" (Rev 13:6, 19:18) stand before throne

- "books" recording their works are opened, and all are judged "according to their works," "according to what they had done" (Dan 7:9-14)

- works righteousness? but these books not basis of being 'thrown into the lake of fire'

- "book of life" (Rev 3:5, 13:8, 17:8, 21:27) opened along with these books

v 14 - "Death and Hades" - death and place of the dead - "thrown into the lake of fire" - Jesus conquered death (Rev 1:17-18, 21:3-4)

vs 14-15 - the "lake of fire" is the "second death" "anyone whose name was not found written in book of life was thrown into the lake of fire"

- *one view* - the "lake of fire" is hell, a place of eternal torment
- *another view* - the "lake of fire" is the purifying fire of God (Rev 3:18; Ex 24:17; Deut

4:23-24; Isa 10:17, 66:12-16; Matt 13:24-30; Mark 9:39-40; Luke 3:16-17; John 15:1-6; Heb 12:26-29; 1 Cor 3:11-15; 1 Peter 7:1-9) that leads to the “second death” of our sinful human nature

- *another view* - “the book of life” - which is not the ‘books of works’ - represents divine grace - “People are accountable for what they do yet ultimately must trust that salvation is based on grace”³

*Rev 20-21 - those who sin are outside the gates of the city of God (Rev 22:15), but “its gates will never be shut” (Rev 21:25)

³ Craig R. Koester, Luther Seminary, *Enter the Bible: Revelation*



REVELATION REVISITED

God Makes All Things New - Rev 21 & 22

- ▲ The culminating vision of the book of Revelation, the climax of Scripture (Genesis to Revelation), the new creation of God's creation
- ▲ A "rapture in reverse" (Rossing, 147) - God takes up residence with humanity, Jesus returns as promised, Spirit invites all to come - the hope fulfilled

Rev 21:1-8 - new heaven, new earth, new Jerusalem

- v 1 - "a new heaven and a new earth," God's *shalom*, peace, wellbeing (Isa 65, 66)
 - "the sea was no more," sea as symbol of chaos (Rev 13:1)
 - creation not destroyed, but restored (Isa 42:9, 43:16-21; Rom 8:18-25; 1 Cor 5:17-21; 1 Peter 3:1-13; 1 John 3:1-3)
 - v 2 - "the new Jerusalem" (Rev 3:12; Gal 4:26; Heb 12:22), the "holy city," the "bride" of Christ (Rev 21:9, 19:7, 22:17) - where the people of God live, *not literal historical Jerusalem*
 - *as opposed to* the 'unholy city,' the "great harlot" Babylon/Rome/Empire (Rev 17), where the people of God are killed (Rev 6:9-11, 17:6, 18:24)
 - God's call to "come out" of Babylon/Rome/Empire (Rev 18:4) and "come" into new Jerusalem (Rev 22:17)
 - vs 3-4 - God dwells with mortals
 - "voice from the throne" (Rev 16:7, 19:5) declares - the "tabernacle" (Greek, *skene*) of God is among humans (Rev 1:20, 7:15, 11:19, 15:5) - Jesus Christ is the new temple, God dwelling with us (Rev 21:22; John 1:1-14; John 2:13-22; Col 2:9-10; Heb 1:1-4)
 - they - "mortals" - will be his people (Lev 26:11-12; Jer 31:31-34; Ezek 37:26-28; Zech 2:10-11, 8:8; 2 Cor 6:16)
 - God himself "will wipe every tear from their eyes" (Rev 7:17; Isa 25:8)
 - no more death, no more mourning, crying, pain (Rev 20:14; Isa 25:6-9, 65:19; Matt 5:4; 1 Cor 15:26; Phil 3:10-14)
- Julian of Norwich, "all shall be well, and all shall be well, and all manner of thing shall be well"*
- vs 5-8 - the words of God, "the one who is seated on the throne" (Rev 4)
 - "I am making all things new"
 - "write this, for these words trustworthy and true" (Rev 1:11, 19, 14:13, 19:9, 22:6)
 - "It is done!" (Rev 16:17), Greek, *ginomai*, "to be, come into being"

- "I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end" (Rev 1:8, 22:13) – Greek, *arche* and *teleos* – God is the *source* and *goal* of life
- "I will give water" of life as a gift to the thirsty (Rev 7:17, 22:1-2, 17; Isa 44:3, 55:1-7, 58:6-14; John 4:5-14, 7:36-38) – promise of abundant life

vs 7-8 – *promise and challenge in letters to the seven churches* (Rev 2-3)

v 7 – "those who conquer" will inherit these things, and "I will be their God and they will be my children" (1 John 3:1-3) – call for endurance of saints (Rev 12:11, 13:10, 14:12)

v 8 – "but as for the..." vice list (Rev 21:27, 9:20-21, 22:15), "their place will be in the lake" of fire, second death – call to repentance of sinners (Rev 9:20-21; 16:9, 11)

