

Understanding the Book of
Revelation

By
Dennis Fischer

© 2000 Dennis Fischer
All rights reserve

Dedication



This book is dedicated to
Mr. Ronald W. Laughland,
a man who inspired in me a unique
curiosity for the Scriptures—and the architect of the greatest
Graduate Club in the history of God's Church

Understanding the Book of Revelation

The book of Revelation, or the Apocalypse, has been the center of more speculation by scholars and casual readers than any other book of the Bible. Around the world, leading members of the religious community debate its content and offer theories about every aspect of its message. Why is there so much confusion about this book? Is it possible to understand its meaning? Is there a key to this understanding? If God decided, in His infinite wisdom, to inspire the writing of this book, wouldn't He also provide a way for it to be understood?

The God of the Bible truly is a God of purpose and that purpose shall be revealed. The prophet Amos was inspired to write that God would do nothing before first revealing it to His servants (Amos 3:7). Additionally, the prophet Isaiah once wrote concerning God's great power over the destiny of the universe and how that power is manifested in His pronouncements concerning the future.

Remember the former things of old: for I am God, and there is none else; I am God, and there is none like Me, declaring the end from the beginning, and from ancient times the things that are not yet done, saying, "My counsel shall stand, and I will do all My pleasure." (Isa. 46:9-10)

It is important to understand that the book of Revelation is a revealing, not a concealing. Therefore, God's purpose is to make known what is written in this extraordinary work.

The Bible: A Coded Book

The Bible has often been characterized as God's instruction book for mankind. It consists of truths that man could never acquire on his own. These truths reveal a great plan of salvation for all who have ever lived. However, the Bible is a coded book and requires one to have God's spirit in order for it to be understood. The apostle Paul grasped this principle and explained it in his epistle to the Church at Corinth.

For what man knoweth the things of a man, save the spirit of man which is in him? Even so the things of God knoweth no man, but the spirit of God. Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the spirit which is of God; that we might know the things that are freely given to us of God. Which things also we speak, not in the words which man's wisdom teacheth, but which the holy ghost teacheth; comparing spiritual things with spiritual. (1Cor.2:11-13)

The point Paul was making is that God communicates to His children through His spirit and reveals His truth by that spirit. That spirit teaches spiritual things. Therefore, in order to truly understand the book of Revelation, one must have God's holy spirit. That spirit will impart a deeper understanding of not only what this book means to mankind, but what it means to each individual believer.

A Time for Everything

It is important to understand that God does things according to His schedule. The book of Ecclesiastes reveals that "there is a time for everything" (Eccl. 3:1). It is also important to understand that God never intended for all things to be understood immediately. When speaking to the prophet Daniel concerning the end time, God ordered His words to be sealed.

But thou, O Daniel, shut up the words, and seal the book, even to the time of the end: many shall run to and fro, and knowledge shall be increased. (Dan. 12:4)

When Daniel questioned the meaning of some of the visions he was shown, God explained that it was not for him to understand.

And He said, "Go thy way, Daniel: for the words are closed up and sealed till the time of the end." (Dan. 12:9)

God clearly explained to Daniel that much of what he saw was sealed until the time of the end. We are now living in that time. The Bible calls this present age "the last days." It is at this time when the great prophecies declared by God will not only come to pass, but their understanding will be made known.

It is also important to understand that in order to grasp the full meaning of Revelation, you will need to possess certain keys. These keys will unlock some of the greatest mysteries concerning the future of this world as well as the ultimate destiny of God's children and the universe.

This booklet identifies twelve keys to understanding what the apostle John was inspired to record over nineteen centuries ago. These keys will bring the book of Revelation to life and make its message clear.

On the Island of Patmos

When the apostle John wrote the book of Revelation, he was on the small island of Patmos approximately 37 miles southwest of Miletus in the Icarian Sea. The island consisted mainly of volcanic hills and rocky ground. It was approximately 10 miles long and six miles wide. The Roman government used Patmos as a penal colony and most scholars believe that John was exiled there because of his preaching, a fact that John himself confirms (Rev. 1:9). The great historian Eusebius indicated that John was banished to Patmos by Emperor Domitian in 95 A.D. and released some 18 months later (Ecclesiastical History, 3.20. 8-9).

While on Patmos, John was taken in vision to a time centuries into the future. There he was given a picture of what the world would be like at the very end of man's reign on earth.

It is also important to understand that John specifically indicated that the purpose of the book of Revelation was to bear record of three things.

- 1) The word of God,
- 2) The testimony of Jesus Christ
- 3) The things John saw (Rev. 1:2)

The words recorded by John in Revelation must be understood in this context. Additionally, it is important to understand that John is not advancing any personal theories but rather describing in great detail these three aspects of his vision.

With this in mind, let us examine twelve essential keys to understanding this extraordinary book.

Key One Understanding the Source of Revelation

The book of Revelation begins with powerful words that, for the most part, have been ignored or misunderstood by many Bible students. Under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, the apostle John introduces the reader of this prophecy to the source of its revelation.

The Revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave unto Him, to shew unto His servants things which must shortly come to pass; and He sent and signified it by His angel unto His servant John. (Rev. 1:1)

Notice that this remarkable book is not the revelation of John, but rather the revelation of Jesus Christ. Jesus is the revealer, a point which is dramatically illustrated throughout the book. Consider the following example. In chapter five, John is taken in vision into the third heaven. There he sees God the Father sitting on His throne, holding a book (scroll) in His right hand. This book is sealed with seven seals.

At one point, an angel proclaims with a loud voice, "Who is worthy to open the book and loose the seals thereof?" (Rev. 5:2). John goes on to say that no man in heaven or on earth was worthy to open the book except the Lamb of God who had been slain and had redeemed God's children by His own blood (Rev. 5:3-9). That Lamb is Jesus Christ; therefore, He alone is the Revealer. Understanding this point is critical to grasping the true meaning of this great writing.

Tragically, this is the place where most scholars err. Many "Bible authorities" have attempted to interpret the book of Revelation and its symbols on their own. In doing so, virtually hundreds of opinions have been advanced concerning the meaning of this prophetic book.

It is important to understand that no scripture is of private interpretation (2 Pe. 1:20). Therefore, in order to clearly understand the true meaning of Revelation, you must allow this book to speak on its own behalf.

Additionally, as was stated earlier, the book of Revelation is a revealing, not a concealing. Therefore, God intended it to be understood, but only at a time He would choose.

This is that time. And the great Revealer Jesus Christ is the One who unseals the words. These words can now be understood by those who allow Jesus Christ to reveal them.

Key Two Understanding the Day of the Lord

Chapter one of the book of Revelation indicates that John was taken in vision "on the Lord's Day."

I was in the Spirit on the Lord's day, and heard behind me a great voice, as of a trumpet... (Rev. 1:10)

While some have argued that John was referring to a particular day of the week when he spoke of the "Lord's Day," the context of the book makes it clear that this is not so. The term "Lord's Day" is actually referring to a time comprising the final year of man's reign on earth. This period is described by the great prophet Isaiah.

Howl ye; for the day of the Lord is at hand; it shall come as a destruction from the Almighty... Behold, the day of the Lord cometh, cruel both with wrath and fierce anger, to lay the land desolate: and He shall destroy the sinners thereof out of it. (Isa. 13:6, 9)

The "Day of the Lord" mentioned by Isaiah is not referring to a literal day but rather a prophetic day. A prophetic day actually lasts one year. This principle is demonstrated in Numbers 14:34 and Ezekiel 4:6. Isaiah confirmed this principle when he spoke of a day of God's vengeance on the world and indicated that the day would be a year in length.

...To proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord, and the day of vengeance of our God; to comfort all that mourn... (Isa. 61:2)

The Bible speaks of a period in human history when great distress will come upon the earth. This is what God's word is referring to when it speaks of the "Day of the Lord." It is a time when mankind will experience firsthand how serious his Creator is about defiance to Him and His law. The prophet Joel characterized this period as possessing such destructive power that few would survive.

And the Lord shall utter his voice before his army: for his camp is very great: he is strong that executeth his word: for the day of the Lord is great and very terrible; and who can abide it? (Joel 2:11)

Joel was not the only one to describe "the day of the Lord" in such terms. The apostle John said it this way.

For the great day of his wrath is come; and who shall be able to stand? (Rev. 6:17)

John also stated that this would be a time when even the mightiest men on earth would be consumed with fear.

And the kings of the earth, and the great men, and the rich men, and the chief captains, and the mighty men, and every bondman, and every free man, hid themselves in the dens and in the rocks of the mountains. (Rev. 6:15-16) see also: Isa. 2:19)

John would later state that during this time, the world would be so filled with terror that mankind would actually seek death, but death would be denied.

And in those days shall men seek death, and shall not find it; and shall desire to die, and death shall flee from them. (Rev. 9:6)

The prophet Zephaniah wrote that the time would come when mighty men would be so distressed they would literally be brought to tears.

The great day of the Lord is near, it is near, and hasteth greatly, even the voice of the day of the Lord: the mighty man shall cry there bitterly. (Zeph. 1:14-15)

The Day of the Lord will be a time when no one on earth without God's protection will be able to escape. There will be no place to hide, nor will man be able to buy his way out of the distress soon to come.

Neither their silver nor their gold shall be able to deliver them in the day of the Lord's wrath; but the whole land shall be devoured by the fire of his jealousy: for he shall make even a speed riddance of all them that dwell in the land. (Zeph. 1:18)

The great prophet Isaiah described the overwhelming strength of God's judgment on a world totally defiant to Him. These words should stand as a warning to all mankind that there will come a point when the Almighty will execute His judgment.

For, behold, the Lord will come with fire, and with his chariots like a whirlwind, to render his anger with fury, and his rebuke with flames of fire. (Isa. 66:15-16)

The prophet Hosea referred to this time of God's judgment as "the day of rebuke" (Hosea 5:9). During it God will chastise His people with great strength. When describing this correction, God says, "I will pour out My wrath upon them like water" (verse 10).

The magnitude of God's judgment on a rebellious planet is inconceivable but real. It is a time that will see seven trumpet plagues unleashed with unimaginable force and conclude with seven vial plagues, the power of which will make absolutely clear that God is in charge of His creation.

With this in mind, it is essential to understand that the "**Day of the Lord**" is not a single day but rather a year in which God will punish a rebellious and depraved world. However, it is also important to understand that God has provided a way to escape this judgment and that way is also revealed in the book of Revelation.

Key Three

Understanding the Seven Churches

The second and third chapters of Revelation contain letters written to seven specific Churches. Understanding the identity of these Churches is essential to understanding the nature of these letters and their intended purpose for man.

The Churches identified as the recipients of these letters were located in seven cities of Asia Minor (currently Turkey). These cities were connected by major highways and represented consecutive stops on a Roman mail route during the latter first century. In chapter one, John is directed to write what he sees and to send it to these seven specific congregations.

... what thou seest, write in a book, and send it unto the seven Churches which are in Asia; unto Ephesus, and unto Smyrna, and unto Pergamos, and unto Thyatira, and unto Sardis, and unto Philadelphia, and unto Laodicea. (Rev. 1:11)

However, when examining the content of these letters, it becomes clear that their intended audience is greater than seven first century Churches. To illustrate this point consider the following. 1) The circumstances described in these seven letters could not possibly have been contemporaneous. For example, it would have been impossible for Smyrna to have been enduring horrible persecution (Rev. 2:10) while at the same time, a sister congregation only miles away in Philadelphia was free to preach the gospel (Rev. 3:7-8). 2) Additionally, the Churches at Thyatira, Sardis and Philadelphia are identified as being in existence at the time of Jesus Christ's return (Rev. 2:25, 3:3, 3:10-11).

Seven Candlesticks

It is interesting that in Revelation 1:12-20, Jesus Christ stands "in the midst of seven golden candlesticks." These candlesticks are defined as "the Churches" (verse 20). However, during the first century, there were far more than seven Church congregations. Even the mail route on which these particular communities of faith were located contained additional Churches of God. In light of this it is clear that these seven Churches possess a much broader meaning than simply being local congregations. When God speaks to them He is revealing a great message to all His people down through the centuries. This is why it is so important for His people today to understand the true meaning of these communities of faith. But there is more.

It is also significant to note that the Old Covenant Church was symbolized by a lampstand (candlestick) which held seven lights (Ex. 25:31-40). This almost certainly is a type of the seven golden candlesticks described by John in Revelation 1:20. Additionally, history reveals it that the Old Covenant Church was also divided into seven successive eras.

The Seven Churches Are Prophetic

When attempting to identify the seven Churches John is writing to it is important to understand that the book of Revelation is a prophetic book. Therefore, these Churches should be understood primarily in prophetic terms. This being the case, the seven Churches recorded in Revelation two and three represent God's Church in seven successive eras. These eras begin with the apostolic Church in the first century, identified as Ephesus, and conclude with God's end-time Churches of Philadelphia and Laodicea.

