

# REVELATION CHAPTERS 1-10

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This paper was originally published in July 1999. I am modifying and improving the paper in July 2012 at the time I prepare the individual articles to put on the various Christian article sites.

## Introduction

My book, *The Mid-Week Rapture* (published in 1991) covers parts of the book of Revelation, especially Rev. 11:1-14:5, in a thorough, verse-by-verse manner. My eschatological paper dated November 1998 covers Revelation chapters 20-22 in a thorough verse-by-verse manner. (It also contains verse-by-verse studies of Matthew chapters 24, 25 and 1 Corinthians chapter 15, and it contains a rather thorough discussion of God’s salvation plans for [the elect of] the nations. I split this paper into four papers [in 2007] when I put them on the internet: *Revelation Chapters 20-22*; *Matthew Chapters 24, 25*; *1 Corinthians Chapter 15*; and *More Regarding God’s Salvation Plans for the Nations*.) My January 1999 paper is a verse-by-verse study of Rev. 14:6-19:21. (I put that paper on the internet in 2007.) This present paper on the first ten chapters of the book of Revelation completes the verse-by-verse study of the book of Revelation. It would almost be impossible to overstate the importance of the book of Revelation when it comes to understanding the end times. (See the introduction to my paper on Rev. 14:6-19:21 for a discussion of this point.) The revelation of the book of Revelation, which was given to the apostle John about AD 95, was given later than the other eschatological teaching of the Bible, and, in general, it’s the most important.

This present paper, like the other papers mentioned above, doesn’t stand complete in itself; it is meant to be a supplement to the *Mid-Week Rapture* (and the other papers). If verses of the book of Revelation, or an eschatological topic, have already been thoroughly discussed in the *The Mid-Week Rapture* (or in another paper), I typically refer the reader to that discussion rather than repeat it here.

For a condensed version of *The Mid-Week Rapture*, see my paper titled *Twenty-Four Articles on the Mid-Week Rapture* that is available now on my internet site. (It became available in 2012.) Those twenty-four articles serve as a good introduction for my book and for the mid-week rapture viewpoint (that Christ will return and the rapture will take place right in the middle of the seven-year period that is sometimes called Daniel’s 70<sup>th</sup> week).

Revelation chapter 1 deals with John’s commission to write the book of Revelation. In this chapter, for one thing, the exalted, glorified Christ appeared to John and instructed him to write down this revelation that he was in the process of receiving. Throughout

the book of Revelation, John was given numerous confirmations that this revelation was from God and that it was true, accurate, and extremely important.

Revelation chapters 2, 3 contain the seven letters to the seven churches, which were also intended for every other church of every other generation where the same conditions apply. The most shocking feature of these letters is that the Lord Jesus informed many of the Christians of that early day (about AD 95) that there was much need for repentance, and that if they didn't repent, they would forfeit their salvation. He wasn't speaking to a few isolated individuals. In two cases (the churches at Ephesus and Laodicea), He was speaking to the entire church (not that the message necessarily applied to every individual in the church). In another church (Sardis), He was speaking to all but the few who didn't need to repent. The most shocking thing is that the Christians at Ephesus had so much right.

Most generations of Christians are very slow to see their sin, and our generation may be one of the worst in this regard. I believe we Christians have a serious need to study these seven letters to the seven churches (and everything else the Bible teaches about righteousness and holiness). In our day many Christians put most of the emphasis on forgiveness and right standing (things that are Biblical and important), greatly diluting the Biblical emphasis on righteousness and holiness (by grace/the Holy Spirit through faith). Many Christians of our day never even use the word repent, and in many circles there is very little fear of God. I'm speaking of a true, balanced, necessary, Biblical fear of God.

Revelation chapters 4, 5 are centered in the very throne room of God in heaven. John saw the throne of God the Father, but rather than seeing Him (cf., e.g., 1 John 4:12), he apparently saw something of His glory. He also saw the four living creatures and the twenty-four elders, and he saw a great multitude of angels—all were worshipping God (including God the Son). Christ, pictured as a Lamb who had been slain, but who was now alive and had all authority, was found to be the only one in the universe worthy to take the all-important scroll from the hand of God the Father. This scroll contained God's plans to save His elect, to judge the world and remove all the unrepentant, including the devil, and to bring about His new heaven and new earth with its new Jerusalem. The contents of this scroll are revealed in the book of Revelation. We can probably say that the scroll equals the book of Revelation, starting at Rev. 6:1. Revelation chapter 5 makes it clear that Christ earned the right, through His atoning death, to take the scroll and open it, which includes the idea that He has the authority to bring to pass the things written in the scroll.

The all-important scroll that the Lamb took from God the Father was sealed with seven seals. The scroll couldn't be opened until all seven seals were removed. In Revelation chapter 6 the Lamb removes the first six seals. With the opening of the first four seals the four horsemen of the Apocalypse (the book of Revelation) ride forth. I believe they have been riding forth since about the time of the ascension of the Lord Jesus Christ. The first Rider, who I understand to be Christ Himself or the Word of the Gospel, rides forth throughout this entire Christian age. I believe the second, third, and fourth riders ride forth until they are superseded by the events of the trumpets during the first half of Daniel's 70<sup>th</sup> week.

When the Lamb broke the fifth seal, John saw the souls of a large group of martyrs (they hadn't been resurrected yet [cf. Rev. 20:4]). I believe he saw all the Christians

who will have been martyred for Christ by the middle of Daniel's 70<sup>th</sup> week, at which time Christ will return and the resurrection and rapture will take place. He probably saw all the martyrs for God from the Old Testament days too. Each of the martyrs was given a white robe. (John was seeing what is yet to happen in the future, as is the case with much of the book of Revelation). As I understand it, these souls have to receive their glorified bodies before they can wear their white robes.

At the very time Christ returns, at the sounding of the seventh and last trumpet of the book of Revelation, the resurrection and glorification for all of God's people who will have died before that time - very much including the martyrs - will take place. Then (essentially at the same time) the true Christians who will still be living on the earth will be glorified, and both of them together will be raptured from the earth to meet the Lord Jesus in the air (cf. 1 Thess. 4:16, 17). The verses that deal with the fifth seal (Rev. 6:9-11) also inform us that more Christians will be martyred during the second half of Daniel's 70<sup>th</sup> week, during the super-evil reign of Antichrist. These believers, who center in the end-time remnant of Israel, will be converted after the mid-week rapture.

When the sixth seal was removed, John saw a great shaking, the darkening of the sun and moon, and other phenomena associated with God's day of judgment. Revelation 6:17 confirms that the day of judgment has come, "for the great day of their [God the Father's and the Lamb's] wrath has come." I believe we can say that the day of judgment will officially begin with the sounding of the seventh trumpet, right in the middle of Daniel's 70<sup>th</sup> week.

It is necessary to understand that we are given this quick look at the arrival of the day of judgment with the breaking of the 6<sup>th</sup> seal before the scroll is opened. After the seventh seal is broken at Rev. 8:1 and the scroll can be opened, we begin to learn very important end-time details like the facts that the coming of the Lord Jesus will be announced by the seven trumpets of Rev. 8:2-9:21 and by the three and one-half year ministry of the two prophets of Rev. 11:3-12, and that He will return at the sounding of the seventh and last trumpet (Rev. 11:15) right in the middle of Daniel's 70<sup>th</sup> week (see Revelation chapters 11-13). It is accurate to say that the Lord will return and the day of judgment will begin at the time of the 6<sup>th</sup> seal (right in the middle of Daniel's 70<sup>th</sup> week), but it is much more important to understand that He will return at the time of the sounding of the seventh and last trumpet (right in the middle of Daniel's 70<sup>th</sup> week).

Revelation chapter 7 contains two very important interludes (parenthetical comments) before Christ breaks the seventh seal from the scroll (Rev. 8:1), which will permit opening the scroll. The first interlude (Rev. 7:1-8) deals with the sealing of the end-time elect remnant of Israel. They will need this special seal, which will protect them during the sounding of the trumpets, because they won't become Christians until after the return of Christ and the rapture. The second interlude pictures the saints in glory that had just been raptured from the earth at the sounding of the seventh trumpet. Rather than being on the earth when God's day of judgment falls on the earth, they will be with Him in glory.

The first four of the seven trumpets of the book of Revelation sound in Revelation chapter 8; the fifth and sixth trumpets (also called the first and second woes) sound in Revelation chapter 9. The first five trumpets are in the category of warning judgments: They warn mankind that the day of judgment is imminent. The events of the sixth trumpet seem to go beyond just being a *warning* judgment because of their awesome

intensity: A third of mankind (probably not a third of the entire population of the earth, which would be more than two billion people) will be killed in a very short period of time.

The seventh and last trumpet doesn't sound until Rev. 11:15. In between the verses that describe the events of the sixth trumpet (Rev. 9:13-21) and the verse that mentions the sounding of the seventh trumpet (Rev. 11:15) there are two interludes. Revelation chapter 10 contains the first of these interludes. Revelation 11:1-13 contain the second interlude. Revelation chapter 10, which mentions that there will be no more delay (the time for the sounding of the seventh and last trumpet of the book of Revelation has arrived), can be considered an introduction to the sounding of the seventh trumpet.

All quotations from the Bible are from the NASB. For the first time I used the newer (1995) edition. I haven't noticed any substantial changes from the 1977 edition.

Last month (May 1999) they had new elections in Israel. Most anticipate that the new government headed by Ehud Barak will move along the "peace process," following in the steps of Yitzhak Rabin, who was assassinated in November 1995. The Netanyahu led government, after returning most of Hebron to Yasser Arafat and the Palestinians, has stalled negotiations the past couple of years. I wouldn't say Netanyahu was wrong to slow down the "peace process," demanding that the Palestinians do more to fulfill their commitments (especially in the area of doing everything they could do to fight terrorism against Israel), but things should get more interesting again now. Somewhere along the line, and it could be very soon, we'll see the seven-year covenant of Dan. 9:27.

May God be glorified through this paper, and His people be edified! His will be done!

## REVELATION CHAPTER 1

**The Revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave Him** [This Revelation (the book of Revelation) was given to the church (to all Christians) by Jesus Christ. It came from Him, but as this verse shows, it was first given to Him by God the Father. The book of Revelation is probably to be dated about AD 95.] **to show to His bond-servants** [It seems that “His” here refers to Jesus Christ; we are His bond-servants (cf., e.g., Phil. 1:1; Rev. 1:1b; and 2:20). It’s also true, however, that we are bond-servants of God the Father (cf., e.g., Acts 4:29 [with Acts 4:23-31]; Rev. 19:2, 5; and 22:3). On God the Father, God the Son, God the Holy Spirit, and the Trinity, see my papers titled, “Who Do We Worship?”; “Who Do We Pray To?”; “The Name Yahweh and God the Father and God the Son”; and “More on the Trinity.” They are available on this site.], **the things which must soon take place** [see “the time is near” (Rev. 1:3)]; **and He** [Jesus Christ] **sent and communicated it by His angel** [see Rev. 22:6, 16] **to His bond-servant John** [cf. Rev. 1:4, 9; 22:8], **(2) who testified to the word of God and to the testimony of Jesus Christ** [“The word of God” here refers to the word of this revelation; it seems that the words “the testimony of Jesus Christ” here refer to the testimony Jesus Christ gave to the authenticity and extreme importance of this revelation (see Rev. 22:20; cf. Rev. 1:5 [“the faithful witness”]; and 3:14 [“the faithful and true Witness”]). But note how the words “the testimony of Jesus” are used in Rev. 1:9 and some other verses; see under Rev. 1:9.

The Greek participle translated “He who testifies [to these things]” (Rev. 22:20) was formed from the Greek verb *martureō*, which was derived from the Greek noun *martus*, which was translated “witness” in Rev. 1:5; 3:14. The Greek noun (*marturia*), which was translated “testimony” here in Rev. 1:2, was derived from the verb *martureō*. We can see the close relationship between “testifying,” having a “testimony,” and being a “witness.”], **even to all that he [John] saw. (3) Blessed is he who reads and those who hear the words of the prophecy, and heed [or, keep] the things which are written in it** [Compare Luke 11:28; Rev. 22:7. Those who make it a top priority to hear, to understand, and to heed/keep the words of the prophecy of the book of Revelation (along with the rest of the Bible) will be fully ready for the return of Christ. The call to repent, where repentance is required, and the call to walk in the truth, righteousness, and holiness of God are an important part of the message of this book.]; **for the time is near** [cf. Rev. 1:1; 3:11; and 22:7, 10-12. If there wasn’t any time left for sin back then, how much more now?]. **(4) John to the seven churches that are in Asia** [See Rev. 1:11. Seven churches in seven cities of the Roman province of Asia are addressed in chapters 2 and 3 of the book of Revelation. The most prominent theme that permeated most of those messages was the powerful call to repent, where repentance was required, or else forfeit their salvation. It seems clear that the messages to those seven churches are directly applicable to all churches/Christians of all generations that are in the same situation. For one thing, the number seven, which is used repeatedly throughout the book of Revelation, is a symbolic number for completeness/perfection. Also, it’s very clear that the prophetic content of the book of Revelation wasn’t designed just for those seven ancient churches. Since so much of the prophecy deals with the end of this age, the book of Revelation undoubtedly has the greatest application

for the churches/Christians of the last days. They're the ones who most need this detailed information.]: **Grace to you and peace, from Him who is and who was and who is to come** [In this context (with the Holy Spirit and Jesus Christ being mentioned next), it seems clear that God the Father is being spoken of here. This same title/name is also used of Him in Rev. 1:8; 4:8. Also, in Rev. 11:17; 16:5 the same name is used of Him, but the last words—"and who is to come"—are dropped, because He comes (especially through the sending of His Son) at the sounding of the seventh and last trumpet in the middle of Daniel's 70<sup>th</sup> week. The sounding of this trumpet is mentioned in Rev. 11:15, just before 11:17.

God the Father Himself, who has the preeminent role in the Trinity, comes in the full and final sense at the time of the new heaven and new earth [Rev. 21:1-22:5.] This title/name ("Him who is and who was and who is to come") is also appropriate for the Lord Jesus Christ, even as the name Yahweh and the word God, are also appropriate for Him, since He is deity with the Father and the Spirit. It's clear that the Lord Jesus, having been sent by the Father, will come at the sounding of the seventh and last trumpet. It's also clear that the words "the Alpha and the Omega" (Rev. 1:8) fit the Son of God too (cf. Rev. 1:17; 2:8; and especially 22:13). See my papers titled, *Who Do We Worship?*; *Who Do We Pray To?*; *More on the Trinity*; and *The Name Yahweh and God the Father and God the Son* that are available on this site.], **and from the seven Spirits who are before His throne** [This is a symbolic way to refer to the Holy Spirit, with the number seven symbolizing perfection/completeness. See Rev. 3:1; 4:5; 5:6; and Zech. 4:10.], **(5) and from Jesus Christ, the faithful witness** [See under Rev. 1:2. The Lord Jesus Christ was a faithful witness when He lived on the earth (cf. John 3:11; 8:14; 18:37; and 1 Tim. 6:13, 14). Of course He still is a faithful witness.], **the firstborn of [or, from] the dead** [He was the first man (though He was and is much more than just a man) to leave death behind and be born into the resurrection glory of eternal life. Also see Col. 1:18; Rom. 8:29; and 1 Cor. 15:20-23.], **and the ruler of the kings of the earth** [cf., e.g., Psalm 89:27; Matt. 28:18; Eph. 1:20-23; Rev. 17:14; 19:16; and 21:24]. **To Him who loves us and released us from our sins by His blood** [He released us from our sins with the guilt and with the penalties, including the major penalties of spiritual death and bondage to sin. He bore our spiritual death (I didn't say He died spiritually), so we could be born again, and He bore our bondage to sin, so we could be set free from bondage to sin and live in the righteousness and holiness of God. This super-important topic, which is a big part of what Christianity is all about, is discussed in detail in my book, *Holiness and Victory Over Sin: Full Salvation Through the Atoning Death of the Lord Jesus Christ*. See, for example, Acts 26:18; Rom. 6:1-23; 8:1-14; 2 Cor. 5:21; Eph. 1:7; Col. 1:9-14; Titus 2:14; Heb. 9:14; 10:10-18, 29; 1 Pet. 1:18, 19; 2:24; and 1 John 1:7. These verses are all discussed in *Holiness and Victory Over Sin*, except for 2 Cor. 5:21, which is discussed in my paper *The Christian, the Law, and Legalism*. Quite a few more equally powerful verses on the topic of righteousness, holiness, and victory over sin could be listed here.]—**(6) and He has made us to be a kingdom, priests to His God and Father** [In a preliminary sense we Christians are in the kingdom now (cf., e.g., Ex. 19:6; Luke 11:20; 17:20, 21; Rom. 14:17; Col. 1:13; and Rev. 1:9) and we are priests now (Ex. 19:6; 1 Pet. 2:5, 9). Many verses, however, show that the kingdom in its full sense, and our reigning in it, is yet future, starting when the King returns (cf., e.g., Dan. 7:13, 14, 18, 22, 27; Matt. 6:10;

16:27, 28; Luke 19:11-27; 1 Cor. 6:9-11; 15:50; Gal. 5:21; James 2:5; Rev. 2:26, 27; 3:21; 5:10; and 20:4, 6). Revelation 20:6 speaks of our being priests and reigning for a thousand years, referring to the millennial kingdom (cf. Rev. 5:10). Revelation 22:5 speaks of our reigning forever and ever.]—**to Him** [Christ Jesus] **be the glory and the dominion forever and ever. Amen. (7) BEHOLD, HE IS COMING WITH THE CLOUDS** [cf. Dan. 7:13; Matt. 24:30; 26:64; Mark 13:26; 14:62; Luke 21:27; Acts 1:9-11; and 1 Thess. 4:16, 17], **and every eye will see Him** [There’s no secret, invisible coming of Christ mentioned in the Bible; it seems that all will see Him when He returns in the middle of Daniel’s 70<sup>th</sup> week, at the time of the sounding of the seventh and last trumpet.], **even those who pierced Him; and all the tribes of the earth will mourn over Him.** [There undoubtedly is an allusion intended to Zech. 12:10, which speaks of the end-time remnant of the nation Israel looking upon Him whom they had pierced (referring to Israel’s rejection and crucifixion of the Messiah at His first coming) and of their mourning with repentance. (Zechariah 13:1ff goes on to speak of their being sanctified.) But here in Rev. 1:7 the picture is apparently broadened to cover all the tribes of the earth. All mankind, because of sin, is responsible in a very real way for the crucifixion of the Lamb of God, who bore the sin of all people.

We can probably include the idea here that the humbled remnant of the nations will ultimately “mourn” with a genuine repentance, as will the remnant of the nation Israel (Zech. 12:10). Revelation 15:3, 4; 20:3 confirm that the remnant of the nations will repent and enter the millennial kingdom (and those who don’t later rebel will have a place in God’s new heaven and new earth with its new Jerusalem). Before the book of Revelation was given (about AD 95), the New Testament had very little to say regarding God’s salvation plans for the remnant of the nations after Christ returns with the clouds. The Old Testament, however, has a lot to say on this topic.

The topic of God’s salvation of the nations is discussed in some detail in my eschatological paper titled, *More Regarding God’s Salvation Plans for the Nations*. Also, my eschatological papers on Psalms, Isaiah, and Jeremiah deal quite a bit with this topic. The Greek verb (*kopto*) that is translated “will mourn [over Him]” here in Rev. 1:7 is also used in the Septuagint version of Zech. 12:10. It is also used in Rev. 18:9 (and other verses; see the next paragraph). See on Rev. 18:9 in my paper on Rev. 14:6-19:21.

It’s also true and quite important, whether the idea is included here in Rev. 1:7, or not, that there will be much negative mourning (mourning without repentance) that will attend the return of Christ to judge the world. The mourning of the tribes of the earth at the return of Christ pictured in Matt. 24:30 doesn’t seem to include any idea of mourning with repentance. It may be relevant that Matt. 24:30 doesn’t mention mourning for/over Him, as do Zech 12:10 and Rev. 1:7. Matthew 24:30 uses the same Greek verb *kopto*; so too do Matt. 11:17; Luke 8:52; and 23:27.] **So it is to be. Amen. (8) “I am the Alpha and the Omega** [Compare Isa. 41:4; Rev. 21:6. *Alpha* and *Omega* are the first and last letters of the Greek alphabet.],” **says the Lord God, “who is and who was and who is to come, the Almighty.”** [These words refer to God the Father (see under Rev. 1:4).] **(9) I, John, your brother and fellow partaker in the tribulation and kingdom and perseverance** [or, steadfastness] **which are in Jesus** [We are enabled to persevere/remain steadfast even during times of trouble/tribulation through the grace/Spirit of God provided in Christ Jesus through faith.], **was on the**

**island called Patmos because of the word of God and the testimony of Jesus.** [John was a prisoner of Rome on the island of Patmos because he had been faithful to the word of God and because of the testimony he had maintained to Jesus, acknowledging Him as his Savior and Lord, and being faithful to Him.] **(10) I was in the Spirit** [Compare Rev. 4:2; 17:3; and 21:10. While John was receiving this revelation, he was very much caught up into the heavenly dimension in/by the Holy Spirit.] **on the Lord's day** [There's widespread agreement that "the Lord's day" meant Sunday. Compare Acts 20:7; 1 Cor. 16:2. Early Christian writings confirm that the Lord's day meant Sunday, the first day of the week, the day of Christ's resurrection.], **and I heard behind me a loud voice like the sound of a trumpet** [Compare Rev. 4:1. It seems this was the voice of Christ Himself (cf. Rev. 1:15, 17-20; and 4:1). It's clear that Jesus spoke in Rev. 1:17-20.], **(11) saying, "Write in a book [scroll] what you see, and send it to the seven churches: to Ephesus and to Smyrna and to Pergamum and to Thyatira and to Sardis and to Philadelphia and to Laodicea."** [These are the seven churches spoken of in 1:4; they are addressed one by one in chapters 2, 3. It is clear, I believe, that the book of Revelation has been sent to all the Christian churches of all subsequent generations.] **(12) Then I turned to see the voice that was speaking with me. And having turned I saw seven golden lampstands** [As Rev. 1:20 shows, the "seven golden lampstands" are the seven churches.]; **(13) and in the middle of the lampstands I saw one like a son of man** [On "one like a son of man," see Dan. 7:13; 10:4-6; and Rev. 14:14. I'll quote Dan. 10:5, 6, "I lifted my eyes and looked, and behold, there was a certain man dressed in linen, whose waist was girded with a *belt of pure gold of Uphaz*. (6) His body also *was* like beryl, his face had the appearance of lightning, his eyes were like flaming torches, his arms and feet like the gleam of polished bronze, and the sound of his words like the sound of a tumult." Note the strong correspondence between the appearance of the "certain man dressed in linen" in Dan. 10:5, 6 and the "one like a son of man" here in Rev. 1:13-16; I believe they both refer to the same Person, the Son of God. (For more on the "man dressed in linen" of Dan. 10:5, 6; 12:5-7; and Ezek. 9:2-10:7, who is to be equated with the Angel/Messenger of Yahweh of the Old Testament, see pages 165-180 of my book, *The Mid-Week Rapture*.) John saw the glorified Son of God, "the One who walks among (in the middle of) the seven golden lampstands" (Rev. 2:1). We must understand that as Christ walked in the middle of the seven ancient churches mentioned in Rev. 1:11, He also walks in the middle of all true Christian churches of all generations everywhere. As I mentioned, the seven churches, with seven being a symbolic number of completeness/perfection, represent all Christian churches. The book of Revelation was given to/for all Christians.], **clothed in a robe reaching to the feet, and girded across His chest with a golden sash. (14) His head and His hair were white like white wool, like snow** [These words emphasize the deity of Christ Jesus because of the correspondence with the appearance of God in Dan. 7:9. (The "Ancient of Days" of Dan. 7:9 speaks of God the Father; in Dan. 7:13 "One like a Son of Man [God the Son]...came up to the Ancient of Days [God the Father]."); **and His eyes were like a flame of fire** [cf. Dan. 10:6; Rev. 2:18; and 19:12]. **(15) His feet were like burnished bronze, when it has been made to glow in a furnace, and His voice was like the sound of many waters** [cf. Ezek. 43:2]. **(16) In His right hand He held seven stars** [On the "seven stars," see under Rev. 1:20; cf. 2:1.], **and out of His mouth came a sharp two-edged sword** [cf.

Isa. 11:4; 49:2; Rev. 2:12, 16; and 19:15, 21]; **and His face was like the sun shining in its strength** [cf. Dan. 10:6; Rev. 10:1; and Matt. 17:2]. **(17) When I saw Him, I fell at His feet like a dead man** [cf. Ezek. 1:28; Dan. 10:8, 9]. **And He placed His right hand on me** [Compare Dan. 10:10. I consider it probable (in agreement with many) that the person who touched Daniel in Dan.10:10 and who spoke with him in Dan. 10:11 (and in the following verses) was a different person than the One he saw in Dan. 10:5, 6 (who was God the Son); it probably was Gabriel (cf. Dan. 8:15-27 [note Dan. 8:18]; 9:21-27). I say that it was a different person mostly because of Dan. 10:13, which is discussed on pages 166, 167 of my book, *The Mid-Week Rapture.*], **saying, “Do not be afraid** [cf. Matt. 17:7]; **I am the first and the last** [These words, like the words “the Alpha and the Omega” (Rev. 1:8) denote deity; see under Rev. 1:4, 8.], **(18) and the living One** [cf., e.g., John 1:1-4; 5:26]; **and I was dead** [e.g., Rev. 2:8; He was dead in a physical sense after His all-important atoning death], **and behold, I am alive forevermore, and I have the keys** [The keys are a symbol for authority.] **of death and of Hades.** [The Lord Jesus Christ, through His atoning death, stripped sin, Satan [cf. Heb. 2:14], and death (both physical death and spiritual death) of their authority, which they had gained through sin, especially the sin of Adam and Eve. The resurrected Christ has all authority now (cf., e.g., Matt. 28:18; Eph. 1:20-23). An early manifestation of this authority was for Him to take the old-covenant believers from Sheol/Hades to heaven (cf., e.g., Matt. 27:52, 53; Eph. 4:8-10; and Heb. 11:39, 40 with Heb. 12:23 [These verses from Hebrews are discussed in my book, *Holiness and Victory Over Sin* on pages 166, 167.]). Furthermore, Christians don’t go to Hades at death; they go to heaven, heaven in a preliminary sense (cf., e.g., 2 Cor. 5:1-8; Phil. 1:21, 23; and 1 Thess. 4:14). On death and Hades also see Rev. 6:8; 20:13, 14.] **(19) Therefore write the things which you have seen, and the things which are** [“The things which are” refers, at least for the most part, to the content of chapters 2, 3.], **and the things which will take place after these things.** [In Rev. 4:1 John was told that he would now be shown “what must take place after these things.” Much of the content of Revelation chapters 2-5 and the first four horsemen of chapter 6 had much application for the church of John’s day. I don’t mean to suggest that the rest of the book of Revelation had no application for those early Christians, but the rest of the book of Revelation (starting by Rev. 6:9) deals mostly with things yet future (even yet future for us), things that won’t start until the end of this age, about the time Daniel’s 70<sup>th</sup> week begins.] **(20) As for the mystery of the seven stars which you saw in My right hand, and the seven golden lampstands** [The lampstands give light by the oil/Spirit of God. Christians give light to the extent they walk in the truth, righteousness, and holiness of God, in/by the Holy Spirit. Compare Matt. 5:14-16; Eph. 5:8-14; Phil. 2:15; and 1 John 1:5-7.]: **the seven stars are the angels of the seven churches** [There’s much difference of opinion regarding what the seven angels represent. The only view that satisfies me is that they are literal angels of God assigned to the various churches. It’s clear that stars are used to symbolize literal angels in the book of Revelation (Rev. 12:4 with 12:7-9; 9:1, 2; cf. 8:10, 11). There aren’t any other verses in the New Testament that speak of the angels of churches, but there are verses in the Bible that speak of the angels of nations (Dan. 12:1; 10:13, 21), and there are verses that speak of the people of God having angels assigned to them (Matt. 18:10; Acts 12:15). I assume the widespread viewpoint that all Christians have angels of God assigned to them is correct.

Angels are repeatedly mentioned in the book of Revelation. Apart from this verse and the verses in chapters 2, 3 that speak of the angels of the seven churches, there are some fifty-eight other verses that use the word angel(s) in the book of Revelation—all of them refer to literal angels (sometimes fallen angels). In Rev. 14:18 we even read of the angel “who has power over fire,” and in 16:5 of “the angel of the waters.” It’s certainly reasonable to think of God assigning angels to His churches. Though the letters to the seven churches are addressed to the angels of the seven churches, it’s clear that the letters are aimed at the Christians of the churches. They’re the ones who are commended, or, more often, they’re the ones who are commanded to repent, or else. I don’t see the angels of the churches (assuming there are such angels) being in any way responsible for the sin of the Christians. I believe God’s angels are always faithful to Him; they’re never part of the problem.], **and the seven lampstands are the seven churches.”**

## REVELATION CHAPTER 2

[Christ is speaking here, as He was at the end of Revelation chapter 1.] **“To the angel of the church [see under Rev. 1:20] in Ephesus write: the One [the Lord Jesus] who holds the seven stars [the seven angels of the seven churches (cf. Rev. 1:16, 20)] in His right hand, the One who walks among the seven golden lampstands [which represent the seven churches (cf. Rev. 1:12, 13, 20)], says this: (2) ‘I know your deeds [or “works.” Also see Rev. 2:19; 3:1, 8, 15. The Greek noun (*ergon*) translated “deeds” here is often translated “work(s).” The NASB translates this Greek noun “work(s)” ninety-six times and “deed(s)” sixty-five times. Many places where the NASB has deed(s) they could have translated work(s), including here in Rev. 2:2. I prefer the translation “works” here (and often), with the KJV and NKJV. The Bible makes it very clear that works are required for Christians, but some Christians are confused on this topic. They think the apostle Paul taught that we are required to have faith, but not required to have works.**

It’s vitally important for us to understand the balanced truth of what the Bible teaches, and especially when we’re dealing with the basics of the Christian gospel (like with faith and works). The apostle Paul would agree with James that “faith, if it has no works, is dead” (James 2:17); in other words, it isn’t genuine (saving) faith. What Paul was against was making ceremonial works of the Law (like circumcision), or any other works of the flesh, a requirement for new-covenant salvation. (He was against man’s trying to earn/merit what God had freely given at a very high cost to Himself, or of any attempt by man to take any of His glory.)