Rev 21:9-27 – the new Jerusalem described

vs 9-14 – the vision of the city of God

v 9 – one of angels with seven bowls, "Come, I will show you the bride" of the Lamb (Rev 21:2, 19:7, 22:17) *contrast to* "Come, I will show you" judgement of Babylon/"harlot" (Rev 17:1)

vs 10-11 – in the Spirit, John carried to "a great, high mountain," Mount Zion

- *contrast to* "seven mountains" of Rome (Rev 17:9)
- vision of Ezekiel (Ezek 40-48), God's "glory" (Greek, *shechinah*) returns to the city/temple/people – radiant with God's presence (Rev 4:2-6, 21:23)

vs 12-14 – city/people/dwelling place of God – fullness of God's people

- on "twelve gates" names of the twelve tribes of Israel (Ezek 48:29-35), on "twelve foundations" names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb (Matt 16:15-19; Eph 2:19-22)
- gates on all four sides (not typical in ancient world) – people welcome from all directions

vs 15-27 – the angel measures the city

- angel has a "measuring rod" (Rev 11:1-2; Ezek 40:1-4; Zech 2:1-2) – building project
- *city shape* "lies foursquare," cube – walled cities in ancient world; Greco-Roman symbol of perfection; temple's "Holy of Holies" (1 Kings 6:20) – whole city is holy
- *city size* is 12,000 *stadia* (1400 miles), wall is 144 cubits (75 yards) – multiples of twelve, fullness of God's people – larger than any city has ever been (NYC is 300 sq miles)

vs 18-21 – wall adorned with "every jewel" – splendor of God's presence (Rev 4)

- breastplate of high priest had "twelve stones" with names of twelve tribes (Ex 28:15-21)
- *contrast to* corrupt wealth of Tyre (Rev 18; Isa 23:1-18; Ezek 27:1-36)
- image of "streets of gold" in heaven

vs 22-27 – the Lord God and the Lamb with mortals

- God and the Lamb, Jesus (Rev 4-5) are the temple of the city – God’s immanent and transcendent presence (2 Chron 6:18-42; Isa 66:1-2; John 2:13-22, 4:19-26), not literal rebuilding of the Temple in Jerusalem
- God and the Lamb, Jesus (Rev 4-5) are the light of the city – God’s glorious, illuminating, comforting presence (Isa 60:19; Ps 9:36) – Jesus is “the light of the world” (John 1:1-5, 8:12, 9:5, 12:46; I John 1:5)

vs 24-26 – “nations” will walk by its light, “kings” will bring their glory, “people” will bring glory and honor of nations – *in contrast to* deceit, self-aggrandizement, greed of kings and peoples of evil empires (Rev 18)

- “its gates [on all sides] will never be shut”
 - implies universal restoration (Isa 2:2-4, 11:10-12, 45:22, 49:5-6, 55:5; Jer 3:17, 16:19-21; Dan 7:13-14; Zech 14:9; Luke 19:10; John 3:16-17; Rom 5:1-19, 10:8-11; Phil 2:5-11; 1 Tim 2:1-6; 2 Peter 3:9)
 - Greek, “*apokatastasis*” – Apostle Peter, Jesus must remain in heaven until “the *universal restoration* that God announced long ago through his holy prophets” (Act 3:21)

v 27 – unclean will not enter, but only those “written in the Lamb’s book of life” (Rev 3:5, 13:8, 17:8, 20:15, 21:8) – we cannot bring our sin with us into the city where sin is no more

Rev 22:1-7 – life with God

vs 1-2 – angel shows John “the river of the water of life” and “the tree of life” in the city

- culmination of biblical narrative, Gen to Rev, pre-history to post-history
- cities need a water supply (Laodicea, Rev 3:15); water supply of heavenly city is the Lord
- Triune God is the source of life (Rev 4:5-6, 7:17, 21:6, John 4:7-15, 7:37-39) – water flows from “the throne of God and of the Lamb,” Jesus, Spirit invites “everyone who is thirsty” to come and drink (Rev 21:17)
- Restoration of Creation
 - Gen 2-3: God creates and places humans in Garden (Greek, *paradiso*, Rev 2:7; Luke 23:43; 2 Cor 12:4) of Eden, with a “river that flows out” (Gen 2:10), and the “tree of life” (Gen 2:9) – after fall, ground “cursed,” humans expelled from garden, experience sin and death (Gen 3:14-24)
 - Rev 22: God’s new creation “nothing accursed” (Rev 21:3), humanity resides in garden

(Rev 21:14), humans drink from the “water of life” (Rev 21:17) and eat from “the tree of life” (Rev 21:14, 2:7), experience sin and death no more (21:3-4)