Perhaps the most compelling reason for understanding these Churches as seven consecutive eras is revealed in the complexion of the book of Revelation. Consider the following. The book of Revelation identifies seven seals. These seals are opened in succession, not all together. It also identifies seven trumpets which are not blown all at once, but rather in sequence beginning with the first and ending with "the last trumpet." Additionally, the sixteenth chapter of Revelation identifies seven plagues poured out of

seven vials. These plagues are not unleashed simultaneously, but once again, are poured out in sequence, one after another.

Therefore, it is reasonable to believe that the seven Churches identified in these letters are actually seven successive eras of God's Church. These eras comprise the history of the Church down through the ages, culminating with the return of Jesus Christ.

God's Church Through the Ages

As was mentioned earlier, it is possible that the Old Covenant Church may also have been divided into seven successive eras. *The first era* was built under the leadership of Moses, Joshua and the elders (Ju. 2:6-7). This Church would have corresponded to the first century Church under the leadership of Peter and the apostles. This New Testament era is referred to as the Church at Ephesus (Rev. 2:1-7).

The First Era: Ephesus

The Ephesus era of the Church experienced dramatic growth during its early years. However, persecution against this era of the Church was strong and ultimately resulted with the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 A.D. After this event, the Church found itself fighting to overcome a constant stream of persecution from without and false teachers from within. This era of the Church ended at the close of the first century under the leadership of John, the last living apostle. It is interesting to note that John was the bishop of the Ephesus Church and it is in that city that he died.

The Second Era: Smyrna

The second Old Testament era of God's Church existed during the time of the judges (such as Samuel). This era would have corresponded to the New Testament Church under the leadership of Polycarp, a disciple of the apostle John. This era is referred to in the book of Revelation as the Church at Smyrna (Rev. 2:8-11).

The name Smyrna means "bitter" and it was a bitter era, to be sure. Polycarp witnessed a great apostasy within the Church in which the truth taught by the original apostles was replaced with fables. He lived to see God's Sabbath replaced with Sunday worship and the Passover replaced with the pagan tradition of Easter. Polycarp's life ended tragically when he was burned to death by a mob in his own city.

The Smyrna era of the Church ended during the fourth century. However, prior to its end, the Church experienced extraordinary persecution. At the order of Diocletian, Churches were destroyed, the ministry was imprisoned and Bibles were burned. This persecution lasted for ten years and ended with the Edict of Toleration in Milan in 313 A.D.

In Revelation 2:9-10, the angel of the Church at Smyrna reveals a great tribulation lasting "ten days." This angel concludes the letter with an exhortation to be strong and faithful, even to death. He then promises that the result of such loyalty would be a crown of life (v. 10). The scriptures reveal that a prophetic day lasts one year (Ezk. 4:6). This being the case, the persecution endured by the Smyrna Church is in complete harmony with the scriptures.

The Third Era: Pergamos

The third Old Covenant era of the Church occurred when Israel was a united monarchy. This took place during the days of David and Solomon. This era corresponded to what Revelation calls the Church at Pergamos (Rev. 2:12-17). The name Pergamos means "fortified."

During this era, God's New Testament Church migrated to the mountains of Armenia. In this location, they called themselves "Paulicians." The Paulicians rejected apostolic succession, taught against the

trinity and crosses, and rejected baptism by sprinkling. Fred Coneybeare translated a book written by the Paulicians and drew the following conclusion.

The general impression which the study of it leaves on us is that in it we have before us a form of the church not very remote from the primitive Jewish Christianity of Palestine. (Key of Truth, p. 193)

In Revelation, the Church at Pergamos is characterized as not denying the faith (Rev. 2:13). Clearly, the faith taught by the apostles was apparent in this community of believers.

The Fourth Era: Thyatira

The fourth Old Testament era of God's Church existed when the monarchy was divided, with Israel in the north and Judah in the south. This fourth era corresponds to the New Testament Church at Thyatira (Rev. 2:18-29).

During the Middle Ages, this era of the Church migrated to Europe. One of its premier figures was a man named Peter Waldo. Waldo taught God's truth throughout France, Italy, Hungary, and even into Russia. His followers were called Waldensians.

It is interesting to note that Waldensian churches in many European congregations displayed an emblem depicting seven candlesticks with only the fourth candle emitting light. The inscription on this emblem read: "A light shines in the darkness." Clearly, this community of faith understood themselves to be the fourth era of God's true Church.

The Fifth Era: Sardis

The fifth era of the Old Testament Church took place when Israel and Judah were in captivity. At that time, the practice of the faith required the consent of gentile kings such as Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon and the Medo-Persian king Darius. Although the faith of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob was preserved during this period by men such as Daniel, it certainly did not flourish. This era of the Old Testament Church corresponds to the New Testament Church at Sardis (Rev. 3:1-6).

By the 1500's, God's Church was experiencing growth. Several groups had arisen, calling themselves "Anabaptists." During the following century, the Church began to grow in England. It was then that a church leader named Stephen Mumford was sent to America. There, he would raise up several small churches united under a common faith. Many of these groups referred to themselves as "the Church of God" and were noted for keeping God's commandments. Ultimately, this church would become the Seventh Day Church of God and it is still in existence today.

The Sixth Era: Philadelphia

The sixth era of the Old Testament Church occurred during the restoration of the temple under Ezra and Nehemiah. At that time, a faith that had all but disappeared was restored and God's law became prominent among His people. This era endured during the days of the Maccabees. At that time, there was a great zeal demonstrated by a relatively small number of people. This era of the Old Testament Church corresponds to the New Testament Church at Philadelphia (Rev. 3:7-13). The Philadelphian era of the Church is characterized in Revelation as having a zeal for God's law and His work.

During the first half of the twentieth century, Herbert W. Armstrong began to preach a powerful gospel message on radio. He would later produce a telecast that would blanket the United States as well as publish several magazines with a circulation measuring in the millions.

Mr. Armstrong taught that although salvation is a gift, obedience to God is an essential part of the Christian walk. He also taught that God's commandments represent a way of giving while man was

consumed with the way of "get." Under the leadership of Mr. Armstrong, God's truth was proclaimed around the world. Today, that work continues, albeit in a much smaller scope.

When Herbert Armstrong died in 1986, his successors repudiated everything he had taught and replaced that teaching with doctrines that were never embraced during the early days of the New Testament Church. Mr. Armstrong's successors embraced the doctrine of the trinity and declared that observance of the Sabbath and Holy Days was "optional." The church leadership also introduced the doctrines of the immortality of the soul, that the law was done away at the cross, and that the observance of holidays such as Christmas and Easter are positive expressions of faith despite having their origins in paganism. This was all done to conform to what church leadership called "normative Christianity."

The apostle Paul once warned that at the time of the end, a great apostasy would take place within the Church (2Thes. 2:3). During the past 15 years, Mr. Armstrong's successors have fulfilled this prophecy. In Transition

Although the Church at Philadelphia will be in existence at the time of Jesus' return, it apparently experiences a transition in which only a part of the Church remains zealous to complete a work. Others become more passive and indifferent and although they keep the commandments, the zeal they once had toward a great commission of preaching the gospel wanes.

Shortly after the death of Mr. Armstrong and the introduction of false teachings within the church, God's people were again scattered, with numerous fellowships arising. For the most part, these fellowships share a common theology; however they are vastly different in their approach to doing a work. Also emerging within these churches is a highly judgmental attitude toward each other. This attitude is reflected with some fellowships believing they are superior to others and all believing that somehow they are God's chosen.

The Seventh Era: Laodicea

The seventh and final era of the Old Testament Church took place during the period of the Pharisees. The Pharisees believed that righteousness could be legislated and proceeded to create virtually thousands of rules regarding obedience to God. This era corresponds with the Church at Laodicea described in Revelation 3:14-18.

The Laodicean era is characterized as "lukewarm." They are self-righteous as well as self-sufficient, much the same as the pharisees of Jesus' day. These "New Covenant Pharisees" embrace the idea that man can decide for himself how God should be worshiped. As a result, many forsake the assembling of themselves together with their brethren. Others believe that the commission to preach the gospel is finished; therefore, the only duty of a Christian is to prepare for the return of Christ. Still others reject the organized Church as a viable institution because of issues involving government within it.

Perhaps the greatest characteristic of the Laodicean attitude is the belief that their fellowship is superior to others. When describing the Church at Laodicea, the angel of this Church declares "they think they are rich, but they are naked" (Rev. 3:17). This attitude of self-sufficiency is highly dangerous and the Church at Laodicea is admonished to turn from it. The Church at Laodicea represents the seventh and final era of God's Church down through the ages.

Clearly, the Churches identified in Revelation two and three represent seven successive eras of God's work on this earth. It began on the day of Pentecost in 31 A.D. with the founding of the New Testament Church and will conclude with the return of Jesus Christ when He sets up His millennial Kingdom on earth.

Seven Characteristics of God's Church

Throughout the past twenty centuries, certain patterns have emerged within God's true Church. These

patterns help identify who His servants are and the path they have taken. Consider seven prominent characteristics of God's Church down through the ages.

- God's Church has always been small. Jesus Christ, Himself, referred to it as "a little flock."
- The Church has repeatedly experienced great persecution, inflicted for the most part by those who claim to be God's servants. This persecution has taken the form of unspeakable violence in which God's people were tortured and even murdered for their belief. It has also taken the form of vicious verbal abuses in which God's people have been characterized as "extremists" and "fanatics" while His Church has been labeled an "apostate cult." Jesus Christ warned that there would be persecution on His people and throughout the scriptures, the Church is exhorted to endure this persecution. (Mt. 10:16-39).
- God's Church down through the ages has striven to obey God's law, including His Sabbath and Holy Days. At the very end of man's rule on earth, God's people are characterized as those who keep His commandments and have the testimony of Jesus Christ. (Rev. 12:17; 14:12)
- God's Church has rejected pagan traditions which are always trying to creep into its teachings. (Mk. 7:7-9)
- God's people have constantly fought against false teachers who emerge within its ranks. These fights have become so intense that God's true servants have often been driven out of the very Churches they founded. (1Jn. 4:1; 2Pe. 2:1; 3Jn. 9-10)
- God's true Church is repeatedly scattered but continues to survive. Jesus Christ declared that the gates of hell (the grave) would never prevail against His Church. (Mt. 16:18)
- God's true Church has proclaimed a gospel message as a witness and will continue proclaiming that gospel until the return of Jesus Christ. (Mt. 24:14)

Today, God's Church can be identified with three signs. It bears His name, it keeps His commandments, and it does His work. Despite relentless persecution from without as well as periods of great apostasy from within, God's true Church endures and will be in existence at the return of Jesus Christ.

This is a chronicle of the history of God's people for two thousand years. That history is powerfully declared in seven letters delivered by seven angels to seven Churches in Asia.

Key Four Understanding the Seven Seals

Chapters six through eight in Revelation describe seven seals which secure a book held by God in His right hand. These seals have been a cause of confusion for many Bible students but it is possible to know what each of them represents because Jesus Christ (the Revealer) had already spoken of them in great detail during His ministry on earth.

Just days before His arrest, trial and crucifixion, Jesus' disciples came to Him on the Mount of Olives and asked Him a powerful question:

"What will be the sign of your coming and of the end of the world?" (Mt. 24:3)

The Greek word for "world" in this verse is *aión*, and is better translated "age." Therefore, the disciples were really asking Jesus what the world would look like at the time when man's rule on earth would end and Jesus Christ would return to restore His Kingdom.

Jesus responded to this query by proclaiming what is commonly referred to as the "Olivet Prophecy." He begins this prophecy by describing religious deception, wars and rumors of wars, political upheaval, racial strife, and even natural disasters. These words spoken by Jesus to His disciples perfectly mirror the six seals described in the sixth chapter of Revelation.

The Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse

The first seal, illustrated by a white horse (Rev. 6:2), pictures a time of great religious deception. In Matthew 24:5, Jesus indicated that a time would come when many would claim to represent Him but would in fact preach a deceptive message and as a result, cause many to be misled. Therefore, the first seal pictures a proliferation of false Christianity over all of Western Civilization and much of the rest of the world.

Although Christianity seems to be alive and well in this present age, it is a faith vastly different from that practiced by the original apostolic Church. Many of the customs and teachings found in Christianity today actually come from the pagan world. Consider its holidays. Christmas and Easter are the two great holy seasons in the professing Christian world. However, these two traditions are nowhere sanctioned in the scriptures. On the contrary, the Bible condemns such practices. Additionally, modern Christianity teaches that God's law is done away. This, despite the fact that Jesus Christ indicated that God's great law would last beyond the existence of the physical universe (Mt. 5:17-19).

The second seal, illustrated by a red horse (Rev. 6:4), pictures a time of great war. While giving the "Olivet Prophecy," Jesus stated that the time would come when the world would be filled with wars and rumors of wars and that nation would rise up against nation and kingdom against kingdom. (Mt. 24:6-7).

It is interesting to note that the Greek word for nation used in Matthew 24:7 is *ethnos*. This word is the root for our "ethnic" or "ethnicity." This being the case, it is very possible that Jesus was describing wars involving both governments (kingdom against kingdom) and races (nation against nation). In the world today, we see greater political and racial strife than at any time in history. With this prophecy, Jesus was saying that conflict and war would reach their greatest intensity during the end time.