Paul would, however, insist that Christians must have works, the right kind of works, the works produced by the grace/Spirit of God through faith in Christ (cf., e.g., Rom. 2:6; 2 Cor. 11:15; Gal. 5:16-25; 6:4-10; Eph. 2:10; Phil. 2:12, 13; Titus 1:16; 2:7, 14; and 3:8), the works which equate with living in the righteousness and holiness of God. Genuine (saving) faith *works* (e.g., Gal. 5:6); it isn’t passive—it produces works/fruit (by grace/the Spirit) for the glory of God. For further study on Paul’s use of the words faith and works, I recommend my *A Paper on Faith and The Christian, the Law, and Legalism.* **and your toil and perseverance [or, steadfastness], and that you cannot tolerate evil men, and you put to the test those who call themselves apostles, and they are not, and you found them to be false** [Many Christians of our day would have rebuked these Christians at Ephesus for what they had done, instead of commending them, as Jesus did, for putting these false apostles to the test. Didn’t they know we’re not supposed to judge? (A little knowledge can be dangerous, as with the idea discussed above that Christians are required to have faith, but not works.) Many Christians are far from the balanced truth on this topic. The New Testament makes it clear that we’re responsible to make sure those who minister in our midst are genuine. We test them by what they say (e.g., 1 John 4:1-6), and we test them by how they live (e.g., Rev. 2:20-23; Matt. 7:15-23). (Problems in the area of what we believe typically lead to problems in how we live.)

The New Testament also makes it clear that we’re required to deal with obvious sin in the church (e.g., Matt. 18:15-20; 1 Cor. 5:1-13; and 2 Thess. 3:6-15). It’s true, of course, that we must be careful of judging in the flesh and of hypocrisy (e.g., Matt. 7:3-

5), that we must be humble and have the right motives, and that we must be as generous as we can be (e.g., Matt. 7:1, 2).]; **(3) and you have perseverance** [or, steadfastness] **and have endured for My name's sake, and have not grown weary.** [It's shocking (and I'm not exaggerating) that Jesus went on to warn these Christians who had so much right that they would cease to be His people if they didn't repent. The messages to the seven churches, and especially this first message to the Christians at Ephesus, should serve as a powerful call for each of us to humbly and honestly evaluate ourselves before God (cf. 2 Cor. 13:5). Much of the church of our day needs to do quite a bit of repenting; and we need to substantially raise the standard of living for God in His truth, righteousness, and holiness, truly loving Him and living for Him from the heart (by grace through faith). We don't need more condemnation, but we do need more transformation. God knows our hearts: He knows if we're making Him, His Word, His righteousness and holiness top priority. God is compassionate and merciful, and He is quick to forgive those who repent.] **(4) But I have *this* against you, that you have left your first love.** [The point is that they had fallen from the place of loving God the Father and Christ (God the Son) the way they did at first, and this was reflected in their works (see Rev. 2:5). To love God is the first great commandment (e.g., Matt. 22:36-40). And there is no way we can love God and not do what He commands us to do (e.g., John 14:15, 21, 23; and 15:10). It's also true that our love for one another is part of what God requires of us (e.g., Matt. 22:39, 40; 1 John 4:7-21). As the last reference from 1 John shows, this is especially important regarding our loving our brothers in Christ, but we are also required to walk in love toward those outside the church. Walking in love toward others could be included in what "your first love" means here in Rev. 2:4, but we must love God first and foremost.] **(5) Therefore remember from where you have fallen, and repent** [cf. Rev. 2:16, 22; 3:3, 19] **and do the deeds** [works] **you did at first** [The "deeds/works they did at first" went with their "first love" (Rev. 2:4) that they had fallen from.]; **or else I am coming to you and will remove your lampstand out of its place—unless you repent.** [I can't imagine any verse in the Bible topping this one as a powerful warning and call to repent, or else. For Christ to remove their lampstand would mean that they would no longer be His people/His church. These words should powerfully motivate us; they should create in us a proper, necessary, Biblical fear of God. This one verse should suffice to put a proper fear of God in the hearts of any Christians that have been abusing the idea of once saved, always saved, or using any other excuse to not deal with sin.

There can be no doubting that Christ was speaking to those who had become born-again Christians. (They still were born-again Christians; they still had the life of God by the Spirit of life, at least most of them did, at the time they received this revelation, but they were on the verge of losing this status/relationship with God according to these words from Jesus Christ.) The fact that they once had a proper first love for God confirms that they had become born-again Christians. It's also confirmed by the fact that this church wouldn't have been/had a lampstand if it wasn't a true Christian church (Rev. 1:20). The good news is that Christ still loved them (He even still loved the more sinful Christians at Laodicea)—that's why He issued this powerful call for repentance (see Rev. 3:19).

If Christ is calling true Christians to repent in our day, and I'm sure He is, it's because of His love for us. However, the Bible makes it very clear that He will do what He said

He will do, including rejecting those who don't take seriously His call to repent. I'll say quite a bit more about the doctrine once saved, always saved when we discuss the church at Sardis (Rev. 3:1-6).] **(6) Yet this you do have, that you hate the deeds [works] of the Nicolaitans, which I also hate.** [Revelation 2:14, 15 apparently tell us a lot about the works of the Nicolaitans, but all we really need to know is that they were sinful works. Some sins are more serious than others, but anything that God considers sinful must be a high-priority item for Christians to take seriously and deal with. Christians are required to have a zero tolerance for sin in themselves and in the church.

This has nothing to do with striving in the flesh or earning (or partially earning) salvation. The only way we can walk in the righteousness and holiness of God, with the victory over all sin, is by grace (which includes all the work of the Holy Spirit) through faith, a faith that is based on God's Word, with a strong emphasis on the atoning death of the Lamb of God. See my book, *Holiness and Victory Over Sin: Full Salvation Through the Atoning Death of the Lord Jesus Christ*. God hates sin, and He paid an infinite price to save us and give us the victory over sin. This is good news, very good news!] **(7) He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.**

[These same words are repeated at the end of each of the seven messages to the seven churches. God's powerful Word doesn't effectively work in those who won't humble themselves and submit to Him and His Word and Spirit (by faith), including having the intention to repent (as required) and to obey. God doesn't force people to take Him and His word seriously, or to repent, or to obey.] **To him who overcomes** [See Rev. 2:11, 17, 26; 3:5, 12, 21; and 21:7. By the definition of the book of Revelation, all Christians must be *overcomers*; otherwise they won't have a place in God's eternal kingdom. We overcome sin and the world, the flesh, and the devil by being/staying faithful to God and His gospel (by grace through faith). Christians who truly repent, where repentance is required, become/are overcomers. God's mercy and forgiveness, and His power to restore and to sanctify are very real. The New Testament makes it clear that God forgives those who repent.], **I will grant to eat of the tree of life which is in the Paradise of God.**' [This is a symbolic way of saying they will partake of eternal life in God's eternal kingdom (cf. Rev. 22:2, 14); they will have a place in God's new Jerusalem (cf. Rev. 21:7, 8; 22:15). We are reminded of the tree of life in the garden of Eden (cf. Gen. 2:9; 3:22-24). Genesis chapters 1-3 are discussed verse-by-verse in my paper on these chapters on my internet site.] **(8) And to the angel of the church in Smyrna write: the first and the last [cf. Rev. 1:17; 22:13], who was dead, and has come to life [cf. Rev. 1:18], says this: (9) 'I know your tribulation [cf. Rev. 1:9] and your poverty** [He is speaking of material poverty, not spiritual poverty, as the following parenthesis demonstrates. Compare, for example, 2 Cor. 6:10; 8:9; and James 2:5. The tribulation and the poverty undoubtedly came, at least in part, because they were being persecuted as Christians.] **(but you are rich** [They were rich in the things of God (contrast Rev. 3:17, 18). This was one of the two churches of the seven that Jesus didn't say anything negative to.]), **and the blasphemy** [The NIV has "slander."] **by those who say they are Jews** [These Jews undoubtedly claimed that they, not the Christians, were the true people of God.] **and are not, but are a synagogue of Satan** [cf. Rev. 3:9]. [At least some of the Jews of Smyrna were blaspheming/slandering the Lord Jesus Christ and the gospel and were persecuting Christians. They were being used by Satan. This wasn't that unusual in the early days of the Christian church (cf., e.g.,

Acts 13:45-51; 14:2-6, 19; and 1 Thess. 2:14-16). These harsh words from Jesus Christ didn't apply to all Jews living at that time. Furthermore, the time is coming when all (the end-time remnant of) Israel will be saved through Christ Jesus (Rom. 11:25-27.) **(10) Do not fear what you are about to suffer.** [Cf., e.g., Matt. 10:28.] **Behold, the devil is about to cast some of you into prison, so that you will be tested, and you will have tribulation for ten days. Be faithful until death, and I will give you the crown of life** [cf. James 1:12]. [The words of this verse certainly had a direct application for some of the Christians of Smyrna at that time, but they undoubtedly were also intended for many other Christians throughout this age, very much including our century. There have been more martyrs for Christ in our century than all of the other Christian centuries combined. Much of this martyrdom came through communists. All Christians will be tested and must be faithful, but this verse zeroes in on those Christians who will face situations where it may literally cost them their lives to stay faithful. Many understand this verse in this sense.

It's somewhat hard to imagine, though not at all impossible, that the Christians of ancient Smyrna would have tribulation for a literal ten days. A few commentators understand ten literal days here. The ten days probably should be understood in a nonliteral sense for an indefinite period. To be given the "crown of life" (cf. Rev. 3:11) is probably just a symbolic way to say that we will be crowned with (will partake of) eternal life.

This would be a good place to mention Polycarp, who was martyred along with eleven other Christians, at Smyrna in AD 156. First I'll quote a few sentences from the article on Polycarp from the *Encyclopedia of Early Christianity* ([Garland Publishing, Inc., 1990], page 742.): "Bishop of Smyrna and one of the apostolic fathers. Polycarp is known to us from his letter to the Philippians and the *Martyrdom of Polycarp*. ... His death is described in the *Martyrdom*, written within a year of the event (*M. Polycarp* 18.3). Polycarp links the apostolic era with the next generation, for Irenaeus (Eusebius, *H.E.* 5.20.6) claimed that Polycarp sat at the feet of the apostle John and that he was appointed to his office at Smyrna by the apostles themselves." Irenaeus (about AD 115-202), who was born at Smyrna and learned from Polycarp, was an important church father. He became the bishop at Lyons.

I'll quote a few sentences that deal with the martyrdom of Polycarp ("Letter of the Smyrnaeans – On the Martyrdom of Saint Polycarp," *Apostolic Fathers*, translated and edited by J. B. Lightfoot [Baker, 1971, reprinted from the 1891 edition by Macmillan and Company, London], page 112). The Roman proconsul/magistrate was urging the aged Polycarp to deny Christ, " 'Swear by the genius of Caesar; repent and say, Away with the atheists [meaning the "atheistic" Christians who denied the gods of the pagans and persuaded many not to sacrifice to, or to worship, them].' Then Polycarp with solemn countenance looked upon the whole multitude of lawless heathen that were in the stadium, and waved his hand to them; and groaning and looking up to heaven he said, 'Away with the atheists.' But when the magistrate pressed him hard and said, 'Swear the oath, and I will release thee; revile the Christ,' Polycarp said, 'Fourscore and six years have I been His servant, and He has done me no wrong. How then can I blaspheme my King who saved me.' "] **(11) He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. He who overcomes will not be hurt by the second death** [This is another symbolic way of saying that overcomers will partake of eternal life in

God's eternal kingdom. On the "second death," see Rev. 20:6, 14; 21:8.].' **(12) And to the angel of the church in Pergamum write: the One who has the sharp two-edged sword** [cf. Rev. 1:16; 2:16; and 19:15] **says this: (13) 'I know where you dwell, where Satan's throne is** [I assume those commentators are right who understand these last four words to refer to the fact that Pergamum was the center of the imperial cult of that part of the world, which demanded the worship of Rome and the Roman emperor. Failure to participate was considered high treason. Because of the imperial cult, Satan had a special presence at Pergamum. I'll quote from E. M. Blaiklock on Pergamum (*Pictorial Encyclopedia of the Bible*, Vol. 4 [Zondervan, 1975], pages 701-704.) "... [The Romans] accepted the royal bequest [by Attalus III in 133 B.C.] and organized the kingdom of Pergamum into the Province of Asia. For another two and a half centuries, Pergamum remained Rome's official center in the province. ...

The imperial cult, the worship of the spirit of Rome and of the emperor, with its loyalty test of formal incense burnt at the foot of Caesar's statue, found a center, appropriately enough, in Pergamum, and colored the city's life. The first temple of the cult was located there in 29 B.C., and is shown as a device on coins down to the principate of Trajan [A.D. 98-117] at the end of the 1<sup>st</sup> cent. In Trajan's honor a second temple was built, and a third was dedicated to Severus. Only the first temple functioned when John wrote his letter from Patmos, but its presence and ritual was enough to make Rome's authority oppressively apparent in the city. ... Perhaps...Antipas...was the first to suffer martyrdom for rejection of the cult. ... [I should mention that Blaiklock also includes a discussion of the many other pagan religions at Pergamum to help explain "where Satan's throne dwells," but he puts the primary emphasis on the imperial cult. I'll conclude this excerpt with his last sentence.] Nowhere was it more difficult to stand thus lonely and execrated [cursed, denounced scathingly] than in Pergamum, where Christianity and Caesarism confronted each other face to face.], **and you hold fast My name, and did not deny My faith** [speaking of their faith in Christ (e.g., Rev. 14:12), which included being faithful to Him in accordance with the truth of gospel] **even in the days of Antipas, My witness** [The KJV and NKJV translated "martyr," instead of "witness." The Greek noun *martus*, which is used thirty-four times in the Greek New Testament, is always translated witness(es) by the NASB. The NIV translated it martyr one place (Acts 22:16). Whether we translate witness or martyr here, the idea is that dying for Christ can be considered the ultimate witness for Him.], **My faithful one, who was killed among you, where Satan dwells. (14) But I have a few things against you** ["You" is singular in Greek, referring to the church at Pergamum.

Apparently some blame fell on the entire church because of the presence there of those Christ goes on to mention. Apparently the church had tolerated (and had not adequately dealt with) those involved with these sinful practices.], **because you have there some who hold the teaching of Balaam, who kept teaching [taught] Balak to put a stumbling block before the sons of Israel, to eat things sacrificed to idols and to commit acts of immorality.** [Compare Acts 15:29; 1 Cor. 10:14-22; and Rev. 2:20. On Balaam and his counsel to Balak, see Num. 25:1-18 with 31:16. The point is that the sins being committed by some of the "Christians" at Pergamum were essentially the same as the sins committed by some of the Israelites that came about through the evil, destructive counsel of Balaam. In a pagan city like Pergamum, it was very easy to be caught up into the sins of eating things sacrificed to idols and committing acts of

immorality. It was hard to avoid meals/feasts being dedicated to pagan idols/gods, since such meals were so widespread in the ancient world. Those who were members of trade guilds, for example, typically had such sacrificial meals at their regular gatherings. Some of those meals/feasts ended up with drunkenness and immoral practices, and sexual immorality permeated much of the life of the world of that day, including temple prostitution.] **(15) So you also** [the church at Pergamum] **have some who in the same way** [These words apparently mean “in the same way (as some of the Israelites of Balaam’s day).”] **hold the teaching of the Nicolaitans.** [“The teaching of the Nicolaitans” led to the “deeds/works of the Nicolaitans” (Rev. 2:6); apparently the deeds/works of the Nicolaitans were the same as those that resulted from the teaching of Balaam mentioned in 2:14. Revelation 2:6 shows that Jesus hated the deeds/works of the Nicolaitans, as did the Christians at Ephesus. There are several different views regarding the Nicolaitans, which I won’t get into here; we don’t know for sure the details regarding this heretical group, but we know all we need to know.

We know (based on the translation of the NASB, which I believe is accurate) that “the teaching of the Nicolaitans” included advocating involvement with the serious sins just mentioned in Rev. 2:14. (The NKJV is the equivalent of the NASB; it has, “Thus you also have....” That’s all we really need to know about the “deeds/works of the Nicolaitans” (Rev. 2:6) and the “teaching of the Nicolaitans” (Rev. 2:15). They had compromised (from God’s point of view) in a very serious, totally unacceptable way with the world. These verses need not necessarily be understood to teach that the sinful “Christians” at Pergamum called themselves, or were called, Nicolaitans.] **(16) Therefore repent** [These words were spoken to the church at Pergamum; the verb repent is singular. The primary warning, however, was clearly aimed at those involved in these sinful practices, as the following words demonstrate.]; **or else I am coming to you quickly, and I will make war against them with the sword of My mouth. (17) He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. To him who overcomes, to him I will give some of the hidden manna** [To partake of the hidden manna apparently is a symbolic way to speak of the yet-future partaking of God’s eternal life, which centers in Christ Jesus (cf. John 6:47-58; 14:6). This symbol may build on the Jewish tradition that the manna of old is now hidden and is to be restored in the messianic kingdom.], **and I will give him a white stone** [The color white goes with purity, victory, and the things of God and His kingdom.], **and a new name** [cf. Isa. 62:2] **written on the stone which no one knows but he who receives it.** [On the new name, compare Christ’s new name (Rev. 3:12). Our new name will undoubtedly reflect the glory of our new status after we have been glorified, entered into a glorious, intimate relationship with Christ (who has a new name) and with God the Father, and have begun our eternal reign with Him.] **(18) And to the angel of the church in Thyatira write: the Son of God, who has eyes like a flame of fire** [cf. Rev. 1:14; 19:12; and Dan. 10:6], **and His feet are like burnished bronze** [cf. Rev. 1:15; Dan. 10:6], **says this: (19) ‘I know your deeds** [works; cf. Rev. 2:2; 3:1, 8, and 15], **and your love and faith and service and perseverance** [or, steadfastness], **and that your deeds** [works] **of late are greater than at first** [contrast Rev. 2:4, 5]. **(20) But I have this against you, that you tolerate the woman Jezebel** [I assume that the name “Jezebel” was being used in a derogatory, insulting sense. On the evil Jezebel of the Old Testament, see, e.g., 1 Kings 16:31-33; 18:4, 19; 19:1, 2; 21:5-26; and 2 Kings 9:7-10, 22, 30-37. The church at Thyatira’s tolerating Jezebel was, at

least to some extent, similar to the church at Pergamum's tolerating those who "[held] the teaching of the Nicolaitans." And it is to be contrasted with the church at Ephesus's rejecting the false apostles and the works of the Nicolaitans.

I'll quote a sentence from F. F. Bruce here (*New Layman's Bible Commentary in One Volume* [Zondervan, 1979], page 1685.). "Her name was not really Jezebel, but she is described here as 'that Jezebel of a woman' because her relaxation of the terms of the apostolic decree [Acts 15:1-35] or further compromises with paganism (cf. verse 14) placed her in the succession of the OT Jezebel, whose Baal-cult was marked by idolatry and ritual prostitution." I'll also quote from Robert H. Mounce (*Book of Revelation*, NIC [Eerdmans, 1977], page 103). "The Thyatiran Jezebel is probably some prominent woman within the church who, like her OT counterpart, was influencing the people of God to forsake loyalty to God by promoting a tolerance toward and involvement in pagan practices. This extended to fornication and participation in the religious feasts connected with membership in trade guilds.", **who calls herself a prophetess** [Christ obviously didn't consider her to be a true prophetess, but some Christians at Thyatira did submit to her "ministry" and were led into serious sin.], **and she teaches and leads My bond-servants** [speaking of Christians] **astray so that they commit acts of immorality and eat things sacrificed to idols.** [The sins that Jezebel's teaching led to were essentially the same, if not exactly the same, as the sins at Pergamum (Rev. 2:14, 15). It's quite possible that there was a link between Jezebel and her followers at Thyatira, those who held the teaching of Balaam and the teaching of the Nicolaitans at Pergamum, and those of like mind at Ephesus (who had been rejected by the church there) and at other cities.

I'll quote from Frederick A. Tatford on the trade guilds at Thyatira; this excerpt will help us understand some of the problems the Christians had to face there, and at other places in the ancient world (*Revelation* [Klock and Klock, 1985 reprint, originally published by Christian Outreach Book Service in 1983], pages 153-156.). "As Thyatira grew in commercial importance and prosperity, it became a well-known center for the numerous trade guilds of the day. Although these were to be found in other cities also, they were more in evidence at Thyatira than anywhere else. Potters, dyers, tanners, bakers, metal-workers, textile-makers, bronze-smiths, slave-dealers, leather-workers and others all had their own guilds there. [Based on other lists I have seen, we could add woolworkers, linen-workers, and makers of outer garments.] Membership of the guild was compulsory and refusal to join made it impossible for the worker to secure employment or to continue in his own (or any other) trade. ... The guilds were well-organized bodies, providing specific benefits for their members, taking action to protect their interests, raising revenues and often owning considerable property.

Each guild was under the patronage of some pagan deity and all proceedings and feasts commenced with the payment of homage and the pouring out of a libation [the ritual of pouring out wine or oil upon the ground as a sacrifice to a god] to the patron god or goddess. This was inescapable: indeed the meeting-place of the guild was often dedicated to the deity and was regarded as a sacred place. It was obligatory on members to attend guild meetings and to engage in the idolatrous ritual which seemed an essential preliminary to the business discussions. Part of the food later consumed had been offered to the presiding deity. The guild banquets which followed business meetings

were attended by considerable sexual freedom, and Christian craftsmen were accordingly faced with the common temptation to license and immorality. ...

Among its many trades, Thyatira was renowned for its dyes and particularly for its purple dye—which was scarlet rather than purple.... . . . When Paul and his companions first visited Philippi they found, among the women piously praying by the river, one named Lydia, a Thyatiran seller of purple...[cf. Acts 16:14].”

I’ll also quote from Alan F. Johnson (*Expositor’s Bible Commentary*, Vol. 12 [Zondervan, 1981], page 443). “Associated with its [Thyatira’s] commerce was an extensive trade guild or labor union network, which must have played a prominent role in the social, political, economic, and religious life of the city. Each guild had its own patron deity, feasts, and seasonal festivities that included sexual revelries. Religiously, the city was unimportant, though worship of Apollo and Artemis (Diana) was prominent.”] **(21) I gave her time to repent**, [cf. Rom. 2:4; 2 Pet. 3:9] **and she does not want to repent of her immorality**. [The Lord Jesus knows the hearts of all people. Jezebel’s time to repent was running out. Revelation 2:22 shows that there still was some room for repentance on the part of her followers, but they were living in a very dangerous place.] **(22) Behold, I will throw her on a bed of sickness and those who commit adultery with her** [The point here seems to be that they have followed Jezebel and her teaching and have thereby committed spiritual adultery against God, not literal adultery with Jezebel (cf., e.g., Rev. 17:2; 18:9). There were, however, literal acts of immorality being committed by these Christians at Pergamum. It seems that they had truly become Christians and still were considered to be Christians, even by Christ, but they were very close to losing this status if they didn’t quickly repent.] **into great tribulation, unless they repent of her deeds** [the deeds/works being done by her and being advocated by her]. **(23) And I will kill her children** [I assume “her children” refers to those who followed Jezebel and her teaching into these sins—they are her spiritual offspring. Once allowance is made for figurative language, we need not understand the fate of the “children” spelled out here to be different than, or more severe than, the fate spelled out in 2:22. The “bed of sickness” and the “great tribulation” of Rev. 2:22 apparently also culminate in death.

It’s quite possible that the concept of Jezebel’s children being killed builds on what literally happened when God (through Elisha the prophet and Jehu) judged Jezebel and the literal offspring (including grandchildren, etc.) of Jezebel and King Ahab (her husband), as recorded in the Old Testament (2 Kings 9:1-10:17). (King Joram [Jehoram], who is mentioned in that passage, was a son of Jezebel and Ahab.)] **with pestilence** [In the margin the NASB has, “or, death.” The NIV has “I will strike her children dead.” The KJV and NKJV have “I will kill her children with death.”], **and all the churches will know that I am He who searches the minds and hearts** [cf. Acts 1:24; Rom. 8:27]; **and I will give to each one of you according to your deeds** [works; cf. Jer. 17:10]. [Those who didn’t quickly repent were headed for intense judgment at the hand of Christ Jesus, judgment unto physical death, for one thing. He wanted all the churches to know (to be warned) that He wouldn’t tolerate such blatant sin, not that He really tolerates any sin. Such temporal judgments were nothing compared to the eternal judgments that many, if not all, of those people were yet to face. Although Christ didn’t specifically mention their eternal condemnation here, it must be assumed. In one sense it was mentioned, in that in their final/eternal judgments they will be recompensed

“according to [their] deeds/works” (cf., e.g., Matt.16:27; Rom. 2:6-16; and Rev. 20:12, 13; 22:12). If the Christians at Ephesus, Sardis, and Laodicea were on the verge of ceasing to be the people of God (which includes forfeiting eternal life and the kingdom of God), it seems clear that these Christians were also in that in that category, assuming they didn’t repent.] **(24) But I say to you, the rest who are in Thyatira, who do not hold this teaching, who have not known the deep things of Satan, as they call them** [They undoubtedly were quite proud of their knowledge, of “the deep things of Satan” which wasn’t shared by the rest of the Christians at Thyatira (thank God!), even as the early Gnostics John dealt with in his first epistle were proud of their special “knowledge.” (The Gnostic’s “knowledge” was “special” all right; it was full of heresy, even denying the basic truths of the Christian gospel, like the all-important atoning death of the Lord Jesus Christ.) “The deep things of Satan,” whatever they were (we don’t really need to know the details), apparently enabled them to justify their participation in pagan, idolatrous, demonic feasts and sexual immorality.

I assume they thought that they understood the things of Christ and the things of Satan on such a deep level that they could avoid being contaminated by these pagan practices. They probably boasted of their authority over Satan, of their deep knowledge (which included plenty of foolishness, but also contained some truth, like the knowledge that the pagan gods didn’t really exist; nevertheless, as Paul pointed out in 1 Cor. 10:19-22, by participating in pagan sacrificial idol-feasts, they were having fellowship with demon spirits), and of their faith and boldness (they weren’t afraid of Satan or of going on his turf). They undoubtedly denied that the things they were doing were sinful, and they probably claimed that there were positive spiritual benefits derived from what they were doing.]—**I place no other burden on you. (25) Nevertheless what you have, hold fast until I come. (26) He who overcomes, and he who keeps My deeds** [works. Jesus is speaking of the works required to be faithful to Him.] **until the end, TO HIM I WILL GIVE AUTHORITY OVER THE NATIONS** [cf., e.g., Luke 19:17, 19; 2 Tim. 2:12; Rev. 3:21; 20:4-6; and 22:5]; **(27) AND HE SHALL RULE THEM WITH A ROD OF IRON, AS THE VESSELS OF THE POTTER ARE BROKEN TO PIECES** [These words are quoted from, or at least build on, Psalm 2:8, 9. Psalm 2 is a very important end-time prophetic passage. It’s discussed verse by verse in chapter 18 of my book, *The Mid-Week Rapture.*], **as I also have received authority from My Father** [cf., e.g., Rev. 3:21]; [It’s important to see that this promised blessing to the overcomers, as with the promised blessings mentioned in the letters to the other six churches, apply to all overcomers of all churches of all generations; they apply to all the members of God’s true Israel. The words of Rev. 2:26, 27 are extremely important. For one thing, these verses (which build on Psalm 2:8, 9) help us understand Rev. 12:5, which I understand to be the most important verse in the Bible on the timing of the rapture, enabling us to see that the rapture of the Christian church will take place right in the middle of Daniel’s 70<sup>th</sup> week. Revelation 2:26, 27 help us see that the “male *child* who is to rule all the nations with a rod of iron” of Rev. 12:5 speaks of those members of true Israel who will be glorified and raptured when Christ returns with the clouds in the middle of Daniel’s 70<sup>th</sup> week. Some of the

members of God's true Israel, centering in the end-time remnant of the nation Israel, will not be converted until after the rapture.

It's also significant that Psalm 2:7 is one of the most important cross-references to help us to understand the birth of the male child of Rev. 12:5. The birth spoken of in both of these verses (and in Isa. 66:7; Mic. 5:3; cf. Col. 1:18; Rev. 1:5; and Rom. 8:29) is the birth into the fullness of eternal life. For those members of true Israel who will have died before the rapture, it will mean resurrection to eternal glory; for those members still alive, it will mean transformation to eternal glory. Revelation 12:5 is discussed on pages 314-316 of my book, *The Mid-Week Rapture.*] **(28) and I will give him the morning star.** [See under Rev. 22:16 in my verse-by-verse study of Revelation chapters 20-22 on my internet site. Revelation 22:16 shows that Christ is “the bright morning star.” He will give Himself to us; He will share with us all that He is—we are His people; we are His bride; we will be glorified with Him; we will reign with Him; He is the “firstborn from the dead” (Col. 1:18; Rev. 1:5); He is the “firstborn among many brethren” (Rom. 8:29); He is the “firstfruits of those who are asleep” (1 Cor. 15:20). Compare 2 Pet. 1:19.] **(29) He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.’ ”**

## REVELATION CHAPTER 3

**“To the angel of the church in Sardis** [Sardis had been the capital city of the ancient kingdom of Lydia.] **write: He who has the seven Spirits of God** [referring to the Holy Spirit; cf. Rev. 1:4; 4:5; and 5:6] **and the seven stars** [cf. Rev. 1:16, 20; 2:1], **says this: ‘I know your deeds** [works; cf. Rev. 2:2, 19; 3:8, 15], **that you have a name** [The NIV has “reputation.”] **that you are alive, but you are dead.** [From the point of view of men, this church appeared to be doing well enough, but from the point of view of God (the only opinion that really mattered), there wasn’t much true Christian reality with most of the Christians at Sardis, including the fact that they didn’t have the necessary works, the works that necessarily result when Christians walk by faith and by the Holy Spirit. Most of them were on the verge of ceasing to have any life by the Spirit; Jesus said (in Rev. 3:2, 3) that they would totally die (spiritually) if they didn’t repent.] **(2) Wake up, and strengthen the things that remain, which were about to die; for I have not found your deeds** [works] **completed in the sight of My God.** [In other words, their Christian works/lives were not acceptable in the sight of God.] **(3) So remember what you have received and heard; and keep it and repent** [cf. Rev. 2:5, 16, 22; 3:19]. **Therefore if you do not wake up, I will come like a thief, and you will not know at what hour I will come to you.** [These words, along with the words of Rev. 3:1, 2, were addressed to those (the majority) who needed to repent. Christ doesn’t come like a thief in judgment (whether at some time during this present age or at the end of this age) against those who are believing what He requires them to believe and living as He requires them to live. On Christ’s coming in judgment as a thief in the night, see on 1 Thess. 5:2-11 on pages 37-40 of my book, *The Mid-Week Rapture* and on Matt. 24:42-51 on pages 43-45 of the same book. Also see 2 Pet. 3:10; Rev. 16:15.] **(4) But you have a few people in Sardis who have not soiled their garments** [Most of the Christians at Sardis had soiled their garments by the contamination of sin, and they had not repented and been restored. False doctrine contaminates too. The blood of Christ, backed up by the Holy Spirit, is the only agent powerful enough to sanctify garments and lives (cf. Rev. 7:14), but it doesn’t just work automatically: Christians must cooperate with God’s sanctifying grace through faith, based on the truth of God’s Word, walking by/in/after the Spirit of God, and doing works that are required (e.g., Rev. 2:5; 19:8).]; **and they will walk with Me in white** [See Rev. 3:5, 18; 6:11; 7:9, 13, 14; and 19:8, 14. Christ was speaking here of walking with Him in white in the yet-future glory that will become available to the saints when He returns. White symbolizes purity, righteousness, and victory. The “few people in Sardis who [had] not soiled their garments” would be joined by the other Christians at Sardis who took these words of Jesus seriously and repented. The blood of Jesus is powerful to restore Christians who have fallen into sin, if they will appropriate it (cf., e.g., 1 John 2:2). The sincere call for repentance was motivated by His love, as Rev. 3:19, for example, demonstrates. The call for repentance is a dominant theme throughout the messages to the seven churches; it could be considered the dominant theme.], **for they are worthy** [The few that were worthy were worthy by God’s grace, as they would be quick to testify. Their boast was in God and His saving grace, not in their works, as if they merited salvation.] **(5) He who overcomes will thus be clothed in white garments; and I will not erase his**

**name from the book of life** [These last words include the awesome warning that those who don't overcome will not have a place in God's eternal kingdom; they will not partake of eternal life. (On the need for all Christians to be overcomers, see under Rev. 2:7.) These words should put the fear of God in the hearts of all Christians not ready for the return of Christ, a healthy fear that leads to repentance. Hopefully many (if not all) of those at Sardis who weren't overcomers repented when they heard these words addressed directly to them by Christ Himself. I wouldn't be surprised if they did (and I wouldn't be too surprised that some of them didn't repent); so too at Ephesus (especially at Ephesus where they had so much right) and the other cities where repentance was required.