- move from garden to garden city, indicates human creative participation
- God’s economy, abundance for all, no more injustice (Isa 55:1-3, 37:30-32, 65:18-25; Jer 31:1-6; Ezek 28:25-26; Amos 9:13-15)

- Fulfillment of prophetic promise

- Ezek 47:1-12: a river of life-giving water flows from the temple, with “all kinds of trees for food...bear fresh fruit every month...their leaves for healing” on both sides
- God’s people/city/temple restored (Ps 46; Isa 35:1-10, 51:1-6; Joel 3:16-18; Zech 14:1-11)
- for all humanity – “twelve kinds of fruit” – fullness of provision, fullness of God’s people; and “the healing of the nations” – all people (Rev 7:9-10, 22:24-26)

Vision represents “the removal of all that prevents human flourishing in community before God and the presence of all that permits and promotes that flourishing” (Gorman, 165)

vs 3-5 – God’s kingdom come

- “the throne of God and of the Lamb” in garden city, and servants “serve” (Greek, *latreou*) God (Rev 7:13-17)
- see God’s face – personal encounter, relationship restored (Gen 3:8; Matt 5:8; 1 Cor 13:12; 1 John 3:2); God’s name “on their foreheads” – belong to God (Rev 3:12, 7:3, 14:1)
- “the Lord God will be their light” (Rev 21:22-27)
- they will reign forever (Rev 3:21, 4:4, 20:4; Dan 7:27; Matt 19:28; Luke 22:30; 1 Cor 6:2) – “those who conquer”

vs 6-7 – Jesus is coming soon

- “These words are trustworthy and true” (Rev 1:11, 19:9, 21:5) – for the Lord sent angels to inspire prophets to show servants “what must soon take place” (Rev 1:1)
- Christ, “I am coming soon” (Rev 21: 7,12,20, 2:25, 3:11, 16:15; Matt 24:43-44; 1 Thess 5:1-7; 2 Peter 3:9-15) – *kairos* (right time), not *chronos* (chronological time)
- “Blessed is the one who keeps the words of the prophecy” (Rev 1:3) – call to action (Rev 13:10-11, 14:12, 21:7)

Rev 22:8-21 – epilogue – reflects prologue (Rev 1:1-11)

vs 8-11 – the words of prophecy unsealed

- John “heard and saw” (Rev 1:1,2 ,4, 9); Worship God!” not angel (Rev 19:10)
- angel says, “do not seal up the words of the prophecy,” for “the time is near” – contrast to “seal up” words of “seven thunders” (Rev 10:1-11; Dan 8:26, 12:4-12)
- challenge and commendation (Rev 2-3)
- “evildoer still do evil” – ironic, call to repentance (Isa 29:9; Jer 44:25; Dan 12:10; Amos 4:4)
- “righteous still do right” – call to faithfulness (Rev 22:17, 14:6-7)

vs 12-13 – promise of Second Coming

- Christ “coming soon,” to “repay according to everyone’s work” (Rev 2:23, 11:18, 14:12-13, 20:11-15)
- Christ is “the Alpha and Omega,” first and last, beginning and end (Rev 1:8,17, 2:8, 21:6) – the source and goal of life

vs 14-15 – promise and warning (Rev 2-3, 20:6-7)

- “blessed are those who wash their robes” in the blood of the Lamb (Rev 3:5, 4:4, 7:13-17, 12:11), right to “tree of life” (Rev 2:7) and “may enter the city” (Rev 21:27)
- “outside” are “dogs” – symbolize uncleanness (Matt 7:6, 15:26; Phil 3:2); vice list (Rev 9:20-21, 21:8) – no place for sin in city, but city gates never closed (Rev 21:25)

vs 16-21 – benediction from the Triune God

- the revelation/*apocalypse*/"testimony" of Jesus Christ (Rev 1:1)
 - “root and descendent” of David – Creator and Redeemer, Lord and Savior, Messiah (Ps 2; Isa 11:1; Matt 1:1, Matt 22:41-46; Rom 1:1-6)
 - “bright morning star” (Rev 2:28)
- “the Spirit and the bride,” people of God (19:7-8, 21:2), offer invitation to “Come” to “everyone who hears,” “everyone who is thirsty,” “anyone who wishes take the water of life as a gift” – mission of the church, share the gospel, invitation to grace
- warning not to add or subtract from “words of the prophecy of this book” (Rev 22:7, 1:3; Deut 4:1-4, 12:32; Prov 30:5-6; Gal 1:6-9) – call to proclaim God’s word, God’s truth
- Christ is “coming soon” – “Amen [so be it]. Come, Lord Jesus” – promise and hope
- benediction – Revelation begins and ends in the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ (Rev 1:4)

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