The third and fourth seals, illustrated by a black horse and a pale horse respectively (Rev. 6:5,8), picture a time of famine and pestilence which will bring about great death. Jesus also spoke of famine and pestilence following on the heels of war (Mt. 24:7).

The Great Tribulation

At this point, the fifth seal is opened, revealing a time of great tribulation which will include religious persecution unlike any ever seen before (Rev. 6:9-11). When describing this seal in the "Olivet Prophecy," Jesus said:

Then shall they deliver you up to be afflicted, and shall kill you: and ye shall be hated of all nations for My name's sake. And then shall many be offended, and shall betray one another, and shall hate one another. (Mt. 24:9-10)

Jesus went on to say that this time of tribulation would be so fierce that unless He intervened, the earth and its inhabitants would be utterly destroyed.

For then shall be great tribulation, such as was not since the beginning of the world to this time, no, nor ever shall be. And except those days should be shortened, there should no flesh be saved: but for the elect's sake those days shall be shortened. (Mt. 24:21-22)

The great tribulation is a time of unimaginable persecution on both the physical descendants of Israel and God's true Church. It is referred to in the scriptures as "Jacob's trouble."

Alas! For that day is great, so that none is like it: it is even the time of Jacob's trouble; but he shall be saved out of it. (Jer. 30:7)

This persecution is inflicted by Satan himself because he knows that he has but a short time (Rev. 12:12). It is important to understand that the great tribulation described in the fifth seal is not God's wrath, but rather Satan's wrath. It is unspeakably merciless and cruel and is directed at those whom God has used to accomplish His purpose.

The great tribulation will result in the descendants of Israel going into one final captivity. This captivity will be so great that the horror of the holocaust will pale by comparison. Additionally, God's Church will experience an assault designed to eradicate it from the face of the earth but there is a way of escape.

A Place of Safety

Although God's people will suffer great persecution in the last days, many of them will be miraculously delivered. The twelfth chapter of Revelation indicates that a part of God's true Church will be taken to a special place where it will be nourished for three and a half years.

And to the woman were given two wings of a great eagle, that she might fly into the wilderness into her place, where she is nourished for a time, and times, and half a time, from the face of the serpent. (Rev. 12:14)

John went on to state that during this flight, the Church will be pursued by a great flood cast out of the mouth of the serpent (Satan the devil) (Rev. 12:15). This flood may very well be a great army, much the same as that of Pharaoh which pursued the Israelites during the exodus. John then states that God miraculously intervenes and just as the Red Sea swallowed Pharaoh's host, the earth will swallow this great flood pursuing God's Church.

And the serpent cast out of his mouth water as a flood after the woman, that he might cause her to be carried away of the flood. And the earth helped the woman, and the earth opened her mouth, and swallowed up the flood which the dragon cast out of his mouth. (Rev. 12:15-16)

John continues his chronicle of this event by indicating that when the Satan is thwarted in his effort to capture the Church, he will become enraged and "make war" with the remnant of God's people (Rev.

12:17). This remnant is not identified by name but it is very possible it is the Church at Laodicea. In chapter three of Revelation, Laodicea is characterized as being spiritually lethargic (Rev. 3:16). God then warns this era of His Church that He will chastise them.

As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten: be zealous therefore, and repent. (Rev. 3:19)

In this case, God may allow Satan's persecution to wake up this lethargic Church. In order for this to happen, this Church will have to go through horrible persecution and even death. This vicious persecution is characterized as "the great tribulation."

The Sixth Seal

It is at this point that the book of Revelation introduces a sixth seal. This sixth seal pictures a time when the heavens will be radically shaken. At this time, the sun will become "black as sackcloth: and the moon shall become "as blood" (Rev. 6:12). It is also a time when great natural disasters such as earthquakes will reach an unimaginable intensity. The book of Revelation indicates that these heavenly signs would drive the mightiest of men to great fear and even cause them to desire death rather than face what was coming (Rev. 6:15-16).

Jesus also spoke of a time when there would be great astronomical signs. When giving the "Olivet Prophecy," Jesus quoted the words of the prophet Joel which described great wonders in the heavens (Joel 2:30-31).

Immediately after the tribulation of those days shall the sun be darkened, and the moon shall not give her light, and the stars shall fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens shall be shaken. (Mt. 24:29)

The Day of God's Wrath

The stage is now set for the seventh seal. This seal contains God's wrath on a rebellious, God-rejecting world. The scope of God's punishment is unimaginable but Revelation 6:17 describes it in part: "For the great day of His wrath is come; and who shall be able to stand?"

As we begin chapter seven, the awesome and frightening seventh seal is about to be opened. This seal signals the beginning of the last year of man's rule on this earth and it is called "The Day of the Lord."

Earlier, we learned that the Day of the Lord refers to a prophetic day. A prophetic day actually lasts one year (Isa. 61:2). It is therefore clear that this seventh seal describes the final year of a three-and-a-half year period the Bible refers to as the great tribulation. This is the last year before Christ's triumphant return in which He will set up His millennial Kingdom.

At this time, when God prepares to unleash His wrath, the apostle John reveals the following.

After these things I saw four angels standing on the four corners of the earth, holding the four winds of the earth, that the wind should not blow on the earth, nor on the sea, nor on any tree. (Rev. 7:1).

These four angels are situated in the north, south, east and west. Poised in these four strategic positions, these angels will insure that the coming plagues contained in this seventh seal will cover the entire earth; nothing will escape.

It is important to understand that John states these four angels hold back "four winds of the earth." But what are these winds? Throughout the scriptures, wind is a symbol God uses to represent spirit. Even the word for spirit in Greek (*pneuma*) means "a breeze" or "a blast of air."

It is interesting to note that when Jesus met with Nicodemus and spoke of being born again, He indicated that those who were born again would be like the wind (Jn. 3:7). It follows then, that these four winds are likely spirit forces unleashed by four angelic beings. If this is the case, it would mean that the four angels described in Revelation 7:1 are actually holding back the spiritual powers which will carry out God's wrath over the entire earth and all of its population.

The 144,000

John then explains that at this time, a special angel arises from the east. This angel instructs the other four angels to withhold God's wrath until His servants are sealed in their foreheads. This sealing protects them from the devastation which will be unleashed by these four angels. The seventh chapter of Revelation indicates that the number of those who are sealed is exactly 144,000.

Bible authorities have differed greatly in their view concerning the identity of this unique people. Some have taught that the 144,000 are comprised exclusively of "Jews" while others have identified them as "modern-day Israel." Still others believe that these people are survivors of the great tribulation. Some have suggested that they represent God's Church throughout the ages.

Recently, it has been suggested that there are actually two separate ranks of 144,000 with one group consisting of physical Israelites protected by God during the tribulation and the other consisting of those who will be changed into spirit beings at the return of Christ. One leading religious denomination contends that the 144,000 occupy heaven while the balance of the saved will reside on earth for all eternity.

The scriptures do, however, identify certain aspects of the 144,000 that are indisputable. First, this community of servants are a holy people who will be respected and admired for all eternity. The scriptures also reveal that they represent only a very small segment of those who will ultimately be a part of God's Kingdom forever. Additionally, the scriptures reveal that this esteemed company represents God's "firstfruits" (Rev. 14:4).

There is an intricate story woven through the scriptures regarding the identity and ultimate destiny of these people. However, for the sake of this booklet, it is only necessary to understand that they are protected from God's wrath by a unique seal placed on their foreheads.

Key Five: Understanding God's Wrath

Many students of the Bible mistakenly believe that the great tribulation mentioned in the scriptures represents God's punishment on the world. This is not true. The great tribulation described in Matthew 24:9 and Revelation 6:9 comprises the fifth seal John saw opened. God's wrath on this world takes place during the seventh and last seal. At that time, God will unleash tremendous plagues on the earth. This period of time is called "the day of the Lord" and as was mentioned earlier, represents the final year of man's rule on earth.

The apostle John introduces the eighth chapter of Revelation by describing the opening of the seventh and last seal of a book God holds in His right hand. He states that once this seal is opened, there will be silence in heaven for the space of about one half hour (Rev. 8:1). John then describes seven angelic beings standing before God and receiving seven trumpets. When blown, these trumpets will bring forth enormous devastation upon the earth.

These seven trumpet plagues pummel a God-rejecting world with such force that virtually billions of people will die. However, it is important to understand that there still remains a great hope for them. This hope will be revealed later in this booklet.

The first three trumpet plagues cause unimaginable devastation on the ecological balance of the earth. Fire and blood rain down upon the earth as well as its oceans and rivers.

At the conclusion of these three plagues, virtually all grass will be "burnt up" and one third of all the trees on earth will be consumed by fire (Rev. 8:7-11). Additionally, the oceans will be so damaged that one third of all sea creatures will die and one third of the ships that travel on them will be destroyed. And as unbelievable as it may sound, this is only the beginning.

When the fourth angel sounds his trumpet, one third of the heavens are darkened. This includes a third part of the sun and moon. Once this occurs, John indicates that an angel will fly through the midst of heaven and cry with a loud voice:

Woe, woe, woe, to the inhabitants of the earth by reason of the other voices of the trumpet of the three angels, which are yet to sound! (Rev. 8:13)

These three woes comprise the fifth, sixth and seventh trumpets sounded by God's messengers.

The Three Woes

Chapter nine of Revelation describes the fifth and sixth trumpet plagues. These plagues are also identified as the first and second "woes." These woes represent a massive military attack and a corresponding counterattack.

Involved in this war is an army of 200 million soldiers which do great battle. To put the size of this army into perspective, it will be over 400 times the size of the coalition forces mobilized during the Persian Gulf War. As a result, this military conflict will cause such devastation that one third of all mankind will be killed (verse 18). Amazingly, however, those who survive will still refuse to repent. Rather, they remain defiant against God and His law (verses 20-21).

The Two Witnesses

Prior to describing the seventh and last trumpet, the apostle John introduces two witnesses who will prophesy against the earth for 1260 days, or three and a half years (Rev. 11:1-3). John indicates that

these servants of God have the power to perform great miracles (Rev. 11:6). He also states that anyone attempting to harm them will be dealt with severely.

And if any man will hurt them, fire proceedeth out of their mouth, and devoureth their enemies; and if any man will hurt them, he must in this manner be killed. (Rev. 11:5)

John then explains that at the end of the 1260 days, these two witnesses will be killed by a beast which ascends out of a bottomless pit. Once these witnesses are murdered, an evil society will "rejoice" and actually send gifts to one another to celebrate their deaths (Rev. 11:9-10).

It is important to understand that although the two witnesses are first mentioned just prior to the seventh seal, they actually appear on the world scene much earlier. Revelation 11:1-3 indicates that they prophesy against the earth for 1260 days (three and a half years).

When the seventh seal is opened, the world has only one year (360 days) until Christ will return with His saints and establish His Kingdom.. This being the case, the two witnesses actually become prominent figures two and a half years before the seventh seal is opened. This would be just prior to the opening of the fifth seal.

Revelation eleven is best understood as an insert chapter designed to introduce two prominent figures who will live during the end time. However, it is reasonable to conclude that their greatest miracles will occur at the end of their testimony.

Who Are the Two Witnesses?

This question has perhaps drawn more speculation from the religious community than any other question pertaining to the book of Revelation. The popular view is that they will be Moses and Elijah resurrected from the dead. This, however, is simply speculation that is actually contradicted in the book of Revelation.

In Revelation 11:4, the two witnesses are characterized as "two olive trees" and "two candlesticks." This is not the only place that mentions olive trees and candlesticks. The great prophet Zechariah records an event in which he saw a vision that included two olive trees (Zech. 4:2-3). An angel informed Zechariah that the olive trees were "the two anointed ones that stand by the Lord of the whole earth" (verse 13).

It has been suggested that Joshua the High Priest described in Zechariah 3 and Zerubbabel the governor described in Zechariah 4 are types of the two witnesses. If this is the case, one of the witnesses (pictured by Joshua) will probably emerge from the ministry in God's true Church. Apparently, at some time in this man's life, a great sin was committed. However, as a result of his repentance, God forgives the sin and uses him as an indicting witness against the world.

Now Joshua was clothed with filthy garments, and stood before the angel. And He answered and spake unto those that stood before him, saying, "Take away the filthy garments from him." And unto him He said, "Behold, I have caused thine iniquity to pass from thee, and I will clothe thee with change of raiment." (Zech. 3:3-4)

The second witness (pictured as Zerubbabel) may come from an administrative or civil background. This would be similar to Moses, whose roots could be traced to the palace of Pharaoh. If this is the case, this second witness will be a man with administrative talents. This will compliment the pastoral skills of the first witness.

It also appears that these two witnesses are not men of prominence but instead are relatively obscure. God indicates that their strength does not come from their credentials but rather from the presence of God's spirit within them (Zech. 4:6).

Two Candlesticks

The two witnesses are also characterized as "two candlesticks" (Rev. 11:4). In Revelation 1:20, candlesticks are identified as God's New Testament Churches. This being the case, it is possible that these two witnesses emerge from the final two eras of God's Church. As was mentioned earlier, these two eras are pictured as the Church at Philadelphia and the Church at Laodicea.