All Christians of all generations must understand these words (as with all the Bible) to be addressed directly to them where the words fit their situation. On the book of life, cf., e.g., Luke 10:20; Phil. 4:3; Rev. 13:8; 17:8; 20:12, 15; and 21:27. On names/persons being blotted out of the book of life, cf. Ex. 32:30-33; Psalm 69:28.

We certainly can't argue that the Christians at Sardis who were called to repent hadn't become born-again Christians: Jesus spoke of their need to strengthen the things that remained, which were about to die (Rev. 3:2); He spoke of them as those who had soiled their (proper Christian) garments; and He warned that their names (which were in the Lamb's book of life) would be erased from the book of life. ((From the point of view of the book of Revelation, some names (not all names), the names of the elect, had been in the book of life from the foundation of the world (see Rev. 13:8; 17:8 [Rev. 17:8 speaks of the people who will be living on the earth during the super-evil reign of Antichrist that will take place throughout the second half of Daniel's 70<sup>th</sup> week whose names have not been written in the book of life since the foundation of the world. It informs us that they will be amazed when they see that Antichrist has come back from the dead, along with other factors that we learn about from the book of Revelation, and they will follow him. We are indirectly also being informed that the elect will not follow Antichrist. This verse is discussed in context in my paper on Rev. 14:6-19:21]; cf. Acts 13:48; Rom. 8:29; Eph. 1:4; and 2 Thess. 2:13.)) The fact that Jesus was speaking (for the most part at least) to born-again Christians at Sardis and warning them that they were on the verge of losing their salvation is strongly confirmed by the fact that the Christians at Ephesus and Laodicea, who clearly had become born-again Christians, were also warned that they were on the verge of ceasing to be Christ's people.

In my paper *Once Saved, Always Saved?* I tried to discuss this topic in a balanced way, aiming for the balanced truth of what the Bible teaches. This is a topic that needs to be discussed; for one thing, the teaching that Christians cannot lose their salvation no matter what they believe or what they do, or don't do, has often been taken to ridiculous extremes that are clearly unbiblical, abusing the doctrine in ways that would have offended Augustine and John Calvin.

Augustine, AD 354-430, in his latter viewpoint, who was followed by Calvin and the Calvinists (and others), was the primary source for the doctrine that it's impossible for the elect to lose their salvation. See pages 20-24 of my paper, *Once Saved, Always Saved?* I recommend reading the entire paper. For one thing, I included an excerpt from L. Berkhof, a respected Calvinistic scholar, under his heading, "The Doctrine of the

Perseverance of the Saints in History,” that includes the statement that “This doctrine was first explicitly taught by Augustine.”

It is clear that this doctrine was just part of the package that Augustine came up with, a package that includes the ideas that mankind is so fallen that we have no capacity to cooperate with God’s grace or to have faith, so God must give faith to those He chooses. And the package includes the idea that if we had to cooperate with God’s grace or submit to the gospel with faith, then salvation would no longer be of grace, but we would be earning/meriting salvation to some extent (which according to him would be unbiblical).

The apostle Paul, for example, didn’t see this problem. He said in Rom. 4:16, for example, “For this reason [since we cannot be saved by the Law] *it is* by faith, in order that *it may be* in accordance with grace....” Saving faith is something we do in response to God’s grace, not something He just gives us (see my *A Paper on Faith*). God doesn’t give us saving faith, and (though His grace enables us to continue in faith) He doesn’t make us continue in faith to the end.

An example of abusing the doctrine, which is a very serious, widespread problem in our day, is to understand once saved, always saved in such a way that we explain away the powerful warnings (the warnings aren’t taken seriously) like those contained in the messages to the seven churches. This undercuts the urgent call for repentance, where repentance is required, and it tends to explain away the need for Christians to have a proper fear of God, a fear required by the Bible, including the New Testament. We should be afraid to sin against God! God hates sin! It’s very dangerous to explain away what the Bible clearly teaches based on doctrines supposedly derived from the Bible.

I need to mention what Charles Stanley teaches on this topic in his book *Eternal Security* (Thomas Nelson, 1990); the book is still being sold at amazon.com in July, 2012. I have a lot of respect for the ministry of Charles Stanley, but I was rather shocked when I read some of the things he says in this book. He says that those who have been saved cannot lose their salvation even if they stop having faith in Christ and no matter what sins they are living in (see, for example, pages x, 5, 28, 29, 72, 77, 78).

I don’t believe the doctrine once saved, always saved is true, and a widespread abuse of the doctrine has led to gigantic problems, but I’m thankful that there are many Christians who hold the doctrine but aren’t abusing it—they make it a high priority item to walk in the truth, righteousness, and holiness of God by His grace, and they take His warnings seriously. We should have a strong assurance of salvation, but not while we are not making God and His righteousness a top priority.

If some Christians are guilty of overstating God’s role in our salvation and of minimizing, or even denying, our role, other Christians are guilty of overstating our role, and minimizing God’s role. (It’s all too easy for Calvinists or Arminians, etc. to live more by the flesh than by the Holy Spirit, but we are called to walk by the Holy Spirit on a continuous basis [cf. Gal. 5:16]. What a privilege!) Also, some Christians make salvation a very unstable affair, with salvation being so easily, and so quickly, lost. The messages to the seven churches, for example, don’t substantiate the idea that Christians immediately lose their salvation if they sin.

At the same time we must treat all sin as a very serious matter. God hates sin, and He paid an infinite price in the sacrifice of His Son to save us from sin. We must put the emphasis on God’s role in our salvation, learn to rest in His sufficient grace, and make

sure we give Him all the glory (as Augustine and Calvinists rightly say), but we must also make sure we understand, and then do, our part, our part as defined and assigned by God. (To the extent we don't do our part, our lives won't glorify God.)

Our part includes making it top priority to learn what the Bible (especially the gospel of new-covenant salvation) teaches, to learn what God has done for us in Christ, and to learn what He requires of us; and it includes doing (by His grace/Spirit through faith) what is required of us, including making it top priority to live for God in His righteousness and holiness, very much including repenting, where repenting is required. These things are not optional (Augustine and many Calvinists would agree with this), but this isn't bad news, it's good news—we're called to divine order—everything out of divine order is chaos, and is destined for eternal chaos.], **and I will confess his name before My Father and before His angels** [cf. Matt. 10:32, 33; Luke 12:8, 9]. **(6) He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.'** **(7) And to the angel of the church in Philadelphia write: He who is holy, who is true** [cf. Rev. 19:11], **who has the key of David, who opens and no one will shut, and who shuts and no one opens** [See Isa. 22:22; Rev. 1:18. Jesus Christ has the "key of David" in that He is the greater son of David, who (for one thing) fulfills the prophecies regarding David's lineage reigning worldwide forever (cf., e.g., 2 Sam. 7:12, 13, 16; Isa. 9:7; and Luke 1:32, 33). He has all authority (e.g., Matt. 28:18; Eph. 1:20-23), but the primary idea here seems to be that He is the One with the authority to say who will, or will not, enter God's yet-future eternal kingdom. (It could be important to know, and to be on good terms with, Someone like that.) The Christians at Philadelphia were in the category of those who would find an open door to eternal glory. This was one of the two churches of the seven to which Christ had only positive things to say. He required of them only to continue to be faithful.], **says this: (8) 'I know your deeds** [works; cf. Rev. 2:2, 19; 3:1, 15]. **Behold, I have put before you an open door which no one can shut** [I understand the idea here, at least the dominant idea, to be that the door to God's yet-future kingdom will be open for them. As verse 10 shows, they will enter the door to eternal glory at the time Christ returns, with the added benefit that they will be kept from the hour of testing taking place on the earth throughout the second half of Daniel's 70<sup>th</sup> week, because they will be raptured from the earth with all the saints when Christ returns.

The devil and those who were persecuting them, including at least some of the Jews of Philadelphia, who claimed that they (not the Christians) were the ones that would inherit/enter the messianic kingdom (see Rev. 3:9; cf. Rev. 2:9), will find a closed door to God's yet-future eternal glory. It's also true that the door to God's presence and to His present blessings was open to these faithful Christians (and all faithful Christians; cf. Rom. 5:2; Heb. 10:19-22) and that a door to witness to the world for Christ Jesus was open for them (cf. 1 Cor. 16:9; Col. 4:3).], **because you have a little power, and have kept My word** [cf. John 8:51, 55; 17:6; and Rev. 3:10], **and have not denied My name** [cf. Rev. 2:13]. [I understand these words in the sense that even though this church only had a little power (in the sense that it was poor, small, and uninfluential from the world's point of view), they were, nevertheless, faithful to God through His sufficient grace (which includes His power). The BADG Greek Lexicon (under *dunamis*) says that this Greek noun is used here "of the externals of power...[and being combined with the adjective "little" here it means] *have few resources.*"] **(9) Behold, I**

**will cause those of the synagogue of Satan, who say that they are Jews and are not** [They aren't true Jews; they aren't part of true Israel (cf., e.g., Rom. 2:28, 29).], **but lie—I will make them come and bow down at your feet, and make them know that I have loved you.** [See under Rev. 2:9. Ultimately God will demonstrate before all mankind that He loved (and loves) His faithful followers at Philadelphia, and all those like them.] **(10) Because you have kept the word of My perseverance** [Or, steadfastness. They had kept His word (they had remained faithful to Him and His word), as Rev. 3:8 demonstrates, which required perseverance/steadfastness. On perseverance/steadfastness (by grace through faith), cf. Rev. 1:9; 2:2, 3, 19.], **I also will keep you from** [or “out of”; Greek preposition *ek*; He didn't say I will keep you “through”] **the hour of testing, that hour which is about to** [or “which is going to”] **come upon the whole world, to test those who dwell on the earth.** [This verse was briefly discussed under Rev. 3:8. It probably is the most important verse in the Bible to show that the saints will be raptured from the earth before God pours out His wrath, including the seven bowls of wrath of the book of Revelation. God's wrath includes His raising up Antichrist, an extremely evil ruler (cf. Dan. 8:19; 11:36; Zech. 11:15-17; 2 Thess. 2:3-12 [Daniel chapters 8, 11; Zechariah chapter 11; and 2 Thess. 2:3-12 are discussed verse-by-verse in my book, *The Mid-Week Rapture*]).

The “hour of testing” correlates with the hour of the reign of Antichrist mentioned in Rev. 17:12 and with the hour of God's judgment mentioned in Rev. 14:7. (Antichrist, who will seem to be invincible at that time, will demand that all people take his mark and worship him, but God, who is the Creator and Judge, will demand that all people repent and submit to Him.) It isn't that these faithful Christians at Philadelphia (and all faithful Christians) avoid being tested; during their time of testing on the earth, they are found faithful (by grace through faith). For a detailed discussion of Rev. 3:10, see pages 40-42 of *The Mid-Week Rapture*.] **(11) I am coming quickly** [cf. Rev. 1:1, 3; 22:7, 10-12, 20]; **hold fast what you have** [cf. Rev. 2:25], **so that no one will take your crown.** [Assuming that the “crown” refers to the “crown of life” mentioned in Rev. 2:10, for someone to take their crown would mean that they would be denied partaking of eternal life with all the overcomers in God's yet-future kingdom. It is also true that we will reign with God from the time of our glorification (cf., e.g., Rev. 2:26, 27; 3:21; 12:5; 20:6; and 22:5). The Christians at Philadelphia didn't need to repent, but we must always hold fast what we have in God and press on until the end of the race. Also, as we are faithful and press on, we will experience growth (by God's grace).] **(12) He who overcomes** [see under Rev. 2:7], **I will make him a pillar in the temple of My God, and he will not go out from it anymore** [These glorious words are a figurative way to say that the overcomers will experience a never-ending, intimate relationship with God (as His bond-servants), being pictured as pillars in the temple in which He dwells (cf., e.g., Eph. 2:19-22; 1 Pet. 2:5). Revelation 21:22 shows that there won't be a literal temple in God's new Jerusalem. We won't need a literal temple when we are permitted to fully dwell in the presence of God. All new Jerusalem could be considered God's temple.]; **and I will write on him the name of My God** [Compare Rev. 14:1; 22:4. The overcomers (all the members of true Israel) are the bond-servants of God; they are set apart for Him; they belong to Him in a special sense, which is a great privilege for the saints.], **and the name of the city of My God, the new Jerusalem, which comes down out of heaven from My God** [This is a symbolic way of saying that the

overcomers will have a place in new Jerusalem; it is their city (cf. Rev. 21:2; 21:9-22:5; and 22:14, 15).] **and My new name** [cf. Rev. 2:17; 19:12]. [Even as the overcomers are set apart for God the Father, they are also set apart for God the Son. They are His people, and everything He is as the victorious Son of God and the Savior of true Israel, which is reflected in His new name, will be eternally shared with His people, who will have His name written on them and will experience the glory contained in this new name.] **(13) He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.’** **(14) To the angel of the church in Laodicea** [Compare Col. 2:1; 4:16. I’ll quote George E. Ladd’s introductory paragraph under this verse (*Commentary on the Revelation of John* [Eerdmans, 1972], page 64.) “Laodicea was situated at the convergence of three important roads. Its situation contributed to its becoming a prominent center of banking and industry. Its wealth is illustrated by the fact that when it, together with other cities in Asia, suffered severe damage from an earthquake in A.D. 60-61, it was able to finance its own rebuilding and did not need, like other cities, substantial subsidies from the imperial treasury. The city was famous for a beautiful black woolen cloth used to make clothing and carpets. Laodicea was also the seat of a flourishing medical school which was particularly noted for its ear ointment and for ‘Phrygian powder’ which was used in the manufacture of eye salve.” Laodicea was founded by the Seleucid king Antiochus II (262-246 BC); it was named after his wife Laodice.] **write: ‘The Amen** [I’ll quote a few sentences from G. B. Funderburk’s article on “Amen” (*Pictorial Encyclopedia of the Bible* [Zondervan, 1975], page 127.) “ ‘Amen’ in both Greek and English is a transliteration from the Hebrew, while the same spelling is also retained in Latin and German. In fact, it is probably the most universal of all words, with only ‘ma’ for mother a close second. ... In Hebrew it is usually an adjective, ‘true’ or ‘faithful.’ ” Christ is the truth (e.g., John 14:6), and He speaks the truth.], **the faithful and true witness** [See under Rev. 1:2 and 1:5.], **the beginning of the creation of God** [In the margin the NASB has, “I.e. Origin or Source [of the creation of God].” The NIV translates the Greek noun (*archē*) differently: “the ruler of God’s creation.” The NIV is reasonable; Christ is the ruler of God’s creation, but I prefer the idea here that the Son of God is the origin/source of the creation in the sense of John 1:1-3—all things were created by/through Him. He, with the Father, is the Alpha and the Omega (cf. Rev. 1:8, 17; 2:8; 21:6; 22:13).

I wouldn’t translate “beginning” (with the NASB and KJV) because this translation lends itself to the heretical idea that the Son of God is a created being, the first creation of God the Father. The Son of God isn’t a created being: He is deity; He is God the Son; He was with the Father in the beginning, before creation began (e.g., John 1:1). The NKJV’s “Beginning” is better, but I prefer a translation like “the origin of God’s creation” with the NRSV, or “the Source of God’s creation” with the *New American Bible*. See my paper, *More on the Trinity*.], **says this: (15) I know your deeds** [works; cf. Rev. 2:2, 19; 3:1, 8], **that you are neither cold nor hot; I wish that you were cold or hot.** [It’s quite clear that the Lord Jesus won’t tolerate lukewarmness in His disciples (Rev. 3:16). He won’t tolerate their being cold either, but at least if they’re cold it’s much more obvious that they’re not true Christians.] **(16) So because you are lukewarm, and neither hot nor cold, I will spit you out of My mouth.** [The Lord Jesus certainly stated the fact in powerful, graphic terms (designed to wake Christians up) that, if they didn’t repent (see Rev. 3:18-20), they would be rejected by Him and

would be His disciples no longer. Even though the words spoken to the Christians at Ephesus and the words spoken to most of the Christians at Sardis were spoken in less graphic terms, the end result of ceasing to be Christ's people, if they didn't repent, was equally applicable for them and for all other Christians in the same situation.] (17)

**Because you say, "I am rich, and have become wealthy, and have need of nothing,"**

[It seems clear that the Christians at Laodicea were too focused on the things of the world, including financial prosperity. They wrongly assumed that because things were going well in those areas they were quite secure in Christ. (Many have pointed out that we Christians in the United States, and in other parts of the world, are in danger of being deceived even as the Laodicean Christians were deceived, because of our material blessings, limited persecution, etc. Let's make sure we don't let the material blessings and other blessings we have become a curse to us.)

They didn't realize that they were in desperate need of the things of God, things like truth, righteousness, and holiness. That is, they didn't realize their desperate need for the things of God until they heard these shocking words from the Head of the church, assuming they took these words seriously. I assume that many of them did repent after receiving this message from the Son of God. What a blessing for Christ to call us to repent when repentance is required. Judgment day will too late to find out that repentance was required.

As Rev. 3:19 shows, this call to repent was/is motivated by His love for His people. It's not exactly good news to find out that we need to repent, but it's a great blessing to know the truth. Once we see our need for repentance, and the awesome consequences for not repenting, it shouldn't take true Christians very long to make repentance top priority.

We Christians must face the fact that God's people are typically very slow to see their sin, and they are often slow to repent. It's shocking to read through the Old Testament and see the sin of generation after generation. Also, the people of Israel of Jesus' day had a very different idea of how well they were doing than Jesus did (and He knew the truth). See Luke 13:1-5, for example. For one thing, we must realize that God takes the sin of His people to be far more serious than the sin of those who aren't His people. The more He reveals to us and gives us, the more He expects from us, and rightly so.

If God considered the sin of Israel to be a serious matter, and He certainly did, how much more does He consider our sin (the sin of born-again Christians) to be a serious matter? The old-covenant people weren't born again, since Jesus had not yet conquered sin and spiritual death through His atoning death (cf. Gal. 3:21). We must make it a top priority item to be open to God and His word to discern where there is a need for repentance. This isn't optional; as these verses show, our salvation could very well depend on it.] **and you do not know that you are wretched and miserable and poor and blind and naked** [Christ's judgment of how the Christians at Laodicea were doing was quite different than their opinion. His words had to come as a great shock. The Laodicean Christians thought they were rich, but according to Christ, they were poor. The Christians at Smyrna, by contrast, were poor (with respect to the things of this world), but Christ said they were rich (Rev. 2:9). Again, each Christian of each generation must be open before God and His word to discern their true status in Christ, and where it is required we must make repentance a top priority item (by His grace).], (18) **I advise you to buy from me gold refined by fire so that you may become rich**

[Compare Isa. 55:1-3; Matt. 13:44; and 1 Pet. 1:7. True “gold” goes with the true riches of the things of God, things like truth, purity, godliness, righteousness, holiness, and the fruit of the Spirit (Gal. 5:22, 23). This true “gold” would solve the problem of their being “poor,” which was mentioned in Rev. 3:17.], **and white garments so that you may clothe yourself** [“White garments” in the book of Revelation often refer to our yet-future garments (see under Rev. 3:4), but the primary idea here is of acquiring white garments now, by repenting and living right now through the grace of God in Christ (cf., e.g., Rev. 7:14; 19:8 and 22:14).], **and that the shame of your nakedness will not be revealed** [The “white garments” would solve the problem of their nakedness, which was mentioned in Rev. 3:17. Compare Rev. 16:15]; **and eye salve to anoint your eyes so that you may see.** [By cooperating with God’s grace, we can see the truth; we can see things as they really are, from God’s point of view. Anointing the eyes with this eye salve would solve the blindness problem, which was mentioned in Rev. 3:17.] **(19) Those whom I love, I reprove and discipline; therefore be zealous** [If they become zealous and repent, they will no longer be “lukewarm” (Rev. 3:16).] **and repent.** [On the call to repent, cf. Rev. 2:5, 16, 21; and 3:3. These words regarding Christ’s love for these Christians (His very special love for those who had been adopted and born into the family of God through His atoning death), who desperately needed to repent are very important to establish the right perspective. The Lord Jesus Christ isn’t trying to get rid of us. (He’s proven that to me many times.) Quite the contrary!

He still loved these Christians at Laodicea and wanted for them to repent. We had better not, however, single out these positive words we like about the love of Christ and use them for an excuse to not take His words seriously regarding being spit out of His mouth if we don’t repent (where repentance is required). That, to say the least, wouldn’t be wise. Anything that Christ does to help His people wake up and see their need to repent (including His reproving and disciplining them) is good, very good, and it will work for great good if we rightly respond to it. Compare Prov. 3:12; 1 Cor. 11:31, 32; and Heb. 12:5-17.] **(20) Behold, I stand at the door and knock; if anyone hears My voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and will dine with him, and he with Me.** [Compare John 14:23. These glorious words were/are addressed to the Christians at Laodicea who needed to repent and all other Christians in the same situation, not to unbelievers. It’s true, however, that the invitation to repent and become Christians has been extended to all unbelievers, and the door to God’s saving grace and His presence will be opened for all who respond to His offer of salvation.] **(21) He who overcomes** [see under Rev. 2:7], **I will grant to him to sit down with Me on My throne, as I also overcame** [On Christ’s overcoming, see John 16:33; Rev. 5:5.] **and sat down with My Father on His throne.** [All overcomers (all the members of true Israel) will reign forever with God the Father and God the Son (cf., e.g., Matt. 19:28; 2 Tim. 2:12; Rev. 2:26, 27; 5:10; 20:4, 6; and 22:5).] **(22) He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.’ ”**

## REVELATION CHAPTER 4

**After these things I looked, and behold, a door *standing open in heaven* [cf. Ezek. 1:1], and the first voice which I had heard, like *the sound of a trumpet speaking with me*, said, “Come up here, and I will show you what must take place after these things.”** [The “first voice which [John] had heard, like *the sound of a trumpet speaking with [him]*,” refers back to Rev. 1:10, where Christ Himself apparently spoke, so Christ Himself apparently speaks here too. (He clearly spoke in Rev. 1:17ff.) John was invited to come up to heaven to receive the rest of the revelation that would become the book of Revelation. He was taken to heaven, to the very throne room of God (Rev. 4:2), but he didn’t remain at that location throughout the rest of the revelation. In Rev. 17:3, for example, he was carried away in the Spirit to a wilderness to receive part of the revelation. John probably wasn’t taken bodily to heaven (to a wilderness, etc.); he probably was taken there in spirit by the Spirit (cf. 2 Cor. 12:1-4).

The words “what must take place after these things” here undoubtedly equal “the things which will take place after these things” of Rev. 1:19 (cf. Rev. 22:6). (“The things which are” of Rev. 1:19 are completed now that the messages to the seven churches have been delivered.) Revelation chapters 4 and 5, however, don’t prophesy regarding the future hardly at all; they set the stage for the detailed revelation regarding the future things. The time setting for the scene of Revelation chapters 4 and 5 is early, apparently shortly after the glorification and ascension of the resurrected Lamb of God, after He had overcome so as to defeat sin, Satan, and spiritual death and earn the right to bring to pass the things spoken of in the book of Revelation. This includes His saving all the elect and taking them to the eternal glory of God’s new heaven and new earth with its new Jerusalem and His removing Satan and all who continue to follow him in his rebellion. The atoning death, resurrection, glorification, and the saving results that flow from His overcoming can all be seen in Revelation chapter 5.

Most of the future things included in “what must take place after these things” (Rev. 4:1) were yet far in the future for those of John’s day (looking at it from our perspective some nineteen hundred years after John received this revelation). They are things that will come to pass at the end of this age, mostly during Daniel’s 70<sup>th</sup> week, but some will come to pass in the subsequent millennial kingdom and in the eternal state that follows that kingdom. Most of the detailed revelation regarding the future is apparently contained in the scroll that Christ takes from the hand of God the Father in Revelation chapter 5. (He was the only One found worthy to take the scroll, to remove the seals, and to open it.) We don’t receive much in the way of new revelation until the seventh and last seal has been removed (Rev. 8:1). The first six seals are removed by the Lord Jesus in Revelation chapter 6.

Most who hold the pre-week-rapture viewpoint believe this verse (Rev. 4:1) speaks of the rapture of the church. I believe it’s rather obvious that’s not what this verse is speaking of. (Some pre-week rapture advocates will concede this point.) The fact that this is the best the pre-week-rapture viewpoint can do to find the rapture in the book of Revelation tends to demonstrate the weakness of that viewpoint. I should mention that those who hold the pre-week viewpoint have many things right; I have learned much from them, and there are many very sincere Christians who hold that viewpoint.

All end-time viewpoints have what can be considered weak points. I suppose that the primary charge that could be brought against the mid-week-rapture viewpoint is that we can't clearly see the mid-week rapture in any clear way until we get to the book of Revelation. I don't really consider this to be a weak point. There are many end-time details we wouldn't know without the book of Revelation. For example, we wouldn't know about the seven trumpets or the seven bowls of wrath; we wouldn't know about the spectacular ministry, death, resurrection, and rapture of the two witnesses/prophets; about many of the important details regarding Antichrist (including the fact that he will come back from the dead before the rapture, that he will be supported by the powerful ministry of the false prophet, and regarding the image of the beast that even speaks, and the mark of the beast); about the fact that the gospel will still be proclaimed after the rapture and that many will be converted to Christ after the rapture; about Babylon the great and God's judgment of her; about the millennial kingdom and God's salvation plans for the nations, and about God's new heaven and new earth with its new Jerusalem. A few of the items just listed could be known to some extent before the book of Revelation was given, but the book of Revelation supplies the details.

The book of Revelation was given about AD 95, some thirty years after the apostle Paul died. I doubt that Paul, for example, knew, or taught, the mid-week rapture. (Based on Paul's writings, especially 2 Thess. 1:8-2:12, his teaching fits best with the end-of-the-week-rapture viewpoint. What he wrote, however, leaves room for the mid-week rapture, but I don't believe 2 Thess. 1:8-2:12 leave room for the pre-week-rapture.) God's revelation is often progressive, supplying more details as time goes on. Sometimes we have to modify what we thought we knew based on subsequent revelation.

The Old Testament prophets and Israel, for example, didn't understand the very important fact that the Messiah was to come twice, with the two comings being very different, and (significantly) Israel didn't understand Messiah was to be deity. They didn't know about, and they were/are very reluctant to make room for, God the Son. These things could have been known based on Old Testament prophecies and other teaching of the Old Testament, but these things that are so clear to us now weren't at all clear back then.

Looking at the all-important prophetic book of Revelation from the perspective of the mid-week rapture, we can see the rapture several places (unlike with the pre-week rapture). (Those who teach the end-of the week rapture typically say the Lord Jesus will return at Rev. 19:11. It is significant that no resurrection, or rapture, or trumpet, etc. is mentioned in those verses.) Revelation 7:9-17 don't specifically mention the rapture, but we see the just-raptured saints before the throne of God. This scene (of Rev. 7:9-17) comes, appropriately enough, just at the time judgment day begins. (See Rev. 6:12-17. These verses give us a brief, but powerful, picture of the arrival of judgment day before the scroll is opened.) The rapture of the two witnesses in the middle of Daniel's 70<sup>th</sup> week, which is pictured in Rev. 11:11, 12, is quite relevant because their rapture will apparently just be part of the mid-week rapture. The most important verse for the mid-week rapture is Rev. 12:5. We can probably also see the just-raptured saints on the white cloud with the Lord Jesus Christ in Rev. 14:14. And we can see the raptured saints with Christ during the second half of Daniel's 70<sup>th</sup> week in Rev. 17:14; and 19:8, 14, 19; cf. Rev. 12:12; 13:6. (These verses are all discussed in my book, *The Mid-Week*

*Rapture* and/or my subsequent verse-by-verse studies of the book of Revelation. Revelation 11:1-14:5 [and many other verses from the book of Revelation and from many other books of the Bible] are discussed verse-by-verse in my book. All the other verses of the book of Revelation are discussed verse-by-verse in papers on my internet site.)] **(2) Immediately I was in the Spirit** [cf. Rev. 1:10]; **and behold, a throne was standing in heaven, and One sitting on the throne.** [As we keep reading, it becomes clear that God the Father is spoken of here (cf., e.g., Rev. 5:1 [with 5:2-7]; 5:13; 6:16; and 7:10). On God the Father, God the Son, God the Holy Spirit; and the Trinity, see my papers titled, *Who Do We Worship; Who Do We Pray To?; More on the Trinity*; and *The Name Yahweh and God the Father and God the Son* on my internet site.] **(3) And He who was sitting was like a jasper stone and a sardius in appearance; and there was a rainbow** [or, halo; cf. Ezek. 1:27, 28; Rev. 10:1] **around the throne, like an emerald in appearance.** [Revelation 21:11 helps us understand the “jasper stone” and that what John saw here in Rev. 4:3 was the glory of God. He certainly didn’t see God the Father Himself in any clear way (cf., e.g., 1 Tim. 6:16; 1 John 4:12; and Psalm 104:2). The time will come, however, that we will see Him (cf. Matt. 5:8; 1 John 3:2; and Rev. 22:4). In Rev. 21:10, 11 John saw new Jerusalem coming down out of heaven from God, “having the glory of God. Her brilliance [which came from the glory of God] was like a very costly stone, as a stone of crystal-clear jasper.” There’s widespread agreement that the “sardius” (which was named for Sardis [cf. Rev. 3:1]) was red.] **(4) Around the throne were twenty-four thrones; and upon the thrones I saw twenty-four elders sitting, clothed in white garments, and golden crowns** [cf. Rev. 4:10] **on their heads.** [I agree with the widespread viewpoint that the twenty-four elders are high-level angelic beings. The twenty-four elders are also mentioned in Rev. 4:10; 5:5, 6, 8, 11, 14; 7:11, 13; 11:16; 14:3; and 19:4. The twenty-four elders can undoubtedly be considered part of “the council of the holy ones...those who are around Him” mentioned in Psalm 89:7. See Isa. 24:23. Note the apostle Paul’s use of the word “thrones” in Col. 1:16, “For by Him [the Son of God] all things were created [cf. John 1:1-3, 10; 1 Cor. 8:6], *both* in the heavens and on the earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities—all things have been created through Him and for Him.” God the Father created all things through His unique Son (see under Rev. 4:10). At least part of their area of authority/responsibility has to do with the saints, with the members of true Israel (cf. Rev. 5:5, 8-10; 7:13-17; and 11:15-18).

(I had a lengthy footnote here that goes on for three paragraphs, Consider, for example, the ministries of the mighty angels Michael (“the archangel” [Jude 1:9]) and Gabriel in behalf of the saints (Dan. 8:15-17; 9:21; 10:13, 21; 12:1; Luke 1:19, 26; and Rev. 12:7). I’m not suggesting that Michael and Gabriel are part of the twenty-four elders, but I mention them as examples of high-level angelic beings faithful to God who were/are directly involved with the affairs of the saints.

If Michael and Gabriel aren’t part of the twenty-four elders (I assume that they aren’t part of the twenty-four elders), they apparently aren’t specifically mentioned in Revelation chapters 4 and 5. (Some have suggested that the “strong angel” of Rev. 5:2 is Michael; others have suggested that he is Gabriel. It’s possible, but I doubt that the strong angel is one of them. Michael is mentioned by name in Rev. 12:7; Gabriel isn’t mentioned by name in the book of Revelation.) But then, “the seven angels who stand before God” (Rev. 8:2), who will sound the seven trumpets of the book of Revelation,

or the seven angels with the seven bowls of wrath (Rev. 16:1ff) aren't specifically mentioned in Revelation chapters 4 and 5 either. Apparently they aren't part of the twenty-four elders. It is clear that Revelation chapters 4 and 5 don't give us a complete picture of God's angelic hierarchy, and I believe we must admit that there's a lot we don't know. I'm sure, however, that God reveals to us all we really need to know.

It's possible that twelve of the elders were/are especially involved with the believers from Old Testament days (consider the twelve tribes of Israel [e.g., Rev. 21:12]) and that the other twelve are especially involved with the new-covenant saints (consider the twelve apostles [e.g., Rev. 21:14]). Even if twelve of the twenty-four elders were/are especially involved with the affairs of the believers from Old Testament days, and the other twelve are especially involved with the new covenant saints—and this point isn't clear at all—I believe we should still think of all twenty-four elders being continuously active in reigning with God. We shouldn't think, for example, of twelve of the elders being inactive in the days before the new covenant was ratified in the blood of Christ. Also, it's important for us to see the unity of all the members of God's true Israel. For one thing, all the members of true Israel (which includes all the believers from Old Testament days and all true Christians, including those who will be saved after the rapture, which centers in the end-time remnant of the nation Israel) are part of the woman of Revelation chapter 12.)

The thrones and crowns of the twenty-four elders show that they are reigning. We have already discussed the "white garments" for the saints under Rev. 3:4, 5, and 18. On "white garments" for angelic beings, see Matt. 28:3; Mark 16:5; John 20:12; Acts 1:10; and Rev. 15:6. On white garments, also see Dan. 7:9; Matt. 17:2; Mark 9:3; and Luke 9:29.

I'll quote part of what Isbon T. Beckwith said on this verse (*Apocalypse of John* [Baker, 1979 reprint], page 498). "The vision of the Seer passes on to the angelic orders who are gathered as courtiers [attendants at a royal court] about the heavenly King, forming the assembly of his council or ministers. Rabbinic writers speak of angelic powers as forming in the presence of God a senate or council to whom he communicates his decrees, and with whom he confers even (Weber, *System* 170f.). Some idea of that kind appears also in Gen. 1:26; 3:22 ('Let us' and 'one of us'); in Isa. 24:23 such an assembly is conceived and the heavenly beings constituting it are called 'Elders'.... The four and twenty 'Elders' of our passage are angelic kings, a rank in the heavenly hierarchy, though they are not elsewhere mentioned in the precise form and number here given. That they are kings is shown in the fact that they sit on thrones and wear crowns. [The twenty-four elders clearly reign, but I'm not comfortable calling them kings.] As such they form an appropriate feature in a picture of the court of the King of kings. 'Thrones are mentioned in Col. 1:16 in the enumeration of the different orders of the angelic hierarchy. The number twenty-four has no parallel in Jewish literature....'] **(5) Out from the throne come flashes of lightning and sounds and peals of thunder.** [Cf. Ex. 19:16; Rev. 8:5; 11:19; and 16:18.] **And there were seven lamps of fire burning before the throne** [cf. Ex. 25:37], **which are the seven Spirits of God** [which is a symbolic way to refer to the Holy Spirit (see under Rev. 1:4).]; **(6) and before the throne there was something like a sea of glass, like crystal** [cf. Ex. 24:10; Ezek. 1:22; and Rev. 15:2]; **and in the center** [literally, "middle of the throne"] **and around the throne, four living creatures** [The four living creatures are also

mentioned in Rev. 4:8, 9; 5:8, 11, 14; 6:1, 3, 5, 6, 7; 7:11; 14:3; 15:7; and 19:4. The four living creatures here are comparable with, but not identical to, the four living beings (NIV “four living creatures”) of Ezek. 1:5; 10:15, 17, 20, who are also called *cherubim* in Ezekiel chapter 10. The four living creatures are also comparable with, but not identical to, the *seraphim* of Isa. 6:2, 6. We’ll discuss the cherubim and seraphim further as we continue, but here I’ll point out that the singular noun cherub with the plural cherubim, and the plural seraphim, which are found in our English Bibles, are taken directly from the Hebrew. The “im” ending forms the plural for many Hebrew nouns, including *cherubim* and *seraphim*.] **full of eyes in front and behind** [Compare Ezek. 1:18; 10:12. For one thing, these eyes make it impossible to sneak up on the four living creatures. One function of these high-level beings is to guard access to God, and access to the life that comes from Him (cf. Gen. 3:24)]. [The four living creatures clearly are high-level beings, who are pictured being “in the center and around the throne.” The margin of the NASB shows that a more literal translation of the Greek would be, “and in the middle of the throne and around the throne, four living creatures....” Apparently these words inform us that the four living creatures are in some way located on the throne itself (where the throne consists of more than a seat), outside of God (including God the Son; see Rev. 5:6). The four living creatures are pictured being “around the throne,” and apparently they are inside of the twenty-four elders.

In Rev. 5:6 we have God the Father on the throne and the Lamb (God the Son), and the Holy Spirit would apparently be included here too (cf. Rev. 4:5; anyway it is clear that the Holy Spirit is deity with God the Father and God the Son). Going on out we have the four living creatures and then the twenty-four elders. Revelation 5:11 says, “...I heard the voice of many angels around the throne and the living creatures and the elders; and the number of them was myriads of myriads, and thousands of thousands.” The many angels were around the throne and the living creatures and the elders; they were outside of the others. The idea behind God’s lines of authority isn’t that one is superior to the other, or that some are inferior, and God certainly doesn’t tolerate His servants competing with one another, looking for a superior status. There’s no room for pride in God’s kingdom. It’s clear though that God does have lines of authority.

I’ll comment briefly on the relative status of the four living creatures and the twenty-four elders. It may be inappropriate to speculate whether one of them has a higher place or more authority than the other; we probably don’t have enough information to decide the matter with any assurance. For one thing, these high-level beings are quite different than one another, by God’s creative design, with different roles assigned by God. The fact that the four living creatures are pictured the closest to God doesn’t prove that they have a higher status than the twenty-four elders. Their location could just go with their function of guarding the throne. The four living creatures do more than guard the throne of God and worship Him, however; for one thing, they are involved with the events taking place that are spoken of in the book of Revelation (see Rev. 6:1-8; 15:7).

As I mentioned, the four living creatures are comparable with, but not identical to, the four living creatures/beings/cherubim of Ezek. 1:5-28; 10:1-22, and with the seraphim of Isa. 6:2-7. Like the seraphim, the four living creatures of the book of Revelation each have six wings (Isa. 6:2; Rev. 4:8). The cherubim of the book of Ezekiel each had four wings (Ezek. 1:6; 10:21). What the four living creatures say in worship of God in Rev.

4:11 is comparable with, but not identical to, what the seraphim said in Isa. 6:3. The seraphim of Isa. 6:1-7 and the four living creatures of Revelation each apparently have just one face, whereas the cherubim Ezekiel saw each had four faces (Ezek. 1:6, 10; 10:14, 21). The four living creatures of Revelation each have a face that is quite different than the face of the others (Rev. 4:7). The different faces are similar to, if not the equivalent of, the four faces that each of the cherubim of the book of Ezekiel had (based on the NIV translations of Rev. 4:7 and Ezek. 1:10, which has “ox” in both verses). The cherubim that were carved on the wall of the temple in Ezek 41:18 each had two faces.

The only places the word seraphim is mentioned in the Bible are Isa. 6:2, 6, but the cherubim are frequently mentioned. The singular cherub is found twenty-five times in the Old Testament, and the plural cherubim is found sixty-five times in the Old Testament and one time in the New Testament (Heb. 9:5). Many of these uses, including Heb. 9:5, speak of the two golden cherubim that were on top of the ark of the covenant in the Most Holy Place or of the two large cherubim that were in the Most Holy Place in the temple Solomon built. One function of the cherubim of Ezekiel chapters 1 and 10 was to transport God (cf. Psalm 18:10) with His movable throne.] **(7) The first creature was like a lion, and the second creature like a calf** [The NIV has “ox.” The BAGD Greek Lexicon (under *moschos*) has “*calf, young bull or ox.*”], **and the third creature had a face like that of a man, and the fourth creature was like a flying eagle. (8) And the four living creatures, each one of them having six wings, are full of eyes around and within; and day and night they do not cease to say, “HOLY, HOLY, HOLY IS THE LORD GOD, THE ALMIGHTY** [Compare Isa. 6:3. On “the Lord God, the Almighty,” compare Rev. 1:8; 11:17.], **WHO WAS AND WHO IS AND WHO IS TO COME** [This is a name/title for God the Father in the book of Revelation (see under Rev. 1:4). I’ll mention a detail that I didn’t mention under Rev. 1:4. This name/title for God the Father builds on the super-important name *Yahweh* that is used of God over 6,800 times in the Hebrew Old Testament. It is typically translated LORD (with four capital letters) in the NASB, NIV, KJV, and NKJV. The name/title in the Hebrew communicates the super-important meanings that He (the God of creation; the God of Abraham and Israel) is God, and only He is God, and that He always existed and always will exist.

The name/title is typically used of God the Father in the Old Testament, but it is used in several verses in the Old Testament for God the Son (who appears in the Old Testament as the Angel of Yahweh; the man dressed in linen; etc.), but not in a way that confuses Him with the Person of God the Father, who has the preeminent role in the Trinity. See my paper titled *The Name Yahweh and God the Father and God the Son* that is available on my internet site. For more information on the Trinity also see my papers titled *Who Do We Worship?; Who Do We Pray To?; and More on the Trinity.*” **(9) And when the living creatures give glory and honor and thanks to Him who sits on the throne** [God the Father (see under Rev. 4:2)], **to Him who lives forever and ever** [cf. Deut. 32:40; Dan. 4:34; 12:7; Rev. 4:10; 10:6; and 15:7], **(10) the twenty-four elders** [see under Rev. 4:4] **will fall down before Him who sits on the throne, and will worship Him who lives forever and ever, and will cast their crowns** [cf. Rev. 4:4] **before the throne** [For one thing, God (the triune God) must receive all the glory. All good things, including the authority and crowns of the twenty-four elders,

came/come from Him.], **saying, (11) “Worthy are You, our Lord and our God, to receive glory and honor and power** [God receives glory and honor and power in the sense that these things, which belong to Him by virtue of who He is and what He has done, are ascribed to Him by His worshipers.]; **for You created all things, and because of Your will they existed, and were created.”** [God the Father, who has the preeminent role in the Trinity, created all things through His Son (cf., e.g., John 1:1-3, 10; 1 Cor. 8:6 [“yet for us there is *but one* God, the Father, from whom all things came and we *exist* for Him; and one Lord, Jesus Christ, by [I would translate “through” with the NIV] whom all things came and we *exist* through Him”]; Col. 1:16; and Heb. 1:2).]

## REVELATION CHAPTER 5

**I saw in the right hand of Him who sat on the throne** [God the Father, as in Rev. 4:3, 9, 10; 5:7, 13] **a book** [In the margin the NASB has, “or, scroll.” I would translate “scroll,” with the NIV and NKJV.] **written inside and on the back** [The NIV has “with writing on both sides.”], **sealed up with seven seals.** [Apparently the seven seals were along the edge of the scroll in a way that prevented its being opened before all seven seals had been removed. The seven seals are removed by the Lord Jesus Christ one by one (Rev. 6:1-12; 8:1). It is significant that there is very little in the way of new revelation (a revelation of things not revealed in the Bible before) regarding the last things from Rev. 4:1 through 8:1, before the seventh seal is removed (at Rev. 8:1) and the scroll is opened. Apparently this same scroll, or part of this same scroll, is seen again at Rev. 10:2; there it has been opened. Ezekiel 2:8-3:4, with its scroll “written on the front and on the back,” is an important cross-reference. I quote these verses and comment briefly on them in this paper, at the end of the discussion of Revelation chapter 10.

I'll quote from F. F. Bruce on “sealed up with seven seals” (*New Layman's Bible Commentary in One Volume*, edited by G. C. D. Howley [Zondervan, 1979], page 1688). “The seals could be properly broken only by someone with due authority to do so. In this instance the person authorized to break the seals will be marked out by that very fact as lord of history and master of the world's destiny.” With the widespread use of the symbolic number seven in the book of Revelation (to symbolize perfection/completeness), I assume that explains the use of the number seven here.] **(2) And I saw a strong angel** [cf. Rev. 10:1; 18:21] **proclaiming with a loud voice** [The “loud voice” fits the “strong angel,” but a “loud voice(s)” is common in the book of Revelation (Rev. 1:10; 5:12; 6:10; 7:2, 10; 8:13; 10:3; 11:12, 15; 12:10; 14:7, 9, 15, 18; 16:1, 17; 19:1, 17; and 21:3).], **“Who is worthy to open the book [scroll] and to break its seals?”** **(3) And no one in heaven or on the earth or under the earth** [cf. Phil. 2:10] **was able to open the book [scroll] or to look into it.** [To be able to open the scroll here in verse 3 equals being worthy to open the scroll in verse 2. On being worthy to take the scroll and to break its seals and open it, see Rev. 5:4, 5, and 9, 10.] **(4) Then I began to weep greatly because no one was found worthy to open the book [scroll] or to look into it** [Apparently John was weeping greatly because he knew something of the awesome importance of this scroll and the need to open it. For one thing, to be worthy to take the scroll, to break its seals, and to open it requires someone worthy/able to bring to pass the things written in the scroll. Jesus, who defeated sin, Satan, and death (including spiritual death and physical death) in His atoning death and earned the right to save all who submit to Him in faith; to judge and remove all who continue in rebellion; and to bring about God's new heaven and new earth with its new Jerusalem was the only One found worthy.

We can probably say that the scroll contains the contents of the book of Revelation, starting at Rev. 6:1. But, as I mentioned, there isn't much in the way of new revelation before the seventh and last seal is removed at Rev. 8:1 and the scroll can be opened. There is a definite correlation between the contents of the scroll and the words “I will show you what must take place after these things” of Rev. 4:1 (cf. Rev. 1:1, 19).]; **(5)**

**and one of the [twenty-four] elders said to me, “Stop weeping; behold, the Lion that is from the tribe of Judah [Compare Gen. 49:8-10; Matt. 1:1, 3; Luke 3:23, 33; and Heb. 7:14. Jesus was/is a “Lion” in His authority and power.], the Root of David [Compare Isa. 11:1, 10; Rom. 15:12; and Rev. 22:16. I assume the BAGD Greek Lexicon (under *rhiza*) is right on the meaning of “Root” here: “shoot...growing from the root, symbolically *descendant*...” It’s also true, however, that the Son of God was before David (having always existed), and He was David’s Lord (cf., e.g., Psalm 110:1 with Matt. 22:41-46).], has overcome [see Rev. 3:21] so as to open the book [scroll] and its seven seals.” (6) And I saw between the throne (with the four living creatures) and the elders [As the margin of the NASB shows, a more literal translation of the Greek would be, “[And I saw] in the middle of the throne and of the four living creatures, and in the middle of the elders.” (See under Rev. 4:6 on the more literal translation of the Greek.) The Lamb was on the throne, inside of the four living creatures, who were inside of the twenty-four elders. The NIV has, “Then I saw...standing in the center of the throne, encircled by the four living creatures and the elders.” The Lamb, with God the Father, was the center of attention.] a Lamb [cf. Isa. 53:7; John 1:29, 36; Acts 8:32; 1 Pet. 1:19; Rev. 5:8, 12, 13; 6:1, 16; 7:9, 10, 14, 17; 12:11; 13:8; 14:1, 4, 10; 15:3; 17:14; 19:7, 9; 21:9, 14, 22, 23; and 22:1, 3.] **standing, as if slain** [Revelation 1:18; 5:9, 12; and 13:8, with many other verses, confirm that He actually had been slain. The Lamb of God had been slain, bearing our sins with the guilt and the penalties, but now He was alive again, being the first-born from the dead (Col. 1:18; Rev. 1:5; cf. Rom. 8:29). He had overcome, and now, for one thing, He had earned the right to take the scroll and to open it. The marks of His crucifixion were visible after His resurrection (cf. Luke 24:39, 40; John 20:20, 25-27).], **having seven horns** [Horns (the horns of animals) sometimes, as here, serve as a symbol for reigning, power, and dominion (cf., e.g., 1 Sam. 2:10; Psalm 89:17, 24; Dan. 7:7, 8, 20, 24; 8:3-14, 20-25; and Rev. 17:3, 12). The number seven, which is often used in the book of Revelation, is used here as a symbolic number for perfection. For the resurrected Lamb to have seven horns is a symbolic way of saying that He has all authority, power, and dominion. After His resurrection Jesus said, “All authority has been given to Me in heaven and in earth” (Matt. 28:18; cf., e.g., Psalm 110:1; Eph. 1:20-23; Col. 2:10, 15; Heb. 1:3; 2:9, 14; and 1 Pet. 3:22), but in the plan of God, this authority, power, and dominion hasn’t been manifested yet in most senses, and it won’t be manifested in its full sense until Jesus has returned to subdue the enemies of God (e.g., Matt. 26:64; 1 Cor. 15:20-28; Phil. 2:9-11; and Rev. 11:15-18). His unlimited authority, power, and dominion, which is symbolized by the seven horns, will be manifested as He brings to pass all the things prophesied in the book of Revelation.**

What’s the time setting for the scene pictured in Revelation chapters 4 and 5? The revelation given to Christ Jesus to show to His bond-servants (Rev. 1:1) wasn’t given to John until about AD 95, but the scene pictured here in chapter 5 fits best at a time shortly after the resurrection of Christ, about AD 30.] **and seven eyes, which are the seven Spirits of God, sent out into all the earth.** [First we’ll look at Zech. 3:9; 4:10. These verses help us understand the meaning of the seven eyes of Rev. 5:6. Zechariah 3:9 says, “ ‘For behold, the stone [The stone represents Christ Jesus (cf. Psalm 118:22; Isa. 28:16; Dan. 2:34, 35, 44, 45; Matt. 21:42; Acts 4:11; and 1 Pet. 2:6, 7).] that I have set before Joshua [Joshua was the high priest of Israel/Judah in the days of Zechariah (cf.

Zech. 3:1-8).]; on one stone are seven eyes. [The “seven eyes” of Zech. 3:9 apparently refer to “these seven...*these are* the eyes of the LORD which range to and fro throughout the earth” of Zech. 4:10. Some understand the seven eyes of Zech. 3:9 to be located on the stone itself. The seven eyes on the stone (the stone which represents Christ Jesus) would then be very much like the picture in Rev. 5:6. This is a reasonable interpretation of Zech. 3:9, but I prefer the viewpoint that the seven eyes of Zech. 3:9 weren’t located on the stone; they were the seven eyes of the LORD [Yahweh] that were directed to that very special stone.] Behold, I will engrave an inscription on it,’ declares the LORD of hosts, ‘and I will remove the iniquity of that land in one day.’” The inscription on the stone apparently deals with the atoning death of the Lamb of God and the resultant high-priestly ministry of the Son of God that (for one thing) will ultimately remove the iniquity of (sanctify) the remnant of the nation of Israel in one day in the last days, when they look upon Him whom they have pierced (see Zech. 12:10-13:1; 5:1-11; 9:9; 11:12, 13; 13:7; 14:2-21; Rom. 11:25-27; and Rev. 11:13). It’s also true that His atoning death sanctifies all Christians. (I should mention, however, that Christians are sanctified only to the extent that they walk in line with the gospel and by the Holy Spirit on a continuous basis by faith.)

Zechariah 4:10 says, “For who has despised the day of small things? [These words allude to the fact that the temple that was being rebuilt in Zechariah’s day, when Zerubbabel was the governor of Israel/Judah (Hag. 1:1-2:23; Zech. 4:6-10), was far less glorious than the temple built by Solomon, which had been destroyed by the Babylonians. (See Hag. 2:3; Ezra 3:12.) However, as God prophesied in Hag. 2:6-9; Zech. 4:6-10, His work of building would only barely have begun when the temple was finished in Zechariah’s day (516 BC); His ultimate work of building would very far surpass Solomon’s temple in glory. His much greater work of building His temple/kingdom/new Jerusalem would be accomplished through The Ruler—The Lord Jesus Christ, The King of glory—of whom Zerubbabel was a type, even as Joshua the high priest was a type (see Zech. 6:11-15).] But these seven will be glad when they see the plumb line [which goes with building] in the hand of Zerubbabel—*these* are the eyes of the LORD which range to and fro throughout the earth.”

For the Son of God, who is deity with the God the Father (and God the Holy Spirit), to have seven eyes here in Rev. 5:6 is a symbolic way of saying that He sees (accurately sees, fully sees) everything everywhere. And we are given the fuller information that He does this by “the seven Spirits of God, sent out into all the earth,” which is a symbolic way to say that He does this by the Holy Spirit (see under Rev. 1:4). The Holy Spirit can be called the Spirit of Christ Jesus too (cf. Acts 6:7; Rom. 8:9; Gal. 4:6; Phil. 1:19; and 1 Pet. 1:11).] **(7) And He came and took the book [scroll] out of the right hand of Him who sat on the throne [cf. Rev. 5:1]. (8) When He had taken the book [scroll], the four living creatures and the twenty-four elders fell down before the Lamb** [It would be quite improper for anyone to fall down before the Lamb to worship Him (cf. Rev. 5:14; 19:10; and 22:8) if the Lamb were not deity with God the Father—He is!], **each one holding a harp [cf. Rev. 14:2; 15:2] and golden bowls full of incense** [Most agree that it was only the twenty-four elders (apparently the four living creatures were not included) who were holding the harps and golden bowls.], **which are the prayers of the saints.** [This is interesting and important information. The twenty-four elders apparently present our prayers before the throne. Our prayers that haven’t

been answered yet that have been prayed in the will of God and in faith don't just vanish. Especially relevant here are prayers like, "Your kingdom come, Your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven" (Matt. 6:9). (For God's will to be done, including being done in our lives, is all that really matters.) Those prayers are before God now. They will be answered! They are part of what God uses to accomplish His purposes on the earth.

We must understand that the Lord Jesus Christ, our Savior and our great high priest, is the one who makes our prayers acceptable before the Father, not the twenty-four elders—and He intercedes for us (cf., e.g., John 15:16; 16:23, 24; Rom. 8:34; Heb. 8:1-10:25; 12:24; and see under Rev. 8:3-5). Also, we pray in His name. It's true, however, that God does give significant authority and responsibility to others, both angels and men. We're not talking about angels or men competing with God and trying to take some of the glory due to Him (the triune God). We're talking about the fact that God chooses to give important assignment to those under Him, angels and men, which they carry out by His grace for His glory. He didn't create us to be unimportant and to do unimportant things. When we're doing what He wants us to do, it's important and significant. On the relationship between prayer and incense, cf. Rev. 8:3, 4; Psalm 141:2; Luke 1:9-11; and Ex. 30:6-10.] **(9) And they sang a new song** [The new song celebrates the victory that has just been accomplished through the death and resurrection of the Lamb of God. Apparently only the twenty-four elders were singing here.], **saying, "Worthy are You to take the book [scroll] and to break its seals** [cf. Rev. 5:2-7]; **for You were slain, and purchased for God with Your blood men from every tribe and tongue and people and nation.** [On "purchased for God," cf. 1 Cor. 6:20; 7:23; Gal. 3:13; 4:5; 2 Pet. 2:1; and Rev. 14:3, 4. All true Christians (all the members of God's true Israel, which includes all the believers from Old Testament days and all true Christians, very much including the end-time remnant of the nation Israel) are redeemed through the blood (sacrifice/atoning death/cross) of Christ (cf., e.g., Rev. 1:5). This is a dominant theme in the New Testament. Furthermore, although they're not mentioned here in Rev. 5:9, 10, the elect of the nations are also saved through the blood of Christ (see Rev. 21:27; 13:8; cf. Rev. 15:3, 4; 20:3). He is the only door to heaven for mankind (cf. John 10:7, 9; 14:6).] **(10) You have made them to be a kingdom and priests to our God; and they will reign upon the earth."** [See under Rev. 1:6. Our reign will begin when Christ returns, and Rev. 20:6 shows that we will reign throughout the millennial kingdom. Revelation 22:5 adds the information that our reign will continue forever in God's new heaven and new earth with its new Jerusalem. In a preliminary sense we are priests now (cf. Ex. 19:6; 1 Pet. 2:5, 9), and Rev. 20:6 shows that we will be priests throughout the millennial kingdom. I assume we will continue to function as priests after the millennial kingdom too.

The KJV and the NKJV have "us" instead of "them" here, and "we shall reign" instead of "they will reign." They also have "redeemed us" instead of "purchased men" in Rev. 5:9. These readings would substantially alter the meaning of these verses. The twenty-four elders would be singing this song about themselves. The twenty-four elders wouldn't, therefore, be high-level angelic beings (see under Rev. 4:4).

The Greek manuscripts of Rev. 5:10 strongly support the translation of the NASB, and most agree that the Greek text behind the KJV and NKJV of Rev. 5:9, 10 is not the original text. Every other translation I have looked at is in agreement with the NASB in

Rev. 5:9, 10 (in opposition to the KJV and NKJV), including the NIV, the *Amplified Bible*, the RSV, the NRSV, the *New English Bible*, the *New Testament in Modern English* by J. B. Phillips, the *Jerusalem Bible*, and the *New American Bible*. The United Bible Societies' *Greek New Testament* (Fourth Revised Edition, 1993) has the Greek readings followed by the NASB, and they assign their highest rating of certainty to these readings, which means that from their point of view "the text is certain." **(11) Then I looked, and I heard the voice of many angels around the throne and the living creatures and the elders; and the number of them was myriads of myriads, and thousands of thousands** [Compare Dan. 7:10; Heb 12:22; and Jude 1:14. Under "myriad," my English dictionary has (in part), "originally, ten thousand; any indefinitely large number." The NKJV has, "the number of them was ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousands of thousands." The NIV has, "numbering thousands upon thousands and ten thousand times ten thousand." "Myriads" comes from the Greek *urias, muridos*, which was sometimes used of a literal ten thousand. (Acts 19:19 in the Greek has the word for five [*pente*] with the plural for myriads, which yields "fifty thousand [pieces of silver].") But it was often used of an indefinite very large number.], **(12) saying with a loud voice, "Worthy is the Lamb that was slain [cf. Rev. 5:6, 9] to receive power and riches [The NIV has "wealth.,"] and wisdom and might and honor and glory and blessing [The NIV has "praise" instead of "blessing" here, and in Rev. 5:13; 7:12. So does the BAGD Greek Lexicon (under *eulogia*).]" [Note that Rev. 4:11 says that God the Father is worthy to "receive glory and honor and power"; note the words spoken to God the Father and to the Lamb (God the Son) in Rev. 5:13; and note Rev. 7:12, words spoken to God the Father, "Amen, blessing and glory and wisdom and thanksgiving and honor and power and might, *be* to our God forever and ever. Amen."**

Since it's a fact, as we discussed under Rev. 4:11, that these things listed here in Rev. 4:11 already belong to God by virtue of who He is and what He has done, He receives them only in the sense that these things, which are His, are ascribed to Him in worship. The same truth applies to God the Son here in Rev. 5:12. The "blessing/praise" of Rev. 5:12; 7:12 and "thanksgiving" of Rev. 7:12 are in a different category; these are things that can be truly be given to God by men and angels in worship.

I'll quote what Isbon T. Beckwith said regarding "blessing" here in Rev. 5:12 (*Apocalypse of John* [Baker, 1979, copyright 1919], page 513). "*Eulogian, blessing: i.e., praise. The word like eucharistian [thanks] in Rev. 4:9 [and "thanksgiving" in Rev. 7:12], expresses what is offered to Christ on man's part; this is, at least in thought, distinguishable from the acknowledgement of what he possesses in himself, his power, wisdom, glory, etc. The distinction is made clear in the doxology in 1 Chron. 29:11-13, with which this hymn is in several terms parallel.*" I'll quote 1 Chron. 29:10-13, "So David blessed the LORD in the sight of all the assembly; and David said, 'Blessed are You, O LORD God of Israel our father, forever and ever. Yours, O LORD, is the greatness and the power and the glory and the victory and the majesty, indeed everything that is in the heavens and the earth; Yours is the dominion, O LORD, and You exalt Yourself as head over all. Both riches and honor *come* from You, and You rule over all, and in Your hand is power and might; and it lies in Your hand to make great and to strengthen everyone. Now therefore, our God, we thank You, and praise Your glorious name.'" **(13) And every created thing [The NIV, KJV, and NKJV have "every creature." ] which is in heaven and on the earth and under the earth [cf. Rev.**

5:3] **and on the sea, and all things in them, I heard saying, “To Him who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb, *be blessing* [or, praise] and honor and glory and dominion forever and ever.”** [The praise and worship of heaven pictured in Revelation chapters 4, 5 expands here to include the entire universe. There is some uncertainty as to whether we are to think of the devil and his followers being included here. Some say yes, and some say no. I’m not sure, but I’m sure that whichever way this question is answered it must not be allowed to obscure the fact that the emphasis of this verse, in this context, is on genuine praise and worship of God the Father and God the Son.