God gives these two men great power and it is clear that they level a strong indictment against mankind for rejecting God and refusing to obey Him. However, the scriptures also reveal that for the most part, their testimony falls on deaf ears. So defiant are the nations of the earth that when these witnesses are eventually killed, there will be joy in the streets and a great celebration by a God-rejecting world (Rev. 11:7-10).

The depravity of the world at this time is so great that the bodies of these witnesses will be left in the street for all to see. After three and a half days, God's power is once again revealed in them. This power is reflected when God raises the two witnesses to life, resulting in great fear falling upon everyone who sees them (Rev. 11:11). Immediately after this event, the two witnesses ascend to heaven in a cloud in plain view of those who rejoiced at their death.

John goes on to explain that in the very same hour, a tremendous earthquake strikes the city in which the witnesses were slain. The result of this earthquake will be tremendous. John indicates that one-tenth of the city will be destroyed and 7000 men will die. This event concludes what the Bible calls "the second woe." But there is one woe left to come.

The Last Trump

Once the second woe is past, a seventh angel sounds his trumpet, causing great voices in heaven to declare, "The kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of our God and of His Christ; and He shall reign for ever and ever." This blast from the seventh and last trump will usher in one of the greatest events in human history. Once this trump is sounded, all the dead in Christ will be resurrected and changed into incorruptible spirit beings. The apostle Paul describes this event when writing to the Church at Corinth.

Behold, I shew you a mystery; We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed. In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed. (1Cor. 15:51-52)

When writing to the Church at Thessalonica, Paul explained that at the sound of the last trump, God's children would be raised and meet Jesus Christ in the air.

For the Lord Himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first: Then we which are alive and remain, shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord. (1Thes. 4:16-17)

Once this spectacular conversion from matter to spirit takes place in God's resurrected saints, the last phase of God's punishment is unleashed.

The Seven Last Plagues

The sixteenth chapter of Revelation describes seven angels with seven vials pouring out seven last plagues upon the earth. This takes place during the final days of man's defiance toward God.

The devastation inflicted by these plagues is unimaginable. Virtually everything in the sea is killed. Additionally, the sun becomes so hot that it actually scorches men with fire, causing them to blaspheme the name of God (Rev. 16:8).

At the very end of these plagues, mankind prepares to wage an unthinkable battle against God and gathers into a place called Armageddon. At this point, a seventh angel appears and pours out of his vial the seventh and last plague. This plague is described as containing thunders and lightnings and a great earthquake unlike any that has ever occurred.

According to the book of Revelation, this earthquake will be so devastating that every island will be removed and every mountain will be leveled. Finally, great hail from heaven will be showered down upon man. However, man will still refuse to repent and will continue to blaspheme God. This concludes the seventh and final plague unleashed upon the earth by seven angelic beings.

These "trumpet plagues" and "vial plagues" represent God's wrath upon the earth. They take place over a period of one year. At their conclusion, Jesus Christ and His saints will return to secure the earth and prepare to restore His millennial government (Rev. 19:16-20:4).

Key Six: Understanding the Identity of the Beast

Numerous theories have been advanced concerning the identity of the creature John saw. Some contend the beast is the United Nations. Others believe it will take the form of a mega-corporation that dominates global markets. Recently, a movie was produced depicting the beast as a multi-billionaire industrialist who appeared to have his heart set on making the world better but really desired total world power.

The key to understanding the identity of this beast is to let the Bible interpret its own symbols. This is made possible because other prophetic books depict terrible beasts and reveal their identity.

Consider the book of Daniel. The seventh chapter of Daniel describes four beasts which are later identified as great kingdoms that dominate the earth (Dan. 7:17). These kingdoms began with the Chaldean empire. This magnificent kingdom flourished over 2500 years ago under the leadership of Nebuchadnezzar. The Chaldean empire was pictured as a beast that looked like a lion with eagles' wings (Dan. 7:4).

The second beast Daniel saw in vision looked like a bear (Dan 7:5). This beast pictures the Medo-Persian empire under the leadership of Darius the Mede and Cyrus the Great. This empire conquered the Chaldean empire and was a prominent kingdom in the world for over two hundred years.

Daniel then saw a third beast which looked like a leopard with four heads and four wings (Dan. 7:6). This beast represents the powerful Greco-Macedonian armies of Alexander the Great which began in 333 B.C. and dominated the world. It is interesting to note that upon the death of Alexander the Great, the Greco-Macedonian empire was split into fourths, with each of these smaller kingdoms being presided over by one of his military subordinates.

The fourth great beast described by Daniel was unlike any of the prior beasts. It was described as "dreadful and terrible and strong exceedingly" (Dan. 7:7). Daniel indicates that this fourth beast "devoured and broke in pieces" these preceding kingdoms. Clearly, the fourth beast Daniel saw was the powerful Roman empire which flourished under the rule of the Caesars.

The Beast of Revelation 13

There is a great similarity between the beast John describes in Revelation 13 and the last beast Daniel saw. The Roman empire was far more powerful than the Chaldean empire, Medo-Persian empire, or the Greco-Macedonian empire. Its dominion blanketed the world and its influence is still felt to this very day.

During the height of Rome, the New Testament Church was born and it was at this time that the apostle John wrote the book of Revelation. With this in mind, it is possible to determine the identity of the beast described by John.

There is compelling evidence within the scriptures that indicate that the great beast John saw was a restoration of the Roman empire. This restoration will take place in the last days. At that time, a confederation of nations will unify under the leadership of a great dictator and a leading religious figure.

The fact that this end-time beast power is a restored Roman empire is clearly demonstrated with the words John uses when describing it. Consider what John records about this beast.

- The beast has a number.
- The number is 666.

- Those with wisdom are encouraged to "count this number." In other words, add it up.
- This number is identified as the "number of his name."
- It is also identified as the "number of a man."

With this information, it is clear that the kingdom John saw can be identified by the number 666. Additionally, the ruler of that kingdom can also be identified by this number. It is interesting to note that the founder and first king of Rome was a man named Romulus. This king as well as his kingdom and subjects all bore the name "Roman."

The prominent language used in the New Testament was Greek and clearly, John wrote the book of Revelation in this language. The Greek word for "Roman" used at this time was lateinos. Additionally, it is interesting to note that when the New Testament was written, Greek letters were also used as numbers. In other words, many Greek letters had a numerical equivalent. With this in mind, consider the Greek word lateinos (Latin man / Roman) and its numerical equivalent.

Greek Letter	Number
L	30
A	1
T	300
E	5
I	10
N	50
O	70
S	200
Latin man/Roman	666

It is important to understand that the word lateinos has nothing to do with race, nor is it referring to the Hispanic culture. The term lateinos pertains to the Latin world dominated by the Roman empire. It should also be noted that Greek writers often referred to the Roman empire as "the Latin kingdom" (Latine Basileia). This term also has a numeric value of 666. Therefore, when John describes this great beast coming out of the sea, he is describing a government of enormous power and influence.

However, the number 666 is also identified as "the number of a man." This being the case, this number stands as an identifying mark of the political leader that governs the beast. With this in mind, it is interesting to note that the name Romulus in Hebrew is Romiith and the numerical equivalent of this name is 666.

Romulus was not the only leader of Rome whose name adds up to 666. Emperor Nero, who died 25 years before John wrote the book of Revelation, also has that distinction. Nero was an emperor of unspeakable cruelty. He was responsible for the first official persecution of Christians by the Roman empire. During his reign, many of the apostles were martyred. Nero has been identified as a type of the end-time ruler which will preside over the beast. It is interesting to note that when the Greek form of his name (Neron Kaeser) is spelled out in Hebrew characters, its numerical value is also 666.

The specific identity of the beast cannot be known for certain at this point. However, it is clear that it will dominate the Western world much the same as the Roman empire dominated the Mediterranean world. Additionally, this world dominating government and its leader will be aided by a great religious leader identified as "the image of the beast" (Rev. 13:11-14). The beast as well as the image of the beast will stand as the great military and economic power in the world and will impose an apostate religion on all its subjects.

The ultimate fate of these two leaders is dreadful. The apostle John indicates that after Christ returns to earth, they will be crushed and cast alive into a lake of fire and brimstone (Rev. 19:20).

Key Seven: Understanding the Mark of the Beast

In Revelation 13:16-17, John records that a special mark is given to those who worship the beast. John goes on to state that without this mark, it would be impossible to engage in any commercial business. In other words, without this mark, a person would be unable to "buy and sell."

And he causeth all, both small and great, rich and poor, free and bond, to receive a mark in their right hand, or in their foreheads: And that no man might buy or sell, save he that had the mark, or the name of the beast, or the number of his name. (Rev. 13:16-17)

In the world today, everyone seems to have an opinion on this mark. Theories have ranged from computer chips implanted in people to social security numbers or special identification cards. Some have suggested that this mark is a bar code which is scanned at places of business. Even the religious community has advanced numerous theories concerning it. Understanding this mark is vital to grasping the true meaning of the book of Revelation and how the last days of man's rule on earth will play out.

It is important to understand that the book of Revelation is written mostly in symbols. The right hand symbolizes labor, or work, while the forehead symbolizes the mind (what is believed). Clearly, the mark of the beast pertains to that which is believed in the mind and obeyed with the hand. With this understanding, consider the following characteristics of what John calls "the mark of the beast."

- The mark was popular: "all had it." (Rev. 13:16)
- The mark made it possible to buy and sell. (Rev. 13:17)
- The mark was given by "another beast" who caused the whole earth to worship the first beast. This other beast is a religious leader who is likened to a lamb that speaks as a dragon. (Rev. 13:11)
- The mark is placed in the right hand or in the forehead. (Rev. 13:16)

Clearly, the most significant characteristic of this mark is that God promises great consequences to those who have it and great rewards to those who refuse to receive it (Rev. 15:2; 20:4).

God Has a Mark

It is interesting to note that God also has a mark. This mark is His law. During the days of Moses, the children of Israel were commanded to keep God's law and to teach it diligently to their children. At one point, God indicated that His law was a "sign" between Him and His people.

... And these words, which I command thee this day, shall be in thine heart... And thou shalt bind them for a sign upon thine hand, and they shall be as frontlets between thine eyes. (Dt. 6:4-8)

The Hebrew word for "sign" in this verse is *owth* and can be translated as "signal" or "mark." Therefore, God's law is a sign that identifies who His people are.

The Sign of the Sabbath

It is also interesting to note that within God's law, there is a specific commandment that is identified as God's mark. This commandment concerns the keeping of God's Sabbath.

The book of Genesis indicates that God created the Sabbath on the seventh day of creation (Gen. 2:1-3). At that time, He sanctified it and made it holy. The word sanctify means "to set apart for a holy purpose." The scriptures declare that God had a specific purpose for creating the Sabbath and He explained that purpose to the children of Israel. While Israel was in the wilderness, God informed them that the Sabbath would be an identifying mark on His people. He also informed them that if they honored the Sabbath, they would know who God was as well as His plan for them.

And the Lord spake unto Moses, saying, "Speak thou also unto the children of Israel, saying, 'Verily My sabbaths ye shall keep: for it is a sign between Me and you throughout your generations; that ye may know that I am the Lord That doth sanctify you...' Wherefore the children of Israel shall keep the sabbath... for a perpetual covenant. It is a sign between Me and the children of Israel for ever..." (Ex. 31:12-17)

Once again, the Hebrew word for "sign" in this passage can be translated as "mark." Clearly, the Sabbath is God's mark on His people. It is a sign that identifies them as worshiping the true Creator.

God's Annual Sabbaths

It is also interesting to note that when speaking to Moses, God said, "Verily, My Sabbaths (plural) you shall keep" (Ex. 31:13). It is important to understand that in addition to the weekly Sabbath, God also created seven annual Sabbaths. These Holy Days are outlined in the twenty-third chapter of Leviticus and were kept by the children of Israel during the Old Covenant and the New Testament Church under the leadership of Peter and the apostles.

While speaking to Moses regarding the keeping of the Passover and the Days of Unleavened Bread, God made an unusual observation concerning how these Sabbaths would be remembered.

And thou shalt shew thy son in that day, saying, "This is done because of that which the Lord did unto me when I came forth out of Egypt." And it shall be for a sign unto thee upon thine hand, and for a memorial between thine eyes, that the Lord's law may be in thy mouth: for with a strong hand hath the Lord brought thee out of Egypt. (Ex. 13:8-9)

Clearly, God's weekly and annual Sabbaths are profoundly important to Him. These days, which God calls "holy convocations" (Lev. 23:2), link His children to Him and reveal His great plan of salvation for all mankind. Additionally, these days stand as a perpetual covenant between God and His Old Testament and New Testament Church.

The Sabbath Was Never Sunday

Contrary to popular belief, the Sabbath was never changed to Sunday. This is a fact that is even acknowledged by biblical scholars and leaders within the religious community. Consider the words of the Catholic church, which acknowledges that it alone is responsible for changing the worship of God from Saturday to Sunday.