The wording of this verse seems to include all creatures, including the enemies of God. On the other hand, the devil isn’t going to worship God. It’s true, however, that even the devil and his followers will ultimately be subdued, and they will have to acknowledge the wisdom, glory, honor, power, and dominion of God (including God the Son). As Phil. 2:9-11 say, “For this reason also, God highly exalted Him [Christ] and bestowed on Him the name which is above every name [This is true already], so that at the name of Jesus EVERY KNEE WILL BOW, of those who are in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and that every tongue will confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father [In most senses this is still future].” All creation, excluding only those who will be removed by judgment, benefits from the victory/overcoming of the Lamb of God (cf. Rom. 8:19-22; Rev. 21:1-22:5; Isa. 11:1-10; and 65:17-25).] **(14) And the four living creatures kept saying, “Amen.”** [Compare 1 Cor. 14:16; Rev. 7:12; and 19:4. On “Amen,” see under Rev. 3:14. For us to say “Amen” after the expression of praise or prayer by others means that we agree with what was said—it is truth—we are making it our own.] **And the elders fell down and worshiped.** [Note that the twenty-four elders worshiped the Lamb with God the Father, which would be totally inappropriate if He weren’t deity with the Father (and the Spirit)—He is!]

## REVELATION CHAPTER 6

Revelation chapter 6 was discussed in a rather thorough way in my book, *The Mid-Week Rapture*. On Rev. 6:1-17 see pages 19-24 of my book, and see under Rev. 10:2 on pages 168, 169. On Rev. 6:12 see number 9 on pages 14, 15, and see under Joel 2:31 on page 157. On Rev. 6:12-17 see pages 301-303, and see under Joel 2:30, 31 on pages 152, 153. I won't repeat nearly all that was said in *The Mid-Week Rapture*, but I'll make some supplementary comments.

**Then I saw when the Lamb broke one of the seven seals** [cf. Rev. 5:1-10], **and I heard one of the four living creatures** [cf. Rev. 4:6-10] **saying as with a voice of thunder** [cf. Rev. 14:2; 19:6], **“Come.”** [The KJV and NKJV, following a different Greek reading, have “Come and see,” as if the words were spoken to John. There's widespread agreement that the Greek reading followed by the NASB (and the NIV) is the correct reading. This living creature was calling forth the rider on the first horse, the white horse, even as the other three living creatures call forth the next three riders and their horses in the following verses. The first four seals go together as a unit. We learn of the famous four horsemen of the Apocalypse (the book of Revelation) from these verses (Rev. 6:1-8).

As discussed in *The Mid-Week Rapture*, I believe the four horsemen all ride forth at the same time, throughout this entire Christians age. The primary cross-reference that convinces me of this interpretation (which is widely held) is the teaching of Jesus in the Olivet discourse (Matt. 24:3-14; Mark 13:3-13; and Luke 21:5-11). The Rider on the white horse corresponds (at least to some significant extent) with the worldwide preaching of the gospel before the end comes that is spoken of in Matt. 24:14. The Rider on the white horse is the Lord Jesus Christ or the Gospel of the Kingdom. This Rider has been riding forth conquering the hearts of all who will submit to the gospel. It's very good to have your heart conquered by this glorious Rider. It's clear that the Rider on the white horse in Rev. 19:11 is the Lord Jesus Christ, and the word *white* is always used in the book of Revelation (17 total uses) of the things of God, very much including purity.

The warfare and famine associated with the second and third seals are part of what Jesus called “the beginning of birth pangs” in Matt. 24:8 (see Matt. 24:6-8). The time of transition beyond the beginning of birth pangs will be the abomination of desolation (see Matt. 24:9, 15). (The abomination of desolation centers in the fact that Antichrist will enter the rebuilt temple in Jerusalem, stop the sacrifices, and demand that he be worshiped. That abominable activity will lead to great desolation.) We can apparently say that the riding forth of the second, third, and fourth horsemen will continue until they are superseded by the events associated with the sounding of the trumpets of the book of Revelation. Events clearly go beyond the limits prescribed for the fourth horseman under the sixth trumpet. The abomination of desolation will take place about the time of the sounding of the sixth trumpet, about a month (cf. Dan. 12:11) before the Lord Jesus returns and the rapture takes place. (Matthew chapter 24 is discussed verse-by-verse in a paper on my internet site.)

Many believe the events associated with the first four seals will only come to pass in the last days, during the first half of Daniel's 70<sup>th</sup> week. Those Christians typically believe that the rider on the first horse is Antichrist. What a difference!

I'll quote a few sentences from George E. Ladd's introduction to Revelation chapter 6 (*Commentary on the Revelation of John* [Eerdmans, 1972], pages 95, 96). "The breaking of the seven seals is preliminary to the actual opening of the book [scroll] and the events of the end time. [I believe the seven seals have been removed and the scroll has been opened (and the contents of the all-important scroll have been revealed to us in the book of Revelation), but that most of the events spoken of in the scroll will not come to pass until the time of the end. The events associated with the fifth and sixth seals will not come to pass until the middle of Daniel's 70<sup>th</sup> week.] It [the breaking of the seals] pictures the forces that will be operative throughout history by which the redemptive and judicial purposes of God will be forwarded [my emphasis]. They are not a part of the great tribulation itself, but are preparatory and preliminary to the great tribulation. This conclusion is reinforced by the fact that the breaking of the sixth seal clearly brings to the threshold of the end; the five seals must precede it." **(2) I looked, and behold, a white horse** [cf. Rev. 19:11], **and he** [or, He] **who sat on it had a bow; and a crown was given to him** [Compare Zech. 6:9-15 (Zechariah chapters 1-8 are discussed verse-by-verse in a paper on my internet site.); Rev. 14:14; and 19:12; and see under Rev. 5:6 on the authority/reigning (the authority/reigning goes with the crown) of the Lord Jesus Christ from the time of His resurrection/ascension/glorification. As I mentioned, I believe Christ, or the Word of the Gospel of Christ, is the Rider on this horse. And as I mentioned, those who believe the events associated with the seals will only come to pass in the last days typically understand the rider to be Antichrist. What a difference!], **and he went out conquering and to conquer**. [I'll quote part of what Henry Alford said under this verse (*New Testament for English Readers*, Vol. 4 [Baker, 1983 reprint], pages 1830, 1831). "The *going forth conquering and in order to conquer* can only, it seems to me, point to one interpretation. The *conquering* might be said of any victorious earthly power whose victories should endure for the time then present, and afterwards pass away: but the *in order that he may conquer* [The words *in order that he may conquer* are a more literal translation of the Greek than the words "to conquer" of the NASB.] can only be said of a power whose victories should last forever. Final and permanent victory then is here imported [stated]. Victory, we may safely say, on the part of that kingdom against which the gates of hell shall not prevail: whose fortunes and whose trials are the great subject of this revelation. Such is the first vision, the opening of the first seal in the mystery of the divine purposes: *victory for God's church and people*: the great keynote, so to speak, of all the apocalyptic harmonies. ... [Alford doesn't believe the rider is the Lord Jesus Himself. He says the rider is "only a symbol of His victorious power, the embodiment of His advancing kingdom...."] ... In all cases but the last [the fourth rider], these riders are left in the vagueness of their symbolic offices. If we attempt to specify further, as e.g., Victorinus (I had a footnote here, " 'Victorinus of Pettau (died about AD 304). Bishop and exegete.' Quoting from Michael P. McHugh, *Encyclopedia of Early Christianity* [Garland Publishing, 1990], page 927.") 'The white horse is the word of preaching with the aid of the Holy Spirit sent forth into the world; for the Lord saith, This gospel shall be preached through all the world, for a testimony before the nations, and then shall the end come [Matt.

24:14],’ – while we are sure that we are thus far right, we are but partially right: we do not cover the extent of the symbol, seeing that there are other aspects and instruments of victory of the kingdom of Christ, besides the preaching of the Word. [That is, Alford agrees with what Victorinus said, but he doesn’t want to limit the meaning of the first seal to what he said.] The same might be said of any other of the partial interpretations which have been given by those who have taken this view. **AND IT WAS TAKEN, WITH DIVERGENCIES OF SEPARATE DETAIL, BY ALL EXPOSITORS FROM EARLIEST TIMES DOWN TO THE YEAR 1500** [my emphasis].” In other words, according to Alford, the interpretations regarding the first seal all agreed in understanding the first seal to deal with the kingdom of Christ and its expanding victory until about AD 1500. I’m confident that they were right.

I decided at the last minute to see if Irenaeus commented on the identity of the Rider on the white horse in Rev. 6:2. Irenaeus is a well respected Church Father (about AD 115 to about 202; bishop of Lyons); he was well acquainted with Polycarp, who knew the apostle John, who wrote the book of Revelation by the inspiration of God. In his *Irenaeus Against Heresies* (Book 4, Chapter 21.3) Irenaeus takes the Rider to be the Lord Jesus Christ.

I’ll also quote from George E. Ladd (*Revelation of John*, pages 99, 100), “The rider is not Christ himself but symbolizes the proclamation of the gospel of Christ in all the world. ... It will be preached effectively in all the world; and in spite of an evil and hostile environment characterized by human hatred, strife, and opposition, the gospel will make its way victoriously in all the world.

Here is a word of confidence, combined with a realistic note, for the church of the first century and every other age. How can any people be devoted to a cause which they believe will experience only defeat? The first generation of believers suffered, and at the hands of some of the later emperors they met determined efforts to root them out and to destroy them completely. But in spite of every form of opposition, the church effectively and victoriously established the gospel in all the Roman world until the Empire ceased its violent opposition. [There has been plenty of violent aggression by the world against God and His people since that time.] We do not look for the coming of God’s Kingdom and the righting of the world’s evils short of the return of Christ; but we are, as the modern bearers of the gospel of the kingdom, expectant of seeing victories won by the power of this gospel.” **(3) When He broke the second seal, I heard the second living creature saying, “Come.” (4) And another, a red horse, went out; and to him who sat on it, it was granted to take peace from the earth, and that men would slay one another; and a great sword was given to him.**

[Compare Matt. 10:34-36; 24:6, 7; Mark 13:7, 8; and Luke 21:10. Alford (*New Testament for English Readers*, Vol. 4, page 1831) quotes Victorinus again here, “The red horse, and he that sat upon him having a sword, are future wars, as we read in the gospel, for nation shall rise against nation... (Matt. 24:7).” The color red undoubtedly goes with the shedding of blood.] **(5) When He broke the third seal, I heard the third living creature [cf. Rev. 4:7] saying, “Come.” I looked, and behold, a black horse; and he who sat on it had a pair of scales in his hand [cf. Ezek. 4:16, 17]. (6) And I heard something like a voice in the center of the four living creatures [A voice coming from this location would apparently be the voice of God. God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit all speak in the book of Revelation.] saying, “A quart**

**of wheat for a denarius and three quarts of barley for a denarius; and do not damage the oil and the wine.”** [As discussed on page 21 of my book, *The Mid-Week Rapture*, I agree with the widespread viewpoint that these verses picture famine—limited famine. (We obviously couldn’t say that there never would be a famine in any part of the world throughout this Christian age more severe than this.)

Based on the information cited in the commentaries, the prices given here for wheat and barley are some eight to fifteen times higher than the normal prices in the Roman Empire of John’s day. The oil and the wine are apparently considered to be basic food items, not luxury items (cf., e.g., Deut. 7:13; 11:14; and 28:51). Warfare and strife can lead to famine, but so can a shortage of rain/water (e.g., Deut. 11:14; Hag. 1:11), or many other things, including locusts, for example. As several commentators point out, the roots of the olive tree (for oil) and of grapevines are deeper and less affected by limited drought than those of wheat and barley.] **(7) When the Lamb broke the fourth seal, I heard the voice of the fourth living creature saying, “Come.” (8) I looked, and behold, an ashen horse** [In the margin the NASB has, “or, sickly pale,” which can be considered the color of death.]; **and he who sat on it had the name Death; and Hades was following with him.** [On Death and Hades, compare Rev. 1:18; 20:13. It isn’t surprising that Hades would follow Death. Hades is the abode for the dead, excluding true Christians (who go directly to be with the Lord at death; cf. Phil. 1:21-23; 2 Cor. 5:8; 1 Thess. 4:14; and Heb. 12:22, 23). The departed saints are with God now (but most of them have not yet received their resurrection/glorified bodies [cf. Matt. 27:52, 53]); when Christ returns they will come with Him.] **Authority was given to them over a fourth of the earth, to kill with sword and with famine and with pestilence** [including plagues (cf. Luke 21:11)] **and by the wild beasts of the earth.** [I understand these words to teach that throughout this age, up until about the time of the sounding of the sixth trumpet, the total number of premature deaths from all causes will be limited to a maximum of a fourth of the population.

Much of the popular end-time teaching of our day understands this verse to teach that at some time during the first half of Daniel’s 70<sup>th</sup> week, within a short period of time, one quarter of the entire population of the earth will be killed. With the present population of the earth, that would be more than one and one-half billion people. For that many people to be killed within a short period of time would, to say the least, be a very big deal. During World War II, which lasted more than five years, the total number of deaths, including civilian deaths, was estimated to be thirty-five to sixty million. Fifty million people are only some 3.3 percent of one and one-half billion.

I expect an increase in birth pangs (an increase in frequency and in intensity) in the last years of the “beginning of birth-pangs” (Matt. 24:8), in the years before the transition beyond the beginning of birth pangs at the abomination of desolation (which will be initiated about a month before the middle of Daniel’s 70<sup>th</sup> week, about the time of the sounding of the sixth trumpet of the book of Revelation). But I don’t expect a gigantic number of deaths during the first half of Daniel’s 70<sup>th</sup> week before the abomination of desolation. Even under the sixth trumpet with the short great tribulation, I don’t expect the loss of life to be close to one and one-half billion people (because I don’t expect the short great tribulation to fully involve mankind worldwide). The loss of life under the sounding of the first five trumpets, which will apparently all sound during the first half of Daniel’s 70<sup>th</sup> week, will apparently be quite limited. No people will die

under the fourth and fifth trumpets. We'll discuss the first six trumpets under Rev. 8:1-9:21.] **(9)** [On Rev. 6:9-11 see pages 21-23 of *The Mid-Week Rapture*.] **When the Lamb broke the fifth seal, I saw underneath the altar** [On the sacrificial "altar," which is to be distinguished from the golden altar before the throne of Rev. 8:3, see Rev. 8:3, 5; 14:18; and 16:4-7.] **the souls of those who had been slain because of the word of God, and because of the testimony which they had maintained** [The emphasis here is undoubtedly on Christian martyrs, but I assume the martyrs for God from Old Testament days (starting with Abel) are included here too. The apostle Paul was one of many saints who ended up being sacrificed on this altar for God (cf. Phil. 2:17; 2 Tim. 4:6-8). In Rev. 20:4 John saw the souls of Christian martyrs, and he saw them come to life in Rev. 20:4, which includes their receiving glorified bodies. The difference is that the martyrs of Rev. 6:9-11 refers to those martyred in the days preceding Christ's mid-week return, whereas the martyrs of Rev. 20:4 are those (converted and) martyred during the three and one-half year reign of Antichrist, after Christ's mid-week return.]; **(10) and they cried out with a loud voice, saying, "How long, O Lord** [The Greek noun normally translated "Lord" (*kurios*) isn't used here. In the margin the NASB has "or, Master." The NIV has "Sovereign Lord." I assume these words were addressed to God the Father, the Person on the throne in Revelation chapters 4, the Person with the preeminent role in the Trinity.], **holy and true, will You refrain from judging and avenging our blood on those who dwell on the earth?"** [As the references cited under Rev. 6:10 on page 22 of *The Mid-Week Rapture* demonstrate, God will avenge the blood of His bondservants. Add Psalm 79:10 to the list.] **(11) And there was given to each of them a white robe** [at the time they are resurrected, right in the middle of Daniel's 70<sup>th</sup> week; these souls have to receive their glorified bodies before they can wear their white robes (cf., e.g., Rev. 3:4; 6:11; 7:14; and 19:8)]; **and they were told that they should rest [wait] for a little while longer, until the number of their fellow servants and their brethren who were to be killed even as they had been, would be completed also.** [See pages 22, 23 of *The Mid-Week Rapture* on this important verse. They would still have to "wait for a little while" before God would avenge their blood and judge and remove those who shed the blood of God's people. The "little while" here of Rev. 6:11 corresponds with the "short time" of Rev. 12:12 which the devil will have left to do his evil work after he is cast down to the earth in the middle of Daniel's 70th week, before he is cast into the abyss. "Their brethren who were to be killed" speaks of those who will be martyred for Christ during the reign of Antichrist, throughout the second half of Daniel's 70<sup>th</sup> week (cf., e.g., Rev. 13:15; 20:4; see on Rev. 20:4 in my verse-by-verse study on Revelation chapters 20-22 on my internet site).] **(12)** [Here we have a brief look at the arrival of judgment day before the scroll is opened. (It can't be opened until the seventh and last seal has been removed at Rev. 8:1.) I refer the reader to the discussions of Rev. 6:12-17 in *The Mid-Week Rapture* mentioned in the paragraph at the beginning of this study of Revelation Chapter 6.

I'll quote part of what William Hendriksen said under Rev. 6:12-17 (*More than Conquerors* [Baker, 1982], pages 107, 108). "The sixth seal...introduces the judgment day. It describes the one great catastrophe at the end of this age. [This "one great catastrophe" won't be finished in the full sense until after the millennium and the great-white-throne judgment. Hendriksen, now deceased, held the amillennial (no

millennium) viewpoint.] The dread and terror, the awe and consternation of that day is pictured under the twofold symbolism of a crashing universe and a thoroughly frightened human race. The terror of that day refers, of course, only to the wicked. ...

What we have here is a symbolic picture of the terror of judgment day. The symbol, taken as a whole, teaches just *one* lesson, namely, that the final and complete effusion of God's wrath upon a world that has [rejected God the Father and His Son and] persecuted the Church will be terrible indeed. ... we do not deny, of course, that there will be a most thorough-going dislocation of the heavenly bodies and a rejuvenation of the universe, in connection with the end of this present age. Scripture clearly teaches this (2 Pet. 3:10, 12, *etc.*). Neither do we at all deny that also our present passage refers to this fact (cf. Matt. 24:39 [24:29]). But the main point of our passage is this: it stresses the terror of the day of wrath for the wicked. The dissolving elements, earthquake, falling stars, *etc.*, add terror to the picture.”] **I looked when He broke the sixth seal, and there was a great earthquake** [I believe it would be better to translate “a great shaking.” This great shaking probably includes the intense shaking of the short great tribulation, which will come to pass under the sixth trumpet, and it undoubtedly includes the shaking pictured in Rev. 6:13, 14. It apparently also includes all the shaking that will take place throughout the second half of Daniel's 70<sup>th</sup> week as God shakes the world in judgment. On the shaking of judgment day, cf., e.g., Isa. 2:19, 21; 13:13; 24:19, 20 [Isaiah chapter 2, 13:6-13; and chapter 24 are discussed in a verse-by-verse manner in my eschatological paper on Isaiah on my internet site.]; Hag. 2:6, 7, 21; and Heb. 12:26-29. On this great shaking/earthquake, also see under Rev. 16:18-20 in my paper that deals with Rev. 14:6-19:21.]; **and the sun became black as sackcloth made of hair, and the whole moon became like blood** [cf., e.g., Joel 2:30-32; Matt. 24:29-31]; **(13) and the stars of the sky fell to the earth, as a fig tree casts its unripe figs when shaken by a great wind.** [The stars here apparently refer first, and foremost, to the angels of Satan, who will be cast down to the earth with their leader (from their present privileged position in heavenly places) right in the middle of Daniel's 70<sup>th</sup> week. See Rev. 12:4, 7-9: the third of the angels who follow Satan are cast down to the earth right in the middle of the seven-year period; those angels are called *stars* in Rev. 12:4. This is a major feature in God's end-time judgment of the world (see pages 15, 317-319 of *The Mid-Week Rapture* on these verses).

Matthew 24:29 is another important cross-reference for the stars falling at the time of Christ's return with the clouds of heaven, at the sounding of the seventh and last trumpet, right in the middle of the seven-year period. I'll quote the second half of Matt. 24:29: “and the stars will fall from the sky, and the powers of heaven will be shaken.” Satan's kingdom will obviously be greatly shaken at the time he and his angels are overpowered and cast down to the earth. (Matthew 24:29 is discussed in my verse-by-verse study of Matthew chapter 24 on my internet site, for one place.) Also see Isa. 34:4. I should point out that the “host of heaven” in Isa. 34:4 refers to the stars.

We should probably also think of literal falling stars here in Rev. 6:13; Matt. 24:29; etc. This present natural/physical world must ultimately pass away/vanish to be replaced by God's new heaven and new earth (cf., e.g., Matt. 24:35; Rev. 20:11; 21:1).] **(14) The sky was split apart like a scroll when it is rolled up** [Isaiah 34:4 includes the words, “And the sky will be rolled up like a scroll.” The Greek noun translated “sky” in Rev. 6:14 and the Hebrew noun translated “sky” in Isa. 34:4 can also be translated “heaven.”

The KJV has “heaven” in Rev. 6:14 and “heavens” in Isa. 34:4. I’ll quote what Leon Morris said regarding these words (*Revelation* [Inter-Varsity Press, 1987], page 108). “In the first century most people appear to have thought of heaven [speaking of one use of the word heaven] as a solid vault. John uses this conception to express the completeness of the cosmic disaster. Heaven was rolled up like a scroll (cf. Isa. 34:4, and for later literature, *Syb. Or.* 3:82), and taken out of the way.”

Genesis 1:6-8, 14-17 help us understand what Morris meant by “solid vault.” I’ll quote Gen. 1:6 and 8a, “Then God said, ‘Let there be an expanse [or, a firmament] in the midst of the waters, and let it separate the waters from the waters.’ ... God called the expanse [or, firmament] heaven.” The KJV and NKJV have “firmament” instead of “expanse.” I’ll quote from the BDB Hebrew Lexicon on the meaning of the Hebrew noun (*raqia*) translated expanse/firmament in Gen. 1:6-8, 14-17, “extended surface, (solid) expanse (as if beaten out....) ... the vault of heaven, or ‘firmament,’ regarded by Hebrews as solid, and supporting ‘waters’ above it, Gen. 1:6, 7, 8....” The expanse/firmament in Isa. 34:4 and Rev. 6:14 is pictured being relatively thin and rolled up as the material of a scroll can be rolled up., **and every mountain and island were moved out of their places.** [By the time God is fully done shaking/judging and bringing forth His new heaven and new earth, everything associated with this present world – including the present sky, mountains, and islands – will have been removed, or made new (cf. Rev. 21:5). See Ezek. 38:20; Nah. 1:2-8; 2 Pet. 3:10; Rev. 16:20; 20:11; and 21:1] **(15) Then the kings of the earth and the great men and the commanders and the rich and the strong and every slave and free man hid themselves in the caves and among the rocks of the mountains; (16) and they said to the mountains and to the rocks, “Fall on us and hide us from the presence of Him who sits on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb** [Compare Isa. 2:10-22 (As I mentioned, Isaiah chapter 2 is discussed verse-by-verse in my paper on Isaiah on my internet site.); Hos. 10:8; Luke 23:30.]; **(17) for the great day of their wrath has come, and who is able to stand?”** [The great day of the wrath of God the Father and God the Son will officially begin when the Lord Jesus returns in the middle of Daniel’s 70<sup>th</sup> week. ((God’s wrath will also be manifested to a significant extent for those directly involved with the shaking of the short great tribulation of Matt. 24:21, 22, which equals (at least for the most part) the warfare of the sixth trumpet (Rev. 9:13-21). Antichrist’s abomination of desolation, which will take place about a month before the Lord Jesus returns (cf. Dan. 12:11), will signal that it is time for the short great tribulation to take place (cf. Matt. 24:15, 21, 22).)]

All the true Christians living on the earth will be able to stand because they will be ready for the return of the Lord Jesus; they live in the light of His return; they are the ones “who have loved His appearing” (2 Tim. 4:8). (Compare, for example, Psalms 1:3-6; Nah. 1:6-8; and Luke 21:36.)

Revelation chapter 7 is an interlude (a parenthetical insert) that answers the question of Rev. 6:17, “and who is able to stand.” Revelation chapter 7 deals with two groups of people who will be able to stand. Revelation 7:9-17 deal with the true Christians who will be living on the earth at that time. Those verses picture them having been caught up into eternal glory. Revelation 7:1-8 deal with the end-time remnant of Israel. Revelation 7:1-3 picture each of them being given a special seal for protection (for one thing, protection during the days of the sounding of the first six trumpets, especially the sixth

trumpet to make sure that each one of them remains alive to receive the Lord Jesus.  
(Compare what Michael the archangel does in Dan. 12:1.) They will not submit to Him  
in faith until after He returns and the rapture takes place.]

## REVELATION CHAPTER 7

The first half of this chapter (Rev. 7:1-8) was discussed in a rather thorough manner in my book, *The Mid-Week Rapture*. See pages 176-179, including the endnotes. This present discussion contains much information, but I won't repeat all that was said there. The references to *The Mid-Week Rapture* are noted below, under the specific verses.

How Revelation chapter 7 fits with the seven seals of the book of Revelation, and how it fits the scheme of the book of Revelation. Revelation chapter 7 is an interlude (parenthetical insert) between the breaking of the sixth seal (Rev. 6:12-17) and the breaking of the seventh seal (Rev. 8:1). (In a similar way, Rev. 10:1-11 and 11:1-13 are two interludes between the sounding of the sixth trumpet [Rev. 9:13-21] and the sounding of the seventh trumpet [Rev. 11:15].) In Revelation chapter 7, before the seventh seal has been broken and the all-important scroll can be opened, we pause to look at two special groups of people. Both groups are part of God's true Israel. These two groups have something else in common: Both groups will be living on the earth during the first half of Daniel's 70<sup>th</sup> week when the first six trumpets will be sounding. I'll explain the difference(s) between the two groups as we continue.

In Rev. 7:9-17 we see a great multitude of saints (members of true Israel) in heaven, before the throne of God. Their state at the time the day of wrath begins is in total contrast with the state of those pictured in Rev. 6:15, 16. They have just been raptured from the earth in the middle of Daniel's 70<sup>th</sup> week, at the sounding of the seventh and last trumpet of the book of Revelation. These saints will, by virtue of the rapture, be kept from/out of the very difficult days that will come to pass for the saints (those who will not become Christians until after the rapture) living on the earth throughout the second half of Daniel's 70<sup>th</sup> week (see Rev. 3:10).

These raptured saints won't be living on the earth when the devil, having been cast down to the earth with his angels in the middle of Daniel's 70<sup>th</sup> week and having great wrath, persecutes the people of God (e.g., Rev. 12:6-13:18). They won't be on the earth for any part of the three and one-half year super-evil reign of Antichrist; he won't begin his super-evil reign until just after the rapture. And they won't be on the earth when God pours out His seven bowls of wrath.

These saints, who (in common with all true Christians) have been sealed by the blood of Christ and by the Holy Spirit, will know God's protective care as they live on the earth during the first half of Daniel's 70<sup>th</sup> week (in the days before the rapture). They will be protected during the time of the sounding of the first six trumpets. The judgments of those trumpets are not aimed at God's people. During the fifth trumpet, for example, the (demonic) locusts will not be permitted to touch those sealed by God (Rev. 9:4). I didn't say, however, that there won't be any martyrs during the first half of Daniel's 70<sup>th</sup> week. We know, for example, that the two prophets will be martyred at the end of that period. Most generations of Christians have known some martyrs. But dying as a martyr in the will of God (by His grace) is victory, not defeat.

Revelation 7:1-8 also deal with elect members of true Israel, but the difference is that those pictured in these verses will not be converted to Christ in time to be taken in the rapture. They will need a special seal to protect them as they live on the earth in the

days before they become Christians, during the first half of Daniel's 70<sup>th</sup> week – especially during the days of the sounding of the sixth trumpet. It's important that these people remain alive to receive Christ Jesus when/after He comes (cf. Dan. 12:1). Although it seems clear that many Gentiles will become Christians (and part of true Israel) after the rapture, the spotlight in Rev. 7:1-8 is on the elect sons of Israel (Jews) who will eventually become Christians. Many prophecies speak of the end-time conversion and salvation of the literal sons of Israel, but it's not until the book of Revelation that we learn that they won't be converted until after the rapture.

Revelation chapter 7 answers the question asked in the last verse of chapter 6, “for the great day of their wrath has come, and who is able to stand?” All the members of true Israel will be able to stand before God (instead of being removed by judgment). Apparently we should see a connection between the question of Rev. 6:17 and the fact that the multitude of Rev. 7:9 are seen “standing before the throne [of God],” and the fact that those “standing on the sea of glass [before God]” (Rev. 15:2) are the ones who were sealed in Rev. 7:1-8. It's also true, though beyond the scope of Revelation chapter 7, that the elect remnant of the nations (who are distinct from true Israel) will be left standing (by God's mercy) when His end-time judgments are over (e.g., Rev. 15:3, 4; 20:3; 21:3, 4, and 21:24-22:3).

**After this I saw four angels** [Compare Rev. 7:2. These are good angels, angels faithful to God.] **standing at the four corners of the earth** [I'll quote what Craig S. Keener said here (*Bible Background Commentary* [Inter-Varsity Press, 1993], page 782), “ ‘Four corners’ of the earth was meant figuratively, even in ancient times. A few people thought that the world was spherical [which it is], but most people viewed it as [flat and] circular; ‘four corners’ was nevertheless conventional speech, as was the idea of four winds from the four directions of heaven...”], **holding back the four winds of the earth, so that no wind would blow on the earth or on the sea or on any tree.** [The message behind this oversimplified picture of a flat earth with four corners (as in Isa. 11:12; Rev. 20:8) is that the four winds (cf. Jer. 49:36; Dan. 7:2; and Matt. 24:31) are under the control of God and will not be permitted to blow – bringing judgments (cf. Rev. 7:2, 3; 8:6-11) – until He has sealed His bondservants on their foreheads for protection. In this context the judgments of the seven trumpets of the book of Revelation are in view. The trumpets are announced right after the scroll is opened (Rev. 8:1, 2, and 6).