Sunday is our MARK of authority. The church is above the Bible, and this transference of sabbath observance is proof of that fact. (The Catholic Record, Sept. 1, 1923)

Here, in plain words, the Catholic church identifies Sunday as its "mark of authority." Additionally, this statement declares that the authority of the Catholic church transcends the authority of the scriptures. In other words, the church is claiming to have the power to contradict and override God's word.

The Catholic church also believes that despite all the differences between it and the Protestant world, the fact that Protestants observe Sunday as their day of worship is actually a form of homage paid by them to the Catholic church.

The observance of Sunday by Protestants is an homage they pay, in spite of themselves, to the authority of the [Catholic] Church. (Plain Talk About the Protestantism of Today, p. 213)

The fact that the Sabbath has never been changed to Sunday is incontrovertible. This truth is expressed without ambiguity by James Cardinal Gibbons in his work Faith of Our Fathers.

But you may read the Bible from Genesis to Revelation, and you will not find a single line authorizing the sanctification of Sunday. The scriptures enforce the religious observance of Saturday, a day which we never sanctify. (Faith of Our Fathers)

The Test Commandment

The Sabbath has rightly been characterized as God's test commandment. It is the one commandment that can affect man's ability to work. It is interesting to note that the greatest persecution inflicted on God's people may have been over their observance of the Sabbath.

During the fourth century, the Sabbath became so abhorrent to those who professed to be God's servants that a law was enacted outlawing it. In 363, the local Council of Laodicea passed the following decree.

Christians must not judaize by resting on the Sabbath, but must work on that day, resting rather on Sunday. But if any man be found to be judaizing, let them be anathema from Christ.

Anyone branded "anathema from Christ" was subject to death and that is exactly what happened. As a result of this decree, God's people suffered great persecution and even martyrdom.

Professing Christianity Accepts the Mark

It is interesting that the Sabbath is the only commandment that professing Christians will not accept. Those who do are often labeled as religious extremists or fanatics.

It is hard to imagine that millions of people who claim to believe in the Bible would actually accept the mark of the beast. But this is exactly what John is recording. These "believers" have accepted the authority of the church over the authority of scripture. The observance of Sunday as the Sabbath is evidence of this fact.

The Bible clearly states that God's seventh day Sabbath was kept by the great heroes of faith such as Moses, David, Nehemiah, Isaiah, and Ezekiel. The scriptures also declare that Jesus Christ and the apostles honored God's Sabbath. Jesus is even identified as the Lord of the Sabbath (Mk. 2:27-28).

When speaking to His disciples, Jesus indicated that the Sabbath would be kept at the very end of the world (Mt. 24:20) and the great prophet Isaiah was inspired to write that the Sabbath would be kept during the millennium (Isa. 66:23).

Clearly, God's Sabbath is His identifying mark. This being the case, it is logical that the mark of the beast would be one that contradicts God's mark.

What is the mark of the beast? It is a sign that a God-rejecting government will impose on all people. That sign will reject God's authority and replace it with the power of an apostate religious leader and a government headed by a tyrannical dictator known as the beast.

Key Eight: Understanding the Identity of Babylon the Great

The apostle John begins the seventeenth chapter of Revelation by indicating that he was invited to witness the judgment of a woman described as "the great whore" (Rev. 17:1). John goes on to provide a very detailed description of this woman. Consider the following.

- She sat upon many waters (verse 1). These waters are later identified as "people and multitudes and nations and tongues" (verse 15).
- The kingdoms of the earth committed fornication with her (verse 2).
- The inhabitants of the earth were made drunk with the wine of her fornication (verse 2)
- She sat on a scarlet colored beast full of the names of blaspheme (verse 3).
- She was decked with gold and precious stones (verse 4).
- She had a cup in her hand full of abominations (verse 4).
- Her name was MYSTERY, BABYLON THE GREAT, THE MOTHER OF HARLOTS AND ABOMINATIONS OF THE EARTH (verse 5).
- She was drunken with the blood of the saints and with the blood of the martyrs of Jesus (verse 6).
- Her sins reached all the way to heaven (Rev. 18:5).
- She glorified herself (Rev. 18:7).

Just who is this woman called "the mother of harlots"? Understanding her identity is essential to grasping the true meaning of the prophecies recorded in the book of Revelation.

A Great False Church

Throughout the scriptures, God's true Church is pictured as a woman who will one day be the bride of Jesus Christ (Eph. 5:22-32; Rev. 19:5-9). As a bride, God's Church will be arrayed in "fine linen, clean and white" (Rev. 19:8).

However, the woman John describes in Revelation 17 and 18 is far different. Unlike the bride of Christ, this woman is characterized as "a whore" dressed in scarlet. This woman represents a great fallen church that exerts enormous influence on the religions of this world. Additionally, this fallen church is intimately associated with a great beast described in Revelation 13. This great beast had seven heads and ten horns and rises out of the sea (Rev. 13:1).

As was mentioned earlier, this great beast rising out of the sea is a resurrected Roman empire. When describing this resurrected empire, the apostle John says that a second beast came out of the earth and caused all people to worship it. This second beast was likened to a lamb that spoke as a dragon. In other words, it had the appearance of being Christian ("like a lamb") but really was the instrument of Satan ("spoke like a dragon").

Is it possible that "Babylon the Great" described in Revelation 17 and 18 is the same as this second beast described in Revelation 13:11-17? The answer is yes! Both the second beast of Revelation 13 and the "great whore" of Revelation 17 and 18 are one and the same. It is an apostate political and religious system that dominates the earth.

The Original Babylon

It is important to understand that Babylon the Great is not some new system that emerges at the end time, but rather is the perpetuation of a false system that has existed for thousands of years. It originated in the land of Shinar (currently Iraq) under the influence of a man named Nimrod. The Bible indicates that Nimrod was a man who acted in defiance of God. Even his name comes from the Hebrew marad which means "to rebel."

While in Shinar, Nimrod persuaded the people to build a great tower that would reach to heaven (Gen.11:4). This tower was designed to keep the people from dispersing into other lands. Additionally, Nimrod actually thought that such a tower would protect man from the effects of another flood, should God decide to send one. Clearly, this enterprise was born out of arrogance and stood as an act of defiance against God.

In addition to presiding over the construction of the tower of Babel, Nimrod also promoted a great false religious system known as the Babylonian Mysteries. This system would become the foundation of all pagan beliefs, including sun worship, reincarnation, and the deifying of nature. Out of it has come witchcraft, sorcery and the practice of every imaginable evil, including human sacrifice. Tragically, the effects of the Babylonian mystery religion fill Christian churches around the world. Its holy seasons such as Christmas and Easter find their origin not in the scriptures, but rather in pagan religions which have descended directly from Babel.

The Bible indicates that God intervened and prevented the completion of Nimrod's tower. However, the great pagan system that emerged from it continued and would ultimately flourish. That system has reached every part of civilization today. The false teachings that originated in Babel have permeated this world's culture, politics, governments, and its religions.

The term "Babylon" is used by God to describe man's civilization, and throughout the scriptures, God warns His people to come out of that system.

And I heard another voice from heaven, saying, "Come out of her, My People, that ye be not partakers of her sins, and that ye receive not of her plagues. For her sins have reached unto heaven, and God hath remembered her iniquities. (Rev. 18:4-5)

The Mother of Harlots

The apostle John provides a fairly comprehensive description of the woman God calls "the mother of harlots." Clearly, this woman is a great false church but which church is it?

It is hard to imagine that Babylon the Great is anything other than the Church at Rome. Consider the following.

John indicates that this "great whore" sits upon many waters which are later identified as a multitude of people (Rev. 17:1, 15). The Roman Catholic church stands head and shoulders above the rest of professing Christianity with respect to size. The most conservative estimates number her membership at one billion people. No other Christian denomination or sect comes close.

John also states that the kingdoms of the earth committed "fornication with her" (Rev. 17:2). In addition to being the seat of the largest ecclesiastical body in all of Christianity, the Vatican is also a sovereign territory and maintains official diplomatic relations with all the leading governments on earth. No other religious dignitary in history has been afforded the recognition given to the Pope. His movements are tracked with great interest by every major news agency in the world.

Additionally, the leaders in government openly recognize his influence. Even today, governments seek alliances with the Vatican. Her influence is powerfully felt around the world, including the Middle East, and that influence is destined to grow more prominent.

Babylon the Great is also characterized as "the mother of harlots" (Rev. 17:5). In other words, this great false church has given birth to other false churches.

As much as the Protestant world would like to distance themselves from Catholicism, it cannot. Not only does its history inextricably tie it to the mother church, but its theology does, as well. The doctrines of the trinity, the immortality of the soul, and the concept of an ever-tortuous hell do not come from the scriptures, but rather from the church at Rome.

Additionally, the Protestant world's observance of holidays such as Christmas and Easter are relics carried over from the Catholic Church – relics which the Catholic Church adopted from the pagan world. Even the honoring of Sunday as the Sabbath comes not from the scriptures, but rather from the Catholic Church and stands as her "mark of authority" over the Protestant world.

The woman who symbolizes Babylon the Great is also described as "arrayed in purple and scarlet color, and decked with gold and precious stones and pearls..." (Rev. 17:4). She is later described as "glorifying herself."

The pageantry and ceremony displayed by the Catholic church is unmatched, even by the greatest governments on earth. Its cathedrals stand as great monuments to their religion and its liturgy is so elaborate that it possesses its own language. Even the vestments of its priests reflect a hierarchy within the church. Clearly, no religion on earth approaches the splendor of the Vatican when it comes to its protocol of worship.

One of the most vile characteristics of Babylon the Great is recorded in Revelation 17:6. There it says "she was drunken with the blood of the saints and with the blood of the martyrs of Jesus."

Tragically, the greatest persecution ever inflicted on Christianity has come from the church at Rome. This church has imposed the death penalty to keepers of the Passover and the seventh day Sabbath during the late Roman empire. Additionally, those who refused to yield to its system were declared heretics. Those receiving such a brand were persecuted not only by the church but by the governments it influenced.

When describing this system, the great prophet Daniel indicated that it made war with the saints and prevailed against them (Dan. 7:21). However, Daniel went on to say that once Jesus Christ returned, judgment would be given to the saints and they would possess the Kingdom forever (Dan. 7:22, 27).

Clearly, Babylon the Great stands as a symbol of a God-rejecting world. Those who yield to it will be severely punished while those who refuse to partake of its sins will be spared God's judgment (Rev. 18:4).

Key Nine: Understanding the Marriage of the Lamb

The nineteenth chapter of Revelation describes a great wedding between Jesus Christ and His Church. Throughout the scriptures, the relationship between Jesus and His Church is characterized as that of a groom and his bride. Even John the Baptist saw Jesus as a bridegroom and rejoiced at that fact.

He that hath the bride is the bridegroom: but the friend of the bridegroom, which standeth and heareth him, rejoiceth greatly because of the bridegroom's voice: this my joy therefore is fulfilled. (Jn. 3:29)

The apostle Paul also saw this relationship and used it to encourage the Church. When writing to the Church at Ephesus, Paul exhorted husbands and wives to use the relationship of Christ and the Church as a model for their marriages.

Wives, submit yourselves unto your own husbands, as unto the Lord. For the husband is the head of the wife, even as Christ is the Head of the church: and He is the Savior of the body. Therefore, as the church is subject unto Christ, so let the wives be to their own husbands in every thing.

Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave Himself for it; that He might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word, that He might present it to Himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish. (Eph. 5:22-27)

Paul went on to say that the institution of marriage, which was created at the very beginning (Gen. 2:24; Mt. 19:4-6) was designed to picture a divine relationship between Christ and His Church.

For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother, and shall be joined unto his wife, and they two shall be one flesh. This is a great mystery: but I speak concerning Christ and the church. (Eph. 5:32)

Paul's words make it clear that marriage is a divine institution with profound significance. With this in mind, it should be easier to understand Jesus' words: "What therefore God has joined together, let not man put asunder" (Mt. 19:6).

Clearly, Jesus saw the connection between marriage and the ultimate relationship He would enjoy with His Church. On more than one occasion during His earthly ministry, Jesus used marriage to illustrate important lessons about His Kingdom.

The parable of the ten virgins (Mt. 25:1-13) as well as the parable of the wedding feast (Mt. 22:1-14) reflect an appeal by Jesus to His followers to always be ready and not take the marriage or the relationship it pictures lightly.

Additionally, it is clear that to attend such an event is a distinction of unimaginable honor. When writing about this wedding, the apostle John records the following:

And I heard as it were the voice of a great multitude, and as the voice of many waters, and as the voice of mighty thunderings, saying, "Alleluia: for the Lord God Omnipotent reigneth. Let us be glad and rejoice, and give honour to Him: for the marriage of the Lamb is come, and His wife hath made herself ready." And to her was granted that she should be arrayed in fine linen, clean and white: for the fine linen is the righteousness of the saints. And he saith unto me, "Write, 'Blessed are they which are called unto the marriage supper of the Lamb.'" And he saith unto me, "These are the true sayings of God." (Rev. 19:6-9)

This great wedding stands as one of the defining moments in the history of the universe and is the conclusion of a vital component of God's plan of salvation. His bride, the Church, is comprised of His firstfruits. This community of faithful are resurrected at the last trump (1Cor. 15:51-52). At that time, the dead in Christ shall be raised and those who are alive will be changed. They will then meet Christ in the air and be His constant companion (1Thes. 4:16-17).