I understand the events of the first five trumpets to be in the category of warning judgments, warnings of the imminent coming of the day of judgment. With the sixth trumpet, however, even though it will sound a month before judgment day officially begins, the judgment will be very intense for those directly involved (very much including the nation of Israel), and it can be considered part of the day of judgment. The earth and the sea are mentioned in Rev. 7:2; the earth, the sea, and the trees are mentioned in 7:3.] **(2) And I saw another angel ascending from the rising of the sun** [After I finish the limited comments I had in the original article under Rev. 7:1-3, I'll include a lengthy discussion to give more details on the identity of this “angel” and on the sealing of Rev. 7:1-8 which he/He accomplishes.], **having the seal of the living God** [On “the living God,” cf., e.g., Matt. 16:16]; **and he cried out with a loud voice to the four angels** [cf. Rev. 7:1] **to whom it was granted to harm the earth and the**

sea, (3) saying, “Do not harm the earth or the sea or the trees until we have sealed the bond-servants of our God on their foreheads.” [Regarding a seal/mark/name on the forehead, compare Ezek. 9:4, 6; Rev. 9:4; 14:1 (this verse refers to all the members of true Israel who will be glorified in the middle of Daniel’s 70<sup>th</sup> week, including all who will have died before that time (apparently including all the believers from Old Testament days); it’s not limited to those who will be living on the earth at the time of the rapture; Rev. 7:9-17 are limited to those who will be living on the earth at the time of the rapture, as we’ll discuss below); and Rev. 22:4 (this verse refers to true Israel in its fullness, including those members converted after the rapture). Contrast the mark/name on the forehead of Rev. 13:16; 14:9; and 20:4.

On this very important sealing, see on Rev. 7:1-8 on pages 176-179 of my book, *The Mid-Week Rapture*. (Many details are included in the section that follows this paragraph.) In that discussion I mentioned that the sealing of Rev. 7:1-8 probably builds on the sealing by the man clothed in linen of Ezek. 9:1-11. Ezekiel 9:1-10:8 are discussed on pages 173, 174 of my book. As noted in *The Mid-Week Rapture*, I favor the view that the angel/Angel of Rev. 7:2, 3 is the Lord Jesus Christ. For the full discussion regarding why I favor this viewpoint, see pages 165-179 of my book. “We” of Rev. 7:3 undoubtedly includes angels under the direction of the angel/Angel who had the seal.

MORE DETAILS ON THE INTERPRETATION OF REV. 7:1-3. (Most of this information was taken from Article #18 of my paper titled, *Twenty-Four Articles on The Mid-Week Rapture*.) I won’t get into all the details here (see my book, *The Mid-Week Rapture* for more details), but I assume that this sealing builds on the sealing of the righteous remnant of Israel by the “man dressed in linen” in Ezekiel chapter 9. (We discussed the “man dressed in linen” in some detail when we discussed Daniel chapter 12. Daniel chapter 12 is discussed verse-by-verse in some detail in *The Mid-Week Rapture*.)

As I mentioned, I believe the “man dressed in linen” is God the Son, who often appears in the Old Testament as the Angel (or Messenger) of Yahweh. In Ezekiel chapter 9, Yahweh instructed the man dressed in linen to “go through the midst of the city, *even* through the midst of Jerusalem, and put a mark on the foreheads of the men who sigh and groan over all the abominations which are being committed in its midst.” At the same time, Yahweh called for judgment to fall on all the people in Jerusalem who had not been sealed for protection. That judgment came through the Babylonians, who destroyed the city of Jerusalem and the temple in 587/586 BC.

As the mark on the forehead of Ezekiel chapter 9 protected the elect remnant of Israel during the days of the destruction of Jerusalem, so the sealing of Rev. 7:1-8 will protect the elect remnant of Israel during the days of the sounding of the trumpets. This sealing will apparently take place before the first trumpet sounds. A reasonable time for this sealing would be about the time of the beginning of Daniel’s 70<sup>th</sup> week.

I’ll read Rev. 9:4, which prophesies of locusts (apparently demonic locusts) that will attack mankind under the fifth trumpet. “They [the locusts] were told not to hurt the grass of the earth, nor *any* green thing, nor any tree, but only the men who do not have the seal of God on their foreheads.” Those sealed on their foreheads in Rev. 7:1-8 will be protected from the locusts, even though they will not yet have become Christians. What about the true Christians who will be living on the earth at that time? We won’t

need a special seal, because we have already been sealed by God through the atoning blood of the Lamb and by the Holy Spirit (see Eph. 1:13; 4:30; and Rev. 14:1, for example).

I mentioned that I assume that this sealing builds on the sealing of the man dressed in linen of Ezekiel chapter 9, and that I believe the man dressed in linen was God the Son. I won't get into the details here, but I should mention, without being dogmatic at all, that I favor the viewpoint that the "angel" here in Rev. 7:2 also represents the Lord Jesus Christ. It seems that the same Person does the sealing in both passages, and how appropriate it is for God the Son to seal His people. I discuss this viewpoint in substantial detail (covering many pages) in my book. I am not saying, of course, that the Lord Jesus is a *created* angel, but He *is* a *messenger* of God the Father, and He frequently appeared in the Old Testament as the Angel (or Messenger) of Yahweh (God the Father). The Hebrew and Greek nouns translated *angel* can also be translated *messenger*.

I agree that it would be quite unusual to refer to the Lord Jesus Christ as "another angel," but I think the other considerations are weighty enough that I have to favor this viewpoint. The case for this viewpoint is greatly strengthened if the Lord Jesus Christ is also called "another angel" in Revelation chapter 8 and "another strong angel" in Revelation chapter 10, which I believe is the case. Quite a few commentators believe the Lord Jesus Christ is the One being spoken of in chapters 8 and 10.

I'll comment briefly on the words, "And I saw another angel ascending from the rising of the sun" of Rev. 7:2. The NIV has, "Then I saw another angel coming up from the east," and the KJV has, "And I saw another angel ascending from the east." Apparently we are to picture this angel rising out of the east, as the sun rises out of the east. The rising of this "sun" apparently pictures the return of the light of God in the Person of the Lord Jesus Christ, as it begins to return to Israel in the end times (see, for example, Mal. 4:2; Matt. 17:2; Luke 1:78, 79; Eph. 5:14; and Rev. 1:16; and 10:1).

It is important that we don't allow any confusion regarding the identity of this angel/Angel to affect our understanding of these verses. God will make sure that this totally effective sealing will take place, whether this angel/Angel is the Lord Jesus Christ, or not. I didn't mention this viewpoint to stir up controversy. We don't need any more controversy. I mention this viewpoint because I believe the evidence is very strong for this viewpoint, and that we ought to at least consider the possibility that God intended that we see the Lord Jesus Christ in these verses. His presence certainly brings some extra glory to these verses.] **(4) And I heard the number of those who were sealed, one hundred and forty-four thousand sealed from every tribe of the sons of Israel: (5) From the tribe of Judah, twelve thousand were sealed, from the tribe of Reuben twelve thousand, from the tribe of Gad twelve thousand, (6) from the tribe of Asher twelve thousand, from the tribe of Naphtali twelve thousand, from the tribe of Manasseh twelve thousand, (7) from the tribe of Simeon twelve thousand, from the tribe of Levi twelve thousand, from the tribe of Issachar twelve thousand, (8) from the tribe of Zebulun twelve thousand, from the tribe of Joseph twelve thousand, from the tribe of Benjamin, twelve thousand were sealed.** [On the numbers "twelve thousand" and "one hundred and forty-four thousand," I agree with the majority that these are symbolic numbers of completeness (discussed as we continue). There are a few peculiarities in the listing of the twelve tribes of Israel here,

but I doubt that there is any major significance. There are many differences in the various listings of the twelve tribes in the Bible, including the omission of the names of various tribes. For one thing, when the tribe of Levi is included, as it is here, there are thirteen tribes, because both of the sons of Joseph (one of the twelve sons of Jacob/Israel) became tribes of Israel. The tribe of Levi was different in that it wasn't allotted a tract of land in the holy land; the priests and Levites came from this tribe.

It's obvious why the tribe of Judah was listed first (e.g., Rev. 5:5). The tribe of Dan isn't listed. Rather than mention the reasons that have been suggested for the omission of the name of this tribe, I'll just mention that Dan was mentioned in the end-time-oriented listing of Ezekiel chapter 48. It's unusual that Joseph, the father of Ephraim and Manasseh, was listed along with Manasseh. It's possible that there was a conscious effort to omit listing Ephraim (and Dan), but I doubt it. Ephraim, by the way, was also listed in Ezekiel chapter 48.

MORE DETAILS ON THE INTERPRETATION OF REV. 7:4-8. (Most of this information was taken from Article #18 of my paper titled, *Twenty-Four Articles on The Mid-Week Rapture*.) These verses list twelve tribes of Israel and say that 12,000 will be sealed from each tribe. The total number is 144,000. I agree with the widespread viewpoint that these are symbolic numbers of completeness. The actual numbers will be much higher than a literal 144,000. I'll quote part of a sentence from Henry Alford, who was a Christian scholar writing in the 1800s who was well acquainted with the earlier Christian writings; this quotation will surprise some people, "No one that I am aware of has taken it literally."

Many Christians in our day do take the number literally. As I mentioned, the people being sealed for protection here are the elect of God who will become Christians after the rapture. This multitude will center in the end-time elect remnant of the people of Israel, but many Gentiles will also become Christians (and part of God's true Israel) after the rapture, and I assume they are included here too.

Symbolic numbers are frequently used in the book of Revelation. Seven, the number for perfection, is often used. Revelation 5:6, for example, speaks of "a Lamb standing, as if slain, having seven horns and seven eyes, which are the seven Spirits of God, sent out into all the earth." The "seven horns" speak of Christ's perfect (complete) authority and dominion. The "seven eyes" speak of His perfect (complete) knowledge. The "seven Spirits of God" refer to the Holy Spirit (see Rev. 1:4, 5; 3:1; and 4:5).

The number twelve, and multiples of twelve, are sometimes used in the book of Revelation to denote completeness. (For one thing, there were twelve tribes of Israel, twelve apostles, and there were twelve months.) I believe the 12,000 stadia of Rev. 21:16 and the 144 cubits of Rev. 21:17 are in this category and are not to be taken as literal dimensions. (See my paper on my internet site that deals with Revelation chapters 20-22 for the details.)

More relevant to our consideration of the 144,000 of Rev. 7:4 is the mention of 144,000 in Rev. 14:1. I believe the 144,000 of Rev. 14:1 is a symbolic number of completeness and that that glorious multitude embraces all the raptured saints; they will be glorified and raptured at the time of Christ's return, right in the middle of Daniel's 70<sup>th</sup> week. That multitude will include all the true Christians who have lived from the beginning of Christianity to the time of Christ's return. I believe it will also include all the believers from Old Testament days, who will also be resurrected, glorified, and

raptured at the time of Christ's return. From the time of the rapture, this gigantic multitude (who are all part of God's true Israel) will be with the Lord Jesus Christ, and they will be reigning with Him in a never-ending reign.

So, the 144,000 of Revelation 7 is to be distinguished from the 144,000 of Rev. 14:1. Both multitudes are part of God's true Israel, and taken together they represent the totality of God's true Israel. The difference is that the 144,000 of Revelation 7 will not be converted until after the rapture. The 144,000 of Revelation 7 can undoubtedly be equated with "the rest of her [true Israel's] offspring [or, seed]" of Rev. 12:17. The woman of Revelation chapter 12 is God's true Israel.] **(9) After these things I looked, and behold, a great multitude which no one could count, from every nation and all tribes and peoples and tongues, standing before the throne [cf. Rev. 7:15] and before the Lamb [cf. Rev. 5:6-10; 7:14, 17], clothed in white robes [The white robes go with the glorified bodies they have just received (cf. Rev. 3:4, 5; 6:11; 7:13, 14; and 19:8, 14).], and palm branches [Compare John 12:13. The palm branches go with the rejoicing before God with praise and thanksgiving. See page 235 of my book, *The Mid-Week Rapture*.] were in their hands [This certainly is an exciting passage for us to consider. Here we see the glorified saints before the throne of God in heaven who have just been raptured from the earth at the sounding of the seventh and last trumpet in the middle of Daniel's 70<sup>th</sup> week. They have just come home. They will now be able to see God the Father and God the Son (cf., e.g., Matt. 5:8; John 17:24; 1 Cor. 13:12; and 1 John 3:2). (See under Rev. 3:10 in this paper; and on pages 40-42 of my book; and see the chapter dealing with Rev. 14:1-5 in the book, which starts on page 343.)**

As I mentioned, I believe this great multitude is limited to those saints who will still be alive on the earth when Christ returns. The key verse that steers me in this direction is 7:14, which informs us that these people are the ones coming from/out of the great tribulation. It cannot be said of those saints who will have died before the days of the short great tribulation that they will be coming from/out of the great tribulation. Also, the short great tribulation is not coming against the saints, and I don't expect many saints will die during that brief period.

Those saints who are alive on the earth when Christ returns never will die. They will be transformed and raptured into the heavenly dimension at the sounding of the seventh trumpet. I believe all the members of true Israel who will have died before this trumpet sounds, including those members who lived on the earth in the days before the new covenant was ratified in the blood of Christ, will be resurrected and raptured into the heavenly dimension at this same time ((cf., e.g., Dan. 12:2 [The believers from Old Testament days are surely included in the mid-week resurrection pictured in Dan. 12:2, in that context.]; Rev. 12:5 [The believers from Old Testament days are surely included in the mid-week resurrection, glorification, and rapture pictured in Rev. 12:5, since they are part of the woman of Revelation chapter 12, who is a symbol for God's true Israel.]; 1 Thess. 4:14-17 [These verses make it clear that the departed Christians will be resurrected and then raptured at the same time as the Christians who are still alive when Christ returns. So too for 1 Cor. 15:50-52. Neither one of these two passages specifically mention the believers from old-covenant days, but it's clear that they are part of God's true Israel.]), but I don't believe those resurrected saints are mentioned in Rev. 7:9-17. (As I mentioned, we can't say that those saints who will have died before the time of the great tribulation will be coming from/out of the great tribulation [Rev.

7:14.) It is to be understood, however, that they will share exactly the same glorious eternal destiny as the ones who are specifically mentioned here.

Why would this passage limit this great multitude to those still alive when Christ comes? It fits the context of Revelation chapter 7, where we pause to consider two special groups of people who will be living on the earth at the time judgment day falls on the earth. They are the ones who will be kept out of the hour of testing of Rev. 3:10 by being raptured from the earth just before that hour of testing begins.]; **(10) and they cry out with a loud voice, saying, “Salvation to our God who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb.”** [Compare Psalm 3:8; Rev. 12:10; and 19:1. The idea is that salvation comes from God, including God the Son (the Lamb). The triune God is the source of their salvation, which they are now experiencing in full measure, including the fact that they have been kept out of the hour of testing (Rev. 3:10), but much more significantly that they have been saved from sin and spiritual death and eternal judgment and that they have just been caught up into the fullness of salvation and eternal glory.] **(11) And all the angels were standing around the throne and around the elders and the four living creatures [cf. Rev. 5:11, 12]; and they fell on their faces before the throne and worshiped God [cf. Rev. 4:10; 5:8, 14; 11:16, and 19:4], (12) saying, “Amen [On “Amen” see under Rev. 3:14; 5:14.], blessing [The NIV has “Amen! Praise and glory....”] and glory and wisdom and thanksgiving and honor and power and might, be to our God forever and ever. Amen.”** [See under Rev. 5:12.] **(13)** [These next two verses (7:13, 14) are of key importance. (They’re discussed on pages 154, 155 of *The Mid-Week Rapture*.)] **then one of the elders answered, saying to me, “These who are clothed in the white robes [Rev. 7:9], who are they, and where have they come from?”** [These two questions are answered in the next verse.] **(14) I said to him, “My lord, you know.”** [The NIV has “Sir, you know.”] **And he said to me, “These are the ones who come out of [from] the great tribulation** [I would translate “These are the ones who come from the great tribulation.” “From” is a common translation for the Greek preposition *ek*. For example, *ek* is used in Rev. 7:4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 13, 14, and 17, and in each of these verses, except for verse 13, where it is translated “of” and verse 14, where it is translated “out of,” the New American Standard Bible translates it “from.”

I believe Rev. 9:13-21, which prophesies of very intense warfare where a third of mankind is killed in a short period of time, is the most important cross-reference to understand the short great tribulation of Matt. 24:21, 22; Dan. 12:1. Also see Joel 2:30-32. The short great tribulation will begin about the time of the abomination of desolation (which will take place about a month before the middle of Daniel’s 70<sup>th</sup> week) and will be over before the Lord Jesus returns at the sounding of the seventh and last trumpet, right in the middle of Daniel’s 70<sup>th</sup> week (see Matt. 24:15-31, especially verses 15, 21, 22, and verse 29-31). (See under these verses in my verse-by-verse study of Matthew chapter 24 on my internet site [Google to Karl Kemp Teaching]. For more on the short great tribulation, start with number 8 on page 14 of my book, *The Mid-Week Rapture*. The short great tribulation is discussed under Rev. 9:13-21 in the chapter of this paper that deals with Revelation chapter 9.)

It is significant that the words, “These are the ones who come from the great tribulation” answer the question of verse 13, “where have they come from?” This glorified, raptured multitude has just come from the great tribulation in the sense that the great tribulation will have been the last major event on the earth before they are

caught up to the throne of God. In fact, the sun and moon will have been darkened at the time of their glorification and rapture, because of all the dust and smoke generated during the warfare of the short great tribulation. I should mention that Rev. 7:14 speaks of the great tribulation. The definite article (the) is included in the Greek text. We already know about the short great tribulation from Matt. 24:21, 22; Dan. 12:1, and other passages.], **and they have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.** [Compare Rev. 3:4, 5, 18; 6:11; 7:9; 19:8, 14; and 22:14, 15. The words “they have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb” answer the question “who are they” of verse 13. All true Christians “have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.” I’ll read Rev. 22:14, 15, “Blessed are those who wash their robes, so that they may have the right to the tree of life, and may enter by the gates into the city [into the city of God’s new Jerusalem]. (15) Outside are the dogs and the sorcerers and the immoral persons and the murderers and the idolaters and everyone who loves and practices lying.” The words of verse 15 mean that the people who are committed to sin will not have access to God’s new Jerusalem; they do not mean that sinners will be located just outside new Jerusalem. I’ll also read the second half of Rev. 1:5, “To Him [to the Lord Jesus Christ] who loves us and released us from our sins by His blood.”

The fact that true Christians are made righteous and holy through the atoning blood/death of the Lamb of God, by grace through faith, through the indwelling Holy Spirit of God, is a dominant theme of the New Testament. See Romans chapters 6 and 8 and 1 Pet. 2:24, for example. I’ll read 1 Pet. 2:24. “He Himself bore our sins in His body on the cross, so that we might die to sin and live to righteousness; for by His wounds you were healed.” The Lamb of God bore our sins with the guilt and the penalties, including the major penalties of spiritual death and bondage to sin, so that we could be born again and die to sin and live to righteousness. For more on this super-important topic, see my book, *Holiness and Victory Over Sin: Full Salvation Through the Atoning Death of the Lord Jesus Christ.* **(15) For this reason** [The reason being that they had been purchased for God by the blood of the Lamb (cf. Rev. 5:9) and they have (by grace through faith) washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. They are, therefore, ready to stand before God.], **they are before the throne of God** [Rev. 7:9]; **and they serve Him day and night** [on a continual, never-ending basis] **in His temple** [Serving God includes being priests of God (cf. Rev. 1:6; 5:10; and 20:6). (These verses show that we will be priests of God throughout the millennial kingdom; this priesthood will probably continue in the eternal state.) Revelation 22:3, which uses the same Greek verb for serve used here in Rev, 7:15, shows that all the members of true Israel will serve Him forever. Those raptured in the middle of Daniel’s 70<sup>th</sup> week will begin to serve Him at that time. (Of course we serve Him now in some ways too.) We won’t just serve God as priests. Many verses, including Rev. 22:5, show that we will also reign with Him forever from the time of our glorification. What a destiny!

It’s clear that we won’t be passive, loafing, or just doing busy/unimportant work. God has important things for each of us to do – forever. That truth applies to our present life on earth too. The foundational element of our relationship with God and of our serving Him will undoubtedly be worship. (Serving is a form of worship too.) We can see this same priority in the ministry of the four living creatures, the twenty-four elders, and the

angels pictured in the book of Revelation.]; **and He who sits on the throne** [God the Father] **will spread His tabernacle over them** [I understand these words to speak, in a symbolic way, of the intimate, protective, fully glorious relationship that God will have with the raptured saints. Eventually, apparently by the time the millennial kingdom begins, all the members of true Israel (including those converted after the rapture) will be glorified and begin to experience the things spoken of in Rev. 7:15-17.]. **(16) They will hunger no longer, nor thirst anymore; nor will the sun beat down on them, nor any heat; (17) for the Lamb in the center of the throne will be their shepherd, and will guide them to springs of the water of life; and God will wipe every tear from their eyes.**” [Compare Isa. 25:8; 49:10; and Rev. 21:6. Revelation 21:3, 4 have some things in common with Rev. 7:15-17, but I believe Rev. 21:3, 4 speak of God’s eternal salvation coming to the elect of the nations (the nations being distinct from true Israel) in the eternal state, after the millennium. (Revelation 21:3, 4 are discussed on pages 340, 341 of *The Mid-Week Rapture*, and they are discussed in my verse-by-verse study of Revelation chapters 20-22.)]

## REVELATION CHAPTER 8

**When the Lamb broke the seventh seal, there was silence in heaven for about half an hour.** [I assume this time of silence goes with the awesome significance of the Lamb's breaking the seventh and last seal. Now the all-important scroll that the Lord Jesus took from God the Father in Revelation chapter 5 can be opened.] **(2) And I saw the** [The definite article is included in the Greek.] **seven angels who stand before God, and seven trumpets were given to them.** [These seven angels, who clearly have a high standing before God, have not been mentioned before in the book of Revelation, at least not specifically mentioned. They're mentioned again in Rev. 8:6 and then individually in the following verses as each one progressively sounds his trumpet (Rev. 8:7, 8, 10, 12; 9:1, 13, (14); and 11:15). (It seems clear that they are different than the seven angels with the seven bowls of wrath [e.g., Rev. 15:1, 6-8].) Many commentators believe these seven angels are the seven archangels. (I had a footnote here, F. F. Bruce (*New Layman's Bible Commentary* [Zondervan, 1979], page 1692), for example, says, "Gabriel identifies himself as one of these [that is, as an angel who stands before God] (Luke 1:19); cf. Tobit 12:15, where Raphael describes himself as 'one of the seven holy angels who present the prayers of the saints and stand before the presence of the glory of the Holy One.' The names of all seven appear in 1 Enoch 20:2-8 as Uriel, Raphael, Raguel, Michael, Sariel, Gabriel and Remiel: 'the archangels' names are seven.' " Craig S. Keener (*Bible Background Commentary* [Inter-Varsity Press, 1993], page 785) says, "Between the Old Testament and the New Testament Judaism had settled on seven archangels (adding five to the two important angels named in Daniel), and they are probably in view here." It's clear that Michael is the (or, an) archangel (Jude 1:9; cf. 1 Thess. 4:16; Rev. 12:7; Dan. 10:13, 21; and 12:1). It's also clear that Gabriel is a mighty angel of God (Dan. 8:16; 9:21; Luke 1:19, 26; cf. Dan. 10:10-21). Daniel 10:13 is interesting, "But the prince of the kingdom of Persia [an evil angel] was withstanding me [probably Gabriel] for twenty-one days; then behold, Michael, one of the chief princes, came to help me...." The words "one of the chief princes" fit the idea that there are other archangels.) **(3)** [Revelation 8:3-5 are discussed on pages 174-176 of my book, *The Mid-Week Rapture*. For the full discussion, see pages 165-179. I didn't comment hardly at all on verses 3-5 in the original version of this paper since these verses were thoroughly in my book, but after I quote verses 3-5 and make a few comments, I'll include a lengthy excerpt on Rev. 8:1-5 from Article #19 of my paper titled, *Twenty-Four Articles on the Mid-Week Rapture*.] **Another angel** [As discussed in *The Mid-Week Rapture*, this angel/Angel probably is the Angel of the LORD [Yahweh] of the Old Testament (God the Son).] **came and stood at the** [sacrificial] **altar, holding a golden censer** [or, firepan]; **and much incense was given to him, so that he might add it to** [offer it with] **the prayers of all the saints on the golden altar which was before the throne. (4) And the smoke of the incense, with the prayers of the saints, went up before God out of the angel's hand. (5) Then the angel took the censer** [or, firepan] **and filled it with the fire of the** [sacrificial] **altar, and threw it to the earth** [Compare Ezek. 10:2. The first three trumpets all include fire (in one form or another) being thrown to the earth/sea, and the sixth trumpet mentions the plague of fire (Rev. 9:17, 18). On the fire of God's judgment in the book of Revelation, also see Rev.

11:5; 14:10, 18; 16:8; 17:16; 18:8; 19:20; 20:9, 10, 14, 15; and 21:8.]; **and there followed peals of thunder and sounds and flashes of lightning and an earthquake** [cf. Rev. 11:19; 16:18].

Lengthy Excerpt Dealing with Rev. 8:1-5 from Article #19 of my paper, *Twenty-Four Articles on the Mid-Week Rapture*:

Now we'll go on to Revelation chapter 8. I'll read verse 1, "When the Lamb broke the seventh seal, there was silence in heaven for about half an hour." I assume this time of silence goes with the awesome significance of the Lamb's breaking the seventh and last seal. Now the all-important scroll that the Lord Jesus Christ took from God the Father back in chapter 5 can be opened. Once the scroll is opened, we begin to receive much super-important revelation of things that had not been revealed before, starting with the revelation of the seven angels with the seven trumpets, which will announce the coming of the Lord Jesus, the resurrection and rapture, and the day of judgment.

The Lord Jesus will return at the sounding of the seventh and last trumpet, right in the middle of Daniel's 70<sup>th</sup> week. The seventh trumpet is extremely important. God's plans to save and glorify His people and to judge the world at the end of this age will come to pass under the sounding of that trumpet (see Rev. 10:7; 11:15-19, for example). This is very important information, especially for the people who will be living on the earth at the time of Daniel's 70<sup>th</sup> week, which probably includes us.

I'll read Rev. 8:2, "And I saw the seven angels who stand before God, and seven trumpets were given to them." These seven angels, who clearly have a high standing with God, are mentioned again in verse 6, and then individually in the following verses as each angel progressively sounds his trumpet in chapters 8 and 9, with the seventh and last angel sounding his trumpet at Rev. 11:15.

The next verses, verses 3-5, contain some very important information that is related to the sounding of the trumpets and God's end-time salvation of His people and His end-time judgment of the world. In verses 3, 4 the prayers of the saints are offered before God. For one thing, these verses help demonstrate that the events associated with the sounding of the seven trumpets will come to pass (in part) in answer to the prayers of the saints. I'm speaking especially of prayers like "your kingdom come, your will be done on earth as it is in heaven."

It is important to know that the judgments associated with the trumpets will not be coming against believers. And it is important to know that God's promised full and final salvation will come to all the members of His true Israel under the sounding of the seventh trumpet. Knowing that these things will come to pass in accordance with the will of God, and in answer to our prayers, helps give us the right perspective as we discuss the seven trumpets.

In verses 3 and 4 we read of an "angel" offering our prayers before God, and in verse 5 we read of this same "angel" casting fire on the earth, which will initiate God's end-time judgment of the world. I cannot be dogmatic on this point, but I believe the evidence is very strong for the point of view that this "angel/Angel" is the Lord Jesus Christ, and I favor this viewpoint. We'll discuss this viewpoint as we continue. These verses become all the more interesting if the Lord Jesus Christ is the One doing these things.

I'll read verses 3 and 4 from the *New King James Version*. (Unless I mention otherwise, I always quote from the *New American Standard Bible*, 1995 edition.) "Then another angel, having a golden censer [or, fire-pan], came and stood at the altar. And he was given much incense, that he should offer *it* with the prayers of all the saints upon the golden altar [upon the golden altar of incense] which was before the throne. (4) And the smoke of the incense, with the prayers of the saints, ascended before God from [or, out of] the angel's hand."

First let's discuss these words, "another angel." This angel is *another* angel in distinction from the "seven angels" of Rev. 8:2. As I mentioned, I favor the viewpoint that this "angel/Angel" is the Lord Jesus Christ. Quite a few commentators agree. I discussed this viewpoint in substantial detail in my book, *The Mid-Week Rapture*. I admit, of course, that it is highly unusual to refer to the Lord Jesus Christ as an "another angel," but I believe the evidence for this viewpoint is so strong that I have to favor this viewpoint. Of course God the Son is not a *created* angel, but He did appear quite often in the Old Testament as the Angel of Yahweh.

As I mentioned when we discussed Rev. 7:2, it is easier to see the Lord Jesus Christ behind the words "another angel" in that verse if He is also called "another angel" in Rev. 8:3-5 and "another strong angel" in Rev. 10:1, which seems to be the case. As the following discussion of Rev. 8:3-5 will demonstrate, these verses strongly support identifying this angel with the Lord Jesus Christ. Anyway, whether this person is the Lord Jesus Christ, or not, does not substantially affect the overall interpretation of these verses. If it isn't the Lord Jesus Christ, it is a high level angel who perfectly fulfills His assignments, as God's angels always do.

Apparently this "angel/Angel" is standing by the *sacrificial* altar here; the altar mentioned in verse 5 is the *sacrificial* altar also. The sacrificial altar is different than the golden altar (of incense) that is before the throne of God. We should think of hot coals being taken from the sacrificial altar and carried in the golden censer (or, fire-pan) to the golden altar (of incense). That's what the priests did twice a day in the ancient temple at Jerusalem.

I'll read verses 3 and 4 again (NKJV) before we further discuss these verses, "Then another angel, having a golden censer [or, fire-pan], came and stood at the altar. And he was given much incense, that he should offer *it* with the prayers of all the saints upon the golden altar which was before the throne. (4) And the smoke of the incense, with the prayers of the saints, ascended before God from the angel's hand." Apparently the incense that was given to this "angel/Angel" (which ultimately came from God the Father as part of His overall plan of salvation) represents that which makes the prayers of the saints acceptable and effective before God. Apparently this incense represents the fruit of the mediatorial work of the Son of God. Through His incarnation and atoning death, the Lord Jesus Christ has earned the right to function as our great high priest (compare Heb. 4:14-16; 5:5, 6; 7:15-8:6; 9:1-28; and 13:15). He has also earned the right to judge the world and to remove all the unrepentant rebels, starting with the devil.

The mediatorial role of this "angel/Angel" is emphasized by the fact that the smoke of the incense, with the prayers of the saints, "ascended before God from [or, out of] the angel's [Angel's] hand." It hardly needs to be said that the mediatorial role of this "angel/Angel" perfectly fits the Lord Jesus Christ, our great high priest.

Before we leave verses 3 and 4, I should point out that the fact that John “heard a voice coming from the four horns of the golden altar which is before God” when the sixth angel sounded his trumpet helps confirm that the judgments associated with the trumpets are coming (in part) in answer to our prayers. They are not coming against God’s people. Under the fifth trumpet, for example, the demonic locusts will not be permitted to touch God’s elect.