Christ's Triumphant Return

After the marriage of the Lamb, Jesus Christ prepares to return to the earth with great power and glory. At this time, heaven opens, revealing Jesus sitting on a white horse (Rev. 19:11). Although He is the Prince of Peace (Isa. 9:6), He is now returning to earth as a great warrior.

Revelation 19:14 indicates that He will be accompanied by a great army clothed in fine linen, clean and white. This army will also be riding on white horses and follow the King of kings as He seizes control of the earth. The scriptures indicate that this great army consists of His saints (Jude 14) as well as a contingent of angels (Mt. 25:31).

As Jesus descends, the great armies of the earth prepare to fight against Him. Jesus and those servants accompanying Him overwhelm these armies and establish His millennial Kingdom.

However, just before the Kingdom is established, the beast and the false prophet are cast alive into a lake of fire and brimstone. Once this occurs, one thing remains before God's great millennial Kingdom will begin.

Satan is Bound

The twentieth chapter of the book of Revelation begins with John recording an event in which an angel comes down from heaven with a special key and a great chain. With these items, this angel lays hold of Satan and binds him up. He then casts Satan into a bottomless pit where he will be restrained and cannot influence mankind. John goes on to indicate that Satan will be in this state for a thousand years, after which he will be released for "a little season" (Rev. 20:5).

Imagine what the world would be like without the devil. His influence on man and his life is overwhelming. Consider just some of the accomplishments the Bible attributes to Satan. The scriptures declare that Satan has deceived the whole world (Rev. 12:9). God's word also certifies that Satan is responsible for snatching the word from hearers (Mt. 13:19), sowing tares among the wheat (Mt. 13:38) and working in disobedience (Eph. 2:2). He has been called a liar, a murderer, and a perverter of scripture. The apostle Paul labeled Satan as the one responsible for blinding the minds of unbelievers (2Cor. 4:4).

While in the Garden of Eden, he seduced Adam and Eve to reject God's law (Gen. 3:1-20). He moved David to number Israel (1Chron. 21:1) and he caused Paul's thorn in the flesh (2Cor. 12:7).

This once-beautiful archangel became so consumed with himself that he actually thought his wisdom was greater than God's. As a result, he waged a rebellion that was so filled with hate, his entire character became immersed in evil. The apostle John once called Satan a murderer and a liar (Jn. 8:44) and his influence on society throughout history has been so devastating that at the end of man's reign on earth, the evil and violence he has spread will be so horrible that God will have to intervene or man will destroy himself (Mt. 24:22).

Satan, who is called the god of this world (2Cor. 4:4) and the prince of the power of the air (Eph. 2:2), has done everything in his power to destroy God's plan for mankind. He put betrayal in the heart of Judas Iscariot (Jn. 13:2) and will give power to a God-rejecting beast and false prophet (Rev. 13:4). Satan has sought to destroy everything that shows God as just and merciful and he has perverted society to actually reject its Creator and Sustainer.

The apostle Peter called Satan the great adversary and compared him to a roaring lion (1Pet. 5:8). Paul indicated that Satan fashions himself as an angel of light (2Cor. 11:4). As a result, man has been deceived from the beginning and that deception has not let up for six thousand years of human history.

Now imagine a world without such an adversary. Such a world would be one in which all nations, races, and cultures live with one another in peace, happiness, mutual respect, and cooperation. In that world, war will be a thing of the past. Crime and violence in the cities will be eliminated.

The world without Satan will be a planet free of the pollution that now destroys it (Isa. 35:1). The terrible ravages of sickness and disease will be gone (Isa. 35:5-6). There will be no more starvation (Isa. 30:23). Even the animals will no longer hurt one another (Isa. 6-9). The world without Satan will be a world filled with supreme joy and happiness for all mankind (Isa. 35:10).

The words recorded by John in Revelation 20 which describe Satan being cast into a bottomless pit stand as one of the most powerful declarations of hope for mankind ever uttered. The day will come when the enemy who has enslaved this world with every imaginable evil will be removed and a new King will come who will establish a government driven by mercy, judgment, and faith. That Kingdom is the hope of not only every believer, but every of non-believer as well.

Key Ten: Understanding the Kingdom of God

The twentieth chapter of Revelation indicates that there will be a great millennial Kingdom under the rule of Jesus Christ and His servants. But what is this Kingdom? And what will it be like?

Just about everyone who considers himself a serious Christian has an opinion about the Kingdom of God. Some believe this Kingdom is the Church while others believe it is God residing in the heart of all true believers. Many professing Christians believe God's Kingdom is in heaven where His true followers will live for all eternity. Understanding what is meant by the Kingdom of God is essential to grasping the meaning of this very important chapter.

Jesus Preaches the Gospel of the Kingdom

Two thousand years ago, Jesus Christ walked the countryside of Palestine and preached a powerful message. It was a message about a Kingdom – a Kingdom that would come to earth and a Kingdom of which He would preside over as ruler.

Everything in His life was dedicated to advancing the cause of that Kingdom. He began His public ministry by preaching a gospel about that Kingdom. The gospel of Mark indicates that when John the Baptist was cast into prison, Jesus came into Galilee and preached the gospel of the Kingdom of God (Mk. 1:14).

The Bible also indicates that Jesus commissioned His disciples to go into all the world and preach the gospel of the Kingdom (Mt. 28:19). So important was the proclaiming of the gospel that Jesus actually said that before His Kingdom could be established on earth, the gospel must be preached as a witness to all nations (Mt. 24:14).

It is important to understand that the Kingdom described by Jesus and His servants is a literal Kingdom which will come to this earth. Jesus once likened Himself to a nobleman who went into a far country to receive for himself a Kingdom. He then indicated that He would bring that Kingdom back to earth where it will be established.

Throughout the Bible, the Kingdom of God is described in great detail. This Kingdom will be presided over by Jesus Christ who will return with great power and glory. When the Kingdom is established, it will be a time of great peace (Isa. 2:4, 32:18), great prosperity (Isa. 27:6; 30:23), great health (Isa. 35:5-6), and great happiness (Isa. 35:10; Jer. 31:12-14). When speaking of this Kingdom, the Bible describes its language, its cities, and its commerce. Further, it indicates that at that time, the knowledge of God will be available to virtually everyone (Isa. 11:9) and that all mankind will keep His law (Ezek. 36:26-27). But who will be in that Kingdom? And what must a person do to be a part of it?

Key Eleven: Understanding the Resurrection

Once Satan is bound, God's millennial Kingdom under the reign of Jesus Christ will begin. The apostle John describes this Kingdom by indicating that those who were martyred as well as those who had not worshiped the beast will occupy positions of great authority in it.

And I saw thrones, and they sat upon them, and judgment was given unto them; and I saw the souls of them that were beheaded for the witness of Jesus, and for the word of God, and which had not worshiped the beast, neither his image, neither had received his mark upon their foreheads, or in their hands; and they lived and reigned with Christ a thousand years. But the rest of the dead lived not again until the thousand years were finished. This is the first resurrection. (Rev. 20:4-5)

Just what is this "first resurrection"? And if there is a first resurrection, are there others? What does the Bible mean when it says "the rest of the dead lived not again until the thousand years were finished"?

Understanding the resurrection is essential to understanding the twentieth chapter of Revelation as well as God's plan of salvation for all mankind.

Not the Only Day of Salvation

One of the greatest errors advanced by much of professing Christianity is that God is trying to save everyone at this time. Therefore, those who fail to accept Jesus Christ as their Savior during this life are lost for all eternity.

But what about the billions who never knew about Jesus Christ or the Bible? What about them? Are they lost? Consider the Canaanites during the days of Moses and Joshua or pagan countries such as Assyria whose capital city Nineveh God described as "not knowing their right hand from their left" when it came to knowing His truth (Jonah 4:11).

What about the Chaldeans, Egyptians, or Persians? All these great kingdoms had a faith that was light years from that of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. Consider how many people never heard the gospel during the first century. What about Asia, Russia, Africa or the Americas? What did they know of this man called Jesus?

And what about today? It has been estimated that on the earth today, as many as three billion people have never even heard the phonetic utterance "Jesus Christ," let alone His gospel message or God's plan of salvation. What about them? Are they lost?

What about the millions of infants that tragically die without ever learning about the great God of the universe? Or what about the millions of unborn children who are killed by abortions every year?

Although many believe God is trying to save the world at this time, the Bible states otherwise.

Two Harvests

The Bible reveals that God has a plan of salvation which includes all mankind. That plan is revealed in His Holy Days (Lev. 23). These commanded assemblies were kept by Jesus Christ, the apostles, and the New Testament Church including gentile Churches under the leadership of the apostle Paul.

One of the most important truths revealed by God's annual feasts is that there are two harvests of man. The first harvest, which is pictured by God's spring Holy Days, is very small. The latter harvest, pictured by God's fall Holy Days, is very large.

This initial spring harvest is reserved for God's elect throughout history. Those who have been called according to His purpose. Their entrance into God's Kingdom constitutes what the Bible refers to as "the first resurrection."

John characterizes this resurrection as having power over death (Rev. 20:6). However, this is not the only resurrection John describes. He would go on to state that when the thousand years of Jesus' millennial Kingdom was complete, there would be a great resurrection of all the billions of people who had never been called and never had God's great plan revealed to them (Rev. 20:5-6).

This resurrection is pictured by God's fall Holy Days. It is a time when there will be a great harvest. That harvest will include the tens of billions of people who never truly knew who God was.

The thirty-seventh chapter of the book of Ezekiel reveals that this will be a physical resurrection in which those resurrected will be made of flesh and bone just as man is today. During this resurrection, all mankind will be introduced to God's plan for the first time and decide for themselves if they want to submit to God's authority in their life. If they choose to surrender themselves to God's will, then they will enter into God's Kingdom as spirit-born children.

Satan is Loosed

Revelation 20:7 indicates that when the thousand years of Christ's millennial rule is complete, Satan will be "loosed out of his prison." Verse three indicates that this release will be "for a little season." Once released, Satan will do everything in his power to destroy the earth and God's plan for mankind.

The Bible indicates that he will go out and "deceive the nations which are in the four quarters of the earth." These nations are identified as Gog and Magog. The thirty-eighth chapter of Ezekiel indicates that Gog and Magog are literal countries located in Asia. However, in Revelation 20:8, it describes them as being in "the four quarters of the earth."

Opinion is divided concerning the specific identity of these people. However, by combining the accounts in both Ezekiel and Revelation, it is likely that these two nations are located in Asia but their attitude of defiance and rebellion have spread around the world. Regardless of who these nations are, it is clear that they are prolific in number and that Satan uses them in an attempt to destroy God's people and Jerusalem (Rev. 20:8-9).

The book of Revelation indicates that as Gog and Magog prepare to attack Jerusalem, God will intervene and will rain fire down from heaven. This fire will devour them and crush Satan's last attempt at destroying God's plan (Rev. 20:9). At that point, Satan will be cast into a lake of fire where he will be tormented for all eternity (Rev. 20:10).

The White Throne Judgment

The Bible actually identifies three resurrections and all three are mentioned in the twentieth chapter of Revelation. The first resurrection is reserved for those whom God has called in this life and have surrendered to His authority. The scriptures declare that this is a resurrection to which all Christians should attain. It is the culmination of a process that involves true repentance and conversion as well as an acknowledgment that Jesus Christ is sovereign.

This resurrection takes place at the last trump at which time the dead in Christ shall rise and be born into God's family. Those in this first resurrection are described in Revelation 20:4-5.

The second resurrection is reserved for all those who have not been called in this life. As was mentioned earlier, this resurrection will take place at the conclusion of the millennium and will enable the billions of people who never heard God's word to be taught God's way and make a decision concerning it.

This second resurrection is a physical resurrection in which those who are in graves shall be made mortal, comprised of flesh and blood and bone (Ezek. 37).

The Third Resurrection

The apostle John indicates that after Satan is cast into the lake of fire, there is a third and final resurrection. During this resurrection, all who were not a part of the first resurrection will be raised to life and appear before God to receive His final judgment. At that time, "the small and great" will stand before God and He will judge them according to their works. Revelation 20:12 indicates that during this judgment, "the books were opened." These books are, in all likelihood, those contained in the Bible.

Jesus once said that man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds out of the mouth of God (Mt. 4:4). This being the case, it is appropriate that man should be judged by God's word.

Revelation 20:12 indicates that another book will be opened during this judgment. This other book is the Book of Life. The apostle John records that anyone whose name is not written in this book shall be cast into a lake of fire and destroyed. On the other hand, those whose names are written in the Book of Life will be changed to incorruptible spirit, joining those who were a part of the first resurrection. At that time, God's eternal family will be established.