Now I’ll read Rev. 8:5. As we will see, this verse lends very strong support to the idea that this “angel/Angel” is the Lord Jesus Christ. “Then the angel took the censer and filled it with the fire of the altar [undoubtedly referring to fire from the sacrificial altar], and threw it to the earth; and there followed peals of thunder and sounds and flashes of lightning and an earthquake.” Apparently this casting of fire to the earth initiates God’s end-time judgment of the world that will come to pass under the sounding of the trumpets. It certainly would be appropriate for the Lord Jesus Christ to be One who initiates the end-time judgment of the world. The Scriptures make it quite clear that the end-time judgment of the world has been given into His hand (see, for example, Matt. 13:36-43; 16:27; 25:1-46; John 5:22-29; Acts 10:42; 17:30, 31; 1 Cor. 15:24-28; 2 Thess. 1:5-10; and 2:8-12).

It is quite significant that this casting of fire to the earth apparently builds on Ezekiel chapter 10, where the “man dressed in linen” scattered coals of fire over Jerusalem, which initiated the judgment of that city in the days of the prophets Jeremiah and Ezekiel. This cross-reference is all the more significant, because as we discussed under Revelation chapter 7, the “man dressed in linen” is the One who sealed the believers in Jerusalem with a mark on their foreheads for protection in Ezekiel chapter 9. He sealed the believers for protection before He initiated the judgment by scattering coals of fire from God over Jerusalem in Ezekiel chapter 10. That judgment came through the Babylonians, who destroyed the city and the temple in 587/586 BC.

As we discussed under Revelation chapter 7 (see pages 165-179 of my book, *The Mid-Week Rapture* for more details), the evidence is very strong that the “man dressed in linen” of Ezekiel chapters 9 and 10 and of Daniel chapters 10 and 12 was God the Son, who frequently appeared in the Old Testament as the Angel of Yahweh. And as we discussed under Revelation chapter 7, I have to favor the viewpoint that it is God the Son who seals the end-time remnant of Israel on their foreheads for protection in that chapter. He seals them before He initiates the end-time judgment of the world and the seven angels begin to sound their trumpets.

Having finished the excerpt, we’ll continue with Rev. 8:6.

**(6) And the seven angels who had the seven trumpets prepared themselves to sound them.** [Chapter 2 of *The Mid-Week Rapture* is titled “Chronological Chart for Daniel’s 70<sup>th</sup> Week with Explanatory Notes.” The foldout Chronological Chart itself is located in the back of the book; I recommend the reader look at the chart. The first five trumpets (Rev. 8:7-9:11) are briefly discussed under number 6 on page 13 of the book. The sixth trumpet (Rev. 9:13-21) is discussed under number 8 on page 14. Also see number 9, which is closely related to the sixth trumpet, on pages 14, 15. The seventh and last trumpet is briefly discussed under number 11 on page 15. Also see numbers 10, 12, and 13, which are closely related to the seventh trumpet, on pages 15, 16. Some may want to read on through number 21 to get a further overview of what will happen after

the seventh trumpet sounds in the middle of Daniel's 70<sup>th</sup> week.] **(7) The first sounded [the first angel sounded his trumpet], and there came hail and fire, mixed with blood, and they were thrown to the earth; and a third of the earth was burned up, and a third of the trees [cf. Rev. 7:1] were burned up, and all the green grass was burned up.** [Revelation 11:6 speaks of rain not falling during the three and one-half year ministry of the two witnesses/prophets, which will cover the first half of Daniel's 70th week. Drought conditions could help explain why the fire of the first trumpet causes such extensive damage. There's some similarity between the events of the first trumpet and the events of the seventh plague of hail at the time of the exodus (Ex. 9:13-35). Under the seventh plague in Egypt, however, there was no mention of "blood" being thrown to the earth, and there was no mention of damage being caused by the fire that accompanied the hail. (The fire mentioned in Ex. 9:23, 24 apparently referred to lightning.)

Hail caused the damage in Egypt, but here under the first trumpet the fire thrown to the earth causes the only damage that is mentioned. The trees are more resistant to damage by fire than the far-less-substantial grass, which undoubtedly includes essential grains like wheat, oats, and barley. I assume we are to think of the fire causing damage to cities, homes, commercial buildings, etc. as part of what it means for a third of the earth to be burned up. Some say that a third of the trees and all the green grass within a third of the earth will be burned up, but this verse seems to say that a third of the trees and all the green grass of the earth will be burned up.

It is quite possible that only a relatively small part of the earth will be directly involved in the events of the sounding of the first five trumpets, that part of the world centered in the revived Roman Empire. (We'll get into some details when we discuss the individual trumpets.) Even if that proves to be true, the entire world will certainly be very much aware of and affected by what is happening. Anyway, even though there's some uncertainty about some of the details for the first five trumpets, we shouldn't have any doubt regarding the fulfillment of these prophesied warning judgments when they finally fall on the earth.

For one thing, there will be confirming signs, including such things as the seven-year covenant/treaty of Dan. 9:27; the ministry of the two witnesses/prophets of Rev. 11:3 (they may announce the sounding of the trumpets before they sound, even as Moses announced the plagues before they fell on Egypt, and/or they may identify these events as fulfilling the trumpet judgments after they sound, which will make these events all the more effective at getting the attention of the world); and the rebuilding of the temple. Furthermore, even if there is some room for doubt about whether the things that have happened fulfill the prophecy regarding the first trumpet, any such doubts should be erased when the second, third, and fourth trumpets follow in sequence.

When will the trumpets sound? Revelation chapters 11-13 show that the seventh and last trumpet will sound right in the middle of Daniel's 70<sup>th</sup> week. The sixth trumpet will sound about the time of Antichrist's abomination of desolation, some thirty days before the middle of Daniel's 70<sup>th</sup> week (Dan. 12:11). The sixth trumpet will initiate the super-intense warfare of the short great tribulation. We are informed that the events associated with the fifth trumpet will last for five months. At the latest then, the fifth trumpet will sound about six months before the middle of Daniel's 70<sup>th</sup> week. The first four trumpets will all sound in sequence before the fifth trumpet sounds. I assume they will all sound

during the first half of Daniel's 70<sup>th</sup> week. The first trumpet could sound as late as something like a month or two before the sounding of the fifth trumpet. I get the impression that once the first trumpet sounds the other trumpets will follow rather quickly.

The mention of a "third" twice in this verse is typical for the first six trumpets (Rev. 8:8, 9, 10, 11, 12; 9:15, 18). This "third" factor substantially lessens the severity of these warning judgments. (The judgment of the sixth trumpet is too severe to be labeled a warning judgment.) Another factor that lessens the severity of the warning judgment of the first trumpet is that the "grass" won't be permanently destroyed. See Rev. 9:4; the same Greek noun (*chortos*) for "grass" is used in Rev. 8:7 and 9:4. (I had a footnote here, See Matt. 13:26, where the NASB translated this noun as "wheat," and Mark 4:28, where the NASB translated this noun as "blade," clearly speaking of grass that yields a harvest for food.) The fact that the grass has had time to grow back after the burning under the first trumpet (assuming that this is the way to explain the presence of grass in Rev. 9:4) would tend to argue for more than a month between the sounding of the first trumpet and the sounding of the fifth trumpet.

Under the seventh plague (as with the plagues of Egypt in general), the people of God were not touched. I expect a similar protection for God's people during the events of the seven trumpets. The judgments of the trumpets aren't aimed at God's people. They are, in fact, coming (in part) in answer to the prayers of His people (cf. Rev. 5:8; 6:9-11; 8:3-5; and 9:13, 20, 21). Revelation 9:4, which deals with the fifth trumpet, specifically mentions that the (demonic) locusts will not be permitted to touch God's people.

How many people will die under the first trumpet? We're not told that any will die under this trumpet, but we would tend to expect that some will die (cf. Ex. 9:19-21, 25). Anyway, I assume that the loss of life will be relatively limited under the first three trumpets, and it doesn't seem that any will die under the fourth or fifth trumpets. This will change drastically under the sixth trumpet.] **(8) The second angel sounded, and something like a great mountain burning with fire was thrown into the sea** [Note the sea in Rev. 7:1. It makes a very big difference what "the sea" means here. Some think of the oceans of the earth; I favor the much-less-severe view that the Mediterranean Sea is meant. "*Something* like a great mountain burning with fire" could be a meteor, it could be some sort of nuclear device, or it could be something obviously supernatural.]; **and a third of the sea became blood** [Compare Ex. 7:17-25; Rev. 11:6; and 16:3-7. This need not be literal blood, and its origin could be supernatural.], **(9) and a third of the creatures which were in the sea and had life, died** [contrast Rev. 16:3]; **and a third of the ships were destroyed** [cf. Isa. 2:16]. [The "third" factor goes with the first six trumpet judgments, as noted under Rev. 8:7. It seems clear that a substantial number of people will die under this catastrophe, but it will undoubtedly be a relatively small number (numbering in the thousands, or tens of thousands?) when you think in terms of God's end-time day of judgment.] **(10) The third angel sounded, and a great star fell from heaven, burning like a torch, and it fell on a third of the rivers and on the springs of waters.** [Because of the following words regarding a third of the waters becoming wormwood, we should apparently think of the star falling on a third of the "springs of waters" too (as with the rivers).] **(11) The name of the star is called Wormwood** [This great star which falls from heaven could involve an evil angel. Stars are sometimes used in the book of Revelation to represent angels, good and evil angels

(Rev. 1:20; 9:1, 2; and 12:4, 7-9), and the fact that this star has a name could fit that viewpoint. Note the use of the word “wormwood” later in this verse, and note the words “made bitter.” The BAGD Greek Lexicon, under the Greek noun translated Wormwood/wormwood (*apsinthos*), points out that wormwood “[contains] a very bitter substance.”]; **and a third of the waters became wormwood, and many men died from the waters, because they were made bitter.** [See Jer. 9:15; 23:15. The bitterness (which here clearly includes poisonous qualities) could be caused by material coming from this falling star, or it could be entirely supernatural. “Many” will die under the sounding of the third trumpet, but, again, the number will probably be relatively small when considered in the context of judgment day.] **(12) The fourth angel sounded, and a third of the sun and a third of the moon and a third of the stars were struck, so that a third of them would be darkened and the day would not shine for a third of it, and the night in the same way.** [The darkening by a third goes with the “third” factor of the first six trumpets. It’s not clear exactly what will happen here, but it shouldn’t be difficult to recognize when it comes to pass, especially with it coming to pass in sequence after the first three trumpets. This probably just means that a third of the light coming from the sun, moon, and stars to the earth will be blocked out (darkened) somehow under the fourth trumpet. I assume that it will be obvious that something unusual (apparently supernatural) is happening.

Some believe this speaks of a partial eclipse (which seems rather complicated when applied to the sun, moon, and stars). Others speak of the light being blocked out for a third part of the day (like for four hours) and for a third part of the night. (This view also seems rather complicated, but God certainly could do it this way.) This partial darkening foreshadows/anticipates the somewhat complete darkening of the sun, moon, and stars that will come to pass in the middle of Daniel’s 70<sup>th</sup> week (cf. Isa. 13:10; Joel 2:31; 3:14; Zeph. 1:15; Matt. 24:29; Mark 13:24; Luke 21:25; and Rev. 6:12). Also, under the fifth bowl of wrath, the kingdom of Antichrist will be darkened (Rev. 16:10, 11). It doesn’t seem that anyone will be harmed, much less die, under the fourth trumpet.] **(13) Then I looked, and I heard an eagle flying in midheaven, saying with a loud voice, “Woe, woe, woe to those who dwell on the earth, because of the remaining blasts of the trumpet of the three angels who are about to sound!”** [The warning judgment of the fifth angel is called the “first woe” in “Rev. 9:12. (No one will die under the fifth trumpet.) The intense judgment of the sixth judgment is called the second woe (Rev. 11:14), and the seventh trumpet, with its very extensive judgments, is called the “third woe” (Rev. 11:14). Many glorious things will also come to pass under the sounding of the seventh trumpet, including the return of Christ; the resurrection and rapture; and the salvation of the end-time remnant of Israel. ]

## REVELATION CHAPTER 9

**Then the fifth angel sounded [his trumpet], and I saw a star from heaven which had fallen to the earth** [This fallen “star” is an evil angel (cf. Rev. 12:4, 7-9; 8:10, 11; and 1:20).]; **and the key of the bottomless pit** [As the margin of the NASB points out, the Greek literally has, “the key of the shaft of the abyss.” The NIV has, “the key to the shaft of the Abyss.” The English word abyss comes from the Greek *abussos*, which was also used in Luke 8:31; Rom. 10:7; Rev. 9:2, 11; 11:7; 17:8; and 20:1, 3.] **was given to him.** [With this key the “star” could now open the shaft of the abyss. The fact that the key, which ultimately came from God, was given to this fallen star shows that God is in control, including the timing. God often uses evil beings in His end-time judgment of the world. We’ll discuss this point further when we discuss His use of four evil angels under the sixth trumpet (Rev. 9:14, 15).] **(2) He opened the bottomless pit** [“the shaft of the abyss”], **and smoke went up out of the pit** [shaft], **like the smoke of a great furnace; and the sun and the air were darkened by the smoke of the pit** [shaft]. [The fact that John saw smoke come out of the shaft of the abyss that darkened the sun and the air doesn’t necessarily mean that the sun and air will be darkened when the fifth trumpet sounds in the last days. These words regarding the sun and air being darkened by smoke demonstrate, however, that it’s Biblical to think of the sun being darkened by smoke that blocks out the light coming from the sun to the earth. The sun itself isn’t actually darkened.

This confirms that it’s reasonable to say that the darkening of the sun and moon at the time the Lord Jesus returns in the middle of Daniel’s 70<sup>th</sup> week (e.g., Joel 2:31; Matt. 24:29, 30; Mark 13:24-26; and Rev. 6:12) will be caused by the smoke and dust generated during the intense warfare of the sixth trumpet/of the short great tribulation (e.g., Joel 2:30; Matt. 24:21, 22; Mark 13:19, 20; Rev. 6:12 [the great shaking of Rev. 6:12 probably includes this intense warfare]; and Rev. 9:13-21 [note the smoke in 9:17, 18]). We will discuss these things under Rev. 9:13-21] **(3) Then out of the smoke** [which came up out of the shaft of the abyss] **came locusts upon the earth** [A large number of locusts came into Egypt under the eighth plague (Ex. 10:1-20). Joel 1:1-2:27 are another important cross-reference for the locust attack of Rev. 9:1-11; these verses in Joel also are an important cross-reference for Rev. 9:13-21. Cross-references to Joel will demonstrate this fact as we continue. Exodus 10:1-20 and Joel 1:1-2:27 speak of an invasion by a large numbers of literal locusts, but it’s clear (based on the description of the locusts) that the locusts of Rev. 9:1-11 aren’t literal locusts. In agreement with many, I consider them to be demonic locusts. They come from the abyss, from the underworld. John saw these demonic locusts, but it’s quite possible that these locusts won’t be visibly present during the time of their attack.], **and power was given them, as the scorpions of the earth have power** [see Rev. 9:5, 10]. **(4) They were told not to hurt the grass of the earth** [These directions ultimately came from God, who is in control. Apparently at least some of the grass that was burned up under the first trumpet (Rev. 8:7) will have been replaced by newly grown grass.], **nor any green thing, nor any tree, but only the men who do not have the seal of God on their foreheads.** [In Rev. 7:1-8 we learned that the end-time elect remnant of Israel will be sealed on their foreheads for protection. They won’t become Christians until after the rapture at the

seventh and last trumpet, so they will need a special seal for protection during the sounding of the trumpets, especially during the events of the sixth trumpet. The Christians who will be living on the earth during the first half of Daniel's 70<sup>th</sup> week, in the days before the rapture when the trumpets will be sounding, won't need a special seal: As born-again Christians they have been sealed by God with the blood of Christ and with the Holy Spirit (cf. Eph. 1:13; 4:30; and 2 Cor. 1:22).] **(5) And they were not permitted to kill anyone, but to torment for five months** [Compare Rev. 9:10. I assume that this locust attack will last for a literal five months.]; **and their torment was like the torment of a scorpion when it stings a man** [cf. Rev. 9:3, 10]. [It's clear that this warning judgment will be powerful enough to get the attention of the world, and it's equally clear that this judgment is in the category of being a warning (of the fast approach of the day of judgment and of the need for repentance), with no one dying under this trumpet. The fact that these locusts won't be able to touch God's people, that it will follow in sequence after the first four trumpets, and that it will last for five months, etc. – just like the Bible said – will make this warning judgment all the more effective at getting the attention of people worldwide. It will be more effective yet if the two witnesses/prophets announce this trumpet before it sounds and/or speak of this warning judgment while it is taking place, which I assume will happen.] **(6) And in those days men will seek death and will not find it; they will long to die** [cf. Job 3:21; 7:15; Jer. 8:3; and Rev. 6:16], **and death flees from them.** [I don't believe there's any idea intended that God will prevent men from committing suicide, etc. This verse apparently just emphasizes the fact that the torment that results from the sting of these demonic locusts will be quite severe. This *will* get the attention of the world.] **(7) The appearance of the locusts was like horses prepared for battle** [Joel 2:4 says, "Their appearance is like the appearance of horses; And like war horses, so they run." I'll comment briefly on the background and meaning of Joel chapters 1, 2. Joel chapter 1 speaks of a literal invasion of locusts that came to Israel/Judah in the days of Joel. God, through Joel, called for the repentance of His people in the light of their dire straits, and in light of the fact that the day of the Lord was still coming (cf. Joel 1:15; 2:1, 11). Joel chapter 2 builds on the locust invasion of chapter 1 and warns of a mighty invasion (by gigantic armies of men) of the land of Israel/Judah in the last days, which is likened to an invasion of locusts, and of the need for repentance at that time (not that God's people are supposed to wait for signs before they repent). The last lines of Joel 2:19 ("And I will never again make you a reproach among the nations," of Joel 2:26 ("Then My people will never be put to shame"), and of Joel 2:27 ("And My people will never be put to shame") help demonstrate that Joel chapter 2 looks beyond the days of Joel to God's ultimate salvation of the elect remnant of Israel. Joel chapter 2 has much application for the people of Joel's generation and subsequent generations too.

I believe the ultimate fulfillment of the invasion spoken of in Joel chapter 2 will come to pass with an invasion of large armies (on the very large armies, see under Rev. 9:14-16) that will lead to the intense warfare of the sixth trumpet of the book of Revelation/of the short great tribulation that will be centered in that part of the world which includes Israel/Judah. We can see the effects of this warfare in Joel 2:30, "blood, fire and columns of smoke." Joel 2:31, 32 go on to say, "The sun will be turned into darkness And the moon into blood Before the great and awesome day of the LORD [Yahweh] comes. (32) And it will come about that whoever calls on the name of the LORD Will

be delivered; For on Mount Zion and in Jerusalem There will be those who escape, As the LORD has said, Even among the survivors whom the LORD calls.” On the intense warfare of the sixth trumpet and the darkening of the sun and moon, see under Rev. 9:13-21. The fifth trumpet with its invasion of “locusts” on the earth builds to some extent on Joel, but the sixth trumpet, with the very large armies, apparently builds even more on Joel.

I’ll quote from Robert B. Chisholm’s introduction to the book of Joel (*Bible Knowledge Commentary*, Old Testament [Victor Books, 1985], pages 1410, 1411). I’ll quote part of what he said under the heading “The nature of the army in 2:1-11.” “Some contend that the locust plague in Joel 1, or an even more severe wave of locusts, is described in 2:1-11. ...

A more likely interpretation is that a literal foreign army is envisioned. The account is patterned after that of chapter 1, the army being described in locust-like terms in many respects (cf. Hans W. Wolff, *Joel and Amos*, p. 42). In this way the close relationship and continuity between the plague of chapter 1 and the army of chapter 2 is emphasized. Both were instruments of the Lord’s judgment—one past, the other future. Locusts had come—more ‘locusts’ were coming!

Several observations may be made in support of this position.

(1) The locust plague of chapter 1 was past; the invasion of 2:1-11 was still future from Joel’s vantage point (cf. also 1:15). Thus the two accounts cannot deal with the same event (Wolff, *Joel and Amos*, pp. 6-7, 42). ...

(2) The army in 2:1-11 is called in 2:20 ‘the northern army’ (literally, ‘the northerner’). Locusts usually attack Palestine from the south or southeast, not from the north (though invasions from the north are not unknown; cf. Allen, *The Books of Joel, Obadiah, and Micah*, p. 88). The designation ‘northerner’ more likely refers to a literal foreign army, since historical or eschatological armies are often described as invading Palestine from that direction (including Assyria, Isa. 14:25, 31; Babylon, Jer. 6:1, 22; 15:12; Ezek. 26:7; and Gog, Ezek. 38:15 [cf. Dan. 11:40-44, discussed in chapter 9 of my book, *The Mid-Week Rapture*]).

(3) The use of locust imagery in the description of the army in Joel 2 has parallels in the ancient Near East (cf. John A. Thompson, ‘Joel’s Locusts in the Light of Near Eastern Parallels,’ *Journal of Near Eastern Studies* 14. 1955:52-5.” Chisholm continued with a fourth observation and further discussion.]; **and on their heads appeared to be crowns like gold, and their faces were like the faces of men. (8) They had hair like the hair of women** [probably meaning long hair], **and their teeth were like the teeth of lions.** [Joel 1:6, speaking of literal locusts says, “For a nation has invaded my land, Mighty and without number; Its teeth are the teeth of a lion, And it has the fangs of a lioness.”] **(9) They had breastplates like breastplates of iron; and the sound of their wings was like the sound of chariots, of many horses rushing to battle.** [The NIV has, “and the sound of their wings was like the thundering of many horses and chariots rushing into battle.” Joel 2:4b, 5 has, “And like war horses, so they run. With a noise as of chariots.”] **(10) They have tails like scorpions, and stings; and in their tails is their power to hurt men for five months.** [Cf. Rev. 9:3, 5.] **(11) They have as king over them, the angel of the abyss** [On the abyss see under Rev. 9:1.]; **his name in Hebrew is Abaddon** [I.e., Destruction. Compare Job 31:12.], **and in the Greek he has the name Apollyon** [i.e., Destroyer]. [Apparently the king of these demonic locusts, the

angel of the abyss, is an evil angel under Satan who has authority over the abyss. It's possible that the angel of the abyss is the same angel pictured in Rev. 9:1, 2, the one who received the key and opened the shaft of the abyss.] **(12) The first woe is past; behold, two woes** [the judgments of the sixth and seventh trumpets (cf. Rev. 8:13)] **are still coming after these things. (13)** [These verses that deal with the sounding of the sixth trumpet are extremely important to a correct understanding of the end times. (They are discussed in some detail in my book, *The Mid-Week Rapture*. For a brief overview see number 8 on page 14, and see pages 31, 32, and 131, 132. On the warfare of the sixth trumpet, see pages 137-143 [starting with Dan. 11:40] and pages 149-159 [under Dan. 12:1]. On when God's day of wrath begins, see note 24 on pages 308, 309. Much of what was said in *The Mid-Week Rapture* will not be repeated here.) The warfare of the sixth trumpet is also discussed in my eschatological paper on Matthew chapter 24. I'll quote what I said under Matt. 24:21, 22 to supplement this study of Rev. 9:13-21. (This is a lengthy excerpt that goes on for some three pages.) Matthew 24:21, 22 is the key passage in the New Testament that uses the words "great tribulation." For one thing, this quotation mentions the three most important cross-references that will help us understand the warfare of the short great tribulation.

(Matt. 24:21) **"for then there will be a** [I would skip this "a" with the KJV, NKJV, and NIV.] **great tribulation, such as has not occurred since the beginning of the world until now, nor ever shall.** [It's extremely important for us to understand the short great tribulation; however, from my point of view, very few do understand it (at the present time). We often hear that the final seven-year period (Daniel's 70<sup>th</sup> week) is the great tribulation, but that is clearly wrong: Matthew chapter 24 shows that it doesn't start until the time of the abomination of desolation, and it is clear that the abomination doesn't take place until the middle (I would say the approximate middle) of Daniel's 70<sup>th</sup> week (see Dan. 9:27; 12:11; both verses are discussed in my book, for one place). ("Then" at the beginning of Matt. 24:21 [and 24:16] refers to the time of the abomination.) Much more reasonable is the widespread viewpoint that the great tribulation refers to the second half of the seven-year period; however, I believe this view is also wrong.

For one thing, as discussed above (in this paper on Matthew chapter 24, and in my book under Dan. 9:27 and 12:11), the abomination of desolation will be initiated a month before the middle of the seven-year period. Furthermore, I believe Matt. 24:29 shows that the great tribulation (spoken of in 24:21, 22) will be over before the mid-week return of Christ. Note that Matt. 24:29 starts with the words "immediately after the tribulation of those days," referring back to the great tribulation. In Matt. 24:30, 31 we see the mid-week return of Christ with the clouds of the sky with power and great; a great trumpet; and the gathering of the saints in the rapture. (The primary passage that convinces me that the Lord Jesus will return right in the middle of Daniel's 70<sup>th</sup> week is Revelation chapters 11-13, which are discussed verse-by-verse in my book, *The Mid-Week Rapture*.) It is also significant that the sun and moon's being darkened in Matt. 24:29 will be caused by all of the smoke and dust generated during the intense warfare of the short great tribulation (cf. Rev. 9:17, 18; Joel. 2:30, 31).

I consider Rev. 9:13-21 to be the most important of the three cross-references that I'll mention here that enable us to begin to understand the short great tribulation. These

verses describe what will happen when the sixth trumpet of Revelation sounds; they speak of very intense warfare, undoubtedly nuclear (and perhaps chemical and/or biological), that will take place in the general region that includes Israel. This trumpet will sound about the time of the abomination of desolation, about a month before the rapture.

The warfare described in Rev. 9:13-21, which constitutes at least the major part of the warfare of the short great tribulation, is a war between nations (not an attack against Christians; this is not to say that there won't be any such attacks during those days); this warfare (described in Rev. 9:13-21) seems to start with an attack against Antichrist and his armies by a gigantic army (it could be as large as two-hundred million soldiers) coming against him. This invasion of troops and intense warfare will certainly include staking out various claims for control of the land of Israel, and especially Jerusalem and the temple mount. We'll talk more about this warfare as we continue.

The nation Israel will suffer greatly during the one-month period between the abomination of desolation and the mid-week return of Christ. During this period they will apparently be reduced to a repentant remnant, ready (for the most part at least) to receive Christ Jesus when He comes. Based on Zech. 13:8 it seems that some two-thirds of the Israelites will be cut off and perish in those days. (See on Zech. 13:7-14:2 [pages 225-229 of my book, *The Mid-Week Rapture*]; see on Dan. 12:1 [pages 149-159], and see on Zech. 12:1-14 [pages 221-224].)

Daniel 11:40-12:1 are another important cross-references for the warfare of the short great tribulation. Daniel 11:40-43 apparently deal with the preliminary warfare that leads up to the warfare of Rev. 9:13-21, and Dan. 11:44 apparently deals with the warfare of Rev. 9:13-21, in very brief form. The abomination of desolation will apparently take place at the time of the events of Dan. 11:41. The warfare of Dan. 11:41-43 can probably be considered part of the warfare of the great tribulation of Matt. 24:21, 22. Chapter 9 of *The Mid-Week Rapture* deals with Daniel 11:36-45.

Daniel 12:1 is a very significant verse for the great tribulation. For one thing, there is widespread agreement that the very words of Matt. 24:21 regarding a time of unequalled great tribulation/distress, though not a word-for-word quotation, derive from the words of Dan. 12:1. See pages 149-151, 155, 156 of my book on Dan. 12:1.

Daniel chapter 12 (with Dan. 11:36-45) serves as a very strong confirmation of the fact that the rapture will take place right in the middle of Daniel's 70<sup>th</sup> week. The time of great tribulation/distress mentioned in Dan. 12:1 will be over by the middle of Daniel's 70<sup>th</sup> week. Daniel 12:7 shows that three and one-half very difficult years still remain (after the time of great tribulation) for the end-time remnant of Israel (cf. Dan. 7:21, 25; Rev. 13:5, 7). Daniel 12:2 speaks of the mid-week resurrection of God's people (not that you could tell that it will take place in the middle of Daniel's 70<sup>th</sup> week based on Dan. 12:2 by itself).

Further rather strong confirmation that the time of great tribulation is over and the resurrection (and rapture) takes place in the middle of the seven-year period is provided by Dan. 12:6, 7, which speak of "the man dressed in linen, who was above the waters of the river." This apparently refers to the Lord Jesus Christ (the Angel of the LORD [Yahweh]), seen in an exalted position above the earth (apparently relating to His coming in the clouds at the time of the rapture), at a time corresponding with the middle of Daniel's 70th week (in that He says that there are still three and one-half years to go).

And last, I'll mention that Dan. 12:11 helps us see that the abomination of desolation will take place a month before the middle of Daniel's 70th week. To say the least, Daniel chapter 12 is a very important prophetic chapter. (These important points are all discussed in the two chapters of *The Mid-Week Rapture* that deal with Daniel chapter 12.) In my book, there is a section titled "The Time of the Sounding of the Seventh and Last Trumpet," starting on page 293. Under number 10 there, I discussed Daniel chapter 12 somewhat, but that discussion should be modified/expanded a little to include all that I have said in the last two paragraphs.

Revelation 7:14 must also be considered here since this verse speaks of "the great tribulation." These words undoubtedly build on Matt. 24:21. This verse is under Revelation chapter 7 in this paper.

Joel 2:30, which we'll discuss further below, is a third important cross-reference for the warfare of the short great tribulation. (I discussed the prophecy of Joel 2:30-32 above in this article.) This verse is doubly significant in that it mentions "columns of smoke." This smoke (and the dust) generated during the warfare of the great tribulation will undoubtedly cause the darkening of the sun and moon pictured in Matt. 24:29. It's significant that Rev. 9:17, 18 mention smoke too. (As mentioned above, Rev. 9:13-21 are the most important cross-reference for the warfare of the great tribulation.) It's significant that Joel 2:30, 31 specifically mention the darkening of the sun and moon, and that they show that this darkening will take place (just) before the day of the Lord begins. Now we'll continue with Matt. 24:22.] **(22) And unless those days had been cut short, no life would have been saved; but for the sake of the elect those days will be cut short.** [The "elect" are God's people, the Christians, but the elect here undoubtedly include those who will eventually become Christians (after the rapture), including the end-time remnant of the nation Israel. Because of the intensity of the warfare of the great tribulation (Revelation 9:15, 18 show that a third of mankind will be killed, which is overwhelming, even if this third probably deals with a third of a population substantially less than the total population of the earth), there wouldn't be any people left alive on the earth if these days weren't cut short in God's end-time plans.