It is important to understand that those whose names are written in the Book of Life did not earn salvation but rather receive it as a gift (Rom. 6:23). However, this gift will only be given to those who will truly cherish it. Therefore, God does require that those who are given eternal life must desire to submit to God's authority. Those who refuse will be cut off and destroyed.

Key Twelve: Understanding the New Jerusalem

The book of Revelation concludes by describing a time when the physical universe will be completely renovated. Jesus Christ is the architect of this renovation. At this time, there will be what the book of Revelation calls "a new heaven and a new earth" (Rev. 21:1). Unlike the current heaven and earth which are comprised of corruptible matter, the new heaven and earth will be made of that which is eternal. The apostle Paul wrote of a time when everything would be made new and that even the physical creation would be changed into that which is incorruptible.

For the creature was made subject to vanity, not willingly, but by reason of Him Who hath subjected the same in hope. Because the creature itself also shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God. For we know that the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now. And not only they, but ourselves also, which have the firstfruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of our body. (Rom. 8:20-23)

Once this renovation of heaven and earth takes place, the final phase of God's plan of salvation is introduced. This phase involves the establishment of a great city called New Jerusalem. Understanding this city and its purpose is the final key to comprehending what John recorded in this prophetic book.

In the twenty-first chapter of Revelation, John describes in great detail a New Jerusalem and indicates that it is brought down from heaven by God the Father.

And I John saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. (Rev. 21:2)

Notice this great city is prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. As was mentioned earlier, the nineteenth chapter of Revelation provides a glimpse into the marriage of Jesus Christ and His Church. This wedding appears to take place in heaven and possibly at the very residence of God the Father (Rev. 19:6-10).

The Seat of God's Government

As we have seen, the apostle John beheld a New Jerusalem coming down from God out of heaven. This great city had the glory of God and was prepared as a bride adorned for her husband (Rev. 21:1-2). John begins his description of this magnificent city by stating he was carried away in the spirit to a "great and high mountain" (Rev. 21:10). The term "mountain" is used extensively in scripture to describe a government or a kingdom (e.g.: Dan. 2:35).

Based on John's description, New Jerusalem is nothing less than the seat of God's universal government. It will be occupied by the greatest leadership team ever assembled in the history of the universe.

The apostle John goes into great detail when describing this city. First, consider its dimensions. It is a perfect cube: twelve thousand furlongs long, twelve thousand furlongs wide, and twelve thousand furlongs high. This would make the surface of the city one hundred and forty-four million square furlongs, or approximately 1400 miles long and 1400 miles wide.

To put this into perspective, the width as well as the length of this city would be the distance between Los Angeles and Dallas. This being the case, the New Jerusalem is larger than most countries on earth today. Suffice it to say there has never been anything like it.

The city is surrounded by a wall one hundred and forty-four cubits high. This would make the wall taller than a 20 story building. The wall has twelve foundations which bear the names of the twelve apostles. Additionally, these foundations are garnished with twelve types of precious stones.

Entrance to the city is made through twelve gates, with three gates on each of its four sides. The gates, which are made of pearls, are attended by twelve angels while on the gates are the names of the twelve tribes of Israel.

The Interior of the City

John describes the interior of New Jerusalem in considerable detail. He states that the main street in this city is made of pure gold so highly polished its appearance is "like transparent glass."

In the midst of the city is a pure river containing waters of life. Additionally, the tree of life is present and is continually bearing twelve manner of fruits. Once again, the number twelve is used extensively in describing a government. In this case, it is the seat of God's universal government, New Jerusalem.

The Residence of God

When describing the New Jerusalem, the apostle John also indicates that the only people allowed access to this city are those whose names are written in the Book of Life (Rev. 21:27). Additionally, John declares that this great city will be the home of God the Father and of Jesus Christ and there they will sit on thrones governing the entire universe (Rev. 22:1-3).

The fact that God's throne resides in this city is of enormous significance. Jesus Christ, without apology, indicated that He shared God's throne and when revealing this, He indicated He too had a throne that would be shared (Rev. 3:21). That throne, which is the seat of His government, will be occupied by those who overcame this world.

Abraham Saw This City

The Bible indicates that when God called Abraham, He instructed him to leave Ur of the Chaldees and go to a land that would ultimately be the home of Israel. Abraham obeyed God's instructions and left his father's house just as God commanded him.

The book of Hebrews provides an extraordinary insight on Abraham's actions. Chapter eleven states that Abraham obeyed God and left his home, not knowing where he was going (verse 8). It goes on to say that Abraham "sojourned in the land of promise as in a strange country" (verse 9).

Why would Abraham leave his own land and spend a lifetime in another land as a stranger? The answer to this question is revealed in Hebrews 11:10.

For he looked for a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God.

The city that Abraham sought was none other than the New Jerusalem. God revealed this magnificent city to Abraham and throughout the scriptures, it is identified as the ultimate destination of God's people. Once this city is established, God the Father and Jesus Christ along with their servants, including Abraham, will govern the entire universe from it.

From this point on, God's plan concerning His family is unknown. However, His infinite creative powers declare that God's family will engage in a marvelous work for all eternity.

A Final Thought

The book of Revelation has been a puzzle to mankind since of the first century when it was written. However, understanding these twelve keys should bring life to the words John recorded.

Perhaps the most important thing to understand about the book of Revelation was spoken by the prophet Daniel. During the reign of Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon, Daniel provided profound insight into God's power. When interpreting a dream of the king's, Daniel described virtually thousands of years of human history yet to come. He spoke of great kingdoms that would emerge throughout history and explained that they would all be destroyed at the return of Jesus Christ. At that time, God would establish a Kingdom that would last forever.

Daniel concluded his interpretation of the king's dream with the following words: "the dream is certain and the interpretation thereof is sure" (Dan. 2:45). God's word is incontrovertible. It stands as a testimony of His greatness and His power over the destiny of the universe. The book of Revelation is a blueprint of that destiny and like Nebuchadnezzar's dream, its fulfillment is certain.

Historical Sequence of Revelation

The four horsemen of the Apocalypse

- 1st seal (white horse) = religious deception (Rev. 6:2)
- 2nd seal (red horse) = war (Rev. 6:4)
- 3rd seal (black horse) = famine (Rev. 6:5-6)
- 4th seal (pale horse) = death (Rev. 6:7-8)

Note: Each of these seals have occurred throughout the centuries since John received this revelation from Jesus Christ but they will reach their greatest intensity during the last generation of man on the earth.

The following reflects the sequence of events that take place during the last days. These events span a period of just over three and a half years. They begin with the emergence of a beast power and conclude with the return of Jesus Christ and the establishment of His millennial Kingdom.

- A great beast power emerges during the last days and exercises great power over the earth. (Rev. 13)
- A great religious leader emerges and causes all to worship the beast (Rev. 13:11-12). Those who refuse to worship the beast will be killed (verse 15).
- The mark of the beast is given. This mark permits people to buy and sell. Those who refuse it will be subjected to great persecution. (Rev. 13:16-17)
- God's people refuse the mark, resulting in extraordinary persecution. Many true Christians are martyred. (Rev. 6:9-11)
- God's true Church is taken to a place of safety where it is nourished for three and a half years. (Rev. 12:13-14)
- Satan pursues God's Church by "casting out of his mouth water as a flood." This flood may be a great army which pursues the Church. (Rev. 12:15)
- God opens the earth and swallows the flood. (Rev. 12:16)
- Satan turns his wrath on the remnant of the Church. This remnant was not taken to the place of safety, perhaps because of lethargy but it will keep the commandments of God and have the testimony of Jesus Christ. (Rev. 12:17)
- The great tribulation begins. This tribulation is identified in the book of Revelation as the fifth seal. During this time, there will be great religious persecution and martyrdom. (Rev. 6:9; 12:17) This great tribulation will last three and a half years and will end with the return of Christ.
- Included in this tribulation is a horrible captivity inflicted on the physical descendants of Israel. This captivity is referred to as "Jacob's trouble." (Jer. 30:7)
- Two witnesses testify against the nations of the earth for 1260 days (Rev. 11:1-6). These witnesses testify during the last three and a half years of man's reign on earth. Their witness takes place while God's Church is in a place of safety and the remnant of that Church is suffering persecution and martyrdom during the great tribulation.

- Great signs appear in the heavens. The sun will become black as sackcloth, the moon will become as blood and the stars of heaven shall fall into the earth. This is referred to as the sixth seal. (Rev. 6:12-13)
- The servants of God are sealed in their forehead. This sealing will protect them from God's wrath which is reflected in the seventh seal. The total number of servants which will receive God's seal is 144,000. (Rev. 7:1-4)
- There is silence in heaven for approximately one half hour. (Rev. 8:1)
- The Day of the Lord begins. This is also described as the day of God's wrath and is pictured by the opening of the seventh seal. This period will last for one year and occurs during the final year of the great tribulation. Additionally, it will be a time of enormous devastation inflicted upon man because of his defiance toward God. This seventh seal will include seven trumpet plagues and seven vial plagues.
- The first trumpet plague is unleashed. This plague consists of hail, fire, and blood (Rev. 8:7). The result is that one third of the earth's trees are burnt and all grass is destroyed.
- The second trumpet plague is unleashed consisting of fire cast into the sea (Rev. 8:8-9). The result is one third of the sea becomes blood, one third of sea life dies, and one third of the ships are destroyed.
- The third trumpet plague is unleashed. "Wormwood" falls on a third of the earth's waters and many men die. (Rev. 8:10-11)
- The fourth trumpet plague is unleashed. The sun, moon, and stars are darkened. (Rev. 8:12)
- An angel flies through heaven and cries out, "Woe, woe, woe!" These three woes represent the fifth, sixth, and seventh trumpet plagues. (Rev. 8:13)
- The fifth trumpet plague is unleashed (the first woe). During this plague, "locusts with the power of scorpions" inflict great damage. This represents a great military attack. (Rev. 9:1-3)
- The sixth trumpet plague (second woe) is unleashed. A massive army (200 million soldiers) launches a counter-attack, resulting in the death of one third of mankind. (Rev. 9:12-19)
- The two witnesses are killed and lay dead in the street for three and a half days. (Rev. 11:7-9)
- People will celebrate the killing of these two witnesses. (Rev. 11:10)
- The two witnesses are resurrected in plain view of those who celebrated their death. They then ascend into the clouds. (Rev. 11:11-12)
- The seventh and last trump is sounded. This is the third woe. At this trump, voices in heaven declare, "The kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of our Lord and of His Christ and He shall reign for ever and ever." (Rev. 11:14-15)
- The saints are resurrected and meet Christ in the air. Those who are alive will be miraculously changed and join them. (1Cor. 15:51-52; 1Thes. 4:16-17)
- There is a great marriage supper. It is possible this supper takes place in heaven at the very residence of God the Father. This supper celebrates the marriage of Jesus Christ (the Lamb) and His Church (the bride). (Rev. 19:6-9).

- The seven last plagues are inflicted upon the earth (Rev. 16). These plagues are poured out of seven vials by seven angels.
- Jesus Christ returns with a great army of His saints. (Rev. 19:11-16)
- The battle of Armageddon takes place in which God's army crushes man's final rebellion. (Rev. 19:11-21)
- The beast and false prophet are overcome and cast into a lake of fire and brimstone. (Rev. 19:19-20)
- Satan is bound for a thousand years (Rev. 20:2).

The Millennium begins

- This begins a period of one thousand years in which Jesus Christ and his saints will rule (Rev. 20:4-5). This millennial Kingdom will be a time of great peace, prosperity, health, and hope. It will be a time when the knowledge of God will be available to all who dwell on the earth.