Having now completed the excerpt from my paper under Matt. 24:21, 22, we'll continue with Rev. 9:13.] **(13) Then the sixth angel sounded [his trumpet], and I heard a voice from the four horns of the golden altar which is before God** [Revelation 8:3 spoke of the prayers of the saints (us believers) being offered before God on this golden altar. As we discussed under Rev. 8:2-5, it's significant that the trumpets are sounded (in part) in answer to our prayers. The fact that the voice that gives directions regarding the judgment of the sixth trumpet comes from the horns of this same golden altar reinforces that idea here. The judgments of the trumpets (including the sixth trumpet) are not coming against us (God's people). Revelation 9:20, 21 serve to confirm this important point. It's not clear who actually spoke (ultimately the voice reflects the will of God), but the voice somehow came from the horns of the golden altar. The altar itself could have spoken: Rev. 16:7 says, "And I heard the [sacrificial] altar saying, 'Yes, O Lord God, the Almighty, true and righteous are Your judgments.' "], **(14) one saying to the sixth angel who had the trumpet, "Release the four angels who are bound at the great river Euphrates."** [The sixth angel, who is a high-level good angel of God, does

more than sound the trumpet. For one thing, he will release the four evil angels who are bound at the Euphrates River. This angel undoubtedly has the authority to make sure that the four evil angels do exactly what they're supposed to do and at the right time; he'll make sure that all the events of the sixth trumpet come to pass in accordance with the will of God. The evil angels will be doing the kind of destructive things they like to do with their assigned roles, but they (like Satan) certainly have no desire to serve God and do His will.

The four angels will apparently go forth to gather large armies of men (Rev. 9:15-19; cf. Rev. 16:13-16 [These verses (Rev. 16:13-16) speak of demon spirits gathering armies of men to Armageddon under the sixth bowl of wrath.]), maybe four separate armies, to cross the Euphrates River, coming from the north and the east (cf. Dan. 11:44), into that part of the world which includes Israel. See pages 141-143 of my book, *The Mid-Week Rapture* (including the endnotes) for more details.] **(15) And the four angels, who had been prepared for the hour and day and month and year, were released, so that they would kill a third of mankind.** [We aren't given any insight as to when and how these four evil angels had been prepared for their roles. It seems that God has already predetermined exactly when the sixth angel will sound his trumpet, down to the very hour (cf., e.g., Acts 1:7). This means that factors like the faithfulness, or lack of faithfulness, of Christians, even though they are very important, won't affect God's predetermined timing for the trumpets, including the seventh and last trumpet of the rapture. God leaves a lot of room for angels (good and bad) and for men (good and bad) to act, but He keeps things under control – thanks be to God!

The "third" factor, as we have seen, is typical for the trumpets. A third of mankind being killed is obviously a very big deal, even if the total number of those killed will probably be far less than a third of the total population of the earth. Under number 6 on page 13 of *The Mid-Week Rapture*, and under Rev. 8:7, 8 in this paper, I mentioned that I doubt that the entire earth will be directly involved with the warning judgments of the first five trumpets. I believe this applies to the judgment of the sixth trumpet too. I'm certainly not being dogmatic of this point.

Under number 6 on page 13 of *The Mid-Week Rapture*, I listed some verses from Daniel which demonstrate that the Bible can speak of a kingdom as a world kingdom when only a small part of the entire world/earth/inhabited earth was being referred to (e.g., "which will rule over all the earth" [Dan. 2:39]; "Nebuchadnezzar the king to all the peoples, nations, and *men of every* language that live in all the earth" [Dan. 4:1]; and "your dominion to the end of the earth" [Dan. 4:22]). Here I'll list several verses from the New Testament which use expressions like "the world," "all the inhabited earth," "to the ends of the world," "all over the world," "throughout the whole world," and "all the earth" where only a rather small part of the entire earth/world (typically the Roman world) was being referred to: Luke 2:1; Acts 11:28; 17:6; 19:27; 24:5; Rom. 1:8; and 10:18.

The judgments of the first six trumpets will probably be centered in that part of the world that includes the revived Roman Empire and not extend outward nearly far enough to directly involve the entire globe. The sixth trumpet warfare will be very extensive; it probably could be called World War III; but I doubt that a third of the total population of the earth will be killed under this trumpet. I'm not saying that I know for a fact that the first six trumpets won't directly involve the entire population of the earth;

I'm just giving my opinion. (The entire world will be very much aware of what is happening during the sounding of the first six trumpets and will be affected by them, even if they aren't directly involved. The darkening of the sun, moon and stars by a third under the fourth trumpet will directly involve the entire world.) Keep in mind that the day of judgment won't officially begin until the sounding of the seventh and last trumpet; a third of mankind being killed is of staggering proportion. If it's true, for example, as I suggested (and I'm not the only one suggesting this), that the sea of the second trumpet (Rev. 8:8, 9) is the Mediterranean Sea, this is a strong basis for suggesting that the first six trumpet judgments probably won't have a totally worldwide scope.

For one important point, I don't believe Antichrist's authority will extend to cover the earth, not even during his super-evil reign throughout the second half of Daniel's 70<sup>th</sup> week. Revelation 13:11-18 show that Antichrist/the false prophet will cause everyone who doesn't take his mark and worship him to be killed, but Rev. 15:3, 4; 20:3 seem to show that there will be a very large number of people of the nations (it could be in the billions), people who had not worshipped Antichrist or taken his mark (cf. Rev. 14:9-11), who will still be alive at the end of Daniel's 70<sup>th</sup> week (by the merciful plan of God) to enter the millennial kingdom. If Antichrist's authority extended worldwide he would have been able to kill all these people.

The present population of the earth is 5.931 billion people. (This number was taken from the 1999 *Time Almanac*, reflecting the July 20, 1998 estimate. The present growth rate is 1.4 percent per year. Now [2006] it's more than 6 billion. Now [2012] it's a little over 7 billion.) A third of this total population would be some 2 billion people (now it's more than 2.3 billion people). Let's briefly consider World War I and World War II to gain some perspective. The total number of deaths, including civilian deaths, attributed to WWI was some 21.5 million people. For WWII the estimates run from 35 to 60 million people. (I took these numbers from the *Encyclopedia Britannica*.) If only a tenth of a third of the present total population of the earth is killed during the sixth trumpet warfare, that would be 200 million (now [2012] more than 230 million) people (a tenth of 2 billion), which would be quite awesome, and would greatly shake the world. Not only would this number be some four times higher than all those who lost their lives because of WWII, but the warfare of the sixth trumpet will apparently last only a few weeks while WWII lasted more than five years. For one thing, modern weapons systems (including nuclear, laser, biological, chemical, etc.), with their advanced delivery systems (including missiles, aircraft, and perhaps spacecraft and satellites) are much more potent and lethal than those used in WWII. I assume the number killed under the sixth trumpet will be closer to 200 million than 2 billion. (I'm certainly not being dogmatic on this point.) **(16) The number of the armies of the horsemen was two hundred million** [This number is rather mind-boggling, but not at all impossible. Such large numbers fit the picture of invading armies being compared to a locust invasion (discussed above under Rev. 9:7). With countries like China having a population of 1.2 billion, and India having 984 million, and with there being some 1.1 billion Muslims in the world today, etc., it's not that hard to imagine a literal 200 million soldiers. (These numbers, which reflect 1998 estimates, were taken from the 1999 *Time Almanac*.) I assume the number is to be understood literally, but I won't be

shocked if it turns out that the number is somewhat less than 200 million soldiers for some reason.

I'll quote part of what J. O. Buswell said regarding the warfare of the sixth trumpet (*Systematic Theology of the Christian Religion*, Vol. 2 [Zondervan, 1963], page 444), "I ...think that God allowed John to see the fearful destruction of a war of some future time, and that the Spirit then guided John to describe what he saw in terms which would be as nearly intelligible as possible to his contemporaries and to us. We of the twentieth century can simply rest in the fact that John is describing military destruction and weapons of a future war in such a manner as is beyond our power to fill in the details. The number of the military personnel, 200,000,000, is credible in terms of our knowledge of the world's population as it is today. As the world's population increases it will be quite easy to take this figure literally." This book by Buswell was published in 1963. The population for that year was 3.178 billion (*Britannica Book of the Year* [Encyclopaedia Britannica, Inc., 1964], page 674. The estimates were taken from 1962, 1963 data), so the population has almost doubled since 1963. (Now [2012] it has more than doubled.)

Alan F. Johnson (*Expositors Bible Commentary* [Zondervan, 1981], page 494) points out that "all the Allied and Axis forces at their peak in World War II were only about 70 million (*The World Almanac*, 1971, ed. L. H. Long [New York: Newspaper Enterprise Association, 1970], p. 355)." The number 70 million for WWII makes the number 200 million for the sixth trumpet warfare sound very reasonable. Johnson, by the way, favors the viewpoint held by many, that the armies here are demonic, like the locusts. (I don't agree.); **I heard the number of them.** [These last words tend to make the number more significant. The same words were used in Rev. 7:4 regarding the important (symbolic) number 144 thousand. The number 200 million doesn't seem to be a symbolic number. Leon Morris (*Revelation* [Eerdmans, 1987], page 131) commented that these words ("I heard the number of them") show "that an exact figure is meant, not simply a large number as in 5:11."] **(17) And this is how I saw in the vision the horses and those who sat on them: the riders had breastplates the color of fire [reddish] and of hyacinth [bluish, like smoke; "In its only occurrence in the NT...*huakinthinos* appears to denote a dusky blue colour as of sulphurous smoke..." (*Vocabulary of the Greek Testament* by J. H. Moulton and G. Milligan [Eerdmans, 1972 reprint], page 647).] and of brimstone [Or, sulfur, which is yellow; cf. Rev. 9:18; 14:10; 19:20; 20:10; and 21:8. It's not clear (nor is it important) whether some of the breastplates were "fiery red" (NKJV), some "hyacinth blue" (NKJV), and some "sulfur yellow" (NKJV), or whether each breastplate had all three colors. The translation of the NIV takes the viewpoint that the horses also had breastplates. These three colors go with the "fire and smoke and brimstone" that proceed from the mouths of the horses, spoken of in the second half of this verse.]; and the heads of the horses are like the heads of lions; and out of their mouths proceed fire and smoke and brimstone.** [Genesis 19:24 says, "Then the LORD rained on Sodom and Gomorrah brimstone and fire from the LORD out of heaven." And Gen. 19:28 says, "and he [Abraham] looked down toward Sodom and Gomorrah...and behold the smoke of the land ascended like the smoke of a furnace." It's clear that we aren't to think of literal horses carrying riders/soldiers; instead of horses we should think of modern weapon systems, like tanks, missile launchers, airplanes, and helicopters. Literal horses don't have heads like lions, and they

don't have fire and smoke and brimstone coming out of their mouths. Out of the barrels of guns and out of the warheads of missiles, however, fire and smoke and brimstone do proceed. In John's day there were no words or concepts to describe modern weapon systems.] **(18) A third of mankind was killed by these three plagues, by the fire and the smoke and the brimstone which proceeded out of their mouths.** [See under Rev. 9:15.] **(19) For the power of the horses is in their mouths and in their tails; for their tails are like serpents and have heads, and with them they do harm.** [On the mouths of the horses, see Rev. 9:17. Their "tails" probably include things like guns coming from the rear of tanks.] **(20) The rest of mankind, who were not killed by these plagues, did not repent of the works of their hands** [As I mentioned, these words confirm the important point that the judgments of the sixth trumpet are not coming against God's people. They also confirm that mankind (at that time) is still being called to repent by God (cf., e.g., Rev. 14:6, 7; 16:9, 11, 21). On the works of their hands, which refer to the idols of gold and of silver and of brass and of stone and of wood, which can neither see nor hear nor walk, compare Deut. 4:28; 2 Kings 19:18; Psalms 115:4-8; 135:15-18; Jer. 1:16; Mic. 5:13; Act 7:41; and 19:26. In our day most of the idolatry is more subtle (i.e., bowing before money, science, fame, the goddess of sex, sports, entertainment, etc.).

I'll quote part of what Philip E. Hughes said here (*Book of the Revelation* [Eerdmans, 1990], page 115), "The much vaunted civilization of our day may be free from graven images, but it is certainly not free from idolatry. As St. Paul explained long since, the person who is covetous is a idolator (Eph. 5:5; Col. 3:5), and this means that virtually anything can become an idol: money, power, fame, pleasure, sex – in short, humanistic self-centeredness in all its forms. Accordingly, the idolatry of which St. John speaks here is not remote from us and irrelevant to our situation. The worship of false gods, who in fact are no gods, is the expression of ungodliness which goes hand in hand with the breaking of all God's commandments.", **so as not to worship demons** [Pagan religion/idolatry/sacrifices often involved the worship of demons, whether the worshippers were aware of it, or not (e.g., Deut. 32:17; Psalm 106:35-38; and 1 Cor. 10:14-22).], **and the idols of gold and of silver and of brass and of stone and of wood, which can neither see nor hear nor walk; (21) and they did not repent of their murders nor of their sorceries** [On sorceries, compare Ex. 22:18; Deut. 18:10; Isa. 47:9, 12; Mal. 3:5; Gal. 5:20; Rev. 21:8; and 22:15. I'll quote what John MacArthur said here (*Revelation 1-11* [Moody Press, 1999], pages 273, 274), "John describes a third sin his vision revealed will characterize that tragic time as sorceries, a Greek word [*pharmakōn*] from which the English words 'pharmacy' and 'pharmaceuticals' derive. Drugs were and still are believed to induce a higher religious state of communion with deities. (For a discussion of such practices, see *Ephesians*, MacArthur New Testament Commentary [Chicago: Moody, 1986], 229-34.) *Pharmakōn* can also refer to poisons, amulets, charms, seances, witchcraft, incantations, magic spells, contacting mediums, or any other object that is tied to pagan idolatry to elicit lust or to seduce. People will dive deeper into the satanic trappings of false religion." ] **nor of their immorality nor of their thefts.** [These words don't mean, I don't believe, that absolutely no people will repent, but the majority won't repent, even though they have every reason to repent. They will continue on in their sins (including unbelief) instead of repenting. These words help demonstrate why judgment day is necessary.]



## REVELATION CHAPTER 10

Key parts of this chapter were discussed in rather thorough fashion in my book, *The Mid-Week Rapture*. I'll supplement what I said in the book here, but significant parts of what was said in the book will not be repeated here. (The primary discussion is on pages 167-172. For the full discussion on the identity of the angel/Angel, see pages 165-179. Also see number 10 on pages 299, 300.)

Revelation 10:1-11 and 11:1-13 are two interludes (parenthetical inserts) between the sounding of the sixth trumpet (Rev. 9:13-21) and the sounding of the seventh and last trumpet of the book of Revelation at Rev. 11:15. (Revelation 11:14 serves as an introduction to 11:15.) The interlude of Revelation chapter 10 has much to do with the sounding of the seventh and last trumpet. For one thing, in Rev. 10:6, 7 we are told that it is now time for the seventh trumpet to sound—there will be delay no longer. Furthermore, in Rev. 10:1, 2 we see a mighty angel/messenger come down from heaven and put one foot on the sea and the other foot on the land, which pictures God's beginning to fully take over the world, a taking over that will officially begin with the sounding of the seventh and last trumpet. As we'll discuss, this mighty angel/Angel/Messenger probably pictures the Lord Jesus Christ coming down to the earth in the middle of Daniel's 70<sup>th</sup> week to save and to judge, at time of the sounding of the seventh and last trumpet. The evidence is very strong that this mighty angel/Angel is the Angel/Messenger of Yahweh of the Old Testament, who is God the Son. If it doesn't picture Christ, it pictures a mighty angel under Him.

**I saw another strong angel coming down out of heaven, clothed with a cloud [cf., e.g., Dan. 7:13, 14; Matt. 24:30; 26:64; Acts 1:9-11; and Rev. 1:7]; and the rainbow was upon his head [cf. Rev. 4:3], and his face was like the sun [see Rev. 1:16; cf. Dan. 10:6; Matt. 17:2; Rev. 21:23], and his feet like pillars of fire [As discussed in *The Mid-Week Rapture* in some detail, the evidence is very strong that this angel/Angel is the Angel/Messenger of the Lord [Yahweh], who appears quite often in the Old Testament; there is rather widespread agreement that this Angel (or we could translate Messenger) is the Eternal Son of God, through whom all things were created (cf., e.g., John 1:1-3). (I had a footnote here, "I'll add several names here to the list of commentators I have in my book who hold the view (or at least prefer the view) that this angel/Angel is Christ: G. K. Beale, *Book of Revelation* [Eerdmans, 1999] pages 522ff.; Robert Van Kampen, *The Sign* [Crossway, 1992], pages 341-344; Walter A. Ewell, *Evangelical Commentary on the Bible* [Baker, 1989], page 1213; Donald W. Richardson, *Revelation of Jesus Christ* [Knox, 1964], page 101 (mentioned by R. H. Mounce, *Book of Revelation*); and, last, I'll list two commentators mentioned by John F. Walvoord (*Revelation of Jesus Christ* [Moody, 1966], pages 169, 170): Walter Scott, *Exposition of the Revelation of Jesus Christ* [Pickering and Inglis Ltd, no date], page 219 and William Kelly, *Lectures on the Book of Revelation* [W. H. Broom, 1874], page 200.)**

On his feet compare Rev. 1:15. The NIV has "legs" instead of "feet," which is quite reasonable in light of the comparison with "pillars of fire." There's no doubting that the basic meaning of the plural of the Greek noun used here (*pous, podos*) means "feet,"

and that the feet are included, but apparently the legs are included too. The BAGD Greek Lexicon says, “In Rev. 10:1 *pous* clearly means *leg*,” and it gives some non-biblical references to substantiate this usage. “The comparison with *stuloi*, *pillars*, implies that the word here includes the leg, as *cheir*, *hand*, often includes the arm” (Isbon T. Beckwith, *Apocalypse of John* [Baker, 1979 edition, copyright 1919], page 580).]; **(2) and he had in his hand a little book [scroll] which was open.** [I assume this little scroll, which was open in the angel/Angel’s hand, is the same scroll the Lord Jesus took from the hand of God the Father (as pictured in Rev. 5:1-7). In Rev. 6:1-8:1, we watch as He breaks the seven seals from the scroll. Only then could the scroll be opened, as it is seen open here in Rev. 10:2. It is very reasonable to expect that this same scroll would still be in the hand of the Lord Jesus here in Revelation chapter 10.

The fact that this scroll is called a “little scroll” in Rev. 10:2 (but not in Rev. 5:1-7) probably indicates that only part of the original scroll remains. The content of the original scroll probably equals the book of Revelation, starting about Rev. 6:1. Part of the revelation contained in the scroll has already been given. In Rev. 10:8-11, the apostle John was told that he should take the little scroll and eat it (cf. Ezek. 2:8-3:11). John was told that he should eat this scroll because he “must prophesy again concerning many peoples and nations and tongues and kings” (Rev. 10:11). He has already prophesied (probably starting at Rev. 6:1 and going through chapter 10).] **He placed his right foot on the sea and his left on the land** [cf. Rev. 10:5, 8]; **(3) and he cried out with a loud voice, as when a lion roars** [The person/Person who “cried out with a loud voice, as when a lion roars,” speaks with great authority. These words certainly fit the Lord Jesus well. He has the authority to save and to judge (cf., e.g., Matt. 28:18; John 5:22, 23, 25-29; and Eph, 1:20-23), and He is called “the LION that is from the tribe of Judah, the root of David” in Rev. 5:5 (cf. Gen. 49:8-12; Jer. 25:30-38; Amos 1:2; and Joel 3:16).]; **and when he had cried out, the seven peals of thunder uttered their voices.** [The seven peals of thunder probably relate to part of God’s end-time judgment of the world. In Rev. 8:5; 11:19; and 16:18 (cf. Rev. 4:5), peals of thunder combined with flashes of lightning and sounds (and other phenomena) apparently picture God’s power going forth in judgment. These judgments (assuming this is what the seven peals of thunder spoke of) probably will come to pass near the middle of Daniel’s 70<sup>th</sup> week.] **(4) When the seven peals of thunder had spoken, I was about to write; and I heard a voice from heaven [cf. Rev. 10:8] saying, “Seal up the things which the seven peals of thunder have spoken and do not write them.”** [Contrast Rev. 22:10. Quite a few times in the book of Revelation John was told to write what he had seen and heard (Rev. 1:11, 19; 2:1, 8, 12, 18; 3:1, 7, 14; 14:13; 19:9; and 21:5). This is the only place where he was instructed *not* to write what he had seen and heard. Daniel 8:26 spoke of the need for Daniel to “keep the vision secret, for *it* pertains to many days *in the future*.” In Dan. 12:4 he was told to “conceal these words and seal up the book until the end of time [time of the end]; many will go back and forth, and knowledge will increase.” And in Dan. 12:9 Daniel was told that “these words are concealed and sealed up until the end time [time of the end].” These verses in Daniel are different than Rev. 10:4, however, in that Daniel was to write down the revelations he received. Daniel’s revelations were to be sealed (and concealed) in the sense that they weren’t to be understood (by the people of Israel) in any full sense until later. The book of Revelation, which builds on the book of Daniel, is not a sealed book for Christians (cf. Rev. 1:1-3; 22:6, 7, 10-12; “And he

said to me, ‘Do not seal up the words of the prophecy of this book, for the time is near’” [Rev. 22:10]). This doesn’t mean, however, that all (or most) Christians will have an adequate understanding of the book of Revelation. Far from it!

It’s a little surprising that John would be permitted to hear what the seven peals of thunder said, and to inform us of that fact, but that he would not be permitted to tell us what they said. (But compare 2 Cor. 12:4.) Apparently these verses set the stage for God to reveal to us at a later time (at the right time) what the seven peals of thunder said. Such a revelation could come, for example, through the two end-time prophets of Rev. 11:3-12. There can be no doubt that God keeps some information hidden until the proper time. For example, if the enemies of God had understood the cross of Christ, “they would not have crucified the Lord of glory” (1 Cor. 2:8).] **(5) Then the angel whom I saw standing on the sea and on the land** [cf. Rev. 10:1, 2] **lifted up his right hand to heaven** [cf. Deut. 32:40; Dan. 12:7], **(6) and swore** [As discussed in *The Mid-Week Rapture*, I believe the “man dressed in linen” of Dan. 12:5-7, who “raised his right hand and his left toward heaven, and swore by Him who lives forever” is God the Son. On this oath also compare Deut. 32:40; Heb. 6:13.] **by Him who lives forever and ever** [cf. Rev. 4:9], **WHO CREATED HEAVEN AND THE THINGS IN IT, AND THE EARTH AND THE THINGS IN IT, AND THE SEA AND THE THINGS IN IT** [Compare Rev. 4:11. The angel/Angel/Messenger would be taking this oath before/by God the Father (or possibly the Trinity). This affirmation with an oath (which is the only oath in the book of Revelation) serves to confirm the importance and truthfulness of that which is stated in the following words, through verse 7. God’s Word is true, of course, without an oath—God doesn’t lie; see Heb. 6:13-20, for example, “it is impossible for God to lie” (Heb. 6:18).], **that there will be delay no longer** [In other words, at the sounding of the seventh and last trumpet of the book of Revelation—and the seventh trumpet (Rev. 11:15) will be on the verge of sounding at that time—God the Father will send His Son to save His own and to judge and take over the world. The millennial kingdom will be established after Daniel’s 70<sup>th</sup> week; then after the millennial kingdom and the great white throne judgment, it will be time for the new heaven and new earth with its new Jerusalem of Revelation chapters 21, 22.

I’ll quote part of what George Eldon Ladd said regarding the translation of the KJV here (*Revelation of John* [Eerdmans, 1972], page 144). “The translation of this phrase in the AV [KJV] is very misleading: ‘that there should be time no longer.’ [This translation didn’t result from a different Greek reading, as it sometimes happens with the KJV in the book of Revelation; it’s a matter of interpretation. Most commentators of our day agree with Ladd here.] We sing in the stirring hymn, ‘When the trumpet of the Lord shall sound, and time shall be no more....’ This rendering suggests that the angel announced the end of time and the beginning of eternity, as though eternity were somehow qualitatively different from time as we know it. ... What the angel announces is that there will be no more time intervening before the coming of the end [before the seventh and last trumpet sounds].”], **(7) but in the days of the voice of the seventh angel, when he is about to sound, then the mystery of God is finished** [cf. Rev. 21:6], **as He preached to His servants the prophets.** [I can’t live with the translation of the NASB (which is basically the same as the KJV and NIV): “when he is about to sound.” The Greek could be translated this way, but I don’t believe this translation communicates the intended meaning. I believe the idea is that the mystery of God, which He preached to

His servants the prophets, will be finished during the days of voice of the seventh angel WHEN HE SOUNDS, not when he is about to sound. The Greek verb *mello*, which the NASB translated “is about to sound,” is often used in the New Testament with no idea of “about to.” The NASB, for example, translated *mello* as “going to” nineteen times. See the BAGD Greek Lexicon. Note the following translations of Rev. 10:7: “But when the seventh angel blows his trumpet, God’s mysterious plan will be fulfilled. It will happen just as he announced to his servants the prophets” (*New Living Translation*). “In the days which shall soon be announced by the trumpet blast of the seventh angel the mysterious purpose of God shall be completed, as he assured his servants the prophets” (*The New Testament in Modern English* [translated by J. B. Phillips]). “but that in the days of the trumpet call to be sounded by the seventh angel, the mystery of God, as he announced to his servants the prophets, should be fulfilled” (RSV). “When the time comes for the seventh angel to blow his trumpet, the mysterious plan of God, which he announced to his servants the prophets, shall be accomplished in full” (*New American Bible*). Also, many commentators get this right (from my point of view).

I’ll quote part of what Ladd said regarding the translation of this verse (*Revelation of John*, page 145). “The AV [KJV] renders the passage ‘when he shall begin to sound,’ but this is the less likely translation. ... If this is correct, the verse asserts that the end will come just before the seventh trumpet sounds [“when he shall begin to sound”]; but this is impossible. ... The verse does not say, ‘when the trumpet sounds,’ but ‘in the days of the trumpet call.’ This suggests clearly that the sounding of the seventh trumpet is not to be thought of as a simple act; it embodies a period of time. We shall see that the period of the seventh trumpet includes the seven bowls (16:1-20)...and the consummation itself.”

The mystery of God, which He revealed to His servants, the Old Testament prophets (cf., e.g., Amos 3:7), and has revealed in a fuller sense through the New Testament apostles and prophets, includes His plans to save His people (true Israel), to judge and remove all who persist in rebellion (including the devil), and to bring about His new heaven and new earth with its new Jerusalem. These things will come to pass, or be brought to completion, through the events associated with the sounding of the seventh and last trumpet (cf., e.g., Rev. 11:15-18; 12:10). On God’s keeping the promises which he made to Israel through the old-covenant prophets, see Rev. 11:19 (page 304 in *The Mid-Week Rapture*); Rev. 15:3 (the “song of Moses”); and Rev. 15:5.

In the margin the NASB says that the Greek verb translated “He preached” literally means “He preached the gospel.” A translation like “as He proclaimed the good news to His servants the prophets” might be preferable here. The BAGD Greek Lexicon gives “bring or announce good news” as the basic meaning of this Greek verb (*euangelizō*). Ladd comments (*Revelation of John*, page 145). “It might be more closely (if a bit awkwardly) rendered, ‘as he announced the good news to...the prophets.’ ” The *Jerusalem Bible* has “just as he announced in the Good News told to *his servants the prophets*.” The *Twentieth Century New Testament* has, “of which he told the good news to his servants, the Prophets.” This emphasis on good news doesn’t eliminate the judgments from God’s mystery: His salvation and His eternal kingdom cannot come forth in any full sense without removing those who never will repent. It’s also true that chastening, refining judgments are sometimes needed by God’s elect, which He supplies—they work for good, including the good of God’s people.] **(8) Then the voice**

**which I heard from heaven** [cf. Rev. 10:4], *I heard again speaking with me, and saying, “Go, take the book [scroll] which is open in the hand of the angel who stands on the sea and on the land [cf. Rev. 10:2].”* (9) **So I went to the angel, telling him** [asking him] **to give me the little book [scroll]. And he said to me, “Take it and eat it** [cf. Jer. 15:16; Ezek. 2:8-3:4 (I’ll quote and briefly comment on these verses from Ezekiel at the end of this discussion of Revelation chapter 10.)]; **it will make your stomach bitter** [These words, which weren’t used in Ezek. 2:8-3:4 (though they apparently could have been used there too [cf., e.g., Ezek. 2:10]), apparently relate to the bitter words of judgment that are contained in the little scroll that John was to eat and then to prophesy.], **but in your mouth it will be sweet as honey.”** [Compare Ezek. 3:3; Jer. 15:16; Psalms 19:10; and 119:103. These words about the scroll being sweet as honey, which were spoken to both John and Ezekiel, relate to the extreme privilege of receiving/taking in God’s Word, which always is very good (even when it includes a bitter message, a message of impending judgment). The scroll that John was to eat and then to prophesy included very much good news for God’s people, culminating in eternal glory. Ezekiel 2:8-3:4 don’t mention anything positive, but it is to be understood that God’s judgments of Israel would ultimately lead to the full salvation of the elect of Israel that is spoken of in later chapters of Ezekiel.] (10) **I took the little book [scroll] out of the angel’s hand and ate it, and in my mouth it was sweet as honey; and when I had eaten it, my stomach was made bitter.** [The same verb translated “made bitter” was also used in Rev. 8:11 (“they [the waters] were made bitter”).] (11) **And they said to me** [This is a literal translation of the Greek, but it’s not clear who was speaking. Many commentators (and probably rightly so) favor a translation like “it was said” here, with the plural being understood in an indefinite sense, equivalent to a passive. The NIV takes this viewpoint: “I was told.”], **“You must prophesy again concerning many peoples and nations and tongues and kings** [I assume these words speak of the rest of the book of Revelation, which John was yet to prophesy.].” [I’ll quote Ezek. 2:8-3:4. Revelation 10:8-11 undoubtedly build on these words spoken to Ezekiel. “ ‘Now you, son of man [Ezekiel], listen to what I am speaking to you [The One speaking to Ezekiel was God (Ezek. 1:26-2:7).]; do not be rebellious like that rebellious house [Israel]. Open your mouth and eat what I am giving you.’ (9) Then I looked, behold, a hand was extended to me; and lo, a scroll *was* in it. (10) When He spread it out before me, it was written on the front and back; and written on it were lamentations, mourning and woe. (3:1) Then He said to me, ‘Son of man, eat what you find; eat this scroll, and go, speak to the house of Israel.’ (2) So I opened my mouth, and He fed me this scroll. (3) And He said to me, ‘Son of man, feed your stomach, and fill your body with this scroll which I am giving you.’ Then I ate it, and it was sweet as honey in my mouth. (4) Then He said to me, ‘Son of man, go to the house of Israel and speak with My words [i.e., prophesy] to them.’ ”]