The Millennium ends

- A second resurrection takes place in which all those who never knew God will be raised to a physical life and be given an opportunity to learn of God's plan for all mankind. At that time, those who are resurrected will choose for themselves whether they will obey God. (Rev. 20:13; Ezek. 37)
- Satan is loosed for "a little season" (Rev. 20:3, 7). At that time, he goes out and deceives the nations which are in the four quarters of the earth.
- A great battle ensues. (Rev. 20:8)
- Satan's final rebellion is crushed. (Rev. 20:9)
- Satan is cast into a lake of fire to be tormented forever. (Rev. 20:10)
- A third resurrection takes place in which all who are not a part of the first resurrection will appear before God's judgment seat to receive His final pronouncement concerning them. This is also referred to as the Great White Throne Judgment. (Rev. 20:11, 13-15)
- A new heaven and earth are created. (Rev. 21:1)
- The New Jerusalem is brought down by God out of heaven. (Rev. 21:2)

Chapter Highlights

Chapter One: The Introduction

- The source of the revelation: Jesus Christ (v. 1)
- The purpose of the book: to bear record of three things - the word of God, the testimony of Jesus Christ, and the things John saw (v. 2)
- A blessing to those who heed the words recorded (v. 3)
- A greeting and salutation (v. 4-8)
- Revelation: written from the island of Patmos (v. 9)
- The apostle John taken in spirit to the Lord's Day (v. 10)
- A vision of Jesus Christ with seven stars (angels) standing in the midst of seven candlesticks (Churches) (v. 12-20)

Chapters Two and Three: Letters to the Seven Churches

- The Church at Ephesus (2:1-7)
- The Church at Smyrna (2:8-11)
- The Church at Pergamos (2:12-17)
- The Church at Thyatira (2:18-29)
- The Church at Sardis (3:1-6)
- The Church at Philadelphia (3:7-13)
- The Church at Laodicea (3:14-22)

Chapter Four: God's Throne in Heaven

- John taken in spirit to the throne of God (v. 2)
- God's splendor and majesty (v. 3)
- The 24 elders (v. 4)
- The 7 spirits of God (v. 5)
- The 4 living creatures (v. 6-8)
- Praise and honor given to God (v. 9-11)

Chapter Five: Introduction to the Seven Seals

- God holds in His right hand a book with 7 seals (v. 1)
- An angel proclaims: "Who is worthy to open the book and loose the seals?" (v. 2)
- No one was worthy but the Lamb (Jesus Christ) (v. 3-9)
- Praise given to God and the Lamb (v. 10-14)

Chapter Six: The First Six Seals

- The four horsemen of the apocalypse
- The 1st seal (white horse) pictures religious deception (v. 2)
- The 2nd seal (red horse) pictures war (v. 4)
- The 3rd seal (black horse) pictures famine (v. 5-6)
- The 4th seal (pale horse) pictures death (v. 7-8)
- The 5th seal pictures a great martyrdom of saints (v. 9-11)
- The 6th seal pictures great natural disasters and signs in the heavens (v. 12-17)

Chapter Seven: Preparation for the Seventh Seal: God's Wrath

- Four angels holding the four winds of the earth (v. 1)
- An angel from the east having the seal of God (v. 2)
- The 144,000 are sealed (v. 3-8)
- The innumerable multitude (v. 9-10)
- The worship of angels (v. 11-12)
- Those who overcame the great tribulation (v. 13-17)

Chapter Eight: The Day of the Lord

- The seventh seal is opened (v. 1)
- This seal consists of seven trumpets (v. 1)
- Silence in heaven for one half hour (v. 1)
- Seven angels with seven trumpets (v. 2)
- Incense is offered with the prayers of the saints (v. 3-4)
- Thunderings, lightnings, and earthquakes (v. 5)
- Trumpet plagues begin
- First trumpet plague: hail, fire, and blood (v. 7)
- Second trumpet plague: a great mountain burning with fire cast into the sea (v. 8-9)
- Third trumpet plague: a great star ("Wormwood") from heaven falls upon a third of the rivers (v. 10-11)
- Fourth trumpet plague: one third of the sun, moon, and stars are made black (v. 12)
- An angel cries, "Woe, woe, woe." (v. 13)

Chapter Nine: The Trumpet Plagues Continue

- The Fifth and Sixth Trumpets and First and Second Woes
- Fifth trumpet plague (first woe): locusts with power as scorpions (v. 1-3)
- These locusts hurt only men not sealed by God (v. 4)
- This torment lasts five months (v. 5)
- Mankind shall seek death (v. 6)
- The description of the locusts (v. 7-10)
- The angel of the bottomless pit is the king of locusts (v. 11)
- Sixth trumpet plague (second woe) (v. 12-14)
- Four angels bound in the Euphrates River are loosed (v. 14-15)
- One third of men are killed by an army of 200 million men (v. 15-19)
- Those not killed refuse to repent (v. 20-21)

Chapter Ten: Preparing for the Seventh and Last Trump

- An angel coming from heaven with "a little book" in his hand (v. 1-2)
- The angel cries with a loud voice (v. 3)
- Seven thunders speak (v. 3)
- John is told not to write what the seven thunders spoke (v. 4)
- The angel swears that there should be no more delay in executing final judgment (v. 5-7)
- An angel gives John the little book and instructs him to eat it (v. 8-9)
- The book was sweet to taste but bitter to the belly (v. 10-11)

Chapter Eleven: The Two Witnesses

- John is instructed by to measure the temple of God (v. 1-2)
- Two witnesses are given power for 1260 days (v. 3)
- They are two olive trees and two candlesticks (v. 4)
- The power of the two witnesses (v. 5-6)
- The witnesses are killed (v. 7-8)
- The people rejoice at their death (v. 9-10)
- After 3½ days, the witnesses are raised from death (v. 11-12)
- A great earthquake kills 7000 (v. 13)
- The last trump
- The seventh angel sounds (v. 15)
- Voices in heaven announce the return of Christ (v. 15)
- 24 elders worship God (v. 16-17)
- A reward is given to God's servants, the prophets, and the saints (v. 18)
- The temple of God is opened in heaven (v. 19)

Chapter Twelve: God's True Church

- A woman with a crown of 12 stars (v. 1)
- The woman is "with child" (v. 2)
- A red dragon having 7 heads, 10 horns, and 7 crowns upon his heads attempts to devour the child (v. 3-4)
- The child is caught up to God (v. 5)
- The woman flees to the wilderness and stays 1260 days (v. 6)
- There is a great war in heaven; Michael and his angels versus Satan and his angels (v. 7-8)
- Satan and his angels are cast to earth (v. 9-10)
- Satan is overcome by the blood of the Lamb (v. 11)
- Satan unleashes his wrath on the inhabitants of earth (v. 12)
- Satan persecutes God's true Church (v. 13)
- The Church (woman) is taken to a place of safety where she is nourished for 3½ years (v. 14)
- Satan pursues the Church but it is protected (v. 15-16)
- Satan turns his wrath on the remnant of the Church which is left behind (v. 17)

Chapter Thirteen: Two Beasts and A Mark

- A beast with 7 heads and 10 horns rises from the sea (v. 1)
- Upon the heads is the name of blaspheme (v. 1)
- The beast is like a leopard with the feet of a bear and the mouth of a lion (v. 2)
- The beast is given power by Satan (v. 2)
- One of the 7 heads is healed from a deadly wound (v. 3)
- The world worships the beast and the dragon which gave it power (v. 4)
- The beast exercises power for 42 months (v. 5-7)
- A warning to those who worship the beast (v. 8-10)
- Another beast emerges which has 2 horns (v. 11)
- The second beast causes the earth to worship the first beast (v. 12-16)

Chapter Fourteen: Three Messages From Heaven

- The 144,000 as spirit beings standing on Mount Sion with Jesus Christ (v. 1)
- A voice from heaven (v. 2)
- A detailed description of the 144,000 (v. 3-5)
- The first message: an angel in the midst of heaven with an everlasting gospel (v. 6-7)
- The second message: another angel follows, saying "Babylon is fallen." (v. 8)
- The third message: a third angel follows explaining the consequences for worshipping the beast (v. 9-11)
- The patience of the saints: those who keep the commandments of God and the faith of Jesus Christ (v. 12)
- The blessing to those who believe (v. 13-16)
- A curse to those who do not (v. 17-20)

Chapter Fifteen: Preparation for the Seven Last Plagues

- John sees seven angels having seven last plagues (v. 1)
- The sea of glass mingled with fire (v. 2)
- Those who had gotten victory over the beast and over the image of the beast and over the mark of the beast and over the number of his name stood on the sea of glass (v. 2)
- They sing the song of Moses (v. 3-4)
- The Temple of the tabernacle in heaven is opened (v. 5)
- Seven angels having seven last plagues come out of the Temple (v. 6)
- The seven angels are given seven vials containing the wrath of God (v. 7)
- The Temple was filled with smoke (v. 8)
- No man was able to enter until the seven plagues were fulfilled (v. 8)

Chapter Sixteen: The Seven Last Plagues

- Seven angels to pour out seven plagues from seven vials (v. 1)
- The first plague: noisome and grievous sores upon all men who worship the beast (v. 2)
- The second plague: the sea becomes blood, killing everything in it (v. 3)
- The third plague: rivers and fountains become blood (v. 4-7)
- The fourth plague: the sun scorches men with fire and they blaspheme the name of God (v. 8)
- The fifth plague: darkness upon the beast power (v. 10)
- The sixth plague: the river Euphrates dries up (v. 12-13)
- Preparation for the battle of Armageddon (v. 14)
- The seventh plague: a great earthquake and great hail from heaven (v. 17-21)

Chapter Seventeen: The False Church – BABYLON THE GREAT, THE MOTHER OF HARLOTS

- An angel invites John to see God's judgment on "the great whore" (v. 1)
- Kings of the earth have committed fornication with her (v. 2)
- The inhabitants of the earth have become drunken with the wine of her fornication (v. 2)
- John is carried in vision into the wilderness (v. 3)
- He sees a woman sitting on a scarlet-colored beast (v. 3)
- The beast was full of blasphemy and had seven heads and ten horns (v. 3)
- A description of the great whore (v. 4)
- The name of the great whore (v. 5)
- She was drunken with the blood of the saints (v. 6)
- An angel describes the mystery of the woman and of the beast (v. 7)
- The beast shall ascend out of a bottomless pit (v. 8)
- The beast shall be admired by those whose names are not written in the Book of Life (v. 8)
- The seven heads are seven mountains (kingdoms) (v. 9)

- Five kings are fallen, one is and one is not yet come (v. 10)
- The king that is not yet come will exist a short time (v. 10)
- The ten horns are ten kings (v. 12)
- They shall give power to the beast (v. 13)
- They shall make war with the Lamb and the Lamb shall overcome them (v. 14)
- The ten horns upon the beast shall hate the whore and make her desolate (v. 16)
- The great whore is a great city which reigns over the kings of the earth (v. 18)

Chapter Eighteen: Babylon the Great Is Fallen

- An angel with great power comes down from heaven (v. 1)
- The angel cries, "Babylon the Great is fallen" (v. 2)
- A description of all who have committed fornication with her (v. 3)
- Another voice from heaven (v. 4)
- "Come out of her, My People" (v. 4)
- For her sins have reached unto heaven (v. 5)
- The fate that awaits her (v. 6-8)
- Weeping for Babylon (v. 9-16)
- Devastation to Babylon (v. 17-24)

Chapter Nineteen: The Marriage of the Lamb

- A voice in heaven giving praise and honor to God (v. 1-2)
- Twenty-four elders, four living creatures worship God (v. 3-4)
- A great voice announces the marriage of the Lamb (v. 5-7)
- The wedding garment: fine linen, clean and white (v. 8)
- Blessed are they which are called to the wedding supper (v. 9)
- Jesus Christ prepares to return to earth (v. 11-13)
- An army follows Him (v. 14)
- The description of Jesus on His return to earth (v. 15-16)
- Armies of the earth gather to wage war (v. 19)
- The beast and false prophet are cast into the lake of fire (v. 20)

Chapter Twenty: The Millennium and White Throne Judgment

- Satan cast into a bottomless pit; bound for 1000 years (v. 1-3)
- Martyred saints given thrones and authority to judge (v. 4)
- Saints to rule with Christ for 1000 years (v. 4)
- This is the first resurrection (v. 5-6)
- The rest of the dead are resurrected after the 1000 years are complete (v. 5)
- Satan is loosed (v. 7)
- Satan goes out to deceive the nations (v. 8)
- Armies gather to make war (v. 8)
- The Holy City is surrounded (v. 9)
- God sends fire down to destroy the armies (v. 9)
- Satan is cast into the Lake of Fire (v. 10)
- A great white throne judgment begins (v. 11)
- A great resurrection of all who are not in the first resurrection (v. 12-13)
- All who are a part of this resurrection are judged (v. 13)
- All not found written in the Book of Life are destroyed - the second death (v. 14-15)

Chapter Twenty-One: The New Jerusalem

- New heavens and new earth are created (v. 1)
- The New Jerusalem comes down, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband (v. 2)
- God Himself will be with the bride (v. 3)
- There will be no more death (v. 4)
- All things will be made new (v. 5)
- The second death imposed on the ungodly (v. 8)

A description of New Jerusalem

- Twelve gates leading to the city (v. 12)
- Twelve angels attending the gates (v. 12)
- Twelve pearls constituting the gates (v. 21)
- Twelve tribes written on the gates (v. 12)
- Twelve foundations (v. 14)
- Twelve apostles written on the foundations (v. 14)
- Twelve precious stones on the foundations (v. 19-21)
- Length of the city: 12,000 furlongs (v. 16)
- Breadth of the city: 12,000 furlongs (v. 16)
- Height of the city: 12,000 furlongs (v. 16)
- Height of the city wall: 144 cubits (v. 17)

Chapter Twenty-Two: The Interior of New Jerusalem

- A pure river proceeding out of the throne of God and of the Lamb (v. 1)
- The Tree of Life (v. 2)
- The tree bearing 12 manner of fruit (v. 2)
- The throne of God and of the Lamb shall be in the city (v. 3)
- His servants shall serve Him (v. 3)
- There shall be no night (v. 5)
- A blessing to those who obey this prophecy (v. 7)
- John falls down and worships the angel that showed him the prophecy (v. 8)
- The angel rebukes John: "I am your fellow servant." (v. 9)
- John instructed to "seal not the words of this prophecy" (v. 10)
- Jesus Christ is bringing His reward (v. 12)
- A blessing to the obedient (v. 13-15)
- An invitation and a warning (v. 16-